



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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 S/Sa 16/10/95
 M. Thorne,
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Confidential

Meeting with Seamus Mallon MP

1. I met with Seamus Mallon at his request on 6 March, primarily to discuss preparations for the PTA debate in the Commons and to look ahead to the seminar on policing at the Forum later this week. He also made a number of comments regarding his own future plans, and on the question of the party leadership.
2. The following were the main points to emerge:

Joint Framework Document

- he continues to view the Document as a major achievement, and as providing an appropriate point of departure for future political developments
- he nevertheless expects that progress will be slow, not least because of reluctance to engage on the part of the main Unionist parties. He thought a comprehensive agreement could be up to 5 years away
- in the interim political life will find an outlet through the Forum (which, while conscious of its limitations, he sees as serving a useful function), and in due course with preparations for the next British general election.
- he was doubtful that the UUP would be ready to engage in meaningful discussions this side of a Westminster election

Note

Policing

- we reviewed progress in the drafting of a party policy paper on policing which Mallon feels is advancing satisfactorily. The final product is likely to reflect fairly closely the position taken by the Government in

3

this area, with an emphasis on identifying criteria for the acceptability of any reformed policing service

- Mallon was less happy with progress on the review of emergency legislation, complaining at the failure of party colleagues and legal advisers to provide promised material
- he welcomes the planned discussion at the Forum, as an indication that the Forum is beginning to tackle "real" issues, but is equally concerned to ensure that this is a self-contained event. He does not want the Forum becoming involved in "negotiations" on policing, and wishes to avoid any specific commitment to further activity in this area
- his own contribution would identify deficiencies in the present arrangements, point to a set of principles which must govern any new policing service and leave open the extent to which a reformed RUC might form part of that service. He will also emphasise that a cross-community consensus on policing is in the final analysis contingent on a comprehensive political settlement

Tory/Labour Visitors

- he has recently had both Mo Mowlam and Andrew Hunter to his constituency to address local members, and contrasted their performances. While Hunter's line had been predictably unwelcome to SDLP on a number of points, he had impressed with his general demeanour and capacity to relate to ordinary party members
- Mowlam's visit was less successful. To begin with she had, without consultation, issued a press release of her remarks prior to her arrival, which included reference to an expanded role for the Police Authority which Mallon found both unhelpful and discourteous. Her comments

4

during the meeting had been contentious (eg greater job-creation powers for district councils), while her lack of rapport with those present had been striking

- Mallon added that he has twice asked, through Mowlam, for a meeting with Blair but has yet to be facilitated

Queen's Visit

- He intends to be present at the Armagh ceremonies, not least to make a point at the lack of participation by Unionist party representatives during visits by President Robinson.

Future Plans

- He recounted a recent heart-to-heart conversation with his party leader, which he believes had helped to clear the air between them. He had reassured Hume that he is not interested in becoming party leader, not least on age grounds. Hume had stated clearly that he intends to step down from his Westminster seat at the next general election, and Mallon believes that he will do so.
- Hume had asked him if he would be interested in standing for the Panel. Mallon had indicated that he wishes to maintain his Westminster seat - he acknowledges the irony that he both likes and is effective in the House of Commons. He suggested that no immediate decision be made about the Panel, bearing in mind that its establishment could be some way off.
- Mallon had also sought to persuade Hume that he could now ease up on his "hand holding" of Sinn Féin, and concentrate on advancing his own party's position. He thought the party leader was disinclined to heed the advice.


P. Hennessy
9 March 1995

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