

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2012/90/1093
Creation Date(s):	[November 1982]
Extent and medium:	1 page
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
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Position of Senator Seamus Mallon in relation to
Northern Ireland Assembly

GOVERNMENT STATEMENT

DRAFT

The Government have noted with profound regret that proceedings in relation to the qualification of Senator Seamus Mallon for membership of the Northern Ireland Assembly were pressed to a conclusion to-day. It is not for the Government to comment on the judicial interpretation or application of Northern Ireland electoral law but the Government regard the pursuit of the case to this conclusion as having the most disturbing political implications in the Northern Ireland context. ^A They recall that the Fine Gael/Labour Programme for Government indicates that one of the most urgent needs, in relation to Northern Ireland, is full recognition of the Irish identity of the nationalist section of the population there, on a par with existing recognition of the British/Irish identity of the unionist section of the population. In this spirit, it was a matter of regret that the British Government decided not to accede to the representations made by the Taoiseach, when in opposition and by others that the relevant British legislation should, if necessary, be amended. It is even more regrettable that the action which concluded to-day should have been pursued. The Government believe that progress towards peace and stability in Northern Ireland can be made only if all sides draw back from further divisive action. They look forward to exploring, in early contacts with leaders on all sides in Northern Ireland who are committed to democratic and constitutional politics, how best to pursue the Government's objectives of promoting peace and reconciliation, in place of violence and polarisation.