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**Reference Code:** 2005/7/631

**Title:** Message from Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave to Prime Minister Harold Wilson regarding the ongoing Ulster Workers' Council Strike and the delays in establishing the Council of Ireland.

**Creation Date(s):** 23 May, 1974

**Level of description:** Item

**Extent and medium:** 3 pages

**Creator(s):** Department of the Taoiseach

**Access Conditions:** Open

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MESSAGE FROM TAOISEACH TO BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

*PA*  
*Taoiseach.*  
*of his message*  
*conveyed by the ambassador*  
*to MA Wilson at 6.30 this evening.*  
*23/5*

*Shows to secretary*  
*23/5*

You will no doubt have noted that, following the statement made by Brian Faulkner on 23 May on behalf of the Executive about the phased implementation of the Sunningdale Agreement, I spoke to the Dáil and announced that in the present extremely serious situation in Northern Ireland I was prepared to accept the principles contained in the statement. I welcomed the opportunity to co-operate in the Council of Ministers of the Council of Ireland - whose early establishment will, through its role in the appointment of the Police Authority, help to secure identification of the Northern minority with the police, and thus advance the cause of peace. The Leader of the Opposition also agreed not to do anything to stay progress towards peace in Northern Ireland.

It is naturally a source of considerable disappointment here that the implementation of the Council of Ireland element as originally agreed has been postponed, especially as we remain convinced that the best chance to win the support of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland for the concept of the Council is to set it up and let it be seen in operation. The statement made by Mr. Faulkner represents a considerable departure from what was agreed at Sunningdale. In announcing promptly our acceptance of the phased implementation which had been agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive without consultation with us, we were motivated primarily by the importance of ensuring the survival of power-sharing since it remains our view that this is the only basis on which progress towards peace can be maintained.

You are aware that in reaching the consensus announced by Mr. Faulkner yesterday, the Northern Ireland Executive clearly

understood that at the same time your Government would take immediate and resolute action to break the UWC strike and in particular to restore without further delay the normal generation and distribution of electricity. The strike is now in its <sup>ninth</sup> ~~ninth~~ day and we are greatly disturbed by the fact that the necessary action has not yet been taken to deal effectively with the situation which has arisen.

We have also been shocked by the open usurpation of power by the UWC with its system of barricades and issue of passes through which they have controlled life in many parts of Northern Ireland. The action taken by your Government in respect of this aspect of the problem, far from bringing an end to this intolerable situation has, as a result of the frequent consultation and discussion with the lawless gangs involved and the failure to arrest any of those responsible, had the effect of confirming the public impression that the ultimate control rests with the UWC, subject only to a limited and temporary deference to the security forces when they are on the spot.

We regard the continuance of this situation as destroying the prospect of peace and the authority of the Northern Ireland Executive, which is thus being rendered incapable of exercising its responsibilities for the economic and social life of Northern Ireland. The Executive has been under tremendous strain and in reaching agreement on phased implementation, all the parties involved made considerable sacrifices. Indeed the SDLP sacrifice was such that we cannot rule out the possibility that, should the control by the strike leaders not be ended and the authority of your Government and the Executive not be restored promptly, the SDLP may find their support diminished to the point where the minority population might swing over to the IRA.

Failure to take immediate action to deal once and for all with the problem which has led to the erosion of the standing of the Executive endangers in our view the continued existence of the Executive which we in the Republic and the SDLP yesterday made such sacrifices to preserve and whose survival is, as we both agree, essential for peace in the North. A continued failure also threatens the survival of the revised basis of the Sunningdale Agreement which we yesterday accepted with great reluctance and disappointment.

I have to ask therefore that your Government will take immediate action, with whatever forces prove necessary for this purpose, to end this intolerable situation in Northern Ireland and to guarantee yesterday's agreement and the survival of the Executive.

At the same time I propose that the formal conference and the first meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Council of Ireland should be held without delay in a matter of days at whatever location is most convenient. I found Brian Faulkner receptive to this move when I spoke to him yesterday evening.

23 May 1974