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MEMORANDUM ON POWER-SHARING AGREED BY UNDER MENTIONED PERSONS

1. The fundamental motivating force behind the Civil Rights Campaign, which by an escalating pattern of action and reaction, has led to the present situation, was not the demand for civil rights, which only represented symptoms of the disease, but the deeply-held feeling that in Northern Ireland there was a governing community and a governed community.
2. Any new institutions which make it possible for one community to do the governing, will not work. It is irrelevant how many checks, balances, blocking mechanisms or Bills of Right are written into the Constitution, nothing short of an actual share in power can engender the necessary confidence in the institutions to enable them to work.
3. The primary purpose behind the suspension of Stormont and imposition of Direct Rule was to bring about a restructuring of the power system in Northern Ireland. This can only be done through a system of executive power sharing. To now balk at carrying through this exercise would render futile the whole exercise and would put the clock back and place Her Majesty's Government in the impossible position of March 1972 without any further options open. The mission undertaken in March 1972 would have failed and be seen to have failed. We believe that this theme was inherent in and central to the Green Paper.
4. We believe that power-sharing must be something which is actually written into the Constitution of the Assembly at this stage, and cannot be left to the accidents of the ballot. We believe that the system proposed by the Unionist Party, while it offers a shadow of power to minority parties, keeps the substance of power with the majority party, and therefore cannot work.
5. It has been argued that the White Paper should spell out the commitment to power-sharing but without outlining the system. We believe that this would be catastrophic. It would postpone the day when the people of Northern Ireland had to face up to the realities. It would enable each party to fight an election on its own plans for government, and those returned would only have a mandate to stick to their plans and not to compromise.
6. Northern Ireland politicians are intractable enough at any time, but particularly so when they have just received the backing of their people for their plan.

7. We believe that the election fought under such circumstances, would give rise to two rival assemblies, each claiming the right to negotiate with the Secretary of State. We would be back to the situation before Direct Rule, only we would be in a much worse position, because Direct Rule would have been tried and would have failed. We think, therefore, it is of critical importance that all the doubts and uncertainties about the future structure of government, doubts which lead to greater support for the men of violence, must be removed by the White Paper.
8. What specific measures should Her Majesty's Government now take to give effect to the implementation of this theme consistent with the Green Paper? Of the possible systems of achieving Executive Power-sharing, mentioned in the Green Paper, the one known as Proportional Representation Government seems to us to offer the most advantages and fewest disadvantages.
9. It can either be used in association with a Committee system, as proposed by the Alliance Party and the Liberal Party, or without a Committee system as proposed by S.D.L.P.
10. Where it is used with a Committee system, the Chairmen would exercise all the Executive functions of Ministers such as making appointments and responsibility for Departments. The parties with less than a pre-determined percentage of seats would not be entitled to a chairmanship but those parties which wished to participate would be allocated chairmanships and vice-chairmanships proportionate to their strength in the assembly on a pre-determined basis. The allocation of portfolios would be done through inter-party discussions and in the absence of agreement the Secretary of State could be the final arbiter.
11. The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen would constitute a type of Executive. This undoubtedly poses certain problems. If we analyse the type of decisions to be taken by the Executive, we see that they boil down to the problems of allocation of resources and interdepartmental co-operation. But many of the problems of allocation of resources between different functions, which arise in a sovereign government, do not arise in Northern Ireland, where much of the resources are allocated in principle by the Treasury for specific purposes. In the short-term the Secretary of State could act as arbiter in problems of this kind.
12. The system outlined is only one of a number which might be used. No doubt your advisers can produce a number of other systems which would be acceptable provided that they contain the important element of executive power-sharing.

-3-

13. It is important to emphasise that if the divisive issues in Northern Ireland politics, such as security and the franchise are removed, there is much greater cohesion and common ground between politicians than many people imagine. In an Assembly shorn of the divisive powers and of the power to determine whether or not Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom, there would not be clear-cut division on Unionist v. Nationalist or Protestant v. Catholic lines, over agriculture, industrial development, education, etc. The divisions would on the contrary, be farming v. urban, West v. East, or interventionist v. non-interventionist.
14. If one is looking for difficulties, it is possible to make out a powerful case for saying that sharing of power cannot work. It is also possible to make out a powerful case for saying that Northern Ireland is ungovernable. We believe that it is just about governable, and it therefore follows that any system which will work would have many snags and difficulties, but that in the last analysis, it has to be tried.

Memorandum agreed by: Rt. Hon. Robin Bailie
Rt. Hon. Phelim O'Neill, M.P.
Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Porter, M.P.
Tom Caldwell, M.P.
Stratton Mills, M.P.
Bob Cooper) Alliance Party
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