

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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*W. J. Howard*

Views of Senator Séamus Mallon

The Secretary, Mr Burke and I met Senator Mallon on 19 November 1982 in Dublin. His mood was sombre. As regards his personal affairs, he had been summoned to appear in court on 16 December to answer the petition put in by Harold McCusker seeking to have his election to the Northern Ireland Assembly declared void. Legal advice was uniformly to the effect that he had no chance of winning this case, and indeed no barrister was prepared to take on his case. (A separate note on this issue is being prepared.) In addition, a DUP summons had been issued alleging that Mallon had committed a criminal offence by declaring that he believed himself to be a qualified candidate, when submitting his papers before the election. Mallon is refusing to make himself available voluntarily to the RUC for questioning on this matter. He may therefore be arrested at any time, but feels sure that at the present stage the RUC are being held in check by the authorities.

Senator Mallon's tactic will be to exploit court proceedings to the maximum from the political point of view and, if his seat is declared unfilled and his election void, to ask the other thirteen elected SDLP representatives to resign their seats also. These resignations would not take place simultaneously but successively and at intervals so as to necessitate a series of by-elections.

On the recent elections and their results, Mr Mallon was gloomy and expressed concern about the solid support shown for Sinn Féin candidates. He admitted that, particularly in West Belfast, there had been intimidation and impersonation but said that Mr Adams did not owe his election to these malpractices. The youth of the Sinn Féin activists and supporters and their enthusiasm, energy and financial means was a matter for despondency in the SDLP. Mallon regarded the defection of Michael Canavan and Paddy Duffy as permanent.

He felt that the party in its demoralised condition was unlikely to live up to expectations in the next Westminster election, when he considered that Sinn Féin was now likely to do better than the SDLP in West Belfast, Fermanagh-South Tyrone and in Armagh. Far from confirming the optimistic expectation of recent months when it was felt that the SDLP might win five out of the seventeen new constituencies, it now looked to Mallon as though the SDLP would be doing well to win Derry alone.

Mr Mallon made reference to the proposed Council for a New Ireland. He felt that some sort of Irish initiative would have to be attempted. Partly in response to questions from the Secretary, he indicated that, in his view, the Council should be an assemblage of nationalist parties, including Sinn Féin, which should be constituted by the initiative and at the invitation of the Irish Government. He saw no point in inviting the parties which were taking their seats in the new Stormont Assembly, since the purpose of the proposed Council should be to provide an alternative focus for nationalists. As regards the aim of the Council, this should be to explore all-Ireland arrangements under a wide variety of headings. Mallon noted that attention had focussed in Dublin on possible constitutional amendments and models, but in his view the work of the Council should bear equally on economic, educational, cultural and social matters. There was some discussion about the extent to which such ideas could profitably be developed.

In general Senator Mallon commented that the atmosphere between sections of the community in Armagh had seldom been as bad as at present. He had himself witnessed the murder of two RUC constables in Market Hill and in attending their funerals and that of Mr Cochrane, the UDR sergeant who had recently been kidnapped and murdered, he had been treated with extreme coldness and hostility even by Protestant neighbours whom he had known all his life.

*C. J. Mallon*  
23/11/62