

(Revised version - as amended by SFS)

Memorandum of meeting between Sir Frank Soskice and representatives of the Northern Ireland Labour Party, held on 22nd April, 1965, in the Labour Party Offices, 58, Waring Street, Belfast.

Present: Sir Frank Soskice; Mr. T. W. Boyd, M.P. (Leader, Parliamentary Party) Mr. F. V. Simpson M.P. (Whip); Mr. C. E. B. Brett, (Chairman, Policy Committee); Mr. M. McDirney, Q.C., Mr. C. Allen, (Treasurer); Mr. S. Napier (Secretary).

Chair: Mr. C. E. B. Brett.

1. The Chairman welcomed Sir Frank Soskice who replied suitably.
2. Discussion took place on the omission from the Racial Discrimination Bill of clauses dealing with religious discrimination, discrimination in employment, and in housing; and on the fact that it was not to apply to Northern Ireland. Sir Frank Soskice explained that he intended to consider additional proposals for conciliation tribunals or similar machinery. The Government at Westminster respected the convention that Parliament at Westminster did not seek to enact legislation with regard to matters within the competence of the Northern Irish Parliament. It was therefore a matter entirely for the Northern Irish Labour Party whether it wished to urge in the Northern Irish Parliament that Westminster legislation on Racial Discrimination should be extended at the request of the Northern Irish Government to apply to Northern Ireland.
3. Sir Frank Soskice stated he had read the Electoral Reform document. This was a matter within the constitutional powers of the Stormont Government. He had taken careful note of its contents and would refer to it in his conversations with the Northern Irish Government.
4. Discussion took place on means of exerting pressure on the Northern Ireland Government in relation to other matters within its powers. Sir Frank stated that direct interference in such matters would not be possible or proper.

5. Sir Frank undertook to examine the channels of communication between the Northern Ireland Labour Party and the Home Office, particularly where other Ministries are involved on matters affecting Northern Ireland. He particularly undertook to inquire into one of the examples tendered, the fate of a letter addressed to the Minister of Transport on 2nd December, 1964, by Mr. W. Baxter, National Union Vehicle Builders, merely acknowledged by his department on 8th December, 1964, and a further letter was received from his department on 21st December, 1964.
6. Discussion took place about the machinery for co-ordination of matters affecting Northern Ireland, both at Ministerial and Civil Service level. Sir Frank was informed, that, while the Unionists express satisfaction with the present system, the Labour Party is of the opinion that its workings are most unsatisfactory.
7. At the Chairman's invitation, Sir Frank made a brief statement regarding the possibility of future proposals for the limitation of the voting powers of Ulster M.P's. He was asked to note that such a proposal, while politically perhaps entirely justified, would have serious electoral consequences for the Labour movement in Northern Ireland and would render the return of Labour M.P's less probable in the foreseeable future; and that the Northern Ireland Labour Party would wish to have an opportunity of discussing such proposals before it became a commitment, and must reserve the right to publicly oppose it. Sir Frank stated that there was no such proposal within the foreseeable future.
8. The meeting terminated with a vote of thanks to Sir Frank for his attendance, and for his most helpful undertakings to look into the questions raised.