

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



<b>Reference Code:</b>	2012/90/1011
<b>Creation Date(s):</b>	16 March 1982
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	3 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of the Taoiseach
<b>Access Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

S. 19003

Discussion with Seamus Mallon SDLP on 15 March 1982

Seamus Mallon asked to see me on 15 March when he was in Dublin. He was accompanied by Hugh Logue for part of our discussion. The main points which emerged from our conversation were as follows:

(a) the central council (not a decision taking body) of the SDLP had met on Saturday 13 March and had unanimously decided to oppose the Prior initiative. The Party Executive would according to Mr. Mallon take a similar decision in due course;

(b) the OUP decision not to participate in further discussions with Mr. Prior is a welcome development from an SDLP point of view as it allows them to avoid the problem of being the party which "wrecked" the initiative;

(c) both Mr. Mallon and Mr. Logue feel that the SDLP has been regaining the trust and confidence of the minority community and that they are in a position to return to their "high-point" of support reached in the early seventies. However a mistake at this stage could be very damaging to their electoral position. Surprisingly Mr. Logue agreed with Seamus Mallon that there were strong arguments for the SDLP deciding not to participate in elections to a new Assembly if Mr. Prior did not come up with more acceptable proposals (guaranteed power-sharing and a meaningful Irish dimension). If the SDLP participated in elections on the basis of present British proposals and "failed to deliver" it could do irreparable damage to their position vis a vis the minority. Mr. Mallon favoured a position of telling Mr. Prior that they could not participate in an election to an Assembly on the basis of what was at present on offer. If Mr Prior moved to meet their demands they could then reconsider the situation. If not, Mr. Mallon

saw no possibility of powers being devolved to local politicians. (British attempts to devolve powers would be "at an end"). Efforts to find a solution should then focus on the Anglo-Irish process and the establishment of a parliamentary tier with real powers and functions (Northern membership to be on the basis of political parties nominating representatives). Mr. Logue did not dissent from his colleague's views;

(d) Mr. Mallon felt that the Secretary of State could still decide because of his need for some political success, to go ahead with stage one of the proposed initiative. The only possibility of moving beyond stage one would be to return to his earlier proposal of a nominated executive which would be unboycottable. Mr. Mallon felt that the Secretary of State had not completely abandoned that possibility as a fall-back position;

(e) Mr. Mallon and Mr. Logue both hoped to have the support of the Irish Government in steering the Secretary of State away from his proposed initiative either into something more attractive or preferably (in Mr. Mallon's case) into abandoning the devolved government approach in favour of joint action by the two Governments;

(f) [REDACTED]

(g) we had a brief discussion on the SDLP's prospects for the next Westminster election. Mr. Mallon felt that if the SDLP maintained the strong electoral position which it now had, it would be possible to win a maximum of three seats (Derry, Armagh and West Belfast). He held out no hope of winning in South Derry, mid-Ulster and

Fermanagh-South Tyrone. He felt that the SDLP decision not to take part in the by-elections in Fermanagh-South Tyrone had now been proved correct. The SDLP had retained its credibility with the minority.



Martin Burke  
16 March 1982

C.C. PSM  
PSS  
Mr. Neligan  
Ms. Hennessy  
Ambassador London  
Ambassador Washington  
Mr. Kirwan D/Taoiseach  
Mr. Murray D/Taoiseach