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S.A./C

Statement being issued by John Hume

Now that the round of district council AGMs has been completed I hope that much of the hysteria which has surrounded local government recently can subside. I hope too that as the dust begins to settle people will see clearly that across the North the SDLP has followed a consistent and a coherent policy without gimmicks, without abuse and without violence.

We have used our positions on district councils in an effort to ensure that in the composition of committees, selection of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen and nominations to outside bodies the democratic will of the electorate is reflected. We have applied the principle of proportionality consistently. This means that in these councils where we have a major say we have supported nominations of elected representatives from all parties and none.

We have done this in spite of our many fundamental differences with these other parties, whether these differences are about bigotry or about violence. We have done this despite the fact that these other parties have not reciprocated our pursuit of the principle of proportionality. We have sought to uphold this policy of common sense and reason in circumstances where other parties have been engaging in disruptions and confrontations.

It is now clear that we are the only major party in Northern Ireland totally committed to the primacy and dignity of the democratic process and a respect for the will of the electorate.

NOTE

John Hume telephoned me from Derry to give me the attached statement on local government which is being issued this afternoon by the SDLP. He specifically asked that the statement be conveyed urgently to the Taoiseach.

He recalled, as background that the OUP had refused to accept an SDLP nomination for the Deputy Mayorship in Derry and that the SDLP has supported the OUP for the Deputy Chair in Strabane. There are many cases where the SDLP used its position to ensure unionists representation on boards and committees including Derry, Down and Fermanagh.

In Belfast, of course, just to cite one example, the unionists combined to exclude both the SDLP and Alliance from all public bodies on which the Council was represented.

Dr

Daithi O'Ceallaigh

5 June, 1985.

c.c. Taoiseach
Tanaiste
Minister
Minister for Justice
Attorney General
Mr. Nally
Mr. Ward
Mr. Quigley
Ambassador London