



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Political Developments in Northern Ireland.

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Belfast City Council.

On the 16 March Unionists in Belfast City Council voted to restructure the Committee system in the Council. Under the new arrangements membership of the 7 ordinary committees will increase from 13 to 17 and the quorum needed for a meeting will be raised from 3 to 8. The effects of these new proposals will be to hand over complete control of all committees to the unionists and allow them to prevent meetings of the committees by denying a quorum.

During the past 16 months, initially as a protest against the Sinn Fein presence in the Council and later as a protest against the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the unionist carried on an adjournment policy preventing meetings of the Council and its committees. Since June 1986 only the General Purposes Committee has been re-convened and here too little or no council business was transacted. The High Court found them in breach of the law for this action and recently fined the City Council £25,000. It is expected that under the new system the unionists will direct most of their business to the committees, continue to have very few meetings of the full Council and then, perhaps, not show up for committee meetings, thus effectively suspending the work of the Council again.

While the unionists are able to push this decision through Council, it still has to be ratified in April and elections to the Committees will be held in May. There is already talk of court action against what can only be described as gerrymandering and it is believed that this interference with the work of the Council is contrary to the spirit of the High Court ruling.

### District Councils

As a follow up to the Alliance's successful proceedings against the Unionist adjournment policy, the SDLP, because of the absence of Alliance councillors there, have indicated that they will take court action against Cookstown and Craigavon district councils to force them to resume normal business.

### Sinn Fein.

In West Belfast, Gerry Adams will obviously give no quarter to the SDLP in the face of Joe Hendron's bid for his Westminster seat in the forthcoming British General Election. Having condemned President Reagan's speech on the AIA, he went on to challenge John Hume to state publicly how much money his party had received in the past and would receive in the future from the National Democratic Institute in Washington which, he claimed, has CIA connections.

### UDA

The UDA continues to benefit politically from the kudos its proposals for a power-sharing devolved government and a Bill of Rights (as set out in its document "Commons Sense") received. Though pointing to the UDA's connection with the UVF - responsible, it is believed, for the fire-bombings in the South and most of the loyalist sectarian intimidation in the North - the Workers' Party welcomed the proposals. The Workers' Party, in line with their ideological outlook, believe that people would support real coalitions in government based on genuine political and economic programmes and called for the Anglo-Irish Agreement to be put into "cold storage" as it has, in their eyes, failed in its objectives.

The UDA itself is trying to maintain the political focus on its new image and quotes an excerpt from the Police Federation's Bulletin in which the Federation's chairman, Alan Wright, told Tom King and Nicholas Scott at a recent meeting that a

significant majority of the population had been politically alienated, or disillusioned because of the developments surrounding the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The UDA used the quote to reiterate that Secretary of State King should "give a clear signal to Unionists that the Government would welcome and seriously consider positive alternatives to the Treaty".

In the same vein, the UDA has challenged the British Government to react to the Taoiseach's statement made in the US on the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Unionist.

Molyneaux, in a now rare assertion of his views, hit out at the in-fighting between OUP and DUP members, obviously referring to the contention between incumbent OUP MPs and aspiring DUP candidates and the ongoing problems encountered by the Joint Unionist Working Party in the past few months. The spectacle of such tension within the unionist camp merely aided the aims of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, he held.

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