



## An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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*by h.c. [signature] 25/1/91*  
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Conversation with Séamus Mallon  
19th January, 1991


Carraher Shooting

1. Mallon is in a despondent mood at present and is particularly aggrieved at what he feels is British determination to cover up the scandal of the Carraher shooting in Cullyhanna last month. He was also greatly upset at the fact that the graveside oration at Carraher's funeral, which was given by a local Sinn Féin Counsellor, concentrated in very large part on criticising the SDLP and personally attacking Mallon himself.
2. As a result of the circumstances surrounding and following the shooting, Mallon believes that the SDLP (and to a certain extent the Government here) have a credibility problem with the nationalist population generally in South Armagh - they are perceived as not being able to deliver any independent element into the investigation or even, as a minimum, the suspension from duty of the soldiers involved and a commitment to the early and public completion of the police investigation into the case.
3. As a result of the above, and of the continuing high level of harassment against a significant number of people in the Cullyhanna/Crossmaglen area, Mallon - who gave me a new file of complaints about this - feels he may have lost up to 4,000 of his votes at the last election and that his Parliamentary seat may now be in danger. (Note: Mallon is subject periodically to these moods of despondency and, while there is undoubtedly a genuine basis for his fears, I would suspect the figures he quotes as to possible vote loss are somewhat exaggerated).

Brooke Initiative

4. Mallon continues to be deeply sceptical about the Brooke initiative and its relevance to the achievement of real political progress. He believes that the British have been leaning over backwards to meet Unionist conditions and, as reported previously, he sees the latest text as being a dressed-up form of the 5th July statement - the same text but "in a new suit, with shining shoes and a bow tie"!
5. Mallon also believes that the structures for the talks, as envisaged in the British paper, would signal that the priority is for some sort of devolved administration in the North. He said that any possible such administration could in no way respond to the reality of the security and human rights problems he is faced with on a daily basis in South Armagh and, as such, would have no attraction for him or those of like minded views in the SDLP. He argued in fact that, if the SDLP were to go down the present route of the Brooke initiative, the party would end up within three or four years as a sort of Fitt/Devlin type group which would have lost its real nationalist core. He insisted - though again I suspect he was exaggerating - that he would not be prepared to go along with any such development and would make his position clear by resigning his seat and leaving the party.
6. Mallon finally said that he was somewhat worried about what he called the "form" of the latest British statement. He would prefer that any draft text did not take the form of a speech by the Secretary of State to the House of Commons. Such speeches tended to be "sacrosanct" in British terms and Unionists could play on the sensitivities of British parliamentarians by alleging that the Irish Government and the SDLP had blocked a second statement by the Secretary of

State to Parliament. (I am not sure, however, if there is very much to this argument and concern).

  
Dermot Gallagher,  
22 January, 1991.

cc: PST; PSM; Mr. Nally; PSS; Ambassador London;  
Mr. Mathews; Mr. Brosnan; Joint Secretary;  
Counsellors A-I; Box