

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD AT PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, STORMONT, ON
THURSDAY 17 JANUARY 1974 AT 11 AM

- Present:
- Mr Faulkner (Chief Minister)
 - Mr Napier (Law Reform)
 - Mr Baxter (Information)
 - Mr Bradford (The 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) (For part of Item 1 only)
 - Mr I Cooper (Community Relations)
 - Mr R Cooper (Manpower)
 - Mr McGrady (Co-ordination)
 - Major Hall-Thompson (Chief Whip)
- Mr Bloomfield)
Mr Sythes) Secretariat
- Mr Roberts (Head of Press Services)

A G E N D A

1. Chief Minister's meeting with Taoiseach.
2. Deputations etc.
3. Legislative Programme (EXMEMO 6/74).
4. Vote of Confidence.
5. Speaker's House.
6. Security.
7. Seating in the Assembly.
8. Council of Ireland (EXMEMO 1/74).

1. Chief Minister's Meeting with Taoiseach

The Chief Minister reported on his visit to Mr Cosgrave on Wednesday 16 January. He was satisfied that there was no going back on the Sunningdale declaration about the status of Northern Ireland. Mr Cosgrave's difficulty was that it seemed he could make no further public statement during the 21 day period allowed for appeal. The Chief Minister for his part made it quite clear that the formal stage of Sunningdale cannot take place until the Republic makes it clear beyond doubt that the present status of Northern Ireland (which is, of course, that it is part of the United Kingdom) cannot be changed without majority consent in Northern Ireland. The Chief Minister had mentioned to Mr Cosgrave that he envisaged an early meeting of Ministers to discuss the Council of Ireland.

The meeting also included a lengthy exchange on security matters and action being taken and to be taken in the Republic. The Chief Minister had made it clear to Mr Cosgrave that the apprehension of prominent IRA men like Martin McGuinness would do more to satisfy Northern Ireland people than anything else.

A detailed discussion on the Chief Minister's report followed, during which Ministers complimented the Chief Minister not only on his visit but on his handling of the news media after it. Ministers were greatly concerned at the prospect of a hiatus of 21 days during which no confirmatory statements would come from Dublin. They asked for a guideline during this period. The Chief Minister read a letter from the Republic's Attorney General to the Taoiseach in which he explained very clearly the official interpretation of Northern Ireland's position. He also asked the Secretary to read out paragraph 3 of the deposition for the defence in the Boland case. These together made it clear that we now have on record the Republic's interpretation of its declaration on the status of Northern Ireland. The Chief Minister also confirmed that the Dublin Government intended to join with us increasingly against the IRA.

It was agreed that each member should have a copy of the legal documents made available to the Chief Minister as well as a general briefing line.

2. Deputations

Considered on mention of Dr Paisley's threat to deal only with Civil Servants and not with Ministers.

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Discussed and the impracticality of Ministers (a) receiving all deputations personally and (b) issuing all letters personally, in matters in which Assembly members were involved, was acknowledged.

Decided that an instruction to Permanent Secretaries should be issued to the effect that (a) requests from Assembly members for deputations to be received should be investigated as to content and if policy were involved they should be referred to Ministers; and (b) letters raising queries from Assembly members should as far as possible be answered via the private offices and signed either by the Minister or on his behalf by his Private Secretary.

3. Legislative Programme

Considered on the submission of the Minister of Co-ordination memorandum of 14 January 1974 (EXMEMO 6/74 with Annex).

Discussed. During the discussion Ministers drew attention to detailed points and mentioned in particular Bills at Westminster which would call for Measures in the Assembly to ensure parity of social services. It was recognised that individual Measures included in the Annex would require more detailed discussion and that acceptance of the programme did not mean acceptance of the terms of the Measures included in it. The Minister of Commerce explained the urgent nature of the Measure to deal with compensation to gas and electricity undertakings to offset losses incurred by price control. It was agreed that this Measure need not be referred to the Consultative Committee on grounds of urgency but that the Minister should be prepared to explain and defend his action in the House.

Decided that EXMEMO 6/70 with Annex should be accepted as the outline legislative programme without prejudice to the possibility of additions to it as future circumstances might require. The Measure to deal with Limitations of Actions (paragraph 4) should be "starred".

4. Vote of Confidence

Further consideration was given to the arrangements, the detail of which it was decided could be left until Tuesday next for final decisions. In the meantime it was agreed that the Chief Minister should move the Vote with a "keynote" speech, fairly wide ranging, mentioning the Statement of Aims and selected Measures from among those "starred" in the Annex to EXMEMO 6/74.

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There was no need for a formal seconder but it was felt that each Minister should be prepared to speak in the debate referring to Measures again from among those "starred" but not mentioned by the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister had a right of reply, but this could be exercised by another Minister if considered appropriate.

The Vote of Censure to be moved against the Speaker was mentioned and it was agreed that the Chief Whip and possibly also the Minister of Co-ordination should speak on behalf of the Administration.

5. Speaker's House

The Minister of Finance mentioned a letter which he understood was being sent to the Speaker by the Secretary of State. After a brief discussion it was agreed that the Minister of Finance should talk to the Speaker to find out the latter's own wishes and make a statement to the Assembly assuring them of the Executive's willingness to co-operate in finding accommodation alternative to Stormont House.

6. Security

The possible forms which threatened protests and obstruction might take next Tuesday were discussed. The Minister of Commerce reported his anxiety over electricity generation being interrupted. So far he was supporting the stand being taken by the Chairman of the Northern Ireland Electricity Service not to reveal information which would enable action to be taken by protesting against selected points. The risks were obvious - hospitals, etc - in any general shut-down. The Minister of Health undertook to investigate the capability of hospitals to generate their own electricity.

The Secretariat were instructed to consult with the security forces as to the means of ensuring freedom of access for Assembly members generally.

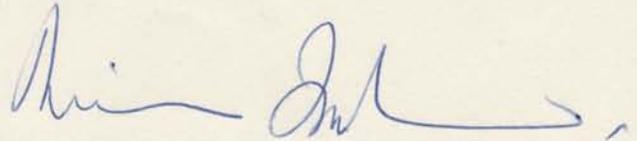
7. Seating in the Assembly

The Chief Whip reported on the situation and said that a meeting of Whips had been arranged.

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8. Council of Ireland

Considered briefly and deferred until next meeting. In the meantime it was agreed that the Chief Minister could pursue the question of an inter-ministerial meeting.



Office of the Executive
Parliament Buildings
Stormont

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