



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON.

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19 March 1986

Dear Assistant Secretary

A conversation with Seamus Mallon, M.P.

Mallon made contact following his press conference this morning regarding "his" paper on the UDR. He said he wanted to keep us briefed on what he was at, and we had a conversation over lunch. He gave the press conference with Kevin McNamara on the basis that the Defence Select Committee had refused to accept the report for consideration. Mallon was outraged by this and was fuelled further by the fact that the Labour members of the Select Committee walked out in protest that it was rejected. In releasing it after submitting it to the Committee, and despite the fact that it was not accepted, Mallon is in breach of House procedures and is technically subject to possible disciplinary proceedings. He doesn't give a damn, he said, about that.

I argued strongly the case that, now that there are two of them in Westminster, he should try to be seen to be involved in other Members' major concerns in such a way that they would come to his help on matters of major concern to him. We had a long discussion about all this and he was, it must be said, most receptive and open to the argument that in Westminster it is not the object, but the object seen, that matters.

If he is to become (or, more properly, to be allowed to become) a Member of a Select Committee, he said at first that it would have to be the Defence Committee. I expressed understanding of this but explained the reality underlying the vacant seat there whereby he could not have it (the Maginnis-Cartwright contest). I asked him earnestly to make his motives for going forward if he must do so very

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clear to John Cartwright, who is after all his representative on the Committee of Selection, and he said he would do so.

I then argued strongly that he should put himself forward for Nicholson's seat on the Agriculture Committee, and he agreed to do this. He said he would try to talk to John Cartwright about it, and I said I would do the same thing. (Afterward I contacted Cartwright, told him of this development and sought his understanding and support for Mallon's case for the Agriculture Committee; and the understanding and support of David Alton, the Liberal Chief Whip. Cartwright agreed to support Mallon on this, and the rest is now up to Mallon, who understands clearly that membership, if he gets it, means participation.)

We discussed tactics vis-a-vis Westminster generally. He agreed that a short, sharp intervention from him, from time to time, on major issues not of direct concern to him, could be in his interest, and he agreed to look at suggestions for interventions, if we wished to make them from time to time.

I raised the point that he and I are seen here as sales reps. from the same firm, that anything I do can affect him and vice versa. He agreed in principle, but we ran into heavy weather when it came down to details and the conversation began to take on an Anglo-Saxon quality before I dropped it: Mallon seems to willingly accept arguments at the level of principle, but to fall back into a sort of deliberate patois, defying reasonable exchange, when it comes to translating principle into practise. At this point he was critical of the way Hume - and any others - try to get him to temper what he sees as his overall responsibility in Westminster, "what I was sent here to do." In any event, if he stays dry on the Agriculture Select Committee point (and if the place can be delivered for him), well and good for the time being.

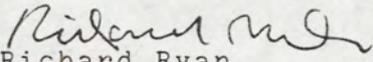
He said he believes the Agreement will fall apart within eighteen months and that, in the interim, ordinary people are getting very fed up waiting for results. He personally has no intention of submitting any more papers to the Conference as he has seen no result he said - not even an acknowledgement - to the twenty or so submissions he has

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made a ready: he said there is no point in our sending Donoghue or Canniffe north any more expecting him to be hands full of positive stuff. After a bit he cooled down and apologised (unnecessarily) as, he said, I am not a politician but someone on the same side over here.

It should perhaps be said that Mallon and I do not know each other very well at all, and he may have felt the need to demonstrate his independence and his bottom line approach. Nevertheless, he may also have taken away some thoughts which, if developed further, may help him to play the Westminster game to his fuller advantage.

Yours sincerely

  
Richard Ryan  
Counsellor.