

## WORKING OF THE EXECUTIVE

1. So as to give it the most practical shape, this memorandum has been prepared in the form of a Note of Procedures for members of an incoming Executive. As such, it would be suitable as a basis for a speaking brief for the chief executive member at the first meeting and/or formal instructions to be issued as a circular from the Central Secretariat.

### A. OBJECTIVES OF POLICY

2. The overriding objectives of policy must be:

- i. to work for the earliest possible end to violence;
- ii. to accomplish the reconstruction, physical, economic and social, of what has been damaged or destroyed;
- iii. to create the base for economic and social advance, and in particular to expand employment opportunities; and
- iv. to build up general public confidence in the impartiality and efficiency of the new institutions of government.

### B. GENERAL METHODS OF WORKING

3. The general methods of working within the Executive must be such as will take account:

- i. of the broadly-based nature of the Executive itself;
- ii. of the desirability of achieving, with the Secretary of State, a consistent and co-ordinated approach to the problems of Northern Ireland, whether these fall into the "excepted", "reserved" or "transferred" category; and
- iii. of the statutory role given to consultative committees of the Assembly in assisting members of the Executive in the formulation of policy.

### C. CONFIDENTIALITY

4. Executive business is protected by the provisions of the Official Secrets Act, and incoming members of the Executive will be asked to sign a declaration acknowledging that the requirements of that Act have been drawn to their attention.

D. PRIVATE INTERESTS

5. The rules formerly governing the conduct of Ministers of Northern Ireland will apply. Members of the Executive will be asked to give information to the Central Secretariat on any directorships they may hold, and advised as to whether there is any danger of a conflict of interests. Where it is considered proper for directorships to be retained, this will be publicly disclosed. At Executive meetings, members will be required to declare any form of private interest.

E. COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

6. If the new system is to gain the confidence of the community, it must be seen to operate consistently and coherently. Good government cannot be achieved by the pursuit of separate and unco-ordinated departmental policies. Within the context of a broadly-based Executive, Heads of Departments must be punctilious about raising with their colleagues any matter which may be particularly difficult or controversial. If there is the slightest doubt about taking a decision as a purely departmental act, the chief executive member or Secretary to the Executive should be consulted. This applies in particular to powers of appointment.

7. In the taking of decisions within the Executive any form of vote is to be avoided if at all possible. The objective must be to reach decisions by which, taking one with another, the Executive as a whole can stand collectively.

8. Special considerations apply to issues which do not fall to be determined by the Executive - in particular the question of the constitutional status of Northern Ireland and "law and order" matters while these remain the responsibility of the Secretary of State. It is appreciated that members may have to reply to questioning on these issues in terms which are consistent with their known views and those of their party and its supporters; but replies should not be incompatible with the form of Oath of Office taken by the Executive, or in terms which will provoke friction within the administration.

F. DETAILED PROCEDURES FOR BUSINESS

9. It is of particular importance, in terms of the new structure, that members of

the Executive should have an opportunity to consider carefully the full implications of issues coming before them. Accordingly, matters will normally be placed on the Executive agenda only where there is adequate notice and a memorandum is circulated in ample time. This rule will only be relaxed in quite exceptional circumstances and on the personal direction of the chief executive member.

10. Memoranda must only be submitted after all other interested departments have been consulted and their views reconciled as far as possible. In all cases the following information should be incorporated where appropriate:

- i. Details of financial and manpower implications.
- ii. Details of any time restraints, particularly in cases requiring legislation.
- iii. Justification for any proposal to by-pass the consultative committee procedures.
- iv. Identification of any matters touching upon the "excepted" or "reserved" categories.

11. Where changes in policy are proposed, the normal sequence of events will be as follows:

- i. The Head of the Department primarily concerned will prepare a draft Consultative Policy Memorandum (CPM), which will review the problem and set out the arguments for and against the various policy options. This will be considered by the Executive, with the object not of reaching any firm decision on policy at this stage, but of approving the CPM for submission to the appropriate consultative committee of the Assembly.
- ii. After the CPM has been considered by the consultative committee, the Head of Department will submit a further memorandum to his colleagues, summarising the arguments within the committee, and making a recommendation to his colleagues on the course of policy to be adopted, including, if appropriate, the drafting of a proposed Measure.
- iii. If a proposed Measure is required, the Executive will consider it in draft, with a view to approving its submission to the consultative committee.

iv. As a final stage the Head of Department will report to the Executive on the arguments relating to the proposed Measure in the Committee, and propose any amendments he considers desirable in the light of that discussion.

12. If there are "excepted" or "reserved" implications, the office of the Secretary of State will normally have been consulted informally before stages (i) and (iii), and formally after stage (iv) and before introduction of the proposed Measure.

K P BLOOMFIELD  
7 June 1973