



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Sec Gallagher

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Topic  
Mallon's concerns  
reinforce the  
vital need to  
break the logjam  
in the Shadow  
Executive

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Carrick Hi

Séamus Mallon and the Shadow Executive

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1. Séamus Mallon called me last evening about the above. He is very concerned about the implications of the impasse that is developing on the Shadow Executive/Decommissioning issue. As you know, his own strong view is that it would be fundamentally damaging to the process if the Shadow North/South Ministerial Council were to meet in advance of the creation of the Shadow Executive. He has been increasingly worried in recent days that David Trimble is proposing to press ahead with a first North/South meeting in which he and Séamus would constitute the "representatives of the Northern Ireland transitional administration" for that purpose referred to in the Agreement.
2. Part of Séamus' concern relates to his own position and the dilemma he now faces. While he feels that to proceed with the North/South Council without first forming the Shadow Executive would be a fundamental mistake, he is also deeply conscious of the potential difficulties for his relationship with David Trimble, and the cohesion of the First Minister/Deputy First Minister axis, if he publicly opposes him on this. To that extent, he feels himself as being between a rock and a hard place.
3. - At the same time, Séamus is in no doubt as to the option he must choose if ultimately forced to make a choice; he regards the early formation of the Shadow Executive to be of absolutely fundamental importance, and, if necessary, he will draw his "line in the sand" on that basis.

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4. He told me that he and David Trimble met with Secretary of State Mowlam on Tuesday. When David Trimble told her that he was proposing to proceed with an early meeting of the North/South Council (ie before the formation of the Shadow Executive), Séamus intervened to say to Dr Mowlam that he could not agree to that. To that extent, therefore, David Trimble (who did not respond to Séamus' comment) is now expressly aware of the position, if he were in any doubt before.

5. Séamus feels strongly that the time-scale available to resolve this issue is relatively short - a matter of a couple of weeks at the outside. He also feels strongly that he and the Government must work very tightly together in how we handle the matter, so that there is "no daylight" between our positions. I have reassured him that the Taoiseach, the Minister and yourself very much share his view and that intensive work is underway to try to resolve the situation (following your meeting with him last week, I have, as you requested, kept in close contact with on the various developments). He believes that the kind of package that we are reflecting on to resolve the matter is a credible one, but his big worry is about the amount of time we have available to achieve a breakthrough. He believes that both the UUP and Sinn Féin have to make space for each other on this, but is worried at the size of the hole each is digging for itself on the matter. He also believes that Prime Minister Blair must put pressure on David Trimble to stop "playing clever" on the issue and to work constructively towards a resolution that is acceptable to both sides.

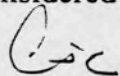
6. I had a brief further word with Séamus this morning on Frank Miller's piece in today's *Irish Times*, which goes public on the difference of view between the Government and Mr Trimble on the matter. While it serves to put the focus on the Government and Mr Trimble (and, therefore, relieves Séamus of the dilemma of having had to go public first), he feels that it possibly narrows the

time-span available to resolve the issue and certainly increases the pressure on him to comment publicly. He has not definitively decided on how to handle the latter dimension, but my impression is that he will have to comment publicly fairly quickly and will do so along the lines that it is fundamental to the agreement that the building of all institutions should (a) be taken forward together and (b) be done on an inclusive basis. Seeking to delay the establishment of the Shadow Executive while pressing on with the North/South Council in reduced form would be a breach of that fundamental approach. At the same, he will probably repeat his call for people to make space for each other and to recognise that the only credible resolution is the one which gives satisfaction to both sides.

7. He greatly appreciates your offer to brief him directly and is looking forward to speaking to you later today.

**Comment:** As you know, this issue has been bothering Séamus greatly for the last number of days. His political instincts tell him that we are approaching a very serious crisis on the matter and that it is essential that it be faced and resolved quickly. He is deeply conscious of the extreme awkwardness of his own position, but has resolved in his own mind as to what his own bottom line is. He has not expressed that bottom line explicitly, even privately, but my impression is - and I stress again that he has not directly said this to me - that he would see it as a resigning matter if a satisfactory solution could not be worked out.

He dearly hopes that it will not come to that, and fully supports the strategy we are seeking to develop. As you know, he is fully prepared to play any brokering role we considered helpful.



T O'Connor  
17 September 1998