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STATEMENT BY THE TAOISEACH MR. LIAM COSGRAVE, T.D.
ON TALKS IN BELFAST ON THE FORMATION OF NORTHERN IRELAND
EXECUTIVE

The Dáil will be aware that elected representatives in Northern Ireland who have been involved in inter-party talks with the Secretary of State, Mr. Whitelaw, over the past six weeks with a view to the formation of a power sharing administration have reached agreement. The agreement, reached last night, offers a basis for hope to all of us in these islands who seek a lasting political settlement. It is historic because it helps to open the way for the establishment in Northern Ireland, for the first time in its history, of an administration representative of, and supported by, each of the communities there; and it is an important and necessary first step in the working out of political institutions providing the basis for a settlement that can bring cooperation and peace in this island.

I sincerely congratulate the representatives of the three parties - Alliance, SDLP and Unionists. I should like to extend our congratulations to the Secretary of State, Mr. Whitelaw, whose patience and energy have contributed so much to the success of those talks.

The occasion is a historic one and presages, I hope, a period in which progress flowing from cooperation and respect for human dignity will show the sterility of violence.

/The talks

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The talks which I had with the British Prime Minister, Mr. Heath, in Baldonnell last September contributed in some measure to the understandings which have now been reached.

The proposed Administration and Executive will not be constituted immediately. But the agreement as to how they could be established has opened the way for further steps towards a settlement. The next stage, in which the Government here will be directly involved - will be the conference to negotiate the detailed arrangements for the Council of Ireland. The Government is now ready to play its full part in these negotiations which, I expect, will shortly get under way.

The Government has kept itself fully informed of these important recent developments and has been in continuous consultation with the British Government. With your permission, A Cheann Comhairle, I would like to outline to the Dáil the points on which an understanding has now been reached between Mr. Whitelaw and the party leaders who have engaged in consultations with him. I understand the information on these points will also be conveyed to the House of Commons in London shortly.

Firstly, it has been agreed that there will be a 15 member Administration in Northern Ireland composed of seven members of the Unionist Party, six members of the SDLP and two members of the Alliance Party together with a Deputy Chief Whip outside the Administration who will be a member of the Alliance Party. Eleven members of the Administration - six Unionists, four SDLP and one Alliance - will be appointed members of a Northern Ireland Executive. The Chief Executive will be Mr. Brian Faulkner, leader of the

/Unionist

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Unionist Party. The Deputy Chief Executive will be Mr. Gerry Fitt, M.P., leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party.

I understand that the Departments will be allocated on the following basis:

Chief Executive	Unionist	<i>Pauline</i>
Deputy Chief Executive	SDLP	<i>Fitt</i>
Legal Member and Law Reform	Alliance	<i>Napier</i>
Chief Whip (outside of the Executive)	Unionist	<i>Hall Thompson</i>
Finance	Unionist	<i>Keith</i>
Commerce	SDLP	<i>John Hume</i>
Health and Social Security	SDLP	<i>Paddy Devlin</i>
Office of Manpower Services (outside of the Executive)	Alliance	<i>Bob Corbett</i>
Housing, Local Government and Planning	SDLP	<i>Austin Lunn</i>
Environment	Unionist	<i>Bradford</i>
Education	Unionist	<i>McGowan</i>
Agriculture	Unionist	<i>Morell</i>
Office of Community Relations (outside of the Executive)	SDLP	<i>Ivan Cooper</i>
Information Services	Unionist	<i>Baxter</i>
Office of Executive (Planning and Coordination) (outside of the Executive)	SDLP	<i>E.M. Grady</i>
Deputy Chief Whip (outside Executive and outside Administration)	Alliance	<i>Barry Glass</i>

/secondly

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Secondly, it has been agreed that a Conference will shortly be held between representatives of the British Government, the Government here and the members of the Northern Ireland Executive-designate to discuss the formation of a Council of Ireland. The leaders of the other parties in Northern Ireland who are not prepared to participate in the Executive will have an opportunity to make their views known to the Secretary of State, Mr. Whitelaw, before the Conference. If as we hope agreement on the detailed arrangements for a Council of Ireland is reached at the Conference, the British Government will then take the necessary steps to devolve powers to the Constitutional Executive in Northern Ireland and to the Assembly. Once this has been done a formal conference will take place between the British Government, the new Executive, and the Government here in order to ratify the matters agreed on at the earlier conference in relation to the Council of Ireland, thus clearing the way for the establishment of the Council.

Thirdly as part of their wish to bring about a lasting peace, the British Government, in the agreement reached in Belfast last night now reaffirms that it will bring detention to an end as soon as the security situation permits and as an earnest of this, it is hoped, if the security situation permits, to take the steps necessary for a number of detainees to be released before Christmas.

As the Dáil will be aware the Government here has over the past few months discussed and worked out the proposals which /it will

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it will put forward in regard to the formation of a Council of Ireland and has made its views on some of these matters known to the British Government. The British Government now reaffirms that it favours, and will facilitate the formation of, a Council of Ireland.

Under these proposals, with which my Government concurs,

- (1) A Council of Ireland would be confined to Northern Ireland and the Republic, subject to certain reservations by the British Government as regards devolved subjects, and arrangements to safeguard ^{their} these interests in the area of finance and other reserved subjects;
- (2) As to structure, the Council would consist not only of representatives of the Government of the Republic and of the Northern Ireland Executive but also, on a separate advisory and consultative level, of representatives from the parties in the Dáil and the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Council would have its own secretariat;
- (3) The Council would have some executive functions as well as a consultative role;
- (4) The Council at government level would operate on the basis of unanimity;
- (5) The Council should be able to play a useful role in relation to certain subjects reserved for the time being

/to the

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to the British Government. The nature of these subjects and the role to be played by a Council need to be agreed between the governments concerned and the Northern Ireland Executive. Among these subjects mentioned for discussion are the concept of a common law enforcement area, the question of extradition processes, human rights and what role a Council might play in the law and order field.

Without going into detail which would be inappropriate for me at this stage, I would like to emphasise as well the real social and economic advantage for all the inhabitants of this island which could flow from a properly constituted and functioning Council.

I said in London last summer that those who have been elected in this island should speak to one another and - chastened by the experience of recent years - find a way of living and working together, with respect for each others' views and aspirations. A Council could help to achieve this essentially simple purpose. It is in this spirit, I hope, that the concept will be discussed at the forthcoming talks.

All of us who live on this island today - whatever our political or religious outlook or loyalties - live with a heavy and difficult legacy from our common past. We in our time can add a further burden to that legacy for our children by intolerance and intransigence. Or we can begin to work towards an ending

/of conflict

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of conflict and a beginning of working and living together.

The agreement worked out last night in Belfast is a necessary first step in this process.

The majority in this island - in both parts of this island - have already endorsed this process by their votes; and they will, I believe, continue to support those who set themselves to work with one another in this sense. They have already by their votes, decisively rejected those who choose instead to impose their own views on others whatever the cost in killing and death.

What we are now about in this island is the working out of a settlement which will provide hope for us and for our children. I believe that this means agreeing to differ about our long-term aspirations and concentrating instead on working now as best we can towards peace based on justice.

What we are working for is a political settlement which will have two pillars - an Administration and Executive which will have widespread support throughout the communities in Northern Ireland; and a Council of Ireland through which North and South can learn to live and work together in growing harmony, to common benefit.

The Dáil and the country may rest assured that this Government will do everything in its power to make this settlement work.

/In this

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In this we ask for the support of all those of goodwill in this island. With the support of the people under God's providence we must succeed.

22 November, 1973