

# 11.

## A SHORT DIARY OF EVENTS

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Since the aim of this book is as much to present a point of view as to tell a story, precise dates are few and far between, although exact references are available. Where I suspect that the person mentioned might later indignantly deny what I have stated or suggested, names of newspapers and dates are added. The Irish are notoriously critical and difficult to please, especially in political matters, thus I do not expect my views to be shared by all, or even by some of my own side.

It would be impossible to give a full history of all the relevant events between 24 May 1963 when the Homeless Citizens League was formed in Dungannon, and 26 March 1973, when we wound up our own Campaign for Social Justice in Northern Ireland. We ceased our endeavours after William Whitelaw's White Paper, which forecast the 1973 Constitution Act, thereupon passing future endeavours to the politicians.

To tackle this chapter, and having to leave out so much, is intensely frustrating. Indeed it is unfair to a great many people whose personal suffering, struggles and heroism must go unrecorded. For completeness, and because of their importance, I have included the Sunningdale Conference and the Workers' Strike in this chapter. They were both later events.

During most of the time covered here, horrible sectarian killings took place, mostly of Catholics. There is no way it would be possible to document them all here, since they occurred from the beginning to the end of our story.

For more details of the events I list here it will be necessary to consult the books given in the bibliography. In some cases I

have added details where they are needed to fill in the picture, and to make my case.

1963 Captain Terence O'Neill (later Lord O'Neill of the Maine) had been Prime Minister of the Stormont Government since March 1963. At that time the Tories were in power in Britain, the Prime Minister being Sir Alec Douglas-Home.

1964 15 February 1964, Mr Harold Wilson said that Labour, when in power, would bring in the Racial Discrimination and Incitement Bill and make whatever minor amendments might be necessary to it.

16 October, Mr Wilson became Prime Minister. The Ulster Protestant Volunteers were formed in that year by Mr Noel Doherty, a colleague of Rev. Ian Paisley, as a working-class paramilitary organisation.

1965 14 January, Capt. O'Neill met Sean Lemass, the Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland, at Stormont. This was very badly received by many Protestants.

3 May, Sir Frank Soskice, the British Home Secretary in the Labour administration, excluded Northern Ireland from the Race Relations Act.

1966 The UVF was re-formed in May 1966 and proscribed in July of the same year.

1967 27 January, the Bishop of Ripon, Dr John Moorman, was forbidden to speak in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast because the Orange Order objected to him as a noted ecumenist, and because of the risk of civil disorder if he was granted permission to give an address.

29 January, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was formed.

On 27 April Capt. O'Neill explained that he found it necessary to dismiss Mr Harry West because, in spite of his advice, Mr West had purchased a farm at a time when he was in possession of privileged information that part of the farm was to be used to develop St Angelo Airport. This development was to be assisted by Government funds.

1968 21 June, Austin Currie squatted in a house in Caledon which had been allocated to a nineteen-year-old unmarried Protestant girl, the secretary of a

1968 solicitor who was an Armagh Unionist councillor. Austin was protesting against this and the eviction of a Catholic family from a similar house a few days before.

24 August, the first civil rights march was held from Coalisland to Dungannon.

5 October, the civil rights march in Derry.

9 October, the People's Democracy (the PD) was formed.

11 December, Capt. O'Neill sacked Mr William Craig. The latter had committed many indiscretions; the banning of the civil rights march in Derry on 5 October and subsequent bans on further Derry marches were inexcusable. When he advocated a Unilateral Declaration of Independence for Ulster Capt. O'Neill was forced to act. After leaving office Craig frequently advocated UDI for Northern Ireland.

1969 4 January, the Belfast to Derry People's Democracy march reached Burntollet. That evening the barricades went up in the Bogside, followed by rioting and the use of water cannons.

In January the Cameron Enquiry was set up by Capt. O'Neill, 'to investigate the causes of violence since 5 October 1968 and the conduct and aims of those bodies involved in the current agitation'. A week after the setting up of the Enquiry Mr Brian Faulkner resigned from the Stormont Government. (The results of the Enquiry were published in September 1969. It criticised William Craig, Rev. Ian Paisley and his associates, and the RUC for its handling of the situation. It supported the minority's accusations of housing discrimination and discrimination in appointments to public bodies. It condemned the manipulation of local government electoral boundaries. Lord Cameron further stated that he understood nationalist objections to the B-Specials.)

11 February, Capt. O'Neill's bid 'to woo moderate support' collapsed when the executive of the Unionist Party, meeting in Glengall Street, Belfast, rejected a Catholic, Mr Louis Boyle, as a candidate for the South Down seat at Stormont. Mr Boyle was one of only two or three Catholics in the Unionist Party.

1969 24 February, at the general election to Stormont, Rev. Ian Paisley improved his position. Capt. O'Neill did not do well. John Hume was elected to the Foyle seat in Derry, beating Eddie McAteer. Ivan Cooper won in mid-Derry.

19 April, there was one of the many riots in Derry: 'On that day seven or eight policemen smashed down the door and forced their way into the house of Samuel Joseph Devenney, aged 43 years. They beat him with batons on the head and kicked him. Samuel Devenney's son Fred was also hit with a baton. A policeman hit Cathy on the legs with his baton, another kicked her. Another of his daughters tried to lie on top of Samuel to protect him. She was lifted off by the hair. Samuel was then seized and thrown across the floor. His face, head and hands were covered with blood.' (Extract from the inquest held when Samuel Devenney died of coronary thrombosis some three months later.)

30 March, an electricity sub-station at Castlereagh was blown up.

17 April, Bernadette Devlin was elected to Westminster.

20 April, an electricity pylon at Kilmore was damaged by an explosion.

21 April, the main outlet to the Silent Valley reservoir, the principal water supply to Belfast, was blown up.

24 April, a water main at Dunadry was disjointed by a bomb.

(On 16 February 1970 five men were charged with blowing up the water main at Dunadry, near Belfast. The Crown claimed that the pipe was blown up to cause disruption in order to bring down the Prime Minister, Capt. O'Neill, and to promote the release from prison of Rev. Ian Paisley and Mr Ronald Bunting. The defendants were John McKeague, William Owens, Derek Elwood, Trevor Gracey and Frank Mallon. Another UPV member, S. Stevenson, was associated with a man named T. McDowell in various bombings including one at Ballyshannon in the Republic of Ireland, where McDowell was himself killed

1969 by his own bomb. Stevenson, when he was brought before the courts, admitted his involvement in various bombings. He pleaded guilty, declaring that he was the Chief of Staff of the UVF. He also agreed that he helped to form the Ulster Protestant Volunteers at the behest of the Rev. Ian Paisley. Details of all these manoeuvres are to be found in the book *Paisley* by Maloney and Pollak.)

28 April, Capt. O'Neill resigned and was followed in office by Major James Chichester-Clarke.

31 July, a rent and rates strike was begun in Dungannon.

2 August, a vicious riot occurred in Belfast when a crowd of more than a thousand Paisleyites, flinging stones, bottles and other missiles, laid siege to Catholic occupied flats at Unity Walk. They were opposed by the Catholics. A police force, inadequate in size, could not cope with the disorder. A policeman was stabbed.

12 August, the Apprentice Boys march in Derry was held. By right it should have been banned. John Hume and his associates pressed the then Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Robert Porter, QC, as well as Capt. O'Neill to that effect without success. The Protestant marchers threw down pennies on the Bogside district. The Bogside replied with nails and stones. There was rioting and the 'battle' of the Bogside had begun. 'Free Derry' was established, the first no-go area. By now CS gas was being used by the police and petrol bombs by the rioters. After three days the police were exhausted and on 14 August Major Chichester-Clark called in the troops.

Also on 12 August the 'battle' of Belfast began in the Falls Road area with attacks on Hastings Street police station. The B-Specials were called out. Barricades were set up and fires lighted on the roads. Petrol bombs and broken paving stones were hurled at the police. The police then attacked the mobs. Protestants from the Shankill joined in. By now many buildings were on fire. The shooting then started, probably from both sides, though it is agreed there were only a few guns and little ammunition in Catholic hands. The

1969 B-Specials went into action on the Protestant side. The police brought out their armoured cars, mounted with heavy machine guns. These raced up and down the Falls Road shooting wildly. The police, who were being sniped at, panicked and sprayed machine gun fire indiscriminately. A nine-year-old Catholic child was hit and had half his head blown away.

In Ardoyne people were sheltering behind barricades made of looted timber, steel and commandeered lorries and buses. Police and Protestants, working in unison, were on the attack. Here also there were many fires. There were a few Catholic snipers. Many people received bullet wounds from police fire.

During the night six men died in Belfast and over one hundred were injured. More than a hundred homes had been destroyed and more than a dozen factories. Some factories were burned to silence snipers who were operating on their roofs. Three hundred houses were damaged by petrol bombs. One Protestant was killed. The next day the Army was brought in. It was welcomed by the Catholics.

There was no army presence in Ardoyne. Thus the Protestants attacked and burned houses in several streets. In the Clonard area they destroyed all the houses in the Catholic Bombay Street. When the Army personnel first arrived they were totally confused and only of limited help. They, and not the police, offered some protection to Catholics. The police sided with the Protestants in most areas. Only one soldier was slightly injured in the whole 'battle'. The Army claimed that the soldiers did not fire a single shot in the entire two days of fighting. The Catholics were the main sufferers in the whole episode.

At this time Jack Lynch mobilised a few army reserves and army emergency medical centres on his side of the 'border'. He also demanded a United Nations peace keeping force. By now many Protestants were certain that they were about to be invaded from the South. Major Chichester-Clark promised that the police would investigate police atrocities.

It was after dark one evening at this time when Bríd

1969 Rodgers, John Donaghy and I, as members of the executive of NICRA, arrived to attend a meeting in the Catholic redoubt in Leeson Street, Belfast. It was held in the Long Bar. The atmosphere was one I had never experienced before or since.

Consider these people, involved, whether they liked it or not, in continuous rioting for several days on end, and menaced by the Protestants, but now safely behind the barricades with all fear and reserve gone.

After a close scrutiny by the vigilantes we were admitted to this district of tiny outmoded kitchen houses, teeming with life, full of bonhomie. The children were still playing on the streets, little groups of adults quietly conversing.... The visit convinced me, if I needed convincing, that our civil rights work was worth while. That work could no longer be seen as the production, in lonely isolation, of dry statistics for the Campaign to publish. Here were the reasons for it all. It was satisfying, too, to know that, compared with previous upheavals in Northern Ireland at least this time the world could not dismiss what was happening in Belfast or elsewhere as 'those wild Irish fighting again'. Now people who mattered could lay their hands on *The Plain Truth*, the first of many publications in which the Campaign and others traced the reasons for what was now happening (see Appendix and Select Bibliography).

19 August, Major Chichester-Clark met Messrs Wilson and Callaghan in London. Two senior civil servants from London were sent to Belfast to supervise affairs. An Enquiry into the police and the B-Specials under Lord Hunt was set up.

20 August, the British Government made the Downing Street Declaration in which equal rights were acknowledged, a Central Housing Authority was set up, local government was to be reformed and an Ombudsman appointed. It was affirmed also that discrimination in employment would be ended.

10 September, the army built the 'Peace Line' barricade—a minor Berlin Wall of steel between the Falls and Shankill Roads.

1969      10 October, Lord Hunt reported. The B-Specials were disbanded and the RUC disarmed. Sir Arthur Young was put in charge of the police, who were to be denied armoured cars with machine guns. The RUC uniform was changed. The slow improvement of standards in the RUC had at last begun.

12 October, the Hunt Report had produced an electric effect on the Shankill Protestants who organised and started to move down towards the centre of Belfast where Catholic Unity Flats were situated. The police and army halted them. A fierce battle ensued. They shot two policemen, one died, a constable, Victor Arbuckle. The army shot two Protestants. The army had twenty-two men wounded, sixteen by gunfire. Their tolerant attitude towards the Protestant community was forced that night to change because of the intensity of the battle. The Shankill had learnt the price of excess.

A Tribunal of Enquiry under Lord Justice Scarman was set up to investigate the riots in July and August and the sabotage of the water supply in April. Its main hearings took place later, during the year 1971. Those various investigations were not a substitute for what should really have been done, which was to abolish Stormont, since without this nothing could really change. What subsequently happened supports this contention. However, Lord Scarman looked meticulously into the various matters which came within the ambit of his Enquiry. He sat for many months.

When he investigated Dungannon he heard of B-Specials on the nights of 11 and 13 August running amok with rifles and machine guns. He heard how no prosecutions were carried out against Orangemen who tore down civil rights banners in Dungiven on 28 June 1969.

The Scarman tribunal heard, on 11 May 1971, that the arms register, which had a record of guns and ammunition issued to the B-Specials in Dungannon in August 1969, was burnt.

John McKeague, chairman of the Shankill Defence

1969 Association, told the Tribunal that he directed the use of guns, petrol bombs and stones against Catholics on the Crumlin Road on the night of 15 August 1969.

Only three specific incidents are described here. The files of the *Irish News* should be consulted to appreciate the width and depth of the Enquiry, and to learn the facts. Lord Scarman, himself British, was commissioned by a British Government to sum up an entirely Irish situation and present findings which the British Government would accept.

In November the Republicans split into the Official IRA (Cathal Goulding, Billy McMillen, Thomas McGiolla, Malachy McGurran), and the Provisional IRA (Sean MacStiofáin, Billy McKee, Daithi O'Conaill, Joe Cahill, Francis Card, Joe Martin, Seamus Twomey). The 'Officials', who were strongly Marxist, were nicknamed the 'Stickies' because their paper *Easter Lily* was held in place by an adhesive backing, whereas that of the 'Provos' was secured with the traditional pin.

The 'Provos' continued with the aim of a thirty-two county Republic to be achieved by violence.

1970 In January the UDR was formed, as a unit of the British Army. Neither side was pleased.

24 January, part of the leader in the *Irish News* went as follows:

On January 19th two members of the Peoples' Democracy were charged, following a four-month prison sentence on Mr Niall Vallely, with disorderly behaviour in Armagh last November. Meanwhile, the person or persons who shot John Gallagher in Armagh in the sight of hundreds of people go free. On January 19th and 20th no less than fifty-one individuals in Enniskillen were charged arising out of incidents in the town on July 26th last. Meanwhile the people who burnt over four hundred homes in Belfast; who burnt and looted sixty-four Catholic owned public houses; who were responsible for the death, among others, of a nine-year old child, go free. On January 22nd the indescribably objection-

1970      able Public Order Bill was driven through that supposedly revising body, the Senate Committee, a mammoth list of seventy-four amendments from the Opposition having been totally rejected.

In other words the minority was entirely dissatisfied with the reluctant reformers of the Stormont Parliament.

18 June, Mr Wilson lost the election to Edward Heath. Mr Reginald Maudling was made Home Secretary. At this time the Stormont Government brought in a new measure which laid down a mandatory minimum six months jail term for rioting or disorderly behaviour, to the great anger of Sir Arthur Young who was trying to settle things down. One of the first victims was Frank Gogarty, chairman of NICRA. The new law was repealed on 17 December.

27 June, there was very serious rioting in many areas of Belfast with gun battles in Ardoyne and Short Strand, between Catholics and Protestants. Seven people were killed. There were incendiary attacks on shops in central Belfast, looting on the Crumlin Road. Ballymurphy police station was taken over by rioters.

3 July, the army raided a house in the Falls Road area. They found arms and ammunition but were pinned down by rioters. Pitched battles; buses burned; C.S. gas; nail bombs; petrol bombs; hand grenades.

A curfew was imposed. The army was firing continuously. Four civilians were shot and one killed by an army vehicle. When morning came the curfew was not lifted and the population claimed that the army had decided to starve them out. House-to-house searches produced arms but also great bitterness among the population because of the destruction caused. The Provisionals received a flood of recruits and were now regarded as the defenders of the general public in Catholic areas.

21 August, the SDLP was formed.

23 September, Sir Arthur Young resigned, because of right-wing pressure. (His work was generously praised by Gerry Fitt, Ivan Cooper and Paddy Devlin in Stormont on 11 November 1970.)

1971 10 January, trouble started in Ballymurphy. Rioting lasted for a week. There were house-to-house searches.

3 February, there were army searches in Clonard and Ardoyne. This caused severe rioting for two nights. This spread to New Lodge Road. On 10 March three Scottish soldiers were shot after being lured to a public house.

18 February, in Stormont John Hume said, 'of the 108 registered gun clubs only about 40 are affiliated to recognised sporting organisations. Thirty out of the 108 have been formed in the past eighteen months.' Many guns belonged to the recently disbanded B-Specials. The great majority of non-sporting guns in Northern Ireland were held by Protestants.

27 February, two policemen were shot dead in Ardoyne. This was caused by alleged police partiality on the day before when they associated with the Protestant rioters, joking with them and arresting twenty Catholic women and six Catholic men.

28 March, Major Chichester-Clark resigned and was replaced by Mr Brian Faulkner.

13 April, Protestants broke through a police cordon and attacked Catholics. The Army fired on this Protestant crowd. That night St Matthews Catholic church was the target. Soldiers were attacked with petrol bombs.

30 April, the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr John Taylor, a hardline Unionist, doubtless made more hardline after he was gunned down on an Armagh Street by the Official IRA, revealed in Stormont that 102,112 guns were held on licence in Northern Ireland.

5 May, Mr Taylor stated that 11,953 weapons were held legally in the police division of North and East Down; 818 in Central Belfast; 764 in Springfield and Andersonstown; 1,375 in Shankill, Oldpark and Ligoniel; in Antrim Road, Greencastle, Newtownabbey, 2,970; in Newtownards Road, Dundonald, Holywood, 3,650; Castlereagh to Dunmurry, 3,632; South Down and South East Armagh, 7,065; Mid-Down and East Armagh, 8,434; East Tyrone and West Armagh, 9,085;

1971 Fermanagh, 6,838; Mid, South and West Tyrone, 6,987; North West Tyrone, North West Londonderry including Derry City, 5,110; North, Mid and South Derry, 10,283; North and part of Mid Antrim, 9,628; Mid-Antrim and South Antrim, 11,725.

22 May, after Catholic girls employed at Gallaghers tobacco factory had been locked in a lavatory and later assaulted by a Paisleyite gang, a riot developed in the New Lodge Road area. Paddy Kennedy, describing events in the Stormont Parliament, told how a ferocious attack was made on the people by the soldiers, using batons and rubber bullets. Mr Kennedy pointed out that out of a work force of almost 5,000 at Gallaghers, there was only one Catholic male employee. These were Scottish soldiers who have always had a poor reputation for impartiality and restraint in the Northern Ireland situation. It was claimed by Gerry Fitt that the soldiers at the riot declared, 'You got three of ours, now we are going to get you.' This was a reference to the murder of three Scottish soldiers at Ligoniel on 10th March.

7 and 8 July, severe riots in the Bogside. Two unarmed Catholics, Seamus Cussack and Desmond Beattie were shot dead. The SDLP issued an ultimatum, that unless the Government set up an independent enquiry they would leave Stormont. It did not, so they left. This was really only part of the reason for their going. By that date not one of the reforms had been sincerely accepted by the Unionist Party or the Unionist Government. The Downing Street Declaration was so far a Declaration without conviction. This point of view was backed up by the Foreign Minister of the Republic, Dr Patrick Hillery, speaking at the United Nations.

7 August, severe rioting in Belfast.

9 August, internment introduced. 342 men were interned, mostly republicans of the 1952 vintage and civil rights leaders. (By 8 February 1972, 750 were interned. 2,447 persons had been arrested under the Special Powers Act since August 1971. Most were Catholics.) Internment led to very severe rioting. In

1971 Belfast, where Protestants intervened in force, whole streets were burned down, about 300 houses in all. Again there were barricades, bombs, CS gas and gunfire. There was rioting in Belfast, Newry, Derry, Armagh, Strabane and Crossmaglen as well as elsewhere. Eight thousand Catholics fled to the Republic. Three thousand were housed in eight army camps, in convents, schools and monasteries. Gormanstown camp was one of the largest sites. The police training centre in Templemore was also used. Eighty-two Protestant refugees went to Liverpool. In the two years up to internment 66 people had been killed. In the 17 months after internment 610 were killed, including 146 soldiers. Some internees were treated with unspeakable brutality. It would be an injustice to the men who suffered if I attempted to summarise. The Campaign for Social Justice's *Mailed Fist*, Andrew Boyd's book *Brian Faulkner*, and even the British *Sunday Times* of 17 October and 24 October gave full details and should be read. The British set up one of their Enquiries, the Compton Enquiry. Only one of the internees attended personally to give evidence, so the conclusions are thus diminished but nevertheless, give much food for thought.

12 August, there were heavy black headlines in the *Irish News*—'Bryson Street Dies in Scorched Earth Exit'. This introduced one of the most bizarre incidents of the 'troubles'. Belfast had an acute shortage of housing accommodation yet the situation was so bad that Bryson Street had to be eliminated. It was an unbelievable sight as almost one hundred comfortable, eminently habitable dwellings were reduced to charred ruins or wrecked so that they could never be occupied by the other side. The army stood guard on one side and the RUC on the other as vans, lorries and forklift truck were used to move the furniture, the aim being to produce a 'no man's land' separating the minority Newtownards Road pocket at St Matthew's Church from the Unionist section of the area. Both sides approved of the action because tension and disturbances had been a feature since the beginning of 1969.

1971 From August onwards in Derry it became increasingly difficult for the army to enter the Bogside due to barricades. Eventually the area became a 'no-go' area for the army. The Republicans controlled the area.

In September the Democratic Unionist Party was formed. Also formed at that time was the UDA. It has been alleged that some of its members formed the dreaded UFF (the UVF had been in existence since 1966). The police were also re-armed about this time.

30 September, a Belfast jury failed to reach a verdict on the first prosecution under the new Prevention of Incitement to Hatred Act. Before the City Commission in Belfast were John McKeague, Hugh Close and Hugh Johnston. They were accused of publishing offensive songs in a book entitled *Orange Loyalist Songs 1971*, which was quoted at the trial thus: 'Taigs were made to kill, Hell is up the Falls, Falls was made for burning, Skulls were made to crack'. The Act was never made use of again, the reason for its failure being that the Bill was badly drafted. There was a requirement to prove that the person intended to stir up hatred. The mistake was to leave it to the jury to decide whether there was or was not deliberate incitement. Not till March 1987 was a new Bill placed on the Statute Book in which it was only necessary to prove that hatred was likely to be stirred up.

In October the assembly of the Northern Irish People (the Dungiven Parliament) was set up.

In the last days of 1971 and into 1972 the British authorities attempted to muzzle the press in its reporting of Northern Irish affairs. The subtle phrase 'balanced reporting' was used. A group of BBC producers and journalists, who stated that they were remaining anonymous because of fear of dismissal, called for a total ban on their staff visiting Northern Ireland 'if BBC censorship and pressures were not lifted immediately'. The BBC withdrew permission for the reporters and producers to talk to some civil rights leaders and some Roman Catholic priests.

Independent Television was experiencing the same difficulties. The *Irish Post*, the *Irish Press* and the *Sunday*

1971 *Times* all reacted strongly, as did the *Universe*. The matter had come to a head when Mr Reginald Maulding, the Home Secretary, attempted to ban an enquiry programme in Northern Ireland, presided over by Lord Devlin. Mr Brian Faulkner did his best to prevent the programme going out, but eventually it was transmitted.

1972 13 January, it was announced that all undergraduate work at Magee University College, Derry, was to cease and all students were to be transferred to the New University of Ulster at Coleraine. (This was subsequently countermanded.)

18 January, a six-hour search by hundreds of British troops took place in Belfast. They were seeking seven internees who had escaped from the prison ship *Maidstone* in Belfast harbour. Doors were forced in with crowbars and sledgehammers, especially in the Markets area. None of the escapers was found.

25 January, Magilligan Strand march. This march was organised by the Derry CRA. 4,000 anti-internment marchers were prevented from approaching Magilligan camp. The soldiers fired rubber bullets, often at point-blank range. Twenty people were injured by truncheons. Some were kicked and batoned on the ground. Ivan Cooper, MP, was hit on the head by a plastic bullet. John Hume and Mr McAteer condemned the army as brutal.

30 January, Bloody Sunday. A civil rights march to be addressed by Ivan Cooper, Bernadette Devlin and Fenner Brockway was arranged. As it progressed through Catholic parts of Derry a stone-throwing riot occurred. The army pinioned the marchers between two groups of men. The Paratrooper group opened fire and killed thirteen marchers and injured twelve others. The army alleged that they were first fired on but this is very, very doubtful. Another British Enquiry was set up, the Widgery Enquiry. The Catholic community was so incensed that at first they were tempted to boycott the hearings. Eventually wiser counsels prevailed. By attending they forced Lord Widgery into an even more contemptible set of conclusions.

1972      12 February, Mr William Craig formed the Ulster Vanguard Movement, promoting the use of the Ulster flag which became more popular with militant Protestants than the Union Jack. Mr Craig declared that he 'was establishing a loyalist army ready for action if the need arose'. The new movement had support from the Harland and Wolff shipyard workers, the B-Specials, the Orange Lodges, the Apprentice Boys of Derry, some young Unionist Associations and the Ulster Defence Association. Paramilitary garb was worn by some. Not one of these loyalists was ever interned.

After 'Bloody Sunday' the violence escalated. The economic life of Northern Ireland was now severely affected. The British Government informed Mr Faulkner that they were going to take over security. He resigned.

24 March, Edward Heath suspended Stormont and installed William Whitelaw as Secretary of State. Both these acts were, even at this late hour, greatly appreciated by the minority.

Violence continued in April and May. On 29 May the Official Republicans declared a truce but the Provisionals did not.

7 July, William Whitelaw met S. MacStiofáin, D. O'Connail, Martin McGuinness, Seamus Twomey, G. Adams and Ivor Bell together with a legal adviser Myles Shevlin. A truce was arranged. This only lasted two days and was followed by even greater violence.

21 July, Bloody Friday. A huge bombing blitz by the IRA of Belfast city centre overwhelmed the various organised forces, and was horrible butchery. Men shovelling human remains into plastic bags were seen on television.

31 July, 'Operation Motorman' was a mass invasion of the 'no-go' areas by the army, which at that time stood at over 20,000 men in Northern Ireland. The army consolidated its position in Derry and Belfast by commanding large buildings. This reduced the number of explosions and shooting incidents.

1973 8 March, the British Government had promised a poll every ten years to discover the degree of desire for the status quo or a United Ireland, the Border Poll. The first was held on 8 March. There was a boycott by the Nationalist population. The vast majority of those who voted favoured the Union, and 57.2% of the electorate voted. The results indicate that up to 40% of the electorate did not wish to remain linked to the United Kingdom. 6,463 voted for Northern Ireland to join the Republic. There were 5,973 spoiled votes. Total electorate 1,035,000. 591,820 voted for union with Britain.

The Republicans and the SDLP both advised their followers to boycott the poll. There were some who did not agree with this advice because, if followed, the opportunity for a test of real opinions would be lost.

In March William Whitelaw proposed that there should be an Assembly set up comprising seventy-eight members with a power-sharing Executive. Westminster was to retain control over law and order and elections. There was provision in the proposals for a Council of Ireland to establish the existence of an 'Irish Dimension'.

The new proposals first appeared in the form of a White Paper in March 1973 and were implemented by the Northern Ireland Constitution Act which repealed most of the extant clauses of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920. It was this particular initiative which made us in the Campaign decide that we had achieved our main aims, and that our publicity work should come to an end.

28 June, elections were held for the Assembly. Those in favour of the proposal won 51 seats, the opposition 27 seats. Mr Faulkner led the pro-Assembly Unionists. The SDLP participated although internment was still in existence. The Executive had 11 members—6 Unionists, 4 SDLP, 1 Alliance. There were 5 non-voting members—2 SDLP, 2 Alliance and 1 Unionist. Mr Faulkner was the Chief Executive; his deputy, Gerry Fitt.

1973 In December, in order to discuss the Council of Ireland, a special meeting was held in Sunningdale, England. The general body of Unionists would not accept the Sunningdale idea and Mr Faulkner took with him to England those Unionists who did. He renamed them the Unionist Party of Northern Ireland, UPNI. The Alliance Party would assert that, at the various negotiations at Sunningdale, the SDLP pushed the Unionists too hard on the Irish Dimension, and were insensitive to Unionist psychological stresses and strains stemming from the loss of their Parliament at Stormont.

1974 In January William Whitelaw was replaced by Francis Pym. He was a poor substitute since he appeared to have no comprehension of the Northern Ireland situation. In February, because of the miners' strike in Britain, Edward Heath called a general election which he lost to Mr Wilson.

14 May, the Ulster Workers' Council was set up by Mr Harry Murray from the Harland and Wolff shipyard. These people organised a well-prepared strike. After 14 days the Executive collapsed because there was paralysis of many parts of the economy. Electricity was severely rationed, as was petrol. Those workers who wanted to attend their places of employment were intimidated and many factories closed.

The new Labour Government failed miserably to confront the enormous pressure and aggressions which were present for all to see. The army's efforts to control the workers were restrained from above and Britain capitulated. This was a very serious turning-point in the affairs of Northern Ireland. It would perhaps have been too much to expect a more determined reaction from Mr Wilson.

Indeed, things for the Catholic minority did not begin to move again until the Tories returned to power and Margaret Thatcher took charge.