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Mr. Gee

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 2. *Mr. Walker*
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- PS/Junior Ministers (I&B) -M
- PS/PUS (I&B) -M
- ~~PS/Sir R. Kidd~~
- Mr. Janes (L) -M
- Mr. Hannigan
- Mr. Lane
- Mr. Marshall (L) -M
- Mr. Mayne (L) -M
- Mr. Burns
- Mr. Newington FCO/RID(L) -M
- Mr. Wilson (L) -M
- Mr. Buxton (L) -M
- Mr. Clift
- Mr. Gilliland
- Miss Simmons (DH)

EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 1979

I attended the count at Belfast City Hall on Monday 11 June. The table below gives the result of the first count of the NI votes in the European Assembly election and compares the party shares of 1st preference votes with the results of the May 1979 general election.

<u>Candidate</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Vote</u>	<u>% 1st Pref Votes</u>	<u>% Vote May 1979</u>
<u>Paisley</u>	DUP	170,688	29.82%	10.2%
Hume	SDLP	140,622	24.57%	19.7%
Taylor	UUP	68,185	11.92%)	36.6%
West	UUP	56,984	9.96%)	
Napier	Alliance	39,026	6.82%	11.9%
Kilfedder	Ind. Unionist	38,198	6.68%	5.3%
Devlin- McAliskey	Ind. Republican	33,969	5.94%	-
Bleakley	United Community	9,383	1.64%	-
Devlin	ULP	6,122	1.07%	-
Cummings	UPNI	3,712	0.65%	1.2%
Brennan	RC-WP	3,258	0.57%)	1.7%
Donnelly	RC-WP	1,160	0.2%)	
Murray	Liberal	932	0.16%	-

2. Valid votes cast, out of a total electorate of 1,029,490, were 572,239, making the quota 143,060. The valid poll % was 55.58% compared with the overall poll of 56.92%; spoiled votes therefore

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represented 1.34%.

3. The result of the 1st preference count is quite clearly a massive boost for Paisley who was elected with nearly 30,000 votes over the quota. Most thought that he would top the 1st preference vote but not by such a large margin. He amassed more 1st preference votes than all the Unionist candidates put together. In his speech to the audience, which began with a hymn and ended with the national anthem, Paisley declared that he had won the battle for the leadership of the Protestant community of Ulster. The ballot box had spoken and all would have to accept the voice of the people. He said that he would be sending an immediate telegram to the Prime Minister to demand a meeting to discuss the security situation in the Province. The terrorist would soon learn that the Ulster people had decided that enough was enough. Peter Robinson, who shared the jubilation of the DUP supporters, commented privately that the Secretary of State and the NIO would now have to listen to and respect the DUP's voice.

4. The SDLP camp were also in good heart, secure in the knowledge that John Hume would be elected. Their mood was buoyant and confident; they had fought off the challenge of the RC-WP, the IIP and Paddy Devlin and their share of the vote (24.57%) was an increase of nearly 5% and their best ever electoral performance. Seamus Mallon commented privately that the SDLP could now never be written off; against all the odds and despite 3 years of political inactivity, they had consistently proved that they were the only party representative of the minority. Both he and Hume accepted, however, that the DUP's gains (and they reckoned that many of Kilfedder's votes would have transferred to Paisley on second preference rather than to the UUP) meant that the Secretary of State's position would be that much more difficult. Mallon commented that the Secretary of State would therefore have to come down on one side or the other and abandon the middle course. He was in no doubt that external pressures would push HMG over to the SDLP's side and he repeated his total opposition to ^{any} local government solution in NI. He looked forward to early multilateral talks on some form of devolution in an Irish context. The honeymoon period

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would not, he said, last for ever nor would the SDLP's patience. Endless talking wasted everyone's time; what was needed was progress.

5. The mood in the UUP camp was despondent and wholly defeatist. Privately several commented that they had just witnessed the demise of their party. Martin Smyth observed that the DUP had won the electoral contest fairly and squarely and the voice of the electorate had to be recognised. Taylor, who looks the more likely to win the last seat in preference to Harry West (although much depends on the transfers) was more optimistic but even his flippancy failed to lift the atmosphere of gloom. Martin Smyth commented that they would have to reassess their position and policies very carefully in the aftermath of the election. Whilst they thought that Paisley, with a personal popularity vote, had outstripped the real electoral strength of his party, they had to recognise that he had beaten their combined vote by a margin of some 50,000 votes.

6. Alliance too were dejected with their poor performance and comments like "whither consensus politics?" and "back to the drawing board" were commonplace. They sought to excuse their poor showing by suggesting that their Catholic support had gone to Hume on first preference but there was little optimism that Napier would reestablish his party's position by the final count. No party mourned their fate and the SDLP (Mallon and Canavan) commented that Alliance's failure would force HMG away from the "middle ground" of partnership devolution that was, in their view, wholly mythical. Interestingly, John Taylor commented that the UUP vote did not look all that unfortunate when combined with that of the Alliance Party.

7. Of the smaller parties, Bernadette McAliskey managed to muster a respectable 1st preference vote despite the PSF boycott and Paddy Devlin kept hold of his personal vote in W. Belfast. The RC-WP were dismissed by all, Bernie McDonagh commenting that they should have waited for the 1981 local government elections to secure themselves a more stable base in district councils before attempting the national electoral arena.

8. The next stage in the count will be the distribution of the

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second choices of those who voted for Paisley according to the value of the surplus. Then it is likely that the bottom 6 candidates will be excluded and their votes distributed. The final result is not at this stage expected before Wednesday.

Alan Huck

A.E. HUCKLE
Division 3(B)
12 June 1979
3B/16289/MR

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