

NATIONAL ARCHIVES**IRELAND**

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Title:	Summary written by Seán Donlon, Assistant Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs, of meetings between Irish Government ministers and a delegation from the SDLP [Social Democratic and Labour Party] on 11 and 12 May, 1974, at which prominent points for discussion included developments towards the finalisation of the Sunningdale Agreement within the Northern Ireland Executive, the positions held by the SDLP and the Faulkner Unionists, and details of proposals for the Council of Ireland.
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I Seán
Taoiseach *hl* *14/5/74*
 To see *hl*
 This was received after I had dictated
 my note of 10. day date on the same
 subject
 13/5/74

Summary of meeting between Government Ministers
and SDLP, 11/12 May 1974

1. The first meeting was arranged at short notice at the request of the SDLP and took place at Iveagh House at 7.00 p.m. Those present were Messrs. Hume and Devlin, the Ministers for Finance, Posts and Telegraphs, the Attorney General, Messrs. Nally (Department of the Taoiseach), Whelan and Donlon (Foreign Affairs). The SDLP had previously met Messrs. Lynch and Colley at the Fianna Fáil headquarters in Mount Street.
2. Mr. Hume explained that the purpose of the meeting was to keep the Government fully informed of developments towards the finalisation of the Sunningdale Agreement within the NI Executive. The Unionists had been slow to move but there was now general agreement among the Executive parties that the political vacuum was fostering violence and that the situation should be developed to the point of finality by the end of May. The SDLP position was that they could not depart from a "full signing of Sunningdale" but that they could agree to a gradual implementation of its provisions. This position was understood and broadly accepted by Faulkner. At the Executive sub-committee what was basically being considered was the detail of gradual implementation. The Faulkner position was set out in a secret document (Appendix I to this report) dated 9 May 1974 which was considered in some detail at the meeting and on which the SDLP asked for comments. The document should, they said, be seen as "the first draft of an attempt to reach an agreed Executive position". There were major points of difference in the document which might lead to a breakdown of the Executive but if an agreement were thrashed out what was envisaged as a next stage was a one day formal meeting which might take the form of a second Hillsborough meeting in the morning and a second Sunningdale meeting in the afternoon.
3. The SDLP regarded the document in its present form as unacceptable but nevertheless realised that it represented considerable movement

Faulkner's part. With the exception of Bradford, the Faulkner Unionists now seemed prepared to move towards "signing Sunningdale" and a number of recent developments, notably the setting up of the new Unionist Party, showed that they were prepared to work towards some form of implementation. The full Executive would meet again on 13 May to consider the document and the SDLP proposed to take the position that it would have to be beefed up (a) to ensure a meaningful Council of Ireland and (b) to get rid of the referendum concept. In negotiating on phasing in, the SDLP were prepared "to give on the second tier before giving on functions". Article 2 of the attached draft outline scheme (i.e. Article 2 of part I) was totally unacceptable in that it would give the Council the power to refuse to take any executive functions. This was a step backwards from the Sunningdale Agreement. And it was the thinking behind the rejection of this article which also led the SDLP to go against the idea of making the next North-South inter-ministerial meeting the first meeting of the Council of Ireland. To do anything of this nature before the "formalisation of Sunningdale" would run contrary to what had been agreed.

4. The Attorney General gave some preliminary views on the document and agreed to consider it overnight and meet the SDLP at 12.30 p.m. on 12 May to give further views. He agreed with the interpretation of Article 2 as outlined in para. 3 and also pointed out that if Article 9 were left in part II (the mss. notes on the document are Hume's and do not represent Unionist thinking) even e.g. Foyle Fisheries functions could not be transferred to the Council until after a referendum. The Minister for Posts and Telegraphs agreed that there were dangers in the document, some of them of a fundamental nature, but that it might be more dangerous to spend too much time trying to beef it up since during that time something might happen to swing Faulkner away completely from signing on the dotted line. The Minister for Finance pointed out that in many ways the document was similar to the 1921 Treaty - it was full of good hope

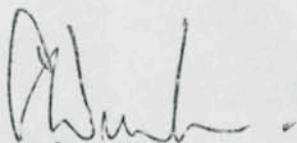
but if the will to implement its provisions was absent on any side, it would become a useless document.

5. After the meeting, I obtained from Mr. Devlin a revised version of the document. This is dated 10 May and is attached as Appendix II. I gathered that the SDLP felt unable to use it as a basis for discussion with us because it is formally classified as an Executive Memo. and they would not wish it known that they were prepared to bring such material to Dublin.

6. In regard to the meeting on 10 May between the NI Administration and Rees and Silkin, the SDLP gave the following information:

- (i) the British are prepared to go along reluctantly with the implementation of extra-territoriality. There is as yet no agreed NI Executive position on the matter but they thought it likely that Faulkner would agree to take the British line;
- (ii) Rees is very worried about the amount of guns coming into Northern Ireland to both sets of extremists and is generally pessimistic about the security situation. (This information was given to me privately by Hume after and not during the meeting);
- (iii) the British seemed to accept that by and large the main security problem was not a cross-border one but an internal NI one.

7. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Attorney General met Messrs. Hume and Devlin at the Attorney General's house at 12.30 p.m. on 12 May 1974. Messrs. Nally and Donlon were also present. The document contained in Appendix I was discussed in detail and the Attorney General gave the SDLP written comments on it. These are contained in Appendix III to this report.


Seán Donlon

12 May 1974