



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Seamus Mallon rounds on Tony Blair



Seamus Mallon

According to former deputy leader of the SDLP, Seamus Mallon, Tony Blair's "duplicitous approach" to negotiations in Northern Ireland has led directly to the collapse of moderate politics here.

Mallon said that Blair "acted in bad faith", making under-the-table deals with Sinn Fein while ignoring other parties. Mallon is no slouch himself at duplicity, so this condemnation carries some weight given that it is come from an acknowledged 'expert' in the subject!

The 68-year-old MP for Newry and Armagh, who is to step down at the general election after 20 years, was one of the key thinkers behind the 1998 "Peace" agreement that was meant to sustain power-sharing government. Mallon questioned how other parties could ever have re-entered negotiations when they did not know "what was going on in the next room". He said that the British and Irish governments were interested only in catering for the peace process, keeping the IRA on ceasefire, rather than the political process of a lasting devolved government.

Mr Mallon accused the governments of acquiescing to republican demands to keep the IRA on ceasefire. "They catered for the latest begging bowl," he said. "If you look at all the side deals, the lesson Sinn Fein got from Blair and Bertie Ahern was the more often you ask, the more often you get." Sinn Fein, he claimed, virtually took up residence in Downing Street, giving the electorate the message that "these are the people we should support because they are the people doing the deals". For once, unionists will give a welcome to something that Seamus Mallon says!!