

Meeting Notes
Strictly Private & Confidential

Seamus Mallon – Deputy First Minister

3 May 2000

SM started by saying that the OFM/DFM was not a Department in the sense that "Agriculture" or "Health" was, in the sense that the latter departments were in existence prior to Devolution. To this was added the fact that the Dept (OFM/DFM) attracted more functions than had been originally envisaged in the GFA as new areas of activity with no other natural "home" were lodged in OFM/DFM.

The Dept did not have the "infrastructure" to handle the demands on it. Quickly moved to make the point that he firmly believed that HOCS should not also be the Permanent Secretary of OFM/DFM.

"Tony McCusker not given the status, not given the title"

Asked to say where the Dept should sit in a central role between a co-ordination role to a more forceful leadership role, SM believed that this should be 8 out of 10 towards the strong role. – Used words like "driving, initiating and overview".

Commented on the papers rush – "too many" and they were the wrong type. Not enough initiation of the big issues e.g. the current crisis in agriculture, the decisions that have to be made in Education.

Believed that the Executive Committee Agenda should be driven by FM/DFM in a 60:40 ratio to rest of Executive.

Talked about a "sense of place" and the difficulties of the accommodation and with it the more serious issue of not being close to HOCS and the senior people in the Dept. Commented adversely on the lack of facilities on Day One for FM and himself.

Commented many times in the interview on the Head of Equality - has this person been appointed yet, why not? Essential to have someone with imagination – why have someone who doesn't want to be Director as Director?

Also commented very adversely on Head of Information. Believed that PR and Information has a very important role across the Executive – "must act as a catalyst for all departments" – "a fulcrum, which plans a fortnight's activities," must have "flair". Very dismissive of current situation.

Accepted that FM and DFM were the customers and that they should have acted to implement changes. Political events and events such as Drumcree, Omagh, Ballymoney etc had left no time for the Dept activities. Would review finding of the "Establishing the Dept" work and would attend Stakis to emphasise his input and commitment.

Adverse comments on the culture of NICS and the need to change.

Seemed to be resentful of Civil Servants in what they put in front of him – poor diary control and not doing enough of the things that he believed that he should be doing e.g. getting out and about etc.

Civil Servants thinks NI ends “ at Finaghy Cross Roads” – want to go to Coleraine, etc.

Not prepared to do evening work when he works all day.

Wondering why the exciting young people that he meets in say London – who want to come home cannot be found places in NICS. Need for new approach.

Generally a very positive interview in that he is committed to greater involvement in the process and will take ownership of findings provided that he can challenge and change as part of the process.

H E Roulston
3 May 2000