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222/93

FROM. C G MACCABE  
POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIVISION  
24 MAY 1993



*md/JS*

cc PS/Mr Mates (B&L) - B  
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PS/Mr Fell - B  
Mr Murray, DOE  
Mr Thomas - B  
Mr Ledlie - B  
Mr Hamilton, DOE  
Mr Williams - B  
Mr Bell - B  
Mr Watkins - B  
Mr Steele - B  
Mr Lyon - B  
Mr Wood (B&L) - B  
Mr Lavery - B  
Mr Cooke - B  
Mr Dodds - B  
Mr Maxwell - B  
Mr McCusker - B  
Mr Leach - B  
Mr Marsh - B  
Mr McNeill, Washington  
Mr Caine - B  
Mr Jardine, PPRU  
Mr Archer, RID - B  
HMA Dublin - B  
Mr Hallett, FCO via SIL - B

PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS: 19 MAY 1993

The count after Wednesday's local government elections began at 9 am on Thursday, and all the results were declared by Friday evening. A summary, together with the final first preference votes and percentages secured by each party, is at Annex A. A further schedule breaking down council areas by party is attached at Annex B. This submission mirrors my minute of 12 May on the subject by examining the performance of each party, before looking at key council areas. It also up-dates and supplements the preliminary assessment given to some copy recipients on Friday night.

2. The pattern, insofar as there is one, is clear. There is little substantive change; all the main parties have done well in some areas and can therefore claim "a mandate". The circumstances which led to falls in support for the DUP and Sinn Fein in 1989 have not

CONFIDENTIAL

-1-

10825/LO

CONFIDENTIAL

continued - indeed Sinn Fein have managed to regain some of their lost ground. The turn-out (which has still to be finally determined) is thought to have been around 58%, which, contrary to expectations, would be slightly higher than in 1989, and conformed to the same general pattern - low in the East (North Down for instance recorded under 38%), and high in the West (for example, 77% of Fermanagh's electorate voted). In and around Belfast interest was also slightly greater than in 1989, with a turn-out of around 54%.

Prospects for Talks

3. Public statements by the representatives of the various parties during and immediately after the counts indicate no significant shift in their approach to Talks. The DUP, in particular, have been making very clear that the position they took in the run-up to the elections will be maintained. They still require a shift in Articles 2 and 3 before re-entry. Despite his differences with their Headquarters, the UUP fielded John Taylor for much of Thursday on radio and television election programmes. He was, unsurprisingly, sceptical about the prospects for Talks, and fastened on to the Molyneaux twin-track proposals. The UUP's failure to make ground at the DUP's expense is likely to make the hierarchy more cautious, with the Westminster MPs group once again to the fore.

4. The Alliance Party have argued strongly for the resumption of Talks, as have the SDLP. The latter have continued to stress the importance of the 3-stranded process. John Hume said he would be willing to consider different arrangements for Talks, in terms of the number of people involved and location, but not a different basis for them. In media interviews Hume was careful to seek to maximise the SDLP's commonality of interest with the UUP and Alliance Party.

Prospects for local government

5. Belfast has only just retained its overall Unionist majority and the increase in Sinn Fein representation will not make the task of establishing responsibility-sharing any easier. In Ballymena, where

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the UUP scored a notable success and a long-standing DUP administration has been overturned, the UUP have indicated they will introduce partnership in the council chamber involving all parties.

6. In terms of the Nationalist/Unionist head counts, the main changes have taken place in Limavady, where the UUP mayor lost his seat to the SDLP thereby allowing a Nationalist majority for the first time; and Magherafelt where, as expected, the extra seat allocated by the Boundaries Commission has resulted in a nine/seven Nationalist/Unionist split. Dungannon remains hung, as does Strabane, but the prospects for responsibility-sharing are better in the latter council because of SDLP gains. Fermanagh and Armagh remain under narrow Unionist control, and seem likely to continue their relatively enlightened approach to council business.

7. All in all, there are good prospects for further responsibility-sharing. Next month's council meetings to select chairmen/mayors will be preceded by a good deal of horse-trading, the results of which will set the tone for the next council term.

8. Among those entering the local government scene for the first time are Mark Durkin (SDLP), David Ford (General Secretary of the Alliance Party), Chris and Michael McGimpsey (UUP), and Gary McMichael (Ulster Democratic Party). Mrs William McCrea also makes her debut in Cookstown. Amongst the most notable victims of the poll were Ken Maginnis, Seamus Lynch (Democratic Left), Tom Campbell (Alliance), Herbert Ditty (Belfast's Lord Mayor), Elizabeth Seawright (Protestant Unionist) and Norman Reynolds (UUP Chairman of Limavady Council).

#### The parties in detail

##### The UUP

9. The UUP are disappointed by their lower share of the vote (down 2.1% to 29.3%), even though it improves upon the gains they made in 1989. They had been hoping to do well at the expense of the DUP, and thereby receive a strong mandate for the continuation of Talks. They will be pleased by their showing in Ballymena, Cookstown, Ards, and Coleraine, and content that their support has held or increased

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slightly in other areas, such as Belfast, North Down and Strabane. But this has been offset by relatively indifferent performances in Castlereagh, Derry, Omagh, Limavady, Magherafelt, Craigavon, Dungannon and Antrim.

The DUP

10. The DUP are pleased with their performance. Although their share of the vote decreased by 0.5%, their hardline stance in the run-up to the elections has, they will argue, been vindicated. Consequently, they are unlikely to soften their pre-conditions for Talks. Belfast saw the largest rise in their vote, with their candidates topping the poll in many areas. They also did well in Castlereagh, where Iris and Peter Robinson romped home well clear of the UUP, and in Derry under Gregory Campbell's leadership.

11. These successes will provide consolation for their failure to retain overall control in Ballymena, and disappointing performances in Ards and North Down. They also lost out in Cookstown, due mainly to the split in the local Party over entry to Strand 2 of the Talks last Summer. Dr Paisley is said to be particularly sore about the loss of Ballymena, his childhood home and traditional power-base.

The SDLP

12. While the SDLP were claiming to see these elections as an opportunity for consolidation of gains, they will be disappointed that their share of the vote (21.9%), although 0.7% higher than in 1989, has not matched their 1992 General Election showing of 23.5%. They suffered particularly in Dungannon, Belfast and Newry (in the first two at the hands of Sinn Fein and in the latter at the hands of Independent candidates). They have, however, succeeded in taking overall control in Derry for the first time, and are now the largest party in both Strabane and Magherafelt. Hume's talks with Sinn Fein do not seem to have hurt the Party's support, and it will be interesting to see whether the level of transfers between the two Nationalist parties was higher than in 1989.

CONFIDENTIAL

-4-

10825/LO

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Sinn Fein

13. Sinn Fein are likely to be relieved and pleased by their performance. The improvement over their General Election showing, and the recapture of some of the seats they lost in 1989, will give them great satisfaction, as will the fact that their overall share of the vote has risen by 1.2% over 1989. In West Belfast they trounced the SDLP, winning an extra seat in Lower Falls and out-polling the SDLP two to one in Upper and Lower Falls combined. At 23.8% their share of the first preference vote put them in first place in the City, although in terms of numbers of seats, with 10 they came second to the UUP's 15. Most of the increase in support in Dungannon and Magherafelt can probably be put down to local factors.

The Alliance Party

14. The Alliance Party's share of the vote increased by 0.8%, which has resulted in their being the largest single party in Carrickfergus, and in gains in North Down, Castlereagh, Ards, and Antrim. They have also representation for the first time in a number of years in Omagh and Banbridge. The rise in their share of votes in Belfast was not rewarded with additional seats; despite coming very close to winning two extra seats, they actually lost one of their existing councillors in North Belfast reducing their council seats from six to five. Despite their relatively good showing, overall their share of the vote (7.6%) and total council seats (44) keep them in fifth place behind Sinn Fein, with overall control of none of the councils.

Conservatives

15. Although their share of the popular vote (1.4%) was greater than in 1989 (1%) (because they ran candidates in more councils) their performance will have been a bitter disappointment. They lost a number of seats previously held by defecting councillors from other parties, and even in North Down, where they polled well in the 1992 General Election, they lost two seats and saw their share of the

CONFIDENTIAL

-5-

10825/LO

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popular vote drop dramatically. Lawrence Kennedy has argued that this was a national phenomenon, citing the recent English County Council elections and the Newbury by-election; exacerbated by the reaction to the Government's policies in Northern Ireland.

Others

16. The defeat of Seamus Lynch (Democratic Left) and Tom French (Workers' Party), means those parties have lost their mainstays. Each now has only one seat and both are spent forces electorally. Ken Kerr (Ulster Democratic Party) lost his seat in Derry, but the Party still has one council seat as Gary McMichael was elected in Lisburn. This may require some further thought to be given to the official attitude to the UDP, which was based on Kerr's strong personal opposition to violence.

Specific areas

Belfast

17. In Belfast, the relative strengths of the two Unionist groupings are much the same, with each having slightly increased their overall level of representation. Chris and Michael McGimpsey will be useful additions to the strength of the UUP. The contest between the SDLP and Sinn Fein went the way of the latter, who took West Belfast in a manner which will be of concern to Joe Hendron at the next General Election. The Alliance Party were unlucky to lose one of their existing six seats. Privately, the UUP are emphasising the positive aspects of their increased representation, and the effect it will have when the recently-promised new Council committee structure (based on proportionality) is put into place. More realistically, the presence of stronger Sinn Fein and DUP factions will make it more difficult for City Hall politics to enter a new era of peaceful co-operation.

CONFIDENTIAL

-6-

10825/LO

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Ballymena

18. Somewhat against the general trend the UUP succeeded in taking control from the DUP, turning a seven/eleven minority into a ten/nine advantage. The SDLP also picked up a seat, increasing their total to two. Local opinion attributes the recent behaviour of the DUP Councillors in relation to the proposed concert by the Electric Light Orchestra as a significant factor in their defeat; but a highly focussed and well-organised UUP campaign must have been of equal or greater importance. There is no reason to expect that the earlier promises of a more liberal UUP regime will not be honoured.

Castlereagh

19. Once again the DUP have emerged on top in Castlereagh, gaining one seat to give them nine in total. The UUP lost two seats, leaving them with six; and the Alliance Party gained two to give them five. Overall control, however, will continue to rest with the three Independent Unionists, who traditionally have voted with the DUP.

Cookstown

20. In Cookstown the UUP have increased their representation from three to five, and to that extent have achieved their primary objective, while the DUP and their independent supporters have fallen to four. The SDLP have lost a seat and Sinn Fein's strength remains at two. This may have the overall effect of strengthening the UUP's hand in promoting co-operation with the SDLP, while at the same time moderating the latter's demands for what should be comprised within such co-operation.

Derry

21. The SDLP have succeeded in taking overall control in Derry for the first time, although it is unfortunate that in the process the last Unionist seat on the West Bank of the Foyle was lost. The SDLP are claiming that, as elsewhere, this was due to Sinn Fein vote

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stealing. The development is likely to increase still further Unionists' awareness of a divided City, and may generate more strident calls for a separate Waterside Council. The DUP gained substantially at the expense of the UUP in the Waterside area and this reflects, at least in part, the poor leadership the UUP have been able to offer in recent years, compared with that of Gregory Campbell.

Dungannon

22. In Dungannon, Ken Maginnis paid the penalty for trying to put his personal vote to maximum tactical advantage. His two UUP colleagues were elected, but Maginnis was eliminated by a very narrow margin. The SDLP's Vincent Currie (another of the leading proponents of responsibility-sharing), scraped in on the seventh count, and his Party, too, dropped a seat. Even a moderate Independent like Jim Canning saw his first preferences fall significantly. In contrast, the DUP increased their representation by one, and Sinn Fein by two. The advocates of continuing responsibility-sharing will be tested both by the more extreme elements now in the Council, and by the absence of Maginnis' strong personal influence.

Magherafelt

23. It had been hoped that a rise in support for the SDLP (who were expected to win the extra seat determined by the Boundaries Commission) would permit an SDLP/UUP responsibility-sharing arrangement to be reached. In the event, both the SDLP and Sinn Fein gained a seat, and the DUP took one from the UUP. This is likely to make the running of the Council difficult. Much will depend on the casting vote of the outgoing Chairman, Mary McSorely, when it comes to selecting the top two posts at their meeting next month.

North Down

24. In North Down, which gained a seat as a result of the Boundaries Commission review, the Conservatives and DUP both lost seats (two and one respectively). Consequently the UUP and Alliance

CONFIDENTIAL

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both gained an additional seat, and Independent candidates gained two additional seats. As regards control, the situation is the same as it was before the elections - no party on the Council has overall dominance, but the UUP is now the largest grouping with six councillors (it was previously the Conservatives). The loss of seats by the Conservatives could have been worse were it not for the fact that two veteran councillors, with over 57 years' service in local government between them, could rely on personal votes to retain their seats.

Omagh

25. There was little change in the Council, with the Alliance Party gaining one seat from the UUP. The hope for further success by the SDLP at the expense of Sinn Fein did not materialise, and the Nationalist vote was divided almost equally. The responsibility-sharing arrangements in which the UUP and SDLP have engaged ought to be able to continue with the support of an Independent Nationalist and the Alliance Party.

**Conclusion**

26. Initial contacts with the four main constitutional Parties suggest that only two, the Alliance Party and the DUP, are really satisfied with the outcome of these elections. The former were afraid that they would get squeezed by the increasing moderation shown by the UUP and the SDLP, and pinned their main hopes on taking votes from the NI Conservatives. In the event they need not have worried. The DUP knew they had adopted a high-risk strategy in their increasingly acrimonious break with the UUP since the Strand 2 meetings in Dublin last September (a strategy of independent action which we have it on good authority was developed by Peter Robinson). Now that it has paid off we are likely to see that gulf between the two main Unionist parties widen.

27. The UUP, although putting on a good public face, are privately shaken by the overall result for they had set considerable store by the hope that they would open up a decisive electoral gap between themselves and the DUP. Publicly they are trying to put the

CONFIDENTIAL

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blame on the Secretary of State and others who suggested the DUP was in decline; but privately, as it was told to me, the "big guns" (ie Ross, Smyth, Trimble et al) are unhappy with the current state of affairs and have called a special meeting of the Party Executive on Monday 31 May. At this meeting the election results, including the Party's approach to responsibility-sharing in councils, and the Party's attitude to renewed Talks, will be given a thorough airing.

28. Generally, the SDLP seem neither happy nor unhappy with the results, although the Belfast councillors I have spoken to are alarmed at the performance of Sinn Fein in the City and its implications for the future conduct of City Council business. Sinn Fein on the other hand are jubilant and the triumphalist behaviour of their councillors and supporters in the City Hall on Friday afternoon was disturbing, not just to me but to all the members of the SDLP, UUP, RUC and press corps that I spoke to there.

[signed CGM]

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CONFIDENTIAL

-10-

10825/LO

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION RESULTS

	1993			1989			1985		
	Seats	First Preferences	% of vote	Seats	First Preferences	% of vote	Seats	First Preferences	% of votes
UUP	197	182,495	29.3	193	193,005	31.4	190	188,497	29.5
DUP	103	107,577	17.3	110*	110,068	17.8	142	155,297	24.3
SDLP	127	136,960	21.9	121	129,553	21.2	101	113,967	17.8
Sinn Fein	51	77,984	12.5	43	69,031	11.3	59	75,686	11.8
Alliance	44	47,645	7.6	39	42,659	6.8	34	45,394	7.1
Conservative	6	8,727	1.4	7+	5,956	1.0	-	-	-
Others	<u>54</u>	<u>64,207</u>	<u>10.0</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>67,712</u>	<u>10.5</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>60,781</u>	<u>9.5</u>
Total	582	623,372	100	566	617,984	100	566	639,622	100

\*Reduced to 95 at the time of the 1993 elections by defections and by-election defeats.

+Increased to 12 at the time of the 1993 elections by defections from other parties and by-election victories.

## DISTRICT COUNCIL COMPOSITION: 21 MAY 1993

	S E A T S	U U P	D U P	S D L P	A P N I	S F	C O N	O T H E R
Antrim	19	8	3	4	2	1		1
Ards	23	9	6		6			2
Armagh	22	10	2	9		1		
Ballymena	24	10	9	2	1			2
Ballymoney	16	6	6	3				1
Banbridge	17	10	2	3	1			1
Belfast	51	15	9	9	5	10		3
Carrickfergus	17	5	2		6		1	3
Castlereagh	23	6	9		5			3
Coleraine	22	12	5	3	2			
Cookstown	16	5	3	5		2		1
Craigavon	26	10	4	6	2	2		2
Derry	30	2	5	17		5		1
Down	23	7	3	13				
Dungannon	22	8	3	4		5		2
Fermanagh	23	10	2	5		3		3
Larne	15	7	4		2			2
Limavady	15	6	1	7		1		
Lisburn	30	16	3	3	2	3	1	2
Magherafelt	16	3	4	5		4		
Moyle	15	2	3	3		1		6
Newry and Mourne	30	6	1	15		5		3
Newtownabbey	25	10	5	1	4			5
North Down	25	6	3		5		4	7
Omagh	21	4	3	5	1	6		2
Strabane	16	4	3	5		2		2
Total	582	197	103	127	44	51	6	54