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EXMIN 74/25

Copy No:

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 21 MAY 1974 IN PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS,
STORMONT AT 12 NOON

PRESENT

Mr Faulkner (Chief Minister)
Mr Fitt (Deputy Chief Minister)
Mr Napier (Law Reform)
Mr Baxter (Information)
Mr Bradford (Environment)
Mr Currie (Housing, Local Government and Planning)
Mr Devlin (Health and Social Services)
Mr Hume (Commerce)
Mr Kirk (Finance)
Mr McIvor (Education)
Mr Morrell (Agriculture)
Mr I Cooper (Community Relations)
Mr R Cooper (Manpower Services)
Major Hall-Thompson (Chief Whip)
Mr McGrady (Executive Planning and Co-ordination)

Mr K P Bloomfield) Secretariat
Mr P A Sythes)

Mr T M Roberts - Head of Press Services

A G E N D A

1. Emergency Situation
2. Sunningdale - Draft Statement

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1. EMERGENCY SITUATION

The Minister of Commerce reported that electricity generation was at a critical stage. About 40% of the workers at Coolkeeragh were reporting for work - mostly Catholic workers - but he had been told that if they were allowed to work Ballylumford would be closed down completely.

The discussion then widened and the question of the Executive's attitude to the strikers was debated. One Minister argued strongly for opening a dialogue with the strikers on the grounds of their very wide support and the realities of the situation. Ministers were generally in favour of taking firm steps to oppose the strikers.

2. SUNNINGDALE - DRAFT STATEMENT

The draft statement prepared by the Secretary was considered in detail and, with some textual amendments, approved.

The question of the timing of its release was discussed. It was generally agreed that neither political action nor military action alone would be effective and that the issue of the statement should depend upon clear evidence of action by the security forces to restore law and order.

(The meeting adjourned at 2 pm and resumed at 7 45 pm)

The Chief Minister emphasised that time was running out. If any benefit was to result from the agreed statement it should be announced as soon as possible.

During discussion the following points were made and agreed:

(a) that the statement should be issued as soon as possible but only after evidence of action on the security front by the Secretary of State;

(b) that the Secretary of State should be asked to set up immediately a standing Committee of Ministers under the Chairmanship of the Secretary of State or in his absence the Minister of State, to co-ordinate the civil and security aspects of the emergency; and

(c) that the Executive should be represented on the Committee by the Ministers of Commerce, the Environment and Manpower Services, supported by senior officials as required, and with full discretion to call in other Ministers as the situation demanded.