

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 the 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 the 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 established by the Constitution Act and the 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 the Council of Ireland.

HEADS OF PROPOSED AGREEMENT

4. The Executive stands unitedly by the principles embodied in 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 the agreed Communique 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 NI Executive and the Irish Government in relation to
the economic and social matters 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."

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

Horse-racing, bloodstock, and greyhounds

Co-operation in Cross-Border planning

Conservation

Marine resources

Electricity Generation and distribution

Inland Waterways

Cross-Border railways

Cross-Border roads and bridges

Historic Buildings

Pollution

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 respectively 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 the opinion of the Northern Ireland electorate.

12. The basis for this test would be the next General Election to the Northern Ireland Assembly (ie 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 such transfers of functions.

16. Provision would be made for the nomination of members of the Assembly and Dail to the Consultative Assembly.

17. The Council of Ministers would determine the location of a permanent headquarters.