

Dr Paisley in particular was anxious to see many executive functions which had been devolved to public bodies being brought back under the direct control of parliament and was prepared to examine how some of these devices could be made a vehicle for increased power-sharing - always provided that ultimate power rested in the cabinet elected by the majority in the Assembly.

8. Mr West asked what guarantee had they that SDLP would even consider any of these possibilities. Reply - none. Chairman urged on UUUC nevertheless the importance of showing themselves as open minded as possible and ready to discuss new ideas, even if in the end they had to reject them. He pointed out that the phrase 'widespread support in both parts of the community' meant widespread in that part of the community represented by UUUC also. This was their ultimate safeguard. Dr Paisley argued that with 22% of the total vote, SDLP could not claim 'widespread support' even in the catholic community.
9. Mr West was anxious to have an immediate election to a constitution set up under the Report. If UUUC were in the minority and a combination of other parties decided to form a coalition with SDLP. UUUC would acquiesce and form a parliamentary opposition.
10. Mr Baird said if the alternative to agreement in the Convention was extended direct rule, the loyalist people would not put up with this for long. There would be fierce opposition - not necessarily non-violent or constitutional and loyalist leaders would have to take a lead in this spontaneous movement or be swept away.
11. RHB suggested that if there was not agreement to discuss the matters in terms acceptable to all parties, it would be better to call off the convention without any plenary session. It was quite clear UUUC would oppose this. Mr West said this would be conceding that SDLP could veto any agreement. UUUC would insist on a plenary session to get their position on the record.
12. Mr West said UUUC would prefer to discuss with the other parties the amount of agreement for such issues as opposition to Council of Ireland, support for police, governor, oath of office etc. Chairman said other parties not really interested in this. Mr Baird said UUUC could only agree to talk if SDLP agreed first to drop the demand for cabinet office. Dr Paisley said they would have to reiterate their refusal to talk on participation at cabinet level.
13. Eventually Dr Paisley said it might be possible for UUUC to agree to a fairly low-key motion which would ask Chairman, in the light of the known attitudes of the parties, to explore the possibility of arranging a programme of talks.

Agreed UUUC would consider this matter and talk again on Monday,
26 January.

14. Chairman told Mr West he was unwilling to delay acknowledging Mr Taylor's letter of resignation. Mr West said Mr Taylor had asked for another day and was agreeable to the Chairman delaying his reply. Chairman reluctantly agreed to wait.



M N HAYES

23 January 1976