



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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John

*Tasmanian
To me etc.*

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Meeting with Seamus Mallon.
Saturday, 12th February, 1994

1. I travelled North at the weekend and had a long meeting with Seamus Mallon.

2. John Hume and himself had a very full private discussion in Westminster since the "not my brother's keeper" interview. Mallon felt it had cleared the air. (Hume told me separately that that was his view of it also). Mallon had explained that the remark was an unguarded one, made when he thought the interview was over. He had made it abundantly clear that he had no interest in "shafting" Hume or permitting a split between them. He felt however the issue of consent and self-determination was one that would have to be faced by the Provisionals sooner or later. He felt it was useful (and perhaps a necessary political insurance policy for the SDLP as a party) to bring that "up front" as of now.

3. On the question of publication of the "Hume-Adams paper", I said the Declaration was the operational text and anything prior to that was, literally, academic. While the Government had no worries for its own sake if the report were published, nevertheless we felt the decision was best left to Hume's judgement. Hume had already read the document to his party executive and promised them it would be published if Sinn Fein rejected the peace process. While the issue of consent was absolutely fundamental and non-negotiable from our point of view, we were prepared, in the very short term, to let Adams work on his supporters on his own terms.

4. Mallon's view was that the Declaration was a major breakthrough which should not be dissipated. He agreed that

Adams was probably sincerely trying to bring the Provisionals into politics. He remains convinced that the "hard men" will not allow him to do so and that the concern to avoid a split will mean a confused or ambiguous position in the end. At the same time Mallon had a real sense that the conflict was drawing to a close. Irrespective of the formal decision, it would be very hard to sustain the armed struggle if, as seemed the case, a majority of the Provisionals high command wanted to end it.

5. On the general situation, Mallon reverted to his frequent theme that it is now time that the Government and the SDLP should work out a coherent joint position. The Declaration should be built on, irrespective of the Provisional's attitude. He felt that new North-South institutions were the key to everything. If they were sufficiently attractive from a nationalist point of view, the Provisionals "would not dare" stay out of discussions. He emphasised very strongly the need for a "top down", i. e. intergovernmental approach, rather than the incremental "bottom up" approach which Mayhew seemed to be pursuing.
6. I drew attention to the Tanaiste's recent statements and said I felt there was very little danger of the Government agreeing to go into the shallow end of the spectrum in relation to future Talks. That would discredit the Declaration in retrospect.
7. Mallon saw some danger that Hume, who had committed himself totally to the "Hume-Adams process", might be tempted to go too far in pursuit of agreement with the Provisionals. He felt however he would be able to counter any such temptation.
8. Mallon remains intensely concerned about the redrawing of the constituencies in Northern Ireland. If present plans

are proceeded with, he faces the problem of an unpleasant tussle with Eddie McGrady about who should contest the new safe seat and, given the near-certainty that Mallon would win that contest, the prospect of cultivating a whole new constituency area. I assured him the Government were fully seized of this problem and that the Tanaiste had conveyed a strong message to Sir Patrick Mayhew at the last Conference. I assured him that we would assist them with any material we could supply to help make the case for a different approach.

9. In terms of internal SDLP relationships, there is also considerable tension with Joe Hendron at present. Hendron is deeply unhappy about the Hume-Adams relationship, and has been threatening to resign from the party. Mallon and Hume had been making common cause over the weekend to try to turn him around. Mallon expressed regret that Hendron has consistently failed to exploit the enormous political leverage he has since the British Government would refuse nothing to the man who unseated Adams. He felt Hendron was frustrated at political manoeuvrings he did not quite understand, and at the same time was failing to play to his own undoubted strengths. Mallon also voiced continuing concern at Hume's health, in particular at the long-term effects of the strong medication which is currently being prescribed for him.

10. On the Westminster front, Mallon believes that a Labour Government is now inevitable. (It should be added that he believed that at the last election also). He feels the time is now ripe to cultivate in particular the Labour and other back-benchers. He said we in Ireland tended to ignore how absolutely neglected and irrelevant most backbenchers in Westminster felt themselves to be and how responsive they could be to any recognition. He felt a sustained campaign by the Embassy would pay considerable political dividends. I said we would take this on board as far as possible. (We

are in fact planning a visit by Labour back-benchers, to follow a more recent Tory visit).

11. Mallon said he would also welcome an in-depth conversation about the International Fund for Ireland. He is worried that some of their procedures, in particular relating to Urban Development grants are becoming over-bureaucratised. I said I would organise a meeting for him with the Fund Secretariat.

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Sean O hUiginn
14 February, 1994

cc PST
PSS
Mr F Murray
— Dr M Harris
Amb Small
Joint Sec.