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In the course of contacts with John Hume, the SDLP leader, and Paddy Duffy, Mid-Ulster constituency representative and Party spokesman on Agriculture, on 12-13 January I mentioned the question of the Irish National Caucus which had been referred to by the Minister on 10 January (though I did not of course reveal the content of the Minister's questions).

Mr. Hume confirmed the major policy differences existing between the SDLP and the Caucus, differences of analysis and of approach. The Caucus analysed the problem in terms of a colonial war or national struggle. In formulating policies to respond to a situation of which they had a simplified and seriously inaccurate view, they had to ignore the prime principle on which all SDLP action depended, namely the use of democratic politics to find a solution. The Caucus attached no primacy to representative politics in Ireland. They favoured the organisation of round table "peace" talks including gunmen of both factions who had not got (and who had never sought) a democratic mandate. They favoured, in their attitude to the H-Block protest, the granting of political status to prisoners whose activities, when at large, had been aimed at destroying politics. By propagating in America the idea that Northern Catholics still suffered the full rigors of pre-1969 police, social and economic repression they belittled the improvements in that respect which democratic politicians and protest within the law had wrung from the British. They also ignored the threat to human rights posed by the I.R.A.

Mr. Hume's views were endorsed by Mr. Duffy, who referred in particular to links existing between the Caucus and the Irish Independence Party, with whom he had been involved in direct competition at the Mid-Ulster polls in the British General Election. Paddy Duffy personifies the supposedly "green Republican" strand of the SDLP denounced by Gerry Fitt,

Paddy Devlin and others, so I found it particularly interesting to hear his forthrightly negative views of the National Caucus and of the I.I.P. whose policy he said, amounted to a simplistic demand for British withdrawal and an opening of the jail gates. Duffy said he had good reason to believe that Father MacManus and his friends had intervened directly to help the I.I.P. in the election campaign.

D. M. Neligan

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