

**CONFIDENTIAL**

EXMIN 74/29

Copy No:

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 23 MAY 1974 AT 3 30 PM IN  
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, STORMONT

PRESENT: Mr Faulkner (Chief Minister)  
Mr Napier (Law Reform)  
Mr Baxter (Information)  
Mr Bradford (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)  
Mr R Cooper (Manpower Services)  
Major Hall-Thompson (Chief Whip)

Mr K P Bloomfield)      Secretariat  
Mr P A Sythes      )

A G E N D A

1. Meeting with representatives of industry, commerce, the farmers and trade unions

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## 1. MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF INDUSTRY, COMMERCE, THE FARMERS AND TRADE UNIONS

Ministers discussed what attitude they should adopt in receiving the representatives of the CBI, the UFU, ICTU, the Joint Electricity Council, Engineering Employers and the shopkeepers.

The Chief Minister reported that he had spoken to the Secretary of State a few minutes previously and had asked for a decision by 4 00 pm that day as to the Westminster Government's attitude towards the use of troops for the maintenance of essential services. He thought it unlikely that a clear answer would arrive in time to be used in the Executive's discussion with the representatives. He suggested therefore that the Executive should adopt the role of listener. This was agreed.

Ministers then went on to wider consideration of the possible options open to the Executive in a situation in which the UWC appeared to be steadily tightening its grip on the country. Mention was made of the possible leak of information about the oil plan. The impression was inescapable that the UWC had highly intelligent direction, and an intimate knowledge of the workings of the supply system for essential services and the precise points at which to put the pressure. The wisdom of talking, directly or indirectly to the strikers was discussed. One Minister strongly advocated opening up some dialogue, at least to hear what they had to say and before the situation became completely entrenched. He felt that the UWC had not expected such complete success, and that they were probably becoming apprehensive at the anarchy which could follow. Other Ministers argued that the objective of the strike was to bring down the Executive and end power-sharing and the Constitution Act. Therefore, it must be resisted to the full extent of the resources at the disposal of the Executive and the Secretary of State.

At this point the Secretary joined the meeting and reported that a decision from the Secretary of State was likely to be received later that day and would probably be in favour of full support to the Executive. The British Government wanted to be perfectly clear of the course they were taking and the troop involvement. One estimate had suggested a need for 30,000 troops.

In further discussion mention was made of a possible Vietnam situation developing with complete devastation of Northern Ireland. Once again a strong plea was made for opening a line of communication with the strikers, but Ministers generally were not in favour.

Office of the Executive  
Stormont

30 May 1974

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