

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD AT PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, STORMONT, ON FRIDAY, 17 MAY 1974 AT 9 30 AM.

PRESENT:

- Mr Faulkner (Chief Minister)
- Mr Fitt (Deputy Chief Minister) (Item 5 only, after 5 30 pm)
- ~~Mr [redacted]~~
- Mr Baxter (Information)
- Mr Bradford (Environment)
- Mr Currie (Housing, Local Government and Planning)
- Mr Devlin (Health and Social Services) (Until 1.15 pm)
- Mr Hume (Commerce)
- Mr Kirk (Finance)
- Mr McIvor (Education)
- Mr Morrell (Agriculture)
- Mr I Cooper (Community Relations) ) Items 1-3 and
- Mr R Cooper (Manpower Services) ) that part of
- Mr McGrady (Executive Planning and Co-ordination)) item 5 taken
- Major Hall-Thompson (Chief Whip) ) after 5 30 pm
  
- Mr K P Bloomfield } Secretariat
- Mr P A Sythes }
  
- Mr T M Roberts - Head of Press Services

A G E N D A

1. Sunningdale - Report of Executive Sub-Committee (EXMEMO 89/74)
2. Detainees after Release (EXMEMO 86/74)
3. Political Levy Issue (EXMEMO 83/74)
4. Reorganisation of Secondary Education (EXMEMO 75/74 with Addition)
5. Civil Disobedience - Collection Charges (EXMEMO 93/74)
6. Emergency Petrol Depots

1. SUNNINGDALE - REPORT OF EXECUTIVE SUB-COMMITTEE (EXMEMO 89/74)

After considerable discussion Ministers agreed to accept the wording of paragraph 2 of the Report as the basis for the Council of Ministers.

During the course of considering the subjects listed in the Annex (which were those put forward in the joint report by officials) there was further discussion on the question of the Secretariat.

Ministers considered separately the various choices and agreed to defer discussion in view of an urgent report by the Minister of Commerce on the current electricity position.

(The Minister of Commerce reported the threat to Coolkeeragh and the danger of supplies to Belfast being stopped if attempts were made to keep Coolkeeragh operating after 2 00 pm. Ministers agreed that they could not accept discrimination in power supplies and supported the Minister of Commerce in his refusal to react to the threat. He was asked to represent the Executive at a meeting with the Secretary of State and accordingly left for Stormont Castle at this point.)

2. DETAINEES AFTER RELEASE

Considered on basis of EXMEMO 86/74 and after discussion it was

Decided that

- (a) the Executive would co-operate in the implementation of the scheme; and
- (b) the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Community Relations should seek assurances on staffing and membership of the body set up to operate the scheme.

3. POLITICAL LEVY ISSUE

Considered on basis of EXMEMO 83/74 dated 9 May 1974 introduced by the Minister of Manpower Services, previously considered on 9 April 1974 (EXMEMO 53/74 and EXMIN 74/16/2).

Decided that

- (a) the recommendation to repeal the provisions of the Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act (Northern Ireland) 1927 relating to the "contracting out" principle should be accepted; and
- (b) before making any announcement on the subject the Minister of Manpower Services should refer back to the Executive.

4. REORGANISATION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Considered on basis of EXMEMO 75/74 and Addition dated 9 May 1974 introduced by the Minister of Education who outlined his latest thinking on the Burges Report and the modifications of his proposed statement which had resulted.

In Discussion Ministers paid tribute to the present grammar school system in Northern Ireland.

Decided that the Minister of Education

- (a) should make a statement expressing agreement in principle with the need to revise the present selection procedure for secondary education and giving assurance that detailed surveys would be undertaken, one in the Belfast area and one in a rural area; and
- (b) should try to arrange for a debate to take place in the Assembly during which opportunity would be taken to explain his position in detail.

(On his return from Stormont Castle at 12 noon the Minister of Commerce reported that the Secretary of State was completely firm in his attitude and was prepared to take alternative steps to ensure minimum essential supplies of electricity if the system should break down completely.)

5. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE - COLLECTION CHARGES

Considered on basis of EXMEMO 93/74 dated 15 May 1974 circulated and introduced by the Minister of Housing, Local Government and Planning.

Discussed at length. During discussion Ministers paid tribute to the courage of the Minister of Housing and to the success he had achieved in obtaining a marked reduction in the number of people still on rent strike, even among those who were not subject to weekly deductions from social benefits. There was however a considerable difference of view as to the wisdom of further postponing the implementation of a decision which had been taken previously by the Executive.

(Discussion was adjourned at 1 15 pm in view of the meeting with the Secretary of State at 2 30 pm and was resumed at 5 30 pm.)

In the resumed discussion the Minister of Housing referred to his initial statement in the Assembly which was consistent with the flexibility which he now wished to show. After a further exchange of views it was suggested that a middle course might be taken by which the administrative arrangement allowing

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for strikers ending their strike during the week beginning 20 May to be deemed to have done so with effect from 20 May, might be extended to apply to all those who did so during the whole four weeks following 20 May. A decision was postponed to enable Ministers to explore the legal and administrative implications of this suggestion.

6. EMERGENCY PETROL DEPOTS

The Minister of Commerce reported on the threat to petrol supplies because of the electricity supply position.

Decided that the Minister of Commerce be authorised to set up emergency depots for petrol if the necessity should arise.

Office of the Executive  
Parliament Buildings  
Stormont

23 May 1974

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