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Examples of Séctarian Practice by Northern Ireland Local Authorities

Armagh

The District Council steadfastly refused to accept responsibility for a £48,000 community centre, situated in a mainly Catholic area, despite the fact that it had the powers and indeed the duty to do so. The centre, which had been started by the former town council and completed by the Housing Executive, lay idle for two years. A local community association was finally forced to assume responsibility for the centre, with the aid of the central authorities.

Minority representatives are almost totally excluded from Council sub-committees and totally from representation on the area boards as a result of block voting by the Loyalist majority. (One SDLP member has been appointed to a Council sub-committee.)

Banbridge

In early 1975 four Catholics were employed by Council officials as temporary labourers, but the Loyalist majority on the Council arranged to have them dismissed. None of the senior officers of the Council is a Catholic. The single SDLP member of the Council is excluded from membership of the major committees and from representation on area boards.

Ballymena

In January 1976, the Council decided by a majority vote to exclude GAA clubs from participating in planning local sports facilities. Explaining the ban, a DUP Councillor claimed that Gaelic associations are "politically motivated" and seek to "usurp our British heritage".

Coleraine

The single SDLP and three Alliance members of the Council are excluded from all major sub-committees and from representation on area boards.

Cookstown

The only Catholic official employed by this Council is the Recreation Officer, who was statutorily inherited from the earlier Urban Council. In the Council's first year of operation, one Catholic Councillor was elected to sit on the Housing Council. This was the only post of significance given to a Catholic Councillor. At the annual general meeting in June 1974, all appointees were re-elected, with the exception of the Catholic Housing Council nominee, who was replaced by a Loyalist. Block voting by the majority ensured a similar result in 1975.

Craigavon

In October 1974, the manager of a £500,000 recreation centre resigned following a ban by the Council on Sunday opening.

In January 1975, the Council's recreation committee refused the use of a local hall on a Sunday for an Irish dancing competition. In November 1975, the Council decided to close its golf course and ski slope on Sunday also.

The SDLP is not represented on delegations or on area boards.

Fermanagh

The 1973 elections returned 4 Official Unionists, 4 UPNI, 1 Unity Unionist, 1 Independent Unionist, 4 SDLP, 4 Unity, 1 Independent and 1 non-party. In practice, the Council comprised 10 Unionists and 10 non-Unionists and failed initially to reach agreement. The area was administered for some time by a Commission of six civil servants appointed by the Secretary of State. A Council meeting in January 1974 elected a Unionist Chairman and the absence of a non-Unionist Councillor at the annual general meeting in June 1974 allowed a Unionist majority to retain the chair. A subsequent series of motions of no confidence were defeated by means of the Chairman's own casting vote.

In April 1975 the Council was instructed by the Local Government Staff Commission to reverse its decision not to appoint a Catholic as

recreation officer. The Catholic had been selected by the Council's own duly appointed appointments committee. Two UPNI Councillors voted with the non-Unionists to uphold the appointment.

In June 1975 the same two UPNI Councillors were called upon to resign when they voted with representatives of the minority to allow the election of an SDLP Chairman.

Limavady

The Loyalist majority on this Council uses its majority of one to exclude the four SDLP members from the main Council sub-committees and from representation on the area boards.

When the post of Head of Department in the new Council's engineering division was being filled, the previous incumbent (a Catholic) was rejected in favour of a Loyalist, even though he was apparently the better qualified. It is understood that there is only one Catholic (a female clerical employee) on the staff of the Council.

Lisburn

The large Unionist majority prevents the single SDLP member from participating in any of the Council's main sub-committees or in area boards.

Major building development planned for the Poleglass area in West Belfast was reduced by about half following representations from members of Lisburn Council and others. The development, which would in effect have extended Catholic West Belfast, would have been in an area safe for Catholics, who constitute the bulk of the present emergency housing list. The Housing Executive's original plans provided for a £50 million complex, with 4,000 houses, 6 schools and a 60-acre industrial area, and the overflow would have affected the electoral balance, particularly in neighbouring Lisburn Borough Council area, which is Loyalist-dominated. (The decision to reduce the size of the development was taken by the Northern Ireland Office.)