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THE ULSTER GENERAL STRIKE (1974)

INCLUDING

**Strike bulletins of the
Workers Association**

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C O N T E N T S

INTRODUCTION: INTRODUCTION: Sunningdale

STRIKE BULLETINS

EPILOGUE

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

SUNNINGDALE

The General Strike which took place in Ulster in May 1974 resulted in the fall of the devolved Government which had held office since January 1974, and in the abolition of the entire Constitutional framework which had been established by the Sunningdale Agreement of December 1973 for the functioning of devolved Government in Ulster. But these dramatic results were far in excess of what had been demanded by the strike leadership.

The effective demand of the strike was that either the Council of Ireland aspect of the Sunningdale Agreement should not be ratified by the Stormont Assembly, or an Assembly election should be called. Since it had been made abundantly clear by the Westminster election in February 1974 that a substantial majority of the electorate was opposed to the establishment of a Council of Ireland under existing circumstances, this demand was entirely reasonable. But the Government, (which is to say the Stormont government under the hegemony of the Westminster government) resisted this demand with blind stubbornness for two weeks - and then capitulated in an extravagantly excessive manner. Not the slightest concession was made to the will of the majority for two weeks, and then a massive concession was made which exceeded the hopes of the most extreme opponents of Sunningdale amongst the strikers.

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Ulster is a region of the United Kingdom that is inherently unsuitable for devolved government, but devolved government was imposed on it against its will in 1920 by Westminster as part of a grand imperial strategy for reaching an accommodation with the IRA on an all-Ireland framework loosely associated with the UK. That accommodation never materialised, but devolved government in Ulster was kept in being.

National or regional homogeneity is a prerequisite for the devolution of government. But Ulster in 1920 was very sharply divided on national/religious lines. The province was made up of two quite distinct communities, the product of two different historical developments. One, constituting two-thirds of the population, was British and wished to be governed as an integral part of the UK. The other, constituting one-third, derived from the old Gaelic society and was involved in the Catholic nationalist development that had begun in the 1820s: it wished to be governed by the Catholic nationalist state of Southern Ireland.

Neither of these communities wished to have to cope with the other in a provincial statelet. Yet that is what Westminster insisted should be the case.

The Unionists, being confronted with the accomplished fact of a devolved government, applied themselves to working it. The Nationalists (including the Nationalist Party and Sinn Fein) applied themselves to making the provincial statelet unworkable, usually by passive obstruction and occasionally by military means - and one third was a sufficiently large minority to make such a policy feasible.

The imposition of a common devolved government on these two sharply conflicting communities was an act of gross political irresponsibility. It had the inevitable result of aggravating and prolonging their antagonism with one another, and retarding political development within each. What they required in order to supersede their local antagonism was the greatest possible involvement in the politics of the larger multi-national state of the UK. What they got was a provincial statelet which sealed them off from political involvement in the mainstream politics of the United Kingdom.

Belfast developed as a component of the great triangle of capitalist cities including also Liverpool and Glasgow. Even Belfast's "sectarian" problem was shared, though to a lesser extent, by Liverpool and Glasgow.

The Liverpool Member of Parliament, Eric Heffer, has written:

"Liverpool is, like Glasgow, one of the last great proletarian cities. It has thrown up leaders, both Tory and Labour, who have tended to act like American city bosses... Liverpool of course had at one stage a predominantly Tory working class, which in those days was based on a religious protestant foundation. Today that has gone, and working people tend to vote as workers, irrespective of religion, which has led to the growth of the Labour Party - although, contrary to press mythology, such a development has taken place only since the end of the second world war" (Eric Heffer, "Who Says Labour's Working Class Socialism Is In Decline?". Tribune. June 18, 1976).

It is one of the negative consequences of devolved Government in Ulster that Heffer does not include Belfast with Liverpool and Glasgow. The three cities developed together and they remain closely interlinked economically and culturally. The "sectarian" problem has the same cause in all three: the migration of the Catholic peasantry of South and West Ireland into centres of industrial development during the 19th century. (In 1800 only a handful of Catholics lived in Belfast.)

If there are still remnants of Catholic/Protestant conflict in the labour movement in Liverpool and Glasgow despite involvement in British political development, is it not probable that ~~that~~ conflict would still be flourishing in those cities if they had been secluded from British politics and compelled ^{to turn} inwards on themselves, as Belfast was?

Much has been written about "fifty years of Unionist misrule" in Ulster. But that 'misrule' resulted from the very fact of devolved government rather from the behaviour of the party which had to operate it. Because the structure of devolution was itself inherently divisive, and because its establishment was opposed by the Unionist Party, it is unreasonable to hold the Unionist Party responsible for the consequences of devolution.

Fifty years after the structure had been set up it broke down. The persistent opposition of the Catholic minority to the Unionist administration led eventually, after many twists and turns, to the uncontrollable rioting of 1969, and the intervention of the Westminster Government. Stormont existed as a Whitehall puppet for a couple of years longer, but was formally abolished in 1972 after the Faulkner government resigned in preference to becoming a completely token affair.

Westminster had no sooner abolished devolved government in Ulster than it began making preparations to restore it. It was announced in August 1972 that a Plebiscite on the Border would be held. The

purpose in this was to reassure the Unionists that their position within the UK would not be jeopardised by any strange arrangements that were made in restoring devolved government. It was hoped that the Plebiscite would take the Partition question out of the politics of devolved government.

All anti-Partitionist groupings were vociferously opposed to the Border Plebiscite, and were determined that the Partition question should remain very much in Ulster politics. The Plebiscite was not held until March 1973, when it was boycotted by all anti-Partitionist organisations, including the SDLP.

A Green Paper on the Constitutional future of the Province was issued in November 1972. This was followed by a White Paper in March 1973, and a Constitutional Bill in May 1973. The latter provided for the election of a Northern Ireland Assembly, which would meet under the supervision of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (William Whitelaw), and from which it was hoped agreement would develop for the formation of a "power-sharing" devolved government. The elections were held in late June 1973, and resulted in a comfortable majority for the three parties which were the potential power sharers: the Faulkner Unionists, the Alliance Party, and the SDLP. But there was a substantial Unionist minority returned on an "anti-White Paper" platform. The Faulkner Unionists, with 26% of the vote, were a minority party in the Unionist camp. The SDLP, which up to this point had been claiming to represent 40% of the society, got 23% of the vote.

The parties of the future Coalition had 49 seats in the 78 seat Assembly, while the three Unionist parties opposed to the White Paper had 28 seats. But the Coalition did not yet exist. It was far from being the case that the future Coalition parties had fought the election on a Coalition programme of power-sharing.

The SDLP had withdrawn from the Stormont Parliament in July 1971, (before the introduction of internment), and had established an "Alternative Assembly". Early in 1972, John Hume announced a policy of "united Ireland or nothing". The IRA offensive escalated continuously until the summer of 1972, and the activity of the SDLP was dovetailed into that offensive. The SDLP relationship with the IRA in 1971-2 was somewhat similar to Parnell's relationship with the Fenian movement a century earlier, as described by James Connolly. Parnell, wrote Connolly, "always believed in a physical force party but would never join it. This gave him the power to say to the English Government that if it did not grant his moderate demands then the physical force party would take control of Irish affairs out of his hands". Parnell thus

"had the power of an organisation of armed men behind him whilst

he had no responsibility for their actions" (Irish Worker, August 8, 1914)

By 1973 it was clear that the IRA offensive was not going to succeed in the way that seemed possible early in 1972. On the other hand the IRA remained intact as a fighting force. The SDLP began to move back gradually into the sphere of constitutional politics with what it considered a very strong bargaining position. Its bargaining strength depended on its 23% vote combined with the fact that it could present itself as an alternative to the IRA. In order to gain most from its bargaining position it played hard to get. It did not enter into any agreements before the election, or for many months after the election. In its election campaign it downgraded the significance of the Assembly, describing it as a "conference table". In contesting the Assembly election it committed itself to absolutely nothing. And one of its leading members, Paddy Devlin, had made a number of statements against power-sharing, which he described quite accurately as "institutionalised sectarianism".

Paddy Devlin explains in his book, The Fall Of The Northern Ireland Executive, (1975), that "by the end of September (1973), time was running out for the parties elected to the... Assembly. They needed to commence work at once on a power-sharing form of Government which could operate on a consensus basis in a limited field of Executive activities... With the Assembly elections four months behind... we had nothing to show for our efforts except the futility of trying to set up a procedure for working the Assembly which a loyalist minority was trying stubbornly to block." (p40). However, it was not primarily because of loyalist procedural obstruction that the Assembly was getting nowhere, it was because the SDLP was dragging its heels politically. It laid down some very stiff preconditions for any movement beyond casual chat at the conference table.

"At Westminster, Mr. Heath was showing irritation over our failure in the Assembly to get the show properly on the road. He was only too well aware, like ourselves, that March, 1974, was the deadline set out in the Constitution Act by which a power-sharing Executive should be in action. Failure to do so would have led automatically to dissolution of the Assembly and a possible return to another and more protracted period of direct rule and its consequent violence. It was in the light of these facts that the SDLP at a meeting held early in October in Dungannon decided to break the deadlock. Prior to this the Party had insisted that its members would not take part in negotiations to form an Executive... until it knew precisely what was to be achieved on the issues of ending detention without trial, on forming a Council of Ireland, and on

changes necessary to make the police more acceptable in non-policed areas" (Devlin, p42)

What actually happened to break the deadlock was that Heath visited Dublin in late September for discussions with the Southern government, and made an off-the-cuff remark to newsmen that if the Assembly didn't produce results the alternative policy of integrating Ulster fully into the UK would have to be considered. This remark produced a startling effect on the SDLP leaders. They had imagined that Whitehall considered integration unthinkable as a final political settlement, and that their own bargaining position was impregnable. But if Heath had an open mind about integration, then they had to get in and negotiate for a slice of devolved power while it was still on offer.

Under this stimulus negotiations got off the ground in October and were finalised at Sunningdale in December.

Paddy Devlin describes the Sunningdale negotiations: *"The general approach of the SDLP to the talks was to get all-Ireland institutions established which, with adequate safeguards (?), would produce the dynamic that could lead ultimately to an agreed single State for Ireland. That meant, of course, that SDLP representatives would concentrate their entire efforts on building up a set of tangible executive powers for the Council which in the fullness of time would create and sustain an evolutionary process. All other issues were governed by that approach and were aimed generally at reducing loyalist resistance to the concepts of a Council of Ireland and a power-sharing Executive. The SDLP was sensitive to the need for loyalist views to be responded to in the deliberations of the Conference. We were in need of some loyalist support to enable us to get the Executive operational"* (p32).

Devlin writes of the Unionists at Sunningdale: *"...the Unionists had insisted from the outset that the only reason they could accept the need for a Council of Ireland was in exchange for a formal declaration by Dublin on N. Ireland's Constitutional status. The Irish Government anticipated the need for such a statement and produced a formula which was later included side by side in the final draft with one by Britain recognising that should the Northern Irish people wish to become part of a united Ireland, Britain would support that wish. The Irish Government's statement was to the effect that it recognised that there could be no change in the status of the status of N. Ireland without the consent of the Northern majority and that this statement would be...formally registered with the United Nations. Mr. Faulkner and his Unionist colleagues were able to appreciate the importance to them of the Dublin declaration on Northern Ireland's status in sealing the*

agreed package when they returned to Belfast. It was a new form of recognition which Mr. Cosgrave was giving to the Unionists on the constitutional position of the North. Indeed, Mr. Roy Bradford, addressing a meeting of his constituency party two days afterwards, said: "It was my first priority at Sunningdale to get recognition in the form of a formal solemn declaration that the wishes of the majority would determine the future constitutional status of N. Ireland. We got that declaration in clear and unmistakeable terms from the Irish Government." (p33/34).

Devlin concludes: "We were satisfied that we had secured the basis for an effective and evolving Council of Ireland. We had gone beyond our wildest dreams in securing Wolfe Tone's objective of uniting Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter. We had one worry and that concerned Faulkner and his Party's ability to sell the package to the Northern electorate in view of the rising tide of loyalist hostility to him back home" (p39).

When it appears that you have gained something beyond your wildest dreams you will be well advised to act very prudently in order to retain it, especially if your wildest dreams are pretty wild and if the place is Ulster.

According to Paragraph 4 of the Sunningdale communique, "representatives of apparently incompatible sets of political aspirations... found it possible to reach agreement to join in Government because each accepted that in doing so they were not sacrificing principles or aspirations". But it was obvious that parties with antagonistic principles and aspirations could only form a Coalition government if one of them sacrificed his principles and aspirations. No matter how convoluted the formulas might be which were employed in order to obscure the sacrifice, the Government would not work unless one of the parties abandoned its principles for practical political purposes. SDLP and Unionists left Sunningdale, each thinking that it had got a very definite edge over the other. The SDLP thought it had got a Council of Ireland which would evolve into an all-Ireland state. The Faulkner Unionists thought they had got an unambiguous recognition of the Border by Dublin. One or other of them would inevitably discover that it had made a fundamental miscalculation.

Eighty per cent of the Sunningdale Agreement had to do with complex arrangements for the Council of Ireland - which is to say, with concessions by the Unionists to the SDLP. Only one sentence was concerned with anti-Partitionist concessions to the Unionists. The first sentence of Paragraph 5 reads: "The Irish Government fully accepted and solemnly declared that there could be no change in the status of Northern Ireland until a majority of the people

of N. Ireland desired a change in that status". It is worth noting that the word "until" is used here instead of the word "unless". In itself this might not be very significant, but it is in harmony with the general tone of the document. The above sentence is followed by a declaration of the British Government that it would not oppose the relevant "change in status", which is expressed in a way that positively looks forward to it.

Nevertheless, if the one sentence declaration of the Dublin Government had had the effect of negating the sovereignty claim over Ulster that is expressed in the Southern Constitution, the overtones and bias of the rest of the Agreement need not have bothered the Unionists. On the face of it that declaration was unconstitutional since it conflicted with the sovereignty claim in the Constitution, and an amendment of the Constitution would be a prerequisite for a ratification of the Agreement. It would have taken a referendum to amend the Constitution, and that would have involved a repudiation of the sovereignty claim by the people of the South after sharp political controversy. And if that had happened, there would have been no basis for Unionist fears that the Council of Ireland was a Trojan Horse of anti-Partitionism.

In mid-January 1974 Kevin Boland, (a former Cabinet Minister who had resigned from Fianna Fail in 1970 on Republican grounds), appealed to the High Court to rule the Government's signature of the Sunningdale Agreement invalid. Boland was legally represented in Court by Sean MacBride - IRA Chief of Staff in the thirties, Minister in the post-war Government which declared Southern Ireland a Republic, now a leading member of Amnesty International, and recently the recipient of a Nobel Peace Prize.

The Government pleaded that its Sunningdale ^{declaration} was not in conflict with and did not in any way prejudice the sovereignty claim in the Constitution, and the High Court agreed.

This meant that the Sunningdale declaration did not mean what it appeared to say, and what it had been represented as saying. It was not a rejection of the sovereignty claim. It was a mere statement that it was not the policy of that particular Government to enforce the sovereignty claim against the wishes of a majority in the North.

The matter was further clarified in late February at the hearing of Boland's appeal to the Supreme Court to overturn the finding of the High Court, where the Attorney General, T.K. Liston, submitted on behalf of the Government that: "Any person living in this island and knowing our history could not possibly construe the declaration (in Paragraph 5 of Sunningdale) as meaning that we

did not lay claim over the Six Counties... The President of the High Court said it was very carelessly drafted, or very carefully drafted, to avoid saying what the claim of the state was. Mr. Liston said that they presumably knew what the claim of the state was" (Irish Times Feb 22).

Following on the Dublin court cases, David Bleakley (the only Northern Ireland Labour Party ^{member} of the Stormont Assembly) called on the Dublin Government to admit that it couldn't meet what had been generally understood to be a commitment entered into at Sunningdale to recognise the Constitutional legitimacy of Ulster's position within the UK: "In all fairness Mr. Cosgrave should publicly... stop pretending that he is any longer able to fulfil his obligations. His present pretence is unfair and utterly unhelpful to the Northern Executive" (Belfast Telegraph, March 23, 1974).

But Cosgrave did not respond. He continued to insist that the Council of Ireland should be set up immediately, and to its fullest extent, even though his Government had stated unambiguously in public court that its Sunningdale declaration did not in any way detract from the sovereignty claim in the Southern Constitution. And it was not only Cosgrave who did this: his Government colleague, Dr. C.C. O'Brien, a would-be liberal democrat, struck an equally nationalistic attitude. After the court cases, O'Brien made a number of irresponsible inflammatory speeches, demanding that the Council be set up at once, and promising (or "predicting") dire consequences if it wasn't.

Before O'Brien entered the Government he had frankly recognised the undemocratic character of Articles 2 & 3 of the Constitution. But after the Boland court cases, when he and his colleagues funked the issue and retreated to the Fianna Fail position, O'Brien began to evolve a Jesuitical argument that Articles 2 & 3, far from making a sovereignty claim over Ulster, were in fact a Constitutional recognition of Ulster's status within the United Kingdom. The grain of truth on which this monstrous lie was based - a lie worthy of Dr. Goebbels - was the fact that the de jure 32 County Constitution included a clause saying that its laws would, for the time being, only apply de facto in 26 Counties.

O'Brien and his colleagues began to pretend that recognition of the mere fact that Ulster was within the UK was the same thing as recognition of its right to be within the UK. But the Constitution clearly asserts a de jure right to sovereignty over Ulster, while acknowledging that this right has not yet been made good in the realm of fact.

Paddy Devlin skates around this development, even though it was

the original cause of the fall of the Executive: "Mr. Faulkner sought reassurance on the matter of status which had been clouded in confusion since Mr. Kevin Boland, ... had challenged the Irish Government's statement in the Sunningdale communique. The Irish Government's 'defence' submission claimed that it had not acknowledged Northern Ireland's status. The gov^t was unable to explain its submission fully in court as the motion (ie Boland's) was refused at an early stage and an appeal which was pending prevented clarification of the position in public. However, Mr. Cosgrave made clear to the Northern provinces that he intended to make a statement after the appeal that would confirm what was agreed at Sunningdale" (p7)

But, alas, after the further clarification of things at the appeal in February, the only statement that would have carried any conviction was a statement announcing a referendum on Articles 2 and 3. The statement which he actually made (March 23) did more harm than good: "The Government was well aware that differences exist in the constitutional law of the Republic of Ireland and of the United Kingdom as to the status of N. Ireland but it considered it would not be helpful to debate these constitutional differences" (!!) But to allay Unionist fears, "however unjustified the Government felt them to be", the declaration in Paragraph 5 of Sunningdale was issued. "The declaration was, of course, referring to the de facto status of N. Ireland, that is to say the factual position... The factual position of N. Ireland is that it is within the UK and my Government accept that as a fact". But unless they were hallucinating they could hardly deny that it was a fact that Ulster was within the UK. The De Valera Constitution did not deny it, nor did the IRA. The point at issue was whether or not Ulster was to have a constitutionally recognised right to determine its own future, and to remain within the UK. And on that point Cosgrave's position did not differ from de Valera's.

Having explained clearly that his Government only accorded de facto recognition, Cosgrave proceeded to say: "I now solemnly re-affirm that the factual position of N. Ireland... cannot be changed except by decision of a majority of the people of N. Ireland". All that this brazen and baffling statement could possibly have meant is a practical estimate that it would not be factually possible to change the factual position of Ulster against the will of the majority there. Beyond that, it only meant a declaration of intent by Cosgrave's own Government - a slight and short-term thing on the scale on which the Constitutions of states must be assessed. (And even in that slight sense the statement

must be judged as fraudulent. The Cosgrave government tried to overcome the will of the Ulster majority through a tricky political manoeuvre, and to realise as much as possible of the sovereignty claim in the Council of Ireland even after the February election had made the will of the Ulster electorate abundantly clear. Taking that into account, Cosgrave's "solemn" statement only said that his Government would not use direct military methods to achieve the sovereignty claim, though it would be prepared to resort to every sort of political manoeuvre to do so.)

THE LOYALIST COALITION GATHERS STRENGTH

The Loyalist opposition to Sunningdale tried to develop a popular movement against it during December 1973 and January 1974. Paisley spoke at rallies throughout the Province, warning that a sell-out to anti-Partitionism was being enacted by the Executive through the Council of Ireland. But, even with old enemies like John Hume and Austin Currie putting on an extravagant exhibitionist display of governing the Province, Paisley scarcely raised a ripple of concern in the Protestant community. Many of his "rallies" attracted no more than twenty or thirty people. Paisley was never so isolated politically as in the month after Sunningdale.

But the situation was very suddenly transformed by the Dublin court cases. The one real thing in Sunningdale from the Unionist viewpoint was the apparent official recognition by Dublin of Ulster's constitutional status within the UK. Given that recognition, the Unionist electorate was prepared to go along with the Council of Ireland on the basis of cooperation with a neighbouring state with which it was on friendly terms and had some common interests. SDLP participation in Government was also seen in the light of Dublin's recognition of Ulster's right to be within the UK. In that context it appeared that the SDLP had ceased to give primacy to its anti-Partitionist "aspiration", and that the aspiration would have no bearing on immediate political conduct.

But when the Dublin court cases established that the Government's declaration at Sunningdale did not detract from the sovereignty claim, the one real thing in the Agreement from the Unionist viewpoint suddenly disappeared. Sunningdale could then only be regarded as yet another elaborate anti-Partitionist manoeuvre by Dublin and the SDLP. Faulkner could only be regarded as a man who had been swindled. The Unionist community then came very rapidly to the conclusion that it would not put up with the Council of Ireland. And since the Executive refused to draw that same

conclusion from the Dublin court cases, the Unionist electorate turned towards the Loyalist opposition.

On January 25th a full-page advert by the UUUC appeared in the Belfast News Letter. The subject was "Sunningdale - The Truth". Here is what it said:

"On Friday 12th June, 1974, Mr. Kevin Boland...sued the members of the Dublin Government for allegedly breaking the terms of Eire's written Constitution. He claims that by the now 'infamous' agreement the Dublin Govt recognised N. Ireland's status within the UK. The Dublin High Court rejected Mr. Boland's claims, and upheld the submission of the Dublin Govt to the effect that they never at any time at Sunningdale recognised N. Ireland's status as part of the UK. Below is a summary of Dublin's submission to the Court:

- "a) We never acknowledged that N. Ireland is part of the UK.
- b) We never acknowledged that NI could not be reintegrated into the national territory until or unless a majority of people in N. Ireland indicated a wish to become part of a United Ireland.
- c) We never purported to deprive the Irish people as a whole of the right to national self-determination or to determine the status and territorial sovereignty of the Irish nation" (The point of this is that the self-determining unit would be the 32 counties.)
- "d) We never purported to limit the national territory to this part of the island of Ireland.
- e) We never precluded the right of the Parliament or Govt. established by the Constitution (of Eire) to exercise jurisdiction over the whole island...
- f) We never purported to impose British Nationality or Citizenship on a section of the Irish people residing in N. Ireland...
- g) We never precluded the courts...from exercising jurisdiction over the whole of...Ireland."

"The High Court...upheld the above submissions.

"Result 1 Not only did Mr. Kevin Boland lose his case, but Brian Faulkner also lost. How can Mr. Faulkner claim that he has won Dublin's recognition of our status as part of the UK when Eire's High Court contradicts this?"

"Result 2 The Sunningdale agreement now enables the Dublin Govt to exercise executive power over a part of the UK. This is entirely in line with the above submission and judgement. The UUUC are

satisfied that Ulster is in a state of transition between total and absolute British sovereignty and total and absolute Irish sovereignty... , and that the Assembly-appointed Republican-Unionist Executive, and Council of Ireland is the machinery by which the Irish Govt. will in reality eventually exercise total jurisdiction over N. Ireland."

The factual accuracy of the above was not challenged: it was unchallengeable. And the Sunningdale perspective with which it ends fully accords with what was being said by the SDLP. (The UUUC advert was a Petition for which signatures were gathered. Over 100,000 signatures were gathered before the Petition was made redundant by the Westminster election a few weeks later.)

In mid-January the Loyalist Coalition had little popular support, and Loyalist politicians expressed their frustration by disrupting the Assembly by brawling. (This was the occasion when Kennedy Lindsay leapt on the table between the front benches and proclaimed that "the temple has been purged"). But six weeks later the Loyalists swept the board at the election, winning eleven of the twelve Ulster seats. The Unionist electorate had been convinced that there was fundamental duplicity involved in Sunningdale (and the Boland Appeal, coming a week before the Election, drove the point home).

This election has been regarded by apologists for the Executive as the cause of all the trouble that followed. But what the election did was to register the extent to which public opinion had swung against the Council of Ireland since the Dublin court cases. If the Executive had been politically competent - or if it had not been crippled by a fundamental conflict of interest within it - it would have welcomed the election for clarifying the fundamental shift in public opinion that had occurred. The idea that, if this shift in public opinion had not been able to register itself so quickly in an election result, the Executive could have carried on regardless of it, is an infantile fantasy. The trouble for the Executive was not caused by the election result, but by the natural and reasonable Unionist response to the Dublin court cases.

The Executive chose to take no account of the election result. Formally, it was not under any obligation to do so since the election concerned a different parliament. Politically, it was suicidal to strike that formal attitude.

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After the first Dublin court case it appeared for a moment that Faulkner was about to do what it was necessary to do if the

Sunningdale arrangement was to survive and develop. He said: "*If Eire now wishes to put a different interpretation on that declaration we will require complete clarification on the whole matter before there can be a formal signing of the agreement.*" But during the following months he showed that his reputation as a skilled politician was quite undeserved: After a private meeting with Cosgrave he said that the ambiguity had been cleared up and that Cosgrave would remove all doubt after the Appeal had been heard. And when Cosgrave issued his obscurantist statement in March, Faulkner professed to be completely satisfied by it. Within the Executive the SDLP was demanding that the Council of Ireland should be established immediately, in its fullest form, regardless of the Boland case and regardless of the election results, and Faulkner behaved as if he himself had nothing to bargain with and could only concede to SDLP demands.

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The great misfortune about the February election was not that it brought the UUUC to Westminster but that it brought certain people from Westminster to Ulster. The new overlords of the Province were Harold Wilson, Merlyn Rees and Stanley Orme. Less than two years earlier (March 1972) Wilson had held discussions with the Provisional IRA at a secret rendezvous in Dublin, and had had an IRA delegation flown to England for further discussions in July 1972: and he had announced a policy of excluding Ulster from the UK and including it in an all-Ireland state within fifteen years. Rees was his master's voice. And Orme was well-known as a campaigner in the anti-Partitionist movement.

Shortly after Rees took office a letter which he had written a year previously to a Provisional IRA supporter in Dundalk was released to the press by David O'Connell. It was dated March 19, 1973, and said: "*Frankly we have not the faintest desire to stay in Ireland and the quicker we are out the better*". Rees had to admit that the letter was genuine: and he did not retract what he had said in it. And he too decided that the Council of Ireland had to be established regardless of everything.

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A word needs to be said about the structure of the Council of Ireland. It was to have two tiers: a Council of Ministers and a Consultative Assembly. The Council of Ministers would be made up of members of the Dublin and Stormont Governments (seven from each), and "*would act by unanimity*". The Consultative Assembly would consist of 60 members, half of whom would be elected by the Dail (Dublin Parliament) and half by the Stormont Assembly on the basis

of proportional representation.

There would therefore be a clear anti-Partitionist majority (the Dail 50% plus the SDLP) in both the Council of Ministers and the Consultative Assembly. In the Council of Ministers this would be negated in executive matters by the unanimity rule. But it would make the Consultative Assembly into an agitational centre for an all-Ireland Government.

In view of the continuing sovereignty claim being made by the Southern state over Ulster, and of the fact that it was becoming clearer every day that the SDLP leadership were interested in power-sharing only as a means to anti-Partitionist ends, it would be surprising if Unionist opinion had not swung massively against the Council of Ireland. And since the Government had decided to override public opinion and go ahead with the full implementation of the Council of Ireland it is not surprising that direct action was resorted to.

It should be recalled that the SDLP, though in government, was not supporting the police force on which the government depended. It was promising that it would begin supporting the police if the police were brought within the executive functions of the Council of Ireland. It should also be recalled that the SDLP had consistently advertised itself as an alternative to the IRA - that is, as a "*political solution*" to the military problem. It was abundantly clear by May that it was not an alternative to the IRA. The Provos were their own men. The IRA offensive had not abated because the SDLP had entered the government - if anything, the contrary was the case. The SDLP was therefore demanding that it should be maintained in power by security forces which it did not support.

And insofar as the SDLP tried to induce the IRA to ease up on the military campaign, it was by arguing that it (the SDLP) was in the process of achieving all-Ireland Government by a Machiavellian political manoeuvre which would outwit the Unionists, while the military campaign had become counter-productive since it stiffened and gave coherence to the Unionist resistance.

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Paddy Devlin does not say a word about what the February election signified politically in Ulster. He writes about how little the UUUC victory affected Westminster. The UUUC MPs went to Westminster imagining that they held the balance of power, he writes, but "*they had underestimated the influence of Heath and*

Wilson on the two-party system... Both men...enjoyed a single-minded dislike of Unionist policies and personalities, and were singularly determined not to create opportunities for the Unionist MPs to exploit their strength in a tied vote. As a result, frustration and anger grew overnight amongst the Unionists with their inability to stop the onward march of the Northern Ireland Executive which, on the surface at any rate, appeared unconcerned with the success of the UUUC in the recent elections... Indeed, Merlyn Rees stated quite categorically...that Sunningdale was to be implemented" (Deblin, p10/11).

But, while a government can decide to ignore the clearly expressed will of the electorate which it is supposed to represent, the electorate is not thereby rendered helpless. When an unrepresentative Parliament ignores the will of the electorate, it can hardly complain if the electorate turns to extra-Parliamentary means of enforcing its will.

The Assembly majority had become grossly unrepresentative of the electorate. The Assembly had not been elected as a Parliament, but as a Constituent Assembly. Faulkner had acknowledged this when taking office on January 1st, but had proposed that the election, or referendum, to sanction the new arrangements should be deferred for some months so that people could see how they worked before they voted on them. But after the Westminster election nothing more was heard about that. The more unrepresentative the Assembly became, the more the majority in it were determined to pretend they were a properly elected government. This grossly unrepresentative Assembly decided that it would ratify the Sunningdale Agreement on Tuesday May 14. And on that same day a laconic advertisement appeared in the News Letter:

"The Ulster Workers' Council...gives notice that: If Brian Faulkner and his colleagues vote in the Assembly on Tuesday 14th to support Sunningdale, then There will be a General Stoppage. Workers' dependents are advised, in such an event, to apply for Supplementary Benefit immediately. After 6pm (Tues 14) all essential services will be maintained, and only action by Mr. John Hume will rob the housewife, the farmer, and the essential services of power".

The Workers' Association began to issue its Strike Bulletins on the first weekend of the strike. It had no connection with the UWC and no inside information. It began to issue these Bulletins on the evidence of its senses in order to counteract the gross misrepresentation of events by the media. By the end of the strike the Bulletins were in mass circulation.

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July 1977

STRIKE BULLETIN NO. 1

The radio and television commentators have been doing their best to to confuse and obscure the causes of the political general strike. What are those causes? They are three-fold: 1. *The political bungling of Merlyn Rees and Stanley Orme at the Northern Ireland Office;* 2. *The irresponsibility of the Dublin Government in pressing for the immediate establishment of a Council of Ireland;* and 3. *The failure of the Executive to deal tactfully with the popular feeling against the Council of Ireland, and its tactless power politics in relying on its mechanical voting majority in Stormont - a majority which has long been unrepresentative of popular feeling.*

This crisis could easily have been averted. David Bleakley, the only Northern Ireland Labour Party member in the Assembly, made a proposal which would have averted it. But the Executive insisted on pressing ahead with its confrontation with the Loyalists. It was made abundantly clear by the General Election in February that the Loyalist viewpoint on the Council of Ireland was the majority viewpoint, and that the Coalition's voting majority in the Assembly had become unrepresentative.

Bleakley proposed a motion welcoming "*the success of power sharing*", but taking note of "*the difficulties that have arisen over the meaning of the Sunningdale Agreement, particularly the ruling in the Dublin High Court that it is not possible under the present Constitution to give full recognition to Northern Ireland*", and proposing that until such time as the Dublin Government is able to drop its claim to sovereignty over the North the Sunningdale Agreement should not be signed.

That was a reasonable, democratic and statesmanlike proposal. It separated the question of power sharing from the question of a Council of Ireland, which it was urgently necessary to do. Power-sharing has been shown to work. The Council of Ireland is not necessary to power-sharing, and is in fact the main danger to power-sharing. If the Council were shelved support for power-sharing would increase rapidly in the Protestant community. And the Northern Catholic community is not primarily concerned about the Council. Catholics who cease to support the Republicans see power-sharing as the real alternative, and no half-baked Council is needed to placate them.

The real purpose of the Council is to provide a fig-leaf for the

Dublin Government which enables them to represent Sunningdale as an anti-Partitionist victory, and a step towards a united Ireland.

The case against the Council is unanswerable. The Constitution of the Republic asserts its sovereignty over the North. The Southern government has not the authority to delete those clauses from the Constitution, and is afraid to call a referendum on the question. It pleaded in the High Court that its de facto recognition of the right of the people of Northern Ireland to decide their own destiny did not prejudice the de jure right of the Southern state to extend its rule over the North by force. And how can there be equal relations between North and South in a Council, while the South claims sovereignty over the North?

Dublin pleads that its intentions are good, and it will not enforce "*the claim*". And that is true - for the time being. But the profound scepticism with which the words of the Dublin government are received by a large part of the Northern people is grounded in long and bitter experience. It is only a few years since the last Dublin government, while uttering fair words, was actively involved in setting-up, financing, arming, and providing a safe hinterland for the Provisional IRA. A change of intention needs to be demonstrated in action in order to be convincing: let the Dublin government call a referendum for the deletion of Articles 2 & 3 before it again calls for the establishment of the Council of Ireland. (And, in view of the controversy that has been caused, the Council should not be established without a prior referendum in the North, no matter what the South may do in future.)

The bungling of Merlyn Rees and Stanley Orme has been the major factor in precipitating the crisis. They have been behaving like arrogant, pompous, and badly informed colonial administrators ever since they came to Northern Ireland. Ulster is nobody's colony, and the sooner Messrs. Rees and Orme realise that, the better for them and all concerned. William Whitelaw worked out the agreements and set up the structures in which conflict in Ulster can be resolved. It needed only an understanding of the situation and a certain amount of political diplomacy to ensure that the Whitelaw solution worked out in practice. Rees and Orme have taken no trouble to understand the situation. They brought with them a headful of false preconceptions. They have been aggravating things ever since they came. It seems as if they, and people like Roy Mason in Westminster, have been deliberately trying to provoke the Protestant working class, and to convince them that the Provo propaganda - that Westminster is preparing to ditch Northern Ireland as if it were a redundant colony - is true. We do not say they have been doing it deliberately. We believe it to be

political bungling. But it is bungling of criminal proportions.

This provocative bungling is well illustrated by Rees's attempt in recent days to equate the industrial strike with the bombing campaign. How long is Harold Wilson going to refuse to recognise that Rees and Orme have made a dangerous mess of things? It was a mistake to have sent them here. They were well known to be strongly biased against the Unionist community. They should be recalled before they can do any more damage, and replaced by somebody more capable, and less prejudiced against the Protestant community.

Protestants and Catholics are now beginning to sort out their differences on a democratic basis. There is every prospect that this development will continue. If Westminster politicians are incapable of actively helping it, (and that has unfortunately been the case with the Labour Government), they should at least try to stop hindering it.

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Political bungling caused the present strike. The issue that is forced into the forefront of politics might have been avoided with a bit of political tact. Since it has not been avoided it must be dealt with.

When the Executive took office Brian Faulkner acknowledged that new Assembly elections would be needed to sanction it. So many changes had been made since the elections of summer 1973 that the mandate needed to be renewed. But, he said, it would be best if people had had the opportunity to see the Executive functioning for five or six months before new elections were called. That was 5 months ago. So how has it suddenly become such an unreasonable thing to call for new elections?

The Executive and the Northern Ireland Office are now resorting to power politics pure and simple. They have decided not to call an election until the prospect of a Loyalist majority recedes. But power politics require great political tact and skill to be successful in a situation like this: and that tact and skill has been sadly lacking for the past couple of months. Power politics have come to grief in a spectacular fashion. The Government might think it knows best what is good for the people. But it has failed to secure the passive consent of the people for what it is doing, and it must bear the consequences of that failure by naming a date within the year for Assembly elections.

Rees has said he will make no compromises with a political strike.

It isn't long since Ted Heath was saying the same thing to the miners. Everybody knows that there was a strong political element in the miners' strike, which aimed to break Phase 3 and force an election. It is absurd that Rees, a beneficiary of that successful political strike, should now be making pompous declarations of principle against political strikes. He should try to control his obsessive hostility to the Protestant working class.

William Craig said that when Len Murray spoke about Northern Ireland he didn't know what he was talking about. That, unfortunately, is only too true. If Len Murray wants to diminish William Craig's influence he should either keep quiet about N. Ireland, or else find out something about it.

It has been made blatantly obvious that the official trade union leadership does not represent the working class in this matter. It is useless to talk of intimidation. A certain amount of intimidation takes place in many strikes: but no strike gets off the ground purely through intimidation, or lasts without a strong core of popular support.

In political matters the Ulster working class falls into a limbo between the British TUC and the Dublin based Irish TUC. The ICTU is strongly anti-Partitionist in politics (and leading Southern trade unionists have financed Provos). The Northern Committee of the ICTU avoids overt politics, but there is a grossly disproportionate anti-Partitionist sentiment in it. The Belfast Trades Council, run autocratically by Betty Sinclair, is notoriously unrepresentative of the political view of Belfast trade unionists. This strike, and the impotence of the official trade union leadership, should finally make the British TUC aware of these circumstances.

Workers' Association

19.5.1974. Belfast

STRIKE BULLETIN NO. 2

TO THE REPORTERS OF BRITISH PRESS AND BROADCASTING:

Your reporting of the strike so far has been a mere propagandist exercise, bearing as little resemblance to the facts of the case as "news reports" of the Republican News tend to do. Perhaps you thought this would help to end the strike. It has clearly not done so. In fact it has been a serious factor in aggravating the situation. It is time that you put an end to propagandist

misrepresentation. The fiasco of the "trade union return to work" should have jolted you out of your propagandist ruts.

Many of you, in the name of impartial reporting, have spent much time talking to Provisionals, and reporting their version of events. Robert Fisk of The Times, to cite one example, justified this approach on Northern Ireland radio recently. He justified impartial reporting of the "enemy" case because he regarded the Northern Ireland conflict as a civil disturbance within the state rather than as a conflict between the state and its enemies. But when it comes to the Ulster Workers' Council and an industrial strike, as against the Provos and a bombing campaign, Mr. Fisk's journalistic impartiality evaporates, and he reports the strike as if he were a paid propagandist of Merlyn Rees's Ministry.

Your reporting has acted as a provocation. You have attempted to bring the Ulster Workers' Council into disrepute and to represent the strikers as a rampaging mob. You are feeding British public opinion with false reporting which backs up the political bungling of Rees and Orme. You are bringing yourselves into contempt. In view of the provocative misrepresentation of their intentions and actions by the press, broadcasting and the Government the strikers have been behaving with remarkable moderation and good sense. Sooner or later you will have to reckon with the Ulster Workers' Council, and the viewpoint that it represents, as a social force that cannot be conjured away either by false propagandist news reporting or by the manipulation of power politics. And the sooner Muhammed starts moving towards the Mountain, the better for all concerned.

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THE 'TRADE UNION RETURN TO WORK'

The fact that Messrs. Rees and Orme risked so much of their credibility on the success of the "trade union return to work" shows they are politically inept rather than malicious. If they had done less of the "colonial administrator" act, and had done a bit more to find out something about the relation of the official trade union leadership to the political views of the trade union rank and file, they would not have expected the "return to work" to be anything less than a fiasco.

Len Murray appealed to the workers to heed the call of their tried and trusted leaders to return to work. Mr. Murray must now realise that the official trade union leadership are not the tried and trusted leaders of the workers in anything but the narrowest trade union affairs. In Britain there is at least a general identity of broad political sympathy between the TUC and

the mass of trade unionists. That is not so in Northern Ireland. Andrew Barr, Chairman of the Shipbuilding Confederation, and Jimmy Graham of the AEU, led the back-to-work campaign. They are anti-Partitionists. The mass of their members are Unionists. Barr and Graham are heeded by their rank and file in trade union affairs proper. But when they led the back-to-work campaign they were not acting as trade union leaders but as politicians. In political matters they are at loggerheads with their members, so the campaign failed. We hope that Mr. Murray will take the trouble to find out why he walked to the shipyards, along with the "tried and trusted leaders", and a mere 150 men. If he does he will find that what we have said is true.

There is a tacit understanding in the trade union movement that political and economic matters will be kept separate. In circumstances of sharp political division this is a necessary condition for keeping the trade union movement united in economic matters. Barr, Graham, etc. broke this convention by trying to use their leading position in the economic struggle for political ends. And it is this fact, (rather than "intimidation on the housing estates", as Graham argued on the radio), that caused this morning's fiasco.

The enormous political gulf between many of the trade union leaders and the general trade union rank and file is understood in Belfast as a pragmatic fact, it will now be understood by many in Britain as a pragmatic, but incomprehensible fact. Since the weird logic of Stanley Orme will try to find an explanation for this fact which harmonises with the widely-held Anti-Partitionist view that nearly all Protestant workers are incipient fascists, who can only be saved from fascism by anti-Partitionism, and since press reporters have not bothered to find out the facts of the case, a word of explanation is necessary here.

There are a number of particular reasons why political anti-Partitionists appear in the economic leadership of workers who are politically unionists. One is that the Communist Party of Northern Ireland gained a strong position in the trade union leadership during the 1939-45 war. During that war, and until about 1950, the CPNI was strongly Unionist in politics. It fought the 1945 election on a Unionist programme. During the 1950s it vacillated on the question of the Union. In the course of the 1960s it became increasingly anti-Partitionist, and united with the Irish Workers' Party (26 Counties) in 1970 to form the Communist Party of Ireland on a strongly Catholic-nationalist programme. Through this development it lost its mass following in the Protestant working class, but a number of individuals remained in the leadership of unions.

A second cause is the fact that local leaders of many British based unions are appointed by the Union executive in Britain or that elections are held on a United Kingdom basis. In such circumstances there is a bias in favour of anti-Partition. (The British Communist Party is anti-Partitionist, and so are many Labour Party elements, who have been induced to believe that anti-Partitionism and social progress are synonymous in Ireland.) That is how Andrew Barr, Jimmy Graham etc. come to lead Trade unionists with whom they have no political sympathy.

The main political damage that they do is in giving trade union leaders in Britain a completely false picture of the situation here.

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WHAT DOES 'SUNNINGDALE' MEAN? Many of the strikers' representatives will say they are against "Sunningdale". This enables it to be said that the strike is against power-sharing. But there are two elements in "Sunningdale": power-sharing and the Council of Ireland. It is the Council of Ireland that is at issue in the strike. If Rees and Orme could grasp that simple fact they might stop making fools of themselves.

Len Murray thinks he is defending "Sunningdale" when he walks with Andrew Barr in what the mass of the workers see as a blackleg attempt. And Andrew Barr, of course, doesn't tell him that the political party to which he (Barr) belongs - the Communist Party of Ireland - opposes Sunningdale because it isn't sufficiently anti-Partitionist. The CPI has been putting up posters calling for return to work as an anti-Sunningdale measure. The CPI was hoping for a major conflict in the Protestant community over return to work. That would certainly have upset Sunningdale.

Workers' Association

21st May 1974.

STRIKE BULLETIN NO. 3

THE GOVERNMENT IS THREATENING POWER-SHARING

The contortions

The contortions of the Government and the servile press get weirder every day. It is as if they were determined to drive the great majority of the Protestant community into the arms of the

die-hard opponents of power-sharing. When the strike began last week they embarked on a propagandist campaign of confusing the issue. They declared power-sharing to be the issue. In fact, anybody with an ounce of wit should have been able to see that it was the Council of Ireland issue that was bringing widespread support to the Loyalist alliance. But the result of the Government's antics is to increase Protestant opposition to power-sharing.

A clear decision to reject the Council of Ireland until such time as the Southern Government called a referendum and deleted Articles 2 & 3, or until such time as a Council was sanctioned by a referendum in the North, would have cleared the air, and would have given the power-sharing Executive the opportunity to prove itself. Such a course of action would have minimised the popular support of the parties opposed to the Executive. But the course of action which was adopted has given the anti-Executive parties an undeniable majority in the country: and the behaviour of the Government during the past week tends to develop that majority from a simple opposition to the Council of Ireland into an opposition to power sharing.

People say: "if all of this is necessary to defend power-sharing, we'll have none of it". And this situation has been brought about by political bunglers who imagine that they are defending power-sharing, and who see themselves as God's gift to the human race!!

If the wise men of the press and the BBC want to find the "extremists" responsible for escalating the threat to power-sharing, they are to be found in Stormont and Downing St.

Orme, Rees and Wilson have announced that they will smash the Protestant workers into the ground rather than negotiate, or even negotiate about negotiations, with them. When Orme, a long-time fellow-traveller of the Republicans, declares this, it is understandable. (The Republicans have longed for the day when the British Army will smash the Protestant workers.) That he should ever have been made the Minister of State at Stormont was an act of gross irresponsibility. But have Rees and Wilson taken leave of their senses? If they persist in the course that they threatened yesterday, power-sharing is finished.

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WILLIAM BLEASE'S MAJORITY

William Blease is finding it hard to come to terms with the fact ^{that} he is not the political leader of his trade unionists. It

*N. Ireland Officer of the ICTU: since retired.
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was he and his colleagues who forced the issue to a confrontation. He is now trying to explain away the fiasco. He still claims that the majority of workers support his policy, and that the Ulster Workers' Council represents only a handful. The reason only 200 of the 20,000 workers in the East Belfast industrial complex turned out is that the other 19,000 were intimidated. Even the BBC is finding that hard to swallow.

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WHY THE GOVERNMENT DOESN'T USE ITS "MAJORITY SUPPORT"

The BBC's opinion poll of a few weeks' back has been cited in recent days to prove that the UWC does not have widespread popular support. That poll shows a great majority for moderate opinions, and it is argued that since the UWC is "extremist" it cannot be representative of majority opinion, and the effectiveness of the strike must be due to intimidation.

But if the Government policy has majority support, why is the prospect of an Assembly Election viewed with such panic? Doesn't everyone know that an election now would almost certainly return a minority of Executive members, virtually wipe out the Faulkner Unionists, and greatly increase Loyalist representation? Is it not precisely because the Government knows very well that its bungling has turned a majority of the electorate against it that it is panic-stricken?

If the UWC represented only a minority of bully-boys it would be very easily dealt with. But the UWC began this strike with a solid core of popular support, and the arrogant and hysterical behaviour of the Government has caused that support to increase. And no amount of tricky propaganda will now erode the influence of the UWC. No people with any spirit will put up with being blatantly insulted and trampled on. (Isn't it surprising that such a thing should have to be explained to people who call themselves socialists?)

The BBC poll showed that ample basis existed for consolidating and developing the power-sharing arrangement provided a modicum of political ability and diplomacy were brought to bear on the matter. It required no ordinary ineptitude to make such a thorough mess of things as Rees and Orme have done. (Whitelaw, having down his bit in Ulster, seems to have dismissed it from his thoughts. But it is certain that he were still in Stormont things would not now be in the mess that they are. It is not pleasant for a workers' organisation to have to regret the absence

of a Tory and the presence of a 'socialist': but a fact is a fact.)

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A CREDIBILITY GAP

Last night's Westminster statement said that the Government will restore normal life in Ulster. What with? It says that is preserving essential services? It has been pretty well proven that essential services are maintained by the UWC rather than the Government. In fact the Government can think of nothing to do except threaten to use the Army in some way or other. It has lost all contact with the people.

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION NOW?

The more that the Government persists in its attitude of colonial domineering, the more difficult a solution becomes. By its recent actions the government has turned the Assembly into a rump Parliament. And the longer the present policy is continued, the less chance there is that the Assembly will again be regarded as a representative institution until there are elections. But how are the parties which now declare the UWC to be an unrepresentative minority to survive the elections?

It is certain that they will not be able to maintain themselves in political power by use of the Army. They can only survive by going on the offensive politically: by negotiating with the UWC; by making a clear statement that there will be no Council while Dublin funks a referendum on its Constitution or while a majority in the North opposes it; and by announcing a date for new elections towards the end of the year, thus giving themselves a few months in which to gain credibility with the Council issue out of the way.

If they haven't the guts for that course of action, the only coherent alternative is to declare in favour of full integration with Britain.

Workers' Association

22nd May, 1974

STRIKE BULLETIN No. 4

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE? The Executive's decision to reduce the scope of the Council of Ireland can be summed up as, too little, too late. If it had reached this decision two weeks ago, and if it had averted the vote on Sunningdale on June 14th, in the manner proposed by David Bleakley, it would not now be in a state of panic-stricken confusion.

For all its cleverness, the SDLP leadership has made great trouble for itself. It is known that John Hume fancied that the SDLP could govern Ulster on its own, using the Faulkner Unionists as a front. But SDLP behaviour over recent weeks did not help it to achieve that ambition. If it wanted to be the power behind the scenes it should have taken good care of the scenery. It was never on for it have both great political influence in Northern Ireland and a strong Council of Ireland. It has overreached itself. It failed to get its priorities in order.

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A REVEALING LIGHT ON THE SDLP The great struggle within the Executive to water down the Council of Ireland throws a revealing light on the aspirations of the SDLP. If it had not been looking on the Council as a stepping stone towards a united Ireland in the not too distant future, it is hard to see why it should have made such a fuss, and threatened the existence of the Executive, over the proposal to water down the Council.

We always took the Council of Ministers to be the substance of the Council. The second tier - the Parliamentary assembly - seemed to be a very insubstantial thing, since it could take no decisions. So why did the SDLP make such a fuss about dropping it?

It is known that the Dublin Cabinet had been reckoning on a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland at the first opportunity. And in the context of that reckoning, the importance of an elaborate Parliamentary structure for the Council is greatly increased. What is unimportant and rather pointless in the context of Union with Britain continuing ad infinitum (that is,

while a majority demands it), becomes much more important and pointed on the assumption that the British Government is only waiting for an opportunity to shed Northern Ireland. It would seem that the old Anti-Partitionist Adam of devious scheming in power politics was not quite dead in the SDLP leadership.

But by agreeing to the Council of Ministers minus the Parliamentary foliage, and making further developments of the Council dependent on elections, the SDLP must have de-escalated its ambitions considerably. But: too little, too late, and in the wrong circumstances.

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AN AMERICAN ELECTORAL SYSTEM? What sense is to be made of Brian Faulkner's statement on radio last night, that it is impossible under the Constitution Act to hold elections before 1978? He said that the Act lays down that Assemblies will last for a fixed period of four years, as is the case in the American electoral system. But last January, when the Executive took office, he said that, in view of the great Constitutional developments since last summer's elections, it would be in order for new elections to be held after about six months in order to sanction ^{the} new system. Hadn't he read the Constitution Act then?

A politician who invents principles as expedients, and who refuses to deal with the reality that is all around him, is in desperate straits.

If the American system is in operation here, we should have been told about it before now: it should not have been saved up as a final trump to play in a moment of crisis.

The Americans are having great trouble with their system at the moment. It is an inflexible system, and is quite alien to the spirit of the British Constitution. The genius who told Faulkner that line had better think again.

The British constitution is based on no set of rigid formalities. Its great virtue is that it takes account of substantial social powers regardless of formalities. If the only way Faulkner can deal with the major social power that has shown itself in this strike is to devise rigid Constitutional rules in an effort to safeguard himself against the public for four years, he is reaching the end of his tether.

It is certain that the Executive will not be able to last for four

years without Assembly Elections. The relevant question is whether it is going to be able to last with elections. Faulkner still denies that the Executive has lost its majority in the country. But if he really thought it had not lost its majority he would not be panic stricken at the thought of an election. And if he has really despaired of being able to win a majority in an election by the end of this year he should adopt a policy of full integration with Britain.

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FAULKNER AND THE SDLP Faulkner's political bungling in recent months has, presumably, resulted from the intransigence of the SDLP on the Council of Ireland. He went much too far to accomodate them, and alienated the major social power in this community: the Protestant working class. The SDLP have pushed him out on a limb. They must now be regretting their blind intransigence. If Faulkner cannot regain his following they are all in trouble.

Despite their short-sighted intransigence over the Council, the SDLP are undoubtedly committed to power sharing within the United Kingdom. There is no doubting the conviction with which John Hume now speaks of "*our economy*". But Hume, when talking about the UWC, is beginning to sound like a bad parody of William Craig on the CRA in 1968. They have "*no mandate from anybody*" he says, and declares that he will not tolerate "*anarchy in our streets*". But the UWC has as clear a mandate to speak for the Protestant working class today as Hume had to speak for the Catholic community in 1968. As for "*anarchy in our streets*"...

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DISCOVERING EVEREST Wonder of wonders! The Ulster Workers' Council is being discovered by the power powers-that-be (or used-to-be?). Rees and Orme are still too panic stricken to talk to them, and declare them to be untouchables, yet we are beginning to hear them on radio and TV, and a distinct note of respect for them, as a power in the land, is noticeable. And they are discovered to be fully paid up, active trade unionists, who know both the function and limits of trade unionism; and who know that Len Murray was abusing his function as TUC leader by interefering in a political situation of which he had no understanding.

If Rees could screw up enough courage and intelligence to deal with the UWC in the way that any government worth its salt

would deal with a major social power. the crisis would be well on the way to being resolved. (Observe, Merlyn, that Harry Thomson talked to Harry Murray last night and has lived to tell the tale. So might you, if you don't die of your imaginary terrors.) If he, or the Executive, do not recognise them and deal with them the crisis cannot be resolved no matter what gimmicks are tried.

"Certain workers influenced by certain politicians have taken certain actions", is all that Hume will say today. If he is to survive politically he will have to learn to do better than that. Here is how he might survive: Put the entire Council of Ireland to a popular vote, and in the meantime deal with Dublin merely as a neighbouring Government; Recognise the UWC as a fact of political life which he cannot escape from; Negotiate the best conclusion of the strike he can with them. No other defence of power-sharing is possible. They are the people he has to share power with if power is to continue to be shared.

Workers' Association

23.5.1974.

STRIKE BULLETIN NO. 5

F A S C I S M A member of the Ulster Workers' Council said on the radio today that they were not very interested in what the Executive did: they would deal with the dictator (Rees), there was no point in dealing with his puppets in the Executive. But the "dictator" is himself a puppet, controlled by political ghosts and goblins in his own mind. He can't see what is all around him because his mind is taken up with echoes of other times and other places, with false comparisons and with fixed ideas. He imagines that he is involved in a last ditch stand against fascism: that he will do what Hindenburg failed to do in 1932. The "fascism" he is intent on smashing is the general strike of a people, provoked with his own political bungling.

How does it happen that an otherwise sane man can suffer from such delusions: and how does it happen that a man with such delusions can be given so much power in the very sphere in which he is deluded?

What we see today is the lunatic ideology of the Peoples' Democracy in control of a British Department of State. Michael Farrell used to write long moody articles to prove that the industrial working class of Ulster was inherently fascist in tendency, and would have to be smashed. Farrell is now a political nonentity: but his delusions have flourished. The entire British press now sounds

like the "Free Citizen".

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REMEMBER EDEN Chamberlain failed to take a stand against fascism at Munich. But how magnificently Anthony Eden took a stand against it at Suez! And now we have another man with a ghost fighting a people in the name of anti-fascism.

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THE STRIKERS Meanwhile how are the "*fascists*" behaving? The wise men of the Executive and the Northern Ireland Office reckoned that the strike would collapse when its participants began to realise that it was depriving them of customary comforts. (Rabbies are not capable of purposeful endurance of hardship.) And they reckoned that the farmers would turn against it when their profits began to suffer. They have been wrong on both counts.

There is every indication that the workers are cheerfully prepared to tolerate a much reduced standard of living in order to maintain the strike. The UWC has ordered the closing of pubs to prevent the frittering away of money, and the recurrence of incidents in which women were pulling their men out of pubs. This is a very sober strike indeed. Some fascists!

The farmers show increasing support for the strike as it continues, and many seem prepared to put up with serious loss of stock if necessary, and to hold out on a subsistence-farming basis, rather than see the strike beaten by the colonial administrator and his rump Parliament, (because that is what they have made themselves).

The marginal element of intimidation is a diminishing factor.

But in the monastic seclusion of Stormont our Don Quixote tilts at his fascist windmills, and the Assembly engages in a ritual that has no connection with the outside world. It is a situation without precedent in the history of British politics.

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A POLITICAL SCANDAL While a small element of realism has begun to creep into the British press during the past day or two, it is still failing miserably in its job. The British public is being systematically misinformed about the facts of the strike and misled about its politics. Central political facts, which must be known to every reporter in Belfast,

are not being reported. The appointment of Stanley Orme to the Northern Ireland Office should have been made into a political scandal. He was well known to be an active anti-Partitionist over many years. (An equivalent appointment by Heath would have been Enoch Powell or John Biggs Davison.)

*

THE BIRTH OF A TRAGEDY

As soon as Orme was appointed, a clique of his anti-Partitionist cronies (Betty Sinclair etc.) became his boon companions. This clique occupied eminent positions in the official trade union leadership which they had systematically used to present a completely false picture of politics here to the British trade union and socialist movement. The Communist Party of Northern Ireland (now CP of Ireland) to which they belong was Unionist in the 1940s. It changed to anti-Partitionism in the fifties, but these members of it continued to retain leading trade union positions among workers who were strongly Unionist in politics. British trade unionists and socialists took them at face value. They took it as a matter of course that the politics of these trade union leaders reflected the politics of the rank-and-file. But trade unions and politics were, in fact, rigidly separated in Belfast. Trade unionism kept together despite sharp political difference by means of this rigid separation of the two.

The Sinclair, Barr, Graham clique explained the persistent Unionist voting of their trade union rank-and-file to British sympathisers, (and finally, it would seem, to themselves), with talk of Tory-fascist manipulation of religious differences. This view was systematically worked into the Labour Party during the sixties. Orme became an active missionary in the cause. Rees and many others accepted it passively.

Wilson, returned unexpectedly to power, was preoccupied with balancing the factions of his party and, treating the Northern Ireland Office as being no more liable to create havoc because of Ministerial bungling than any of the other Departments of State, he sends Rees and Orme here. Neither of them had the political ability the situation required. Both had their heads full of false preconceptions, and couldn't see the wood for the few trees they could identify.

Believing Northern Ireland to be a colony to be freed, Orme began to behave like a colonial administrator, and Rees followed suit. Due to their provocative mishandling, combined with the more understandable bungling of the Executive, the strike was provoked. And that is how Rees and Orme came to be fighting their battles

against an imaginary fascism, and incidentally threatening to wreck power-sharing and force the province into civil war.

*

WHAT CONCLUSION ? We do not think that there are any resources in the Executive or in the Assembly capable of retrieving the situation. (David Bleakley of the Northern Ireland Labour Party, whose proposals would have averted the crisis, is isolated in Stormont.) Unless the British working class is able to do something to induce the Government to change its lunatic policy, a period of complete chaos cannot be avoided.

The Ulster Workers' Council increasingly stands out as the only responsible factor in the situation. The government seems to be itching for a show-down. The UWC is avoiding a show-down, and is gaining in power and credibility every day. If a show-down is forced by the Government, it will be the Government that will go down in disgrace, and not the UWC.

*

GERRY FITT Gerry Fitt must now be viewed as a serious and thoughtful statesman. Nobody must be reminded of his statement only two years ago that the Ulster Plantation of the 17th century (Harold Wilson please take note) had resulted today in "*a million monsters*". He is now apparently to be given the use of the British Army to fight his 17th century war against the Plantation.

24.5.1974

STRIKE BULLETIN NO. 6

FACE-SAVING The time for the saving of faces is upon us: the faces of Rees, Orme, Faulkner, and, above all, the SDLP. The SDLP may not fully realise that its face needs saving, in which case the operation is doubly difficult.

Yesterday these people saw themselves as heroic defenders of liberty in the fight against fascism. Today they discover that they are political bunglers whose faces have to be saved. The

bully boys and thugs against whom the great crusade was being waged yesterday are now discovered to be the substance of the society.

At the end of the day the only faces which do not need to be saved are the faces of the Ulster Workers Council, the strikers and their supporters. The great political problem now is how to accomodate the UWC as a major social power without destroying the bunglers and fanatics who were denouncing them as a bunch of fascists. Harold Wilson, whose irresponsible selection of personnel for the Northern Ireland Office is the original cause of all the trouble, is now faced with the problem of finding a line of retreat for himself and all concerned.

But there can be no simple retreat to an earlier position. The bungling of the Northern Ireland Office and the Executive provided the opportunity for a substantial new social development in the Protestant community which must be accommodated, and it has almost wrecked the SDLP.

*

A SENSITIVE PLANT The SDLP is a carefully nurtured plant. Three years of the greatest intelligence and tact of which British politics is capable went into cultivating it and making it ready for power-sharing. Justice Devlin described the task very precisely at the second of the great "Television Trials" in 1972. It was to find a way in which the SDLP might abandon its anti-Partitionist principles without appearing to do so. William Whitelaw's great diplomatic skills and the best years of his life went into the accomplishment of this task.

But then Whitelaw was taken to apply his skills elsewhere (and less successfully), and the SDLP had to fend for itself. And not only that, but some of Gerry Fitt's old pals suddenly and unexpectedly appeared in the Northern Ireland Office. From that time forward the N. Ireland Office and the SDLP had an inflammatory effect on each other, and a chain of development was set off which led to the fiasco we have just witnessed.

The great problem now is how the SDLP is to be saved from becoming a political wreck. It is hardly capable of saving itself. But who will save it? Not Rees and Orme. Not the Dublin Government, which is still trying to stir things up, and demanding that Britain put down these striking Protestants with a firm hand. (Who would ever have expected to see that suave, upper class, literary, socialist, Conor Cruise O'Brien, develop so quickly into a war-monger?)

The possibility that the SDLP will become a political wreck if concessions are made to the Ulster Workers' Council, and the fact that there is no sign on the horizon of a replacement for the SDLP, must now be a major factor tempting Wilson to try to preserve the existing political arrangement at all costs. But the UWC must be conceded to. So how can the SDLP be saved for constitutional politics?

Having overreached itself, the SDLP, in desperation, is indulging itself in an orgy of authoritarian fantasies. All its hopes are now focussed on the strong arm of the law. (It has even gone to the length of suggesting that the strikers might be arrested.) But the strong arm of the law won't save it.

*

A PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT? Is the UWC a Provisional government? It has obviously been obliged to take over many of the functions of government. Since the Executive and the Secretary of State refused to cooperate with it in the provision of essential services at the onset of the strike, it had no alternative but to do so. There is no doubt that Rees tried during the first week of the strike to force a state of collapse. That was his only strategy for breaking the UWC. And the UWC responded by preventing collapse- which meant enforcing measures necessary to that end.

At this moment the UWC has civil executive authority in the Protestant community and in the economy. The Secretary of State has a very large army and nothing more. His "*Executive*" is badly misnamed. It shouts and jumps up and down, but nobody takes much notice. But when the UWC says that something is going to be done, then it is done. And the authority of the UWC is maintained chiefly by the moral force it has acquired.

Rees has been comprehensively outmanoeuvred by the UWC, which has shown itself capable of guiding the community in such a way as to defeat every one of his provocations. If he continues to escalate his provocations there is every reason to assume that the UWC will continue to counter them, and thereby increase its ability and its authority. And that, of course, is why Rees now gives vent to ineffectual rages.

Much surprise is being expressed that such a powerful, representative, capable, self reliant and reasonable body as the UWC, (and many who were hostile to it a week ago, are now finding it hard to deny it these characteristics), should have come into existence unknown to the world. The UWC is obviously concerned primarily to be known to, and be effective within, the community

in which it developed. For the "world" (or the international press) it cares little. The Protestant working class has seen itself cleverly and sensationally misrepresented and insulted in the international press for seven years, and has learned to do without the approval of that press. Much of the power of the IRA depended on its success in manipulating the press. The very different kind of power exercised by the UWC depends not at all on the press. And the only surprising thing is that it has taken so long to evolve.

*

'CONNOLLY SOCIALISM'

We have witnessed the end of "*Connolly socialism*". James Connolly, a sound socialist in other ways, got caught up in the Nationalist movement. In 1912 he denounced the Ulster Protestants for organising themselves to prevent the imposition on them of the Catholic nationalist Home Rule government. He ended up ridiculing the culture of Protestant Ulster, and demanding that the British Army put down the Unionists. Gerry Fitt has always declared himself to be a "*Connolly Socialist*", and when he entered the government he tried to act in the manner advocated by Connolly in 1914. "*Connolly socialism*" has now burned itself out. It broke before the organised power of the Protestant working class. This piece of action will have far-reaching consequences for working class development in Northern Ireland. It will result in a greater clearing up of confusion than any amount of propaganda could have done.

25.5.1974

WORKERS' ASSOCIATION

STRIKE BULLETIN No 7

WILSON BACKS DOWN: INSULTS BUT NO ACTION

Harold Wilson
insulted the

strikers in his broadcast last night. Apart from that he did nothing. And doing nothing is a great improvement on what the Government has done so far. Up to now they have been offering one provocation after another, and trying to bring about confrontations. Last night, for the first time, the Government restrained itself. Having been out-maneuvred by the Ulster Workers' Council for eleven days, it has finally learned to be a bit more cautious.

The SDLP call for the "*fascists*" of the UWC to be put down with a strong hand has not been met. The SDLP has now suffered a major

political defeat from the UWC.

*

VULGAR ABUSE Wilson described the strikers as "*people who spend their lives sponging on Westminster and British democracy*". What did he hope to achieve by such a vulgar and ridiculous insult? When some emotional fringe elements in Unionist politics made such remarks about the Catholic community there were demands that they should be prosecuted under the Race Relations Act. When Wilson descends to the same level by describing the industrial working class of Ulster as spongers, will those who demanded the prosecution of John McKeague remain silent?

*

THE UWC DOES NOT WANT A SECTARIAN STATE Wilson accused the UWC of using "*undemocratic and unparliamentary means in order to set up a sectarian and undemocratic state from which one-third of the population will be excluded*". Has he taken the slightest trouble to find out what the UWC is and what it wants? It is perfectly willing to tell him. But he doesn't want to listen.

It is NOT the aim of the UWC to set up a sectarian state or to exclude Catholics from representation in the Government. The purpose of the strike is to end the Council of Ireland, not to kill power-sharing. Can Wilson cite a single statement of the UWC against Catholic representation in the Government? The UWC categorically deny that they have such an aim, and the UWC now have much greater political credibility than Wilson or Rees.

*

TO THE CATHOLICS OF NORTHERN IRELAND You have long feared the "*Protestant backlash*" against Republican terrorism. The Provos have sought to provoke that backlash in order to make you dependent on them as your defenders. Well, the "*Protestant backlash*" has come.

But did you ever imagine that it would be like this? Where is the burning and the looting: where are the pogroms and assassinations? The "*Protestant backlash*" has now been in full swing for eleven days. The entire social life of Northern Ireland is in its grip. But you are safer in your houses and on the streets than you were before it began.

Brian Faulkner, following Wilson's speech, said: "*Last night as a*

direct result of this situation four people were killed". Faulkner is a liar. The people killed on Friday night were not killed at the behest of the UWC. People have been killed regularly on the streets, in pubs and in their homes for five years. That killing has not increased since the UWC asserted its power: it has decreased in a remarkable manner. The killings on Friday night were a remnant of the old ways, not a product of the new.

When Faulkner governed Ulster he could not restrain the para-military factions in the Protestant community, which had been provoked into being by the IRA. Neither could William Whitelaw or the new Executive. The UWC has done more to restrain them in the last eleven days than was done in the previous five years.

The press cries out about Tartan gangs. But the Tartan gangs and the para-military factions have to a great extent been shown the error (or at least the ineffectiveness) of their ways by the UWC. Much of their earlier behaviour resulted from feelings of frustration, and from the lack of coherence and social purpose in the politics of the Protestant community. The UWC have put an end to all of that. They have brought about a purposeful exertion of economic power by the community, and therefore have been able to exert a progressive influence on Tartans and para-military factions in a way that Faulkner could never do.

But instead of thanking them for it, Faulkner slanders them by blaming them for killings which are, in fact, an inheritance from his period of government which the UWC have not yet been able to overcome completely.

*

NO SECTARIANISM INVOLVED

Wilson whines that this is not a strike about wages. It was never pretended that it was. It is a political strike of a highly original and effective kind.

Its purpose is NOT to establish the UWC as a Provisional Government from which Catholics are excluded. The UWC has in fact assumed many of the functions of government because Rees and the Executive abdicated them in an effort to precipitate chaos and thus break the UWC. But it has not proclaimed itself to be the Government of the province, and has no intention of doing so.

Wilson said: "They seek to allocate food: to decide who shall eat and who shall not". If the British press is worth its salt it will expose this lie to the British public. There has NOT been sectarian distribution of food. Of course a general strike

involves hardships. But there certainly has not been a sectarian distribution of hardship.

*

AN OPPORTUNITY The emergence of the UWC in the Protestant community presents an unprecedented opportunity for a settlement of the national, or sectarian, conflict. An agreement arrived at with the UWC would be an agreement with the mass of the Protestant working class. It could be depended upon. And the UWC is the most open minded, as well as the most powerful, political organisation in the Protestant community.

When Gerry Fitt denounces the Council as "*a bunch of fascists*" he declares himself to be politically bankrupt. The SDLP have shown themselves over the last two weeks to have been thoroughly deceptive over the question of a united Ireland. It WAS their purpose to use the Council as a stepping stone to a united Ireland.

We know from experience - and it was borne out by the BBC opinion poll - that a majority of Catholics are not at all anxious to come under the Dublin Government, and would be perfectly satisfied with participation in a democratic Northern Ireland government within the UK.

The hysterical Government propaganda about UWC fascism has been shown to have no basis in fact. The Government is infinitely closer to fascism than the UWC. A sober assessment of the past few days by the Catholic community would show it that there is a far greater prospect of arriving at a democratic settlement by negotiating with the UWC than by relying on the flimsy Executive which has been howling for the blood of the UWC.

The UWC are determined to avert the doomsday situation that they have slanderously been accused of desiring: and they have the ability to avert it despite provocation. Such an organisation, in a situation like this, deserves a lot of serious thought.

26.5.1974

Workers' Association.

STRIKE BULLETIN No. 8

WESTMINSTER SHIFTS ITS GROUND Last week Westminster and the press were telling the world that the general strike was imposed by a handful of thugs on

the population at large. The press has finally discovered that it has very widespread popular support. But Westminster still sticks to its old story. Of course nobody in Westminster actually believes it any longer. But if they admitted that they had made an enormous, (indeed a criminal), mistake last week, they could no longer give any sort of a reason for refusing to negotiate with the Ulster Workers' Council.

But a noticeable change of emphasis has taken place in their explanations of how the small minority imposed its will on the great majority. Last week they said it was by physical intimidation; by the use of bully boys and thugs. They now say it was by exploiting the understandable, though groundless, fears in the Protestant community that a Council of Ireland would lead them into a united Ireland against their will. That was the explanation given by Francis Pym last night.

This deep suspicion of the Council of Ireland is declared to be completely unjustified. There are said to be "cast-iron guarantees". The people must be very stupid indeed if their groundless fears, on a question on which there are cast iron guarantees, could be exploited by a small, sinister, political group in such a way as to cause a general strike. But let us look a bit closer.

*

GROUNDLESS FEARS?

Andrew Barr walked alongside Len Murray in the "trade union return to work" last week. Len Murray understands nothing about Northern Ireland politics, and no doubt he took it in good faith from Andrew Barr and Stanley Orme that the fears of a United Ireland manoeuvre through the Council of Ireland were the fears of ignorant people who had been confused by sinister politicians.

But last Friday Andrew Barr put his signature to a letter to Wilson calling on the British Government to make a declaration of intent to withdraw from Northern Ireland. The letter says: *"If the British Government makes such a declaration, it completely changes the framework of the argument for Unionists of all varieties. Realistically, the issue for them then becomes one of obtaining the best possible deal within a united Ireland situation."* (The letter was also signed by other official trade union leaders prominent in the attempt to break the strike: Betty Sinclair and Joe Cooper, secretary and treasurer of the Belfast Trades Council; by SDLP Assemblymen, Paddy Duffy and Desmond Gillespie; and by many Fianna Fail MPs.)

The Government and press have all described Andrew Barr as an

Intelligent and respectable man, superior in every way to the strikers. But Barr is clearly not very impressed by the "cast-iron guarantees". And if Barr, who is a colleague of Stanley Orme's, thinks that a united Ireland against the will of the Protestants is a real possibility, how can it be said that the fears of the Protestant community are stupid and groundless?

*

THE SDLP NOW THE MAIN DANGER TO POWER SHARING

The main danger to democratic power sharing is now coming from the arrogant and tyrannical behaviour of the SDLP members in the Executive. It is now obvious that the SDLP only engaged in power-sharing in order to further its anti-Partitionist aims. It says it will not try to get a united Ireland against the wishes of the majority in Northern Ireland. "Unity by consent" is its slogan. But it has a strange idea of "consent". It is now trying to blackmail Westminster into using the Army to ram the Council of Ireland down the throats of the great majority of the Protestant community.

SDLP spokesmen still persist in their vicious slander campaign against the great mass of the Protestant working class. John Hume declared on Radio Eireann yesterday: *"The Northern Ireland Executive is in the front line against a fascist takeover... This is a complete fascist takeover. We know the steps that have to be taken to stop it. The plans are prepared, awaiting the sanction of the British Government."*

This attitude of the SDLP is building up great problems for the maintenance of democratic power-sharing. The only democratic approach for the SDLP would have been to admit after the February election that there was a strong majority against the Council of Ireland. If they had then agreed to suspend the question of the Council until such time as it became clear that it was acceptable to a substantial majority of the people, the power-sharing arrangement could have continued in a democratic form. And its basis could have been broadened, because the Opposition parties (who had come to represent majority opinion in the society) would, no doubt, then have agreed to take part in the Executive.

But the SDLP put the Council of Ireland before power-sharing. Democratic power-sharing has broken down. And the SDLP is denouncing the majority of the people as fascists because they objected to the way they were being railroaded.

It is increasingly unlikely that the British government will try

to use the Army to break the strike. If they do not, the SDLP will be left in a powerless Executive, screaming "Fascists !" at the greater part of the society that it is supposed to be governing.

The SDLP Assemblymen have brought all of this upon themselves. It was not the case that their Catholic constituents were putting pressure on them to behave like that. There is plenty of evidence that the majority of the Catholic community would have supported them if they acted reasonably and democratically in the power-sharing arrangement, and shelved the Council of Ireland when it became clear that the great majority of the Protestant community was against it. It was their own excessive ambition, and the political dishonesty which resulted from it, that led to their undoing.

*

WHO IS AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF THE CONSTITUTION ?

Francis Pym said that there can be no negotiations with, or concessions to, the Ulster

Workers' Council, because the British Constitution will not tolerate challenges to Parliament from outside bodies. But that's nonsense. Time and again the British Parliament has brought about fundamental changes in response to social pressures from outside Parliament. The present strike has plenty of precedents in the history of the British Constitution.

Parliament must take account of the feelings of the people between elections as well as at elections. And if Parliament, between elections, provokes great hostility to itself from a large proportion of the people, it must either meet the grievance of the people or call an election. It is useless for it to say, when the majority of the people have actively withdrawn their consent from it, that a majority won last year is good enough for this year.

The only alternative to government by consent is government by the Army, and that is against the spirit of the British Constitution. The use of armed force either to overthrow a Parliament, or to maintain a Parliament against the will of the people, is considered completely out of order. The Ulster Workers' Council has no intention of using violence. If the Army is sent into the power stations it will not be resisted, but the workers who are now running them will leave and let the Army produce power if it can: and likewise with the distribution of petrol, etc.

If the Government will not negotiate with the UWC for the maintenance of essential services, and if it sends the Army in to maintain

them, the Army will simply disappear as an Army and become a workforce. And that's why John Hume's demands will not be met by Westminster. They are alien to the spirit of the Constitution, and they are completely impractical. And the UWC methods are both practical and in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution. Pym must think again:

Workers' Association

26.5.74

STRIKE BULLETIN NO. 9

**THE GOVERNMENT
IS ANARCHIST**

*"Those whom the Gods wish to destroy
they first drive mad."*

That is a saying of the ancient Greeks.
They must have had prophetic knowledge of the SDLP.

Francis Pym called on the Ulster Workers' Council and its supporters not to embark on a course of anarchy. He should have directed his call elsewhere: to the "Executive" in Stormont and to Downing Street. The Government has now embarked on an all-out course of anarchy. It has disrupted the essential services maintained by the Ulster Workers' Council for twelve days. Within hours of Wilson's decision to accede to the SDLP call to break the strike with the army, essential services are breaking down.

The Government pretends that the Army was sent into the business of petrol distribution for the purpose of providing essential services. But it was so obvious that the sending in of the Army would bring about the collapse of essential services, that the real aim of the exercise could not possibly have been the maintenance of essential services. Its aim can only have been to force a situation of anarchy.

Hume and Fitt have been telling the British public for the past week that they are in the front line of defence against a fascist takeover. They have now caused the breakdown of essential services, and they must be hoping that this will lead to the outbreak of some hooliganism in the Protestant community, or some attacks on Catholic areas. If that happens Hume and Fitt will declare it to be proof that the strike movement is fascist. And they will have the opportunity to escalate things still further by getting the Army to use jackboot methods on the people under cover of suppressing "fascist

"hooliganism".

But if the methods of the Ulster Workers' Council are strictly adhered to, and if orderly behaviour is strictly maintained during the next few days despite the irresponsible provocations of the Government, then Fitt and Hume are finished; Faulkner is finished; and Rees and Orme are finished.

Isn't it a strange state of affairs when the "anti-fascists" can only be saved from political disaster if they can succeed in provoking hooligan behaviour among the people that they describe as fascists!

A COLLAPSE OF CREDIBILITY

British public opinion has been systematically misled about this strike by Fitt, Orme and Rees, and by most of the British press. But the true facts of the case have been getting through to some extent in recent days. Fitt and Rees have been steadily losing in credibility. Wilson's speech on Saturday night caused a further substantial loss in the credibility of the Government. And the showdown that they have tried to force today will cause a collapse of credibility if orderly behaviour is maintained throughout the Protestant community.

Pressures against the present policies of the Government are already building up. They will build up with increasing momentum from now on, if the Government fails in its bid to provoke anarchy.

Workers' Association.

27.5.1974

STRIKE BULLETIN NO. 9 SECOND EDITION

A CHALLENGE TO THE BELFAST TELEGRAPH

The Belfast Telegraph is still talking about thugs and bully boys. In today's editorial it says: "*it is true that there is intimidation on a massive scale. It is true that the past few days have seen activities that can only be described as 'fascist' in character.*"

It concedes that there is some genuine support for the strike because of fears about the Council of Ireland, and continues: "*But not all the tacit support for the strike is based on opposition to a Council of Ireland. A great many are also opposed to the very existence of the power sharing Executive. Indeed, its destruction is a principal objective of the Ulster Workers' Council.*"

The Belfast Telegraph does not cite a single scrap of evidence that the UWC is opposed to power sharing. It is opposed to the people of Northern Ireland being railroaded into a Council of Ireland against their will. And it is opposed to this present Executive, (made up of three minority parties, who are a minority even when they are added together), because it has tried to ram the Council of Ireland down the throats of the people. This minority Executive declares that there can be no election for four years. It has the ambition of ruling as a minority government for four years, against the hostility of a majority of the people.

Democratic power sharing cannot take the form of tyrannical government by a Catholic party and a very small Protestant party against the wishes of a majority in the society. To call that power-sharing is to degrade the concept of power-sharing, and bring it into contempt. But it is that kind of "power-sharing" that exists in this present Executive, that is being propped up by Westminster, that the Belfast Telegraph defends, and that the Ulster Workers' Council opposes.

It is an irresponsible and inflammatory action by the Belfast Telegraph to declare that the UWC is opposed to the general policy of power-sharing, as distinct from the distortion and caricature of power-sharing that is represented by the present Executive, (which will probably have fallen by the time you read this).

The Belfast Telegraph must either retract its slander of the UWC, or else be branded as an irresponsible mischief maker.

*

THE WORKERS' ASSOCIATION

The Workers' Association which publishes these Bulletins is an organisation of Catholic and Protestant workers whose aim is to bring about a democratic settlement of the national conflict. It has branches in both parts of Ireland. One of our members in the South, Jim Kemmy of Limerick, is standing for a local government election next month on a programme of demanding that the Southern Government should recognise Northern Ireland properly by calling a referendum to delete Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution which claim sovereignty over Ulster. This will be the first time that anybody in the South has contested an election on such a programme, but not the last time.

We have discussed things with the Ulster Workers' Council, and are convinced that what we say about them is true. And members of the UWC have read these Bulletins and said that we have given

a fair and correct account of their views and activities. They have encouraged us to keep on producing them.

The government abdicated all practical responsibility for the maintenance of social and economic life almost two weeks ago in an effort to bring about chaos and break the UWC. And the UWC was forced to take over many functions of government in order to avert chaos. In these circumstances the Workers' Association undertook to counteract the irresponsible misrepresentation of the UWC by most of the British and Northern Irish press.

Workers' Association

27.5.1974

STRIKE BULLETIN NO. 10

THE COLLAPSE OF COLONIALISM

At the moment of writing all that has happened officially is that the Executive has resigned. But the tide of influential public opinion has turned decisively against Rees and Orme. Just over a week ago the London "Times" was in full support of Rees' policy of confrontation. Today (Wednesday) it declares that the Government bungled the whole affair, and calls on Rees to concede to the UWC demand for early elections. It argues that since *"the attempt to break the strike has instead broken the Executive, no purpose is served by refusing to deal with the strike leaders or refusing their demand for elections."*

If Rees persists in refusing to deal with the UWC or to call elections he can only be classified as a political maniac. And since his political career in Northern Ireland must be virtually finished anyway, persistence in his pig-ignorant attitude can only hasten his departure. A member of the Ulster Workers' Council told Orme, at the only meeting held between the two parties, that he needed to be psychoanalysed. The Workers' Association had a meeting with Orme while he was in opposition, and we have no reason to disagree with that view. The man is impenetrable to reason.

The attempt by Rees and Orme to treat Ulster as a colony has collapsed in disgrace: and so we bid adieu to these "socialists" who aspired to be colonial administrators.

THE PROSPECT FOR THE FUTURE

But what of the future? Various people in Britain, (like the Labour MP Paul Rose, for example), are trying to generate an

atmosphere of gloom, and to whip up feeling in support of a British separation from Ulster. But these despicable trouble-makers will be frustrated once again. They predict that the Loyalists will now try to "return" to a "Protestant ascendancy" arrangement. In fact there is scarcely a sign of Protestant triumphalism to be seen. The general state of mind brought about in the Protestant community by the strike offers greater opportunity for the working out of a democratic political settlement than has ever existed before.

The SDLP will now have to make up its mind once and for all whether it is an anti-Partitionist party, or a party which will represent the interests of the Catholic community within the Union. The arrangement of the past six months, whereby it has been an anti-Partitionist party participating in government within the Union for anti-Partitionist objectives, has been shown to be unworkable.

What is now required is a definite division between anti-Partitionist politics and power-sharing politics in the Catholic community. And there is no doubt that in such a division the anti-Partitionist tendency would be in a minority. It was the political ambition of the SDLP leaders, not pressure from the Catholic community, that was responsible for extremist SDLP behaviour in the recent period. The SDLP might have led the Catholic community into a democratic power-sharing arrangement. It chose to do otherwise, and put anti-Partitionist manoeuvrings to the fore.

UNREASONABLE ? The "unreasonable fears" of the Protestant community about the Council of Ireland have been shown in the past two weeks not to have been so unreasonable after all. Even "The Times" now says: *"So inept has been the Government's handling of the crisis in the last few days... that doubts have been sown about the deeper intentions of the Government. If the conduct of affairs has been so unhelpful to the realisation of its declared intentions, has it undeclared intentions?"*

And even though "The Times" concludes that it has not, it is acknowledged that the suspicion of devious intentions was a reasonable suspicion.

There must be no confusion surrounding essential matters the next time round.

A BIT OF HISTORY

Much is now being said about "No going back to the old Stormont". But a word about "the old Stormont" is needed. The idea seems to be generally accepted in the British press that the old Stormont was "Protestant ascendancy" by Unionist design, and that the Catholic community was denied participation in government as a matter of policy. In fact what happened was that when Stormont was set up, the Northern Catholic community was in the grip of the Sinn Fein politics that had just then come to dominance in the South, and it refused to participate in Stormont politics. For many years the Nationalist Party boycotted Stormont completely. (And when it gained majorities in local government areas it refused to operate local government.) It did eventually agree to attend the Stormont Parliament, but on a completely obstructionist policy. It was not until 1966 that it would agree to accept the status of official opposition, and it did so reluctantly under pressure from Lemass, (the then Dublin Prime Minister).

Craigavon, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland in the twenties and thirties, was anxious to change the basis of politics from the issue of Partition, on which Catholics would be a permanent minority, to more general social issues, on which political parties would cut across religious grounds. But while the Catholic community remained in the grip of anti-Partitionist politics that could not happen, and so the "Protestant ascendancy" resulted.

The Civil Rights Association of the late sixties was for all practical political purposes a mere anti-Partitionist tactic. It included some genuine civil rights who wanted to shift the ground of politics away from the question of Partition, but they quickly lost all influence in it, and it simply became a clever new way of playing the anti-Partitionist game. The Provo campaign was a logical development out of it. (Let the gentlemen of the press wish away this account of things as "Orange propaganda", we should say that the Workers' Association includes people who were active for a time in the Civil Rights movement - and on the Executive of the CRA - and who left it because of its policy of provoking sectarian clashes for anti-Partitionist purposes.)

If the British Press want to contribute to the establishment of a democratic political settlement, (which up to the present their activity has tended to impede), they should start by getting their historical facts straight, and stop chattering about "Protestant ascendancy".

A substantial proportion of the Catholic community is now thoroughly fed up with the dead-end of anti-Partitionist politics.

The working out of a democratic settlement only requires adequate political representation for this large and increasing part of the society. (Of course, in the long run the democratic aim must be for forms of politics which cut across the community division, but that can only happen on any large scale after there has been a democratic settlement between the communities.)

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How can the Dublin Government contribute to a democratic settlement? It can occupy itself with the implementation of progressive reform in the South (such as imposing £100 fines on unmarried for the purchase of contraceptives?), and stop interfering. Or, if it has the nerve, it can call a referendum for the abolition of Articles 2 and 3 of the Southern Constitution which claim sovereignty over the North. Until those articles are abolished, the only useful thing that the Cosgrave government can do is shut up.

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The action of the Ulster Workers' Council has cut through a lot of nonsense, and has pulled the mass of the Protestant community out of the swamp of frustration, and given it a sense of confidence in itself. What the leadership of Carson and Craig did in 1912, the Ulster Workers' Council has done today.

29.5.1974

(This is, of course, the concluding issue of our Strike Bulletin. During the coming months, which are critical to the future of Northern Ireland, we will be issuing a weekly publication called WORKERS WEEKLY.)

EPILOGUE

The fact that the whole Sunningdale Agreement was scrapped by Rees at the end of the strike does not mean that the aim of the strike was to scrap Sunningdale, or that the scrapping of Sunningdale necessarily followed from the success of the strike. The only reason why the UWC strike meant the end of Sunningdale is that the Executive and Rees decided to make Sunningdale the central issue in the strike. In an effort to strengthen their hand against the UWC over the Council of Ireland/Elections issue, they declared the whole Sunningdale Agreement to be at issue. It was as if somebody with a very weak hand in poker staked everything he possessed in an effort to sap the confidence of his opponent and make him throw in his hand. If the bluff didn't come off, instead of incurring a moderate loss while remaining in the game he would lose everything. Such an approach is guaranteed to lead to bankruptcy in poker and disaster in politics.

Rees and the Executive wrecked the Sunningdale Agreement in an irresponsible gamblers' effort to break a protest strike against a relatively unimportant part of that Agreement.

Rees made a speech in the immediate aftermath of the strike in which he declared that it was a manifestation of a new social force, "Ulster nationalism". The leaders of the strike immediately repudiated that assertion. They insisted that their aim had been to ensure that Ulster was democratically governed within the United Kingdom: they had no nationalist objectives, and they rejected the nationalism attributed to them by Rees.

But a lot more was to be heard about "Ulster nationalism" in the following two years. Rees was determined to create what he had pretended to discover. In December 1974 he negotiated the Feakle Agreement with the IRA, and his civil servants set about persuading the Loyalist paramilitary groups that a "British withdrawal" was under way and that they had better formulate a policy for an independent Ulster.

Rees was assisted in this effort by a peculiar assortment of academics, journalists and New Leftists. Robert Fisk, Belfast correspondent of The Times during the strike, published a book in the summer of 1975 entitled: *"The Point Of No Return: The Strike That Broke The British In Ulster"*. The point of the book was to establish a very sharp dichotomy between "the British" and Ulster, and to propagate the idea that *"The psychological link between Britain and Northern Ireland had been broken"* by the strike (p23).

There appeared simultaneously with Fisk's book a "Marxist" article advocating Ulster nationalism. It was written by Tom Nairn, a member of the editorial committee of the New Left Review, and was first published in a magazine called Bananas (No. 2, 1975) and subsequently in Calgacus, a Scottish Nationalist magazine (Spring 1976), and a book called The Break-Up Of Britain (1977). Nairn too depicted the UWC strike as a manifestation of nationalism. And he commented that Ulster *"has refused to be 'British' in the fairly elementary sense of obeying the British government's plans for the province"*. Let us reflect on this for a moment: let us consider what light the strike throws on the British character of Ulster.

Are the British a state-oriented people? Is it a British characteristic to be blindly obedient to government directives? Far from it. If the British state can boast three centuries of evolutionary development in a period when other states have been toppling like ninepins, that is certainly not due to any slavishness on the part of the people. On the contrary, the state has been capable of evolving because it has been continuously subjected to popular pressures which it did not have the power to resist. The 18th century oligarchy evolved into the limited democracy of the 19th

century amidst great social turbulence which the oligarchy was incapable of pacifying. And that limited democracy evolved into the social democracy of the 20th century because the growing trade union and labour movement had no inhibitions about exercising its enormous power to negate laws designed to curb it and to compel Parliament to pass laws which would facilitate it. In short, continuous evolution has meant continuous turmoil. Revolution has been averted by successful rebellion. The rule of law has been respected because it has always been brought into line with social fact. Britain is the last place where a law would be respected merely because it was a law, and mere government decrees are regularly treated with contempt.

The UWC strike had some very unusual features which mark it out as a singularly British phenomenon. Where else on earth could an obnoxious government be so thoroughly stripped of power through such a rapid extemporising of an alternative state structure? And where else would such an alternative state structure so rapidly and painlessly disappear from the scene, and full authority de facto and de jure be restored to the Constitutional government, once it desisted from its obnoxious course of action and conceded the point at issue.

Was it a rebellion against the Crown? Of course it was. The Crown - or its agent - was behaving unreasonably and intolerably, it refused to take account of the clearly expressed will of the province, therefore it was necessary to use extra Parliamentary pressure to restore it to its senses. The officers of the Crown shouted "rebellion" in order to frighten the strikers back into line. But nobody was frightened. The strikers affirmed their undying loyalty to the Crown, but continued to rebel until the point at issue was conceded, (and much more than the point at issue was unnecessarily conceded); and then, suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, all that could be seen where previously there had been rebels were law abiding subjects of the Crown. How unmistakably British!

Of course, matters do not usually go to such extremes in Britain. The point at issue is usually conceded well before such an extreme point of rebellion is reached - for example, the bending of the law by the government when faced with the clear prospect of rebellion in connection with the jailing of dockers under the Industrial Relations Act in 1972. But matters have gone to the point of rebellion before. The great "Constitutional stoppage" in Ulster was very similar in that respect to the great Spithead Mutiny of 1797.

This highly successful Mutiny, which occurred in the midst of war with France, took place because certain changes in conditions of naval service being demanded by the sailors would not be conceded

by the Crown. The sailors considered this attitude on the part of the Crown to be utterly unreasonable. They were taunted with rebellion in order to frighten them and break their reform movement. So, declaring that they had no intention of rebelling, they rebelled. The rebellion held solid, and never allowed itself to go beyond the issue which caused it. The situation then was that the Crown could have a navy if it conceded the issue on which the rebellion took its stand, otherwise it would not have a navy. So the Crown conceded the reforms and pretended that there had been no rebellion, the rebel command structure disbanded itself, full authority was immediately restored to the commissioned officers of the Crown, and Napoleon lost his navy at Trafalgar.

Such things only happen in British society. Elsewhere, successful rebellions lead to the overthrow of states, and situations of dual power are resolved militarily. So, in the light of the great "Constitutional stoppage" of 1974, how could it possibly be the case that Ulster is not British? British reformism, that political wonder of the modern world, is firmly based on a social capacity for stubborn, effective, conditional, restrained and purposeful rebellion.

Ulster engaged in a typically British piece of disobedience in 1974. And if the outcome of the UWC strike was not as successful in evolutionary terms as the outcome of the Spithead Mutiny the cause does not lie in a qualitative difference in the behaviour of the two sets of Constitutional rebels, but in a qualitative difference in the behaviour of the two Governments. Pitt and his colleagues conceded handsomely, intelligently and with good grace, as much as it was necessary for them to concede. They were worthy of that remarkable rebellion. They neither opposed it blindly nor conceded too much to it. To have conceded too much would have been little better than refusing to make any concessions at all. The mutineers did not demand, for example, that the officers should be elected by the mess; and Pitt did not, in a fit of pique at having his authority rebelled against so successfully, declare that the mutineers were incomprehensible to the Admiralty, (as they undoubtedly were to many a respected Admiral), and would therefore have to make their own arrangements for conducting the Navy.

Merlyn Rees and Harold Wilson were utterly unworthy of the remarkable British rebellion against the un-British behaviour of their Government in Ulster in 1974. They opposed it blidly for far too long, and when they became incapable of opposing it any longer they conceded to it, unintelligently and with bad grace, much more than it had demanded. And they gave every appearance of doing this in a sheer fit of pique, in the way that a child might smash a toy that had not obeyed its whim.

If at any point during the strike the Government had declared that, (while it would not tolerate rebellion, or make the slightest

concession to people who went outside the Parliamentary process, etc. etc.), it had come to its notice that the Dublin government could not see its way to meeting its commitments under Sunningdale; that the establishment of a Council of Ireland would, regretfully, have to be suspended until Dublin was able to meet those commitments by amending its Constitution; and that Assembly elections would, as had always been intended, be held within six months - that would have been an ample concession on which to settle the strike, and the Sunningdale framework would have been preserved as a basis for development.

With the Council postponed on such reasonable grounds, and with the issue of the Council effectively separated from the issue of power-sharing, the SDLP would have been hard put to it to withdraw, and the participationist aspect of the SDLP would have been given the best possible conditions in which to become preponderant over the anti-participationist aspect. No doubt there would have been a political crisis, but a serious political crisis effectively resolved would have been the making of the Assembly. However, that very real possibility of the situation was casually wiped out in a fit of pique by Merlyn Rees, who treated Ulster as if it was a colonial remnant, and who was himself the most un-British political feature in Ulster.

Paddy Devlin explains why the SDLP decided to push for all-out confrontation with the strike, and to demand that the Army be used to run essential industries: *"It was obvious that the remaining power-workers would be withdrawn by the UWC and that the experienced technical experts would take over. It was predictable that this plan, if activated, would create the type of confrontation that the loyalists could not face. We reckoned that the loyalists were largely the products of a law and order community and would not operate outside the law once it was established that they were in breach of it. This was never understood by Rees and Wilson at any time during the stoppage" (The Fall of the Executive).*

This passage indicates how grossly the SDLP misconceived the character of the Unionist workers. Devlin cannot, even with hindsight, understand why he is no longer a Government Minister. Wilson and Rees went to insane lengths in confronting the strike. The more they confronted it the more coherent it became. Yet Devlin still indulges himself in the fantasy that if Wilson and Rees had gone to even greater lengths of confrontation the strike could have been broken. The SDLP leaders have so often declared the Unionist workers to be a lumpen rabble which stands in awe of a reactionary aristocracy that this has become a fixed idea with them which nothing that the Unionist workers actually do is capable of altering.

Having scrapped the Assembly, Rees announced that an Ulster

Constitutional Convention would be established. The Convention would be elected on the same basis as the Assembly, but would be without any definite functions. The impression was given initially that the Convention would be a powerful, or at least an influential body. (Tom Nairn, in the aforementioned article, declared that "*in the new Ulster Convention they will actually be ruling themselves*".) In effect, the Convention was a constituent assembly without the power to constitute anything. It did not even have an advisory function. The Report which it drew up received a token discussion at Westminster in February 1976 and was then put in the waste paper basket. Rees announced the Convention in June 1974, but delayed its election until May 1975. The point of the delay was a hope that it would enable the Faulkner Unionists to regain credibility, but it had the contrary effect.

The moment was ripest for a political initiative in the immediate aftermath of the strike, when Rees did absolutely nothing.

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The Westminster government still remains committed to restoring a devolved government, as is the Westminster opposition. But it has been found much easier to knock down devolved government in Ulster than to set it up again. The great political secret about Ulster is that it is a region that is inherently unsuitable for the devolution of government. The powers that be are now all engaged in a conspiracy to prevent that secret from leaking out. That grave and responsible newspaper, the Times, which has agonised so much in recent years about the freedom of the press, has published a multitude of eccentric viewpoints on Ulster. What it absolutely will not publish is an article or letter which lets out the secret that Ulster is inherently unsuitable for devolution. The fundamental truth of that idea is so irresistible that only the strictest censorship of its expression can prevent a landslide of opinion towards an "integrationist" solution of the Ulster problem.

We have demonstrated here that the abolition of the devolved Sunningdale Assembly was not a demand of the UWC strike, and we have argued that if there had been a modicum of political intelligence at work in the Northern Ireland Office the framework of the Assembly might have been preserved. But we do not regret the abolition of the Assembly. It has since 1974 been found impossible to restore devolved government. Ulster is therefore being integrated on a de facto basis, despite the policies of both Tory and Labour Parties. We welcome the fact that it is being found impossible to get Ulster back into the straitjacket that was imposed on it in 1921.

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