

NATIONAL ARCHIVES**IRELAND**

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Title: Report written by Seán Donlon, Assistant Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs, on his visit to Northern Ireland on 14 and 15 May, 1974, detailing efforts to reach agreement in the power-sharing Executive, the positions held by the SDLP [Social Democratic and Labour Party] and the Faulkner Unionists, and the flight of Catholics in the greater Newtownabbey area. Includes an attached summary of proposals for the Council of Ireland.

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We are having confidential assessments made by Justice, Defence, and Finance, of the security, Department of the Taoiseach
 of a breakdown in the Executive, in so far as these can be gauged now.
 Visit to Northern Ireland 14/15 May, 1974

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 1. The Northern Ireland Administration sub-committee (Bradford, Morrell, Hume, Devlin, Napier, Bob Cooper) has now reached the stage where it feels it can make no further progress and has agreed to report back to the full Administration on 17th May. While no agreement has been reached on any of the four contentions issues which the sub-committee was set up to consider, a document on Council of Ireland functions has been drafted and is described by the SDLP as "the maximum the Unionists are prepared to concede" on that issue. A copy of the document is attached. On the other three issues, the following is the position:-

second tier: Unionists are not prepared to implement without some "test of opinion". Hume and Devlin have rejected the referendum concept. The Unionists have suggested that the next Assembly elections, not due for four years on present plans, might be used as the test. Hume and Devlin have not completely rejected this as a basis for discussion but Hume sees very little hope in it;

secretariat: Unionists are not prepared to consider anything more than servicing of the Council by civil servants from Dublin and Belfast who would continue to be paid by and responsible to their respective Ministers. Hume and Devlin are not prepared to accept that, especially if Council of Ireland functions are to be along the lines described in the attached document. They seem to feel, however, that there is room for compromise on this issue;

headquarters: Hume and Devlin have virtually conceded that there will be no permanent base, at least initially.

2. It is difficult to predict what the outcome of the Northern Ireland Administration meeting on 17th May will be. Hume and Devlin are generally pessimistic about the prospects of reaching agreement with Faulkner on phased implementation but they are determined not to take any hasty decisions since they see their survival as a political force very much influenced by the manner in which the Executive is seen to collapse, if that is what is to happen. They say that they are committed to consulting both with their Assembly Party and Party Executive and in addition will consult with the Government here before taking any decision which might lead to a collapse. Two factors which may have a bearing on the SDLP decision should be noted. Firstly, there are considerable internal strains now becoming evident. Paddy Duffy, the party treasurer and important backroom figure before and since the party's formal establishment, told me that he is on the verge of resigning from the party, but probably not from the Assembly, because of the failure to implement the provisions of the Sunningdale Agreement, especially those relating to internment. Seamus Mallon, the chairman of the Assembly Party, showed me a letter signed this week by a large number of local branch officers, district councillors and prominent party supporters who wish the SDLP to pull out of the Executive before July "unless Sunningdale is fully implemented". The signatories are mainly from south Down, Armagh, Tyrone and Mallon made it clear that he shares their views. In addition there is no doubt that the Derry (Hugh Logue) SDLP as opposed to the Derry (John Hume) SDLP would support that position and the effect of all this is to reduce considerably the room for manoeuvre which the party leadership might have in its negotiations with Faulkner. So far, the backbenchers are not aware in detail of the negotiations but a meeting has been called for this weekend

(18/19 May) at which the whole matter is to be discussed.

The second internal SDLP strain inevitably involves Gerry Fitt's position as leader. I have obtained a copy of the minutes of the Assembly Party meeting of 8th May (attached - please treat as particularly confidential) at which a motion was passed "expressing concern at his lack of leadership" and at which "press statements contrary to party policy" (all of them, I gather, made by Fitt) were discussed in detail. A letter of censure was sent to Fitt within the last few days and as might be expected his reaction was along the lines "stuff it. I don't need a party. I've survived in politics without one for nineteen elections and I'll survive without one for another nineteen".

3. The combination of the internal strains within the SDLP and the lack of progress at inter-party talks do not augur well for the future of power sharing but it is important to bear in mind that when it comes to the brink there is still the possibility that Faulkner may well decide to concede enough to enable the SDLP to survive. There is no doubt that the SDLP in general is in a position to accept a phased implementation of the Sunningdale Agreement provided the phasing-in period, especially for the second tier, was not unduly prolonged, say not beyond a year from now, and provided some immediate concession was made on internment.

4. Paddy O'Hanlon of the SDLP introduced me to Brigadier Ronald Broadhurst (Faulkner Unionist member of the Assembly for south Down) on 14th May and Broadhurst could not have been ^{more (?)} gracious and hospitable. We talked for about an hour and though it is clear that he is not politically experienced and that his views do not reflect those of his party, they are at least worth noting. His background could not be much further removed from

Northern Ireland. His father was a senior police officer in Palestine and he was educated there and at Cambridge from which he graduated in the twenties. Most of his career was with the Arab Legion of which he was deputy chief of staff when he resigned in 1949 to retire to a farm in Co. Down which his wife, a member of the Morrison linen family, had inherited. There he pursues his oriental and classical studies - he has written a book called "The Travels of Ibn Jubayr" - and, because of his fondness for liturgy and ceremonial, has taken a reasonably active interest in local Church of Ireland and Orange Order affairs. He does not like the Church's theology and describes himself as "a Church of Ireland agnostic". Equally he does not like the Orange Order's bigotry - he thinks the local lodge has in any event recently expelled him at the same time as the local (Glengall Street) Unionist Party branch expelled him for supporting Faulkner - but one of his greatest loves, he said, was dressing up in a good blue suit, a sash and bowler to parade on the 12th July each year.

5. He sees the Northern Ireland problem exclusively in terms of the "Shinners" versus the rest and that once they are dealt with by effective military action, everything will be well. He says he is an ardent supporter of everything in the Sunningdale Agreement and says that whatever the reverses suffered by the Faulkner Unionists since December, they must be gentlemen and honour fully an agreement to which their leader solemnly put his name. He looks forward to meeting southern politicians in the Council of Ireland's second tier and says that by and large the island of Ireland is fortunate in having "an honourable bunch of politicians" north and south. Mr. Cosgrave was particularly honourable and had gone further than his Sunningdale commitment in making the status declaration in March. He had

also shown his determination in tackling violence by "locking up every Shinner in sight". That was all that mattered. Broadhurst's knowledge of Irish history appeared to be virtually nil. (On his side, no doubt he was shocked, even though I scraped the bottom of my Latin and Greek barrel, by my ignorance of the classics.) His information e.g. on the origins of unionism and the career of Craigavon was remarkably vague and at one point he asked me if I would be kind enough to explain to him who that most dedicated man Patrick Devlin was referring to when he talked of "John (sic) Connolly socialism". He is, however, clearly committed to power-sharing and is making a determined effort to understand the other side's point of view. His determination even extended to visiting Long Kesh recently where he talked to extremists on both sides. The living conditions in the camp he described as intolerable. The main point in recording the conversation is to confirm the impression we have been getting at second hand that many of the people Faulkner is relying on are politically lightweight!

6. At the meeting in Dublin on 13th May with the Northern Ireland Secretary of State, the Minister once more drew attention to the flight of Catholics in the greater Newtownabbey area where housing intimidation was rife and sectarian assassinations frequent (cf. report of my visit to Northern Ireland on 28th February/1st March) and Mr. Rees had responded by asking for further detailed information. I talked to some contacts in the area with a view to getting additional material and they confirmed that the situation was getting worse and that the local RUC continued to be unhelpful. When I returned home on 15th May, however, I received a telephone call from a priest in Whiteabbey to say that military police had that day moved into the area in significant numbers and had obviously stationed themselves to give good protection to Catholics in exposed areas. This was the first indication of any official response to the numerous

●omplaints made over the last eighteen months and though it is too early to judge its effectiveness, at least it represents some progress.

Seán Donlon

Seán Donlon

16th May. 1974

Council of IrelandCo-Operative Agreements and Decisions

The N.I. Executive and the Irish Government agree that the Council of Ministers will provide the forum for consultation, co-operation and co-ordination of action between the Executive and the Irish Government in relation to the economic and social matters listed below which have been identified in accordance with the following criteria set out in paragraph 3 of the Sunningdale Communique:

- (1) to achieve the best utilisation of scarce skills, expertise and resources;
- (2) to avoid, in the interests of economy and efficiency, unnecessary duplication of effort; and
- (3) to ensure complementary rather than competitive effort where this is to the advantage of agriculture, commerce and industry.

Electricity generation and distribution

Tourism

Carlingford Lough and Lough Foyle

Specific Joint Industrial Projects

Study of Future Energy Needs and Resources

Geological Survey

Aspects of Trade Promotion

Drainage in border areas

Aspects of Plant and Animal Health

Horse Racing and Bloodstock

Physical Planning/Regional Planning

Conservation (nature reserves, wildlife, marine resources)

Inland Waterways

Railways

Cross-border roads and bridges

Preservation and restoration of historic buildings

Pollution policy

Each of the above matters is accompanied by a detailed definition as contained in Chapter III of the Secret Joint Report of Officials on Transfer of Functions to the Council of Ireland. In the case e.g. of aspects of trade promotion, the definition includes elements identified in the Report both under the heading executive action and executive decision⁷

15 May, 1974.