

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES****IRELAND**

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**Title:** Report written by Seán Donlon, Assistant Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs, of his conversations with the SDLP [Social Democratic and Labour Party] regarding Sunningdale, and of the current situation in Northern Ireland during the UWC [Ulster Workers' Council] strike. Includes an attached statement of what the SDLP regard as the maximum movement that Brian Faulkner, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Executive, is prepared to make on Sunningdale.

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Northern Ireland Situation - 21 May 1974

1. The following information is based exclusively on conversations yesterday and early this morning with the SDLP.
2. The attached draft statement represents what the SDLP regard as the maximum movement Faulkner is prepared to make on Sunningdale at this stage. They have indicated to Faulkner and to the British that they are prepared to accept it subject to the following conditions:
  - (a) the agreement of the SDLP Assembly Party;
  - (b) evidence that the British have taken on and broken the UWC control of geographic areas and <sup>of</sup> the business and normal life of Northern Ireland;
  - (c) the British immediately take whatever steps are necessary, including the manning of the power stations by the troops, to restore normal electricity supplies.
3. Within the SDLP, I am satisfied that, as of now, the six members of the NI Administration (Fitt, Hume, Devlin, Currie, Cooper, McGrady) are prepared to support the draft statement. The six backbenchers who have so far seen the draft are opposed to it and the full party is meeting at 11.30 a.m. today to consider the matter further. My impression is that the leadership will be able to carry most if not all of the Assembly Party with it but that it will have considerable difficulty in doing so, especially if at the same time there is no move on internment. The possibility of a handful of defections (maximum of 4, led by Paddy O'Hanlon?) cannot be ruled out.
4. Within the NI Administration, Faulkner has argued strongly that he has a written assurance from the Taoiseach that "any consensus arrived at by the NI Executive" in relation to Sunningdale will be acceptable to Dublin.

5. The unwillingness of the British to confront the Loyalist strikers is attributed by the SDLP to a difference of opinion between Rees and Mason, the latter taking the line that troops cannot be fully committed to confronting Loyalists in circumstances when they might also have to cope with a massive do or die effort by the Provos.

6. The overall situation in Belfast and in the areas of Northern Ireland through which I travelled yesterday is completely chaotic. The power situation is very bad and even essential food supplies are scarce. What is most dramatic and obvious, however, is the UWC control of the situation. Any part of "normal" life which is continuing is doing so only by licence from the UWC.

*Seán Donlon*

Seán Donlon

22 May 1974

DRAFT STATEMENT:

1. The Northern Ireland Executive has been engaged for many weeks in careful consideration of the matters covered by the Sunningdale Communique. This has involved detailed preparatory work by officials and discussions with the other participants in the Conference, the United Kingdom and Irish Governments.
  
2. Throughout these discussions, the Executive has had constantly in mind the following matters:-
  - (a) the Executive itself, commanding as it does the confidence of the Assembly elected in June 1973, is determined to continue to act unitedly for the benefit of the whole Northern Ireland community throughout the lifetime of that Assembly, which expires in 1977/78.
  - (b) The Executive is convinced that the constitutional settlement embodied in the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973, and the Sunningdale Communique, represents the only means open to secure the progress of Northern Ireland through co-operation of all sections of our community, rather than on the inherently unstable basis of dominance by any section of the community. Accordingly it is determined to stand firmly by that settlement.
  - (c) the Executive, however, recognises the difficulty of securing general public support for new constitutional arrangements in a situation of continuing violence; and it is for precisely that reason that those opposed to such arrangements continue to use violence. While there can be no instant solutions to this problem, it is appreciated that in the long term the new arrangements are bound to be judged by the contribution which they make to peace and stability.
  - (d) the essence of detailed further development, in accordance with the broad

*/framework*

framework established by the Constitution Act, Sunningdale Communique, must be a steady growth of mutual confidence both within Northern Ireland itself and as between North and South in Ireland. It must therefore be the objective to promote such confidence by making progress on the basis of the general consent of the people.

3. It is against this background that the Executive has now agreed the basis upon which it is prepared to proceed in relation to an agreement relating to a Council of Ireland with the British and Irish Governments.

#### HEADS OF PROPOSED AGREEMENT.

4. The Executive stands united by the Sunningdale Communique as the basis for a development of mutual trust and confidence and looks to their implementation in accordance with the need for consent set out above.
5. It has therefore been decided to seek an early meeting with the other parties to the Sunningdale discussions to decide upon further progress towards the implementation of these principles as follows.

#### PHASE ONE

6. Following such decision the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government would forthwith each nominate seven members to a Council of Ministers which would act, as agreed at Sunningdale, only on the basis of complete unanimity.
7. The Council of Ministers would provide the forum for consultation, co-operation and co-ordination of action between the Executive and the Irish Government in relation to the economic and social matters listed below which have been identified in accordance with the following criteria set out in paragraph 8 of the Sunningdale Communique:

- (1) to achieve the best utilisation of scarce skills, expertise and resources:

- (2) to avoid, in the interests of economy and efficiency unnecessary duplication of effort; and
- (3) to ensure complementary rather than competitive effort where this is to the advantage of agriculture, commerce and industry.

Electricity Generation and Distribution.

Tourism

Carlingford Lough

Lough Foyle

Studies into possible joint industrial projects.

Study of future energy needs and resources

Geological Survey

Aspects of trade promotion

Cross-Border drainage

Plant and Animal Health

Marine Resources

Inland Waterways

Cross-Border Railways

Cross-Border Roads and Bridges

Historic Buildings

Pollution

Plant and Animal Health (continued)

Horse-Racing, Bloodstock and Greyhounds.

Co-Operation in Cross-Border Planning

Conservation

Sport

Aspects of Health and Social Welfare.

8. The Council of Ministers would undertake those responsibilities in relation to human rights and policing set out in paragraphs 11 and 15 of the Sunningdale Communique.

9. The Council of Ministers would meet at alternate venues North and South.
10. For the purpose of servicing meetings of the Council of Ministers and for the efficient discharge of its business, it would appoint staff on secondment from the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government.

## SECOND PHASE

11. Further steps in implementation of the Sunningdale Communique would be taken only after a test of opinion of the Northern Ireland electorate.
12. The basis for this test would be the next General Election to the Northern Ireland Assembly (i.e. that which will be due under the Constitution Act in 1977/78).
13. Thereafter, those elements of Sunningdale not incorporated in the steps described in paragraphs 4 - 10 above would be activated with the consent of the Assembly. In particular, these steps would include the following.
14. Assembly legislation would be introduced from time to time to provide for the transfer of functions from existing Departments and authorities to the Council of Ministers.
15. The Council of Ministers would proceed to the appointment of a Secretary General and of any further staff required in the light of the transfer of functions.
16. Provision would be made for the nomination of members of the Assembly and Dail to a Consultative Assembly.
17. The Council of Ministers would determine the location of a permanent headquarters.

21 MAY 1974