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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

22 July 1998

Mr Dermot Gallagher
Second Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division
Department of Foreign Affairs

(Handwritten circles containing scribbles and '25A')

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Anglo-Irish, just be
✓ Ceann Com AI
YE 22/7.*

W. McLoughlin

*Panel on to the
Tadiseach
m. 7. 98*

Dear Secretary,

Conversation with Seamus Mallon

Ambassador Barrington invited Seamus Mallon to dinner at the Embassy on Monday night. David Cooney and I were also present. Mr. Cooney and I subsequently had a meeting at the House of Commons with Seamus, Kevin McNamara, and Eddie McGrady to discuss the committee stage of the Northern Ireland Bill. You may find it useful to have the following summary of Seamus's observations.

Sinn Féin and the Shadow Executive

David Trimble has probably not made up his mind on how to handle the question of Sinn Féin's participation in the Shadow Executive. On the one hand, during the second reading of the Northern Ireland Bill he indicated (as Helen Blake has reported separately) that as of now he does not accept Sinn Féin's commitment to peaceful means. On the other hand the appointment of Ministers and junior ministers, and in general the bedding down of the new institutions, is strongly in Trimble's political interests. On other issues, including Drumcree, Trimble has shown signs of vacillation and needs steadying by Mallon. Trimble is not helped by the fact that some of his close advisers are less sympathetic to the Agreement than Trimble himself. The only member of the parliamentary party on whom he can rely is Ken Maginnis who is in hospital with a back problem.

Sinn Féin are likely to appoint Bairbre de Brún and Mitchell McLoughlin to the Executive. (Comment: Yesterday's Financial Times predicts that Adams and McGuinness will refrain from seeking positions on the Executive in order to make it easier for the UUP to sit down with Sinn Féin.)

Organisation of the new administration

Because of Drumcree, work on the future organisation of Northern Ireland departments is at an early stage and the SDLP do not appear to have thought through their position on Departments and portfolios. It has not been decided whether to establish an independent Department of Equality and Mallon himself seemed unsure whether a separate Department or the inclusion of Equality with another Department was the right course to take. He has proposed a single secretariat, with two chief advisers, to service the First and Deputy First Ministers. Trimble is opposing this but it was not clear how far he would push his opposition.

DUP

The DUP is likely to try to take up positions in the Executive on the assumption that

- * they will not have to attend Executive meetings in person
- * they can be replaced by other ministers in the North-South Ministerial Council.

*OR they could
seriously embargo
Trimble by using
on the Sinn
Fein position
issue
Dr*

Parades

The Orange Order's will had been broken at Drumcree. The legislation on parades was appropriate, and it is right that there should be an "independent sanction" in the form of the Parades Commission. The British side, including Downing Street, may not fully appreciate the significance of this.

It is difficult at the moment to see a resolution of the differences between the residents in the Garvaghy Road and the Orange Order. The proximity talks are valuable in any case as a means of lowering tension. It should be borne in mind that the stand-off creates immense difficulties at a practical level for the residents themselves and may have devastating consequences for Catholics in Portadown who live outside the Garvaghy Road estates. It is also relevant that if no accommodation is reached, outside opinion next year may lean to the Orange Order's position, on the grounds that it is "their turn".

It is disturbing that in some areas, including Keady and Newry - although not the Garvaghy Road - the so-called residents protests are unrepresentative of the local community.

It is essential for the sake of Northern Ireland to find an overall accommodation on the parades issue. Church leaders such as William Bingham (whom Mallon has known for a long time) and John Dixon can play a crucial role. Catholic bishops have done much more than, e.g., the Irish News gives them credit for.

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Northern Ireland Bill

Seamus's principal concerns about the Bill were set out in his speech to the Commons. He explained to us that his emphasis on the Civic Forum ties in with the Taoiseach's recent statement about the need to address sectarianism directly as we have addressed the problem of violence. The Civic Forum could offer scope to some of the more positive leaders of opinion. Unionist opinion is ferment following recent events. It is likely that the British government's final position on the Bill will only become clear when it comes to the Lords in October.

Labour Party Conference

Seamus is likely to speak at a fringe meeting at the Labour Party Conference organised by the CBI and the TUC. Trimble may speak on the same platform. Seamus has resisted efforts to persuade him to speak at the conference under the auspices of New Dialogue.

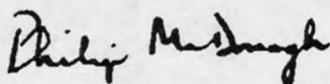
Scotland

We discussed the possible impact of developments in Scotland on the political future of Northern Ireland, including the difficulty that may arise for the SNP's implied Irish policy if Sinn Féin rather than the SDLP comes to be seen as the most representative voice of northern Nationalists.

Britain and Northern Ireland

We noted signs of a shift in British attitudes to Northern Ireland in recent weeks, as reflected, for example, in media coverage (as reported by Michael Gaffey) and remarks to the Ambassador by senior business and political figures who might normally be expected to be sympathetic to the Unionist position. We suggested that the appearance in a number of reports of the round figure of £8 billion pounds for the British "subsidy" may indicate an official, or semi-official, source.

Yours sincerely,



Philip McDonagh
Counsellor