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WED 25/10 (1) Sir Ewart
(2) POL

PAB/5935/RE

cc: PS/S of S (L&B)
PS/Ministers (L&B)
PS/FUS (L&B)
Sir E Bell
Mr Merifield
Mr Angel
Mr Gilliland
Miss Davies
Mr Abbott
Mr Boys Smith
Miss MacGlashan

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

ASSEMBLY ELECTION RESULTS

1. The final result of last Wednesday's Assembly elections is as follows:-

	<u>% First Preference Votes</u>	<u>Seats</u>
UUP	29.7	26
DUP	23.0	21
SDLP	18.8	14
Alliance	9.3	10
Sinn Fein	10.1	5
Workers Party	2.7	0
UUUP	1.7	0
Others	4.7	2
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>78</u>

Save for the elections to the European Parliament in 1979, the turnout (60.3%) was the lowest for a number of years - 6% down on the last general election and 4% lower than in the council elections of 1981. Over 70% of the electorate voted in the 1973 Assembly elections. There were just over twenty thousand spoiled papers, or 3.2% of the votes cast.

Unionist Parties

2. The two main unionist parties between them won just over 52% of the votes, almost exactly the same proportion of the total as in the May 1981 elections. However, the 52% split decisively in favour of the Official Unionists, who finished with a 6% lead over their DUP rivals and 5 more seats - an outcome which must be a considerable disappointment to Mr Paisley. Of the 20 Belfast seats, the DUP managed to win only 4 compared to the UUP's 7. In East Belfast, they secured only two of the six seats despite polling over 40% of the

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first preference votes; while in North Belfast the seat won by Mr McQuade at the 1979 Westminster elections, the DUP took fewer first preferences than the UUP and had to be content with one seat. Even in Mr Paisley's own constituency, North Antrim, the DUP share of the vote was much lower than expected and they had to wait until the eleventh count to be sure of their fourth seat. The UUP polled well throughout the Province and even took a seat in West Belfast where DUP councillor Billy Dickson was expected to do well following the recent attempt on his life by INLA. Their one disappointment was probably South Down where they had to split the four unionist seats with the DUP. As usual, the UUP gained far more transfers than the DUP and were the only party to take at least one seat in all of the twelve constituencies.

3. Two independent unionists were elected. In North Down, Jim Kilfedder confirmed his personal popularity by finishing top of the poll with a quarter of the first preferences and in North Belfast, former Lord Mayor Frank Millar (Snr) scraped in with the help of transfers from other unionist candidates. On most matters their views lie closer to those of the UUP than the DUP.

4. The other small unionist parties were eliminated. Despite fielding 13 candidates, Mr Baird's UUUP took less than 2% of the first preferences. In Mid-Ulster, Westminster MP John Dunlop finished twelfth of the 14 candidates and was eliminated on the fourth count. His chances of retaining the seat for the UUUP at the next general election are remote. The PUP and ULDP (political counterparts of the UVF and UDA respectively) did equally badly.

Nationalist Parties

5. The unexpected feature of the elections was of course the performance of Sinn Fein in winning 5 of the 78 Assembly seats and polling some 10% of the first preference votes. Their voters were committed, disciplined and in some areas at least used the PR system cleverly. In two constituencies (West Belfast and Fermanagh/South Tyrone) they topped the poll and took more than a quarter of first preferences: in Londonderry, Martin McGuinness was elected on the first count while in North Belfast, Joe Austin failed by less than 200 votes to win a sixth seat for his party. Allegations of massive personation (which certainly seems to have taken place) cannot adequately explain

the size of the Sinn Fein vote. The SDLP view, probably correct, is that Sinn Fein brought out a new element of hard-line nationalists who have previously boycotted elections, took over the support of such groups as PD; won some IIP votes and, especially in Belfast and Londonderry, maximised their support among young voters frustrated by economic and social conditions and angered by the constant harassment, as they see it of the security forces. The existence of so considerable a Republican protest vote is disturbing.

6. Despite this, Mr Hume is satisfied with the 14 seats won by the SDLP. Before the elections, he must have been concerned that the decision to boycott the Assembly would be unpopular with many of his party's traditional supporters. In the event, there was little evidence of SDLP abstentions and, at 18.8%, the party's share of first preferences was marginally higher than in either the 1981 council elections or the 1979 general election. Mr Hume himself comfortably topped the poll in Londonderry and the only real disappointments from his point of view must have been the SDLP's poor showing in West Belfast and the loss to Sinn Fein of one of the three nationalist seats in Armagh. Seamus Mallon's election is of course being challenged and the UUP look likely to pick up another seat in the subsequent by election. The level of UUP support will do little to persuade the 'green' wing to abandon their boycott plans, and the SF success will cause the moderates to look over their shoulders.

Alliance

7. The Alliance Party's share of the vote is as high as they could reasonably have expected and, by picking up transfers from nearly every party, they secured more seats than anyone (including themselves) predicted. Their best performances were in North and West Belfast, where both Glendinning and Maguire were elected without reaching the quota, and South Antrim, where they secured two of the eight seats with less than 12% of the first preference vote. In South Belfast, the highly personalised campaign mounted by David Cook, who monopolised the Alliance vote, probably cost them an eleventh seat.

Workers Party

8. Once again, the Workers' Party emerged from an election without significantly increasing its share of the vote. Only Seamus Lynch

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(North Belfast) and Mary McMahon (West Belfast) managed more than 5% of first preferences (some of them no doubt due to personation). None of their 12 candidates came close to winning a seat and even Tom French, one of the party's three remaining councillors, finished well down the poll in Armagh where he was thought to have an outside chance.

Summary

9. Save for the intervention of Sinn Fein, the outcome of the elections is much as expected and the distribution of seats inside the Assembly shows a number of striking similarities to the party strengths in the Constitutional Convention of 1975. Then, as now, the various unionist parties opposed to power-sharing won 49 seats with about 55% of first preferences. The Alliance Party has picked up two more seats than in 1975, with a slightly lower share of the vote. The SDLP have won 5% fewer first preferences than in 1975 and taken 3 fewer seats. But this is not a new trend for them.

S Hewitt

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25 October 1982

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