



An Chartlann Náisiúnta **National Archives**

Reference Code:	2021/93/49
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Meeting with the SDLP.

4 July, 1991

Delegation

1. John Hume telephoned last night to say that, in addition to his five colleagues who were along the last day (Mallon, McGrady, Hendron, Denis Haughey and Sean Farren), he would particularly wish to invite Bríd Rodgers to the meeting. Mrs. Rodgers has apparently been particularly helpful as a back-up to Hume during the past ten weeks.
2. Hume also mentioned that the party would intend seeing the leaders of Fine Gael and the Labour Party later today.

Impressions of the Talks

3. It would be helpful to have an overview from John Hume and his colleagues of their overall impression of the talks, including of the approach and performance of the leading personalities and of the lessons to be drawn from the exercise.
4. An interesting overview of the general impressions of Seamus Mallon and a few of his colleagues, prepared by Tim O'Connor, was circulated in the weekly brief earlier this morning. Perhaps the over-riding lesson which they took from the exercise was that inter-party talks in the North could not of themselves ever be a vehicle for delivering a solution; essentially only an initiative between the two Governments could deliver this. However, the SDLP did see some benefits flowing from the exercise, including increased cohesion within the party itself and the beginning of an "educative process" within Unionism; a particular achievement was that the Agreement had held up "rock solidly" even in the most testing circumstances.

Possible future gap

5. The SDLP will no doubt wish to probe how we would approach any "talks about talks" phase designed to restart the process. Inevitably, there will be some initial discussion with the British at the Conference on the 16th on the terms and conditions under which a new gap might be constructed. The Taoiseach and Ministers might wish to reassure the SDLP that the Government's signals of flexibility in this regard will be coupled with a commitment to ensure that the Agreement is not impaired in any way. (The discussion on the 16th is likely, however, to be rather tentative - the British may well feel, for instance, that the immediate aftermath of the marching season is not the best time to open discussions with the Unionists).

Conference on the 16th

6. The Taoiseach and Ministers might wish to emphasise that there will be a full and substantive Conference meeting on the 16th (apart from being important in its own right, there is a need to send out a clear signal that there was a sensitive and substantive agenda to be taken up at the Conference).

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Dermot Gallagher,
4 July, 1991.

cc: PST: PSM; Mr. Nally; PSS; Mr. Brosnan.