

The Sunningdale agreement was one of the earliest attempts at meaningful power sharing between Unionists and Nationalists.

The process towards this agreement came as Northern Ireland was experiencing horrific levels of violence. Internment in 1971 had led to Bloody Sunday, Direct rule and over 450 people dead in 1972 alone.

The British government were determined to try and find a more stable political solution to replace Stormont and create an accepted peace.

- They knew to do this they would have to
- 1) Have an agreed form of power sharing to replace Majority rule.
  - 2) Have some form of link with the Republic of Ireland 🇮🇪

## 1) BACKGROUND

**A POWER SHARING ASSEMBLY** created  
Members elected by PR voting system ( much fairer)

An **EXECUTIVE** (government) would be based on power sharing and have **11 Ministries - 6 UNIONIST, 5 SDLP (nationalist) and 1 Alliance**.

A **COUNCIL OF IRELAND** was to be created. However, this was very controversial and was vague in detail. It was supposed to deal with areas of cooperation between north and south.

The governments agreed different things to help peace

The **UK Government** 🇬🇧 agreed not to oppose Irish unity if he people of N. Ireland wanted it

The **Irish government** 🇮🇪 promised to accept the idea of **CONSENT**- that only the people of N. Ireland could decide its future.

## 2) TERMS

## VIEWS ON POWERSHARING

# THE SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT 1974

## HOW DID SUNNINGDALE END? (Ulster Workers Strike)

## ULSTER WORKERS COUNCIL (UWC) STRIKE 1974

The event which finished Sunningdale once and for all was the **ULSTER WORKERS COUNCIL STRIKE OF 1974**

The **UWC Strike** was called by protestant trade unions, hardline unionist politicians and loyalist groups.

It was not successful at first but intimidation by loyalists brought most of Northern Ireland to a standstill after one week. Industries had to close down, there were regular electricity blackouts, fuel supplies were strictly controlled. Hundreds of road blocks took place.

**BRITISH PRIME MINISTER, HAROLD WILSON**, was outraged at the loyalist protests and went on TV calling them spongers. (Implying they were lazy and taking money from British taxpayers) This backfired as it made the protestors even more angry!

Many wore sponges 🧽 as a badge of honour. The army refused to intervene to stop the protests calling it a **POLITICAL MATTER**.

Eventually the UWC ordered a total shutdown when the army was ordered to take over fuel supplies. **FAULKNER** could no longer withstand the pressure and had to resign. This ended Sunningdale and introduced Direct rule for the next 20 years!

## OPPOSITION TO POWER SHARING

- **Anti-power-sharing unionists** (as the **UUUC**) contested the first Assembly elections and secured the **majority of unionist votes**
- They **disrupted the Power-Sharing Assembly** and **criticised the Power-Sharing Executive**
- They contested the **1974 General Election** – and **won 11 out of the 12 seats**
- **Loyalist violence increased. An ULSTER ARMY COUNCIL was created to coordinate loyalist activity. Bombs** exploded in Dublin and Monaghan
- Many unionists were determined to destroy power-sharing because of the "Irish Dimension" – the **Council of Ireland**, which would allow the Irish Republic a significant contribution into the way Northern Ireland was run
- Many unionists did not believe that power should be shared with those who were not loyal to the Union
- There was anger among anti-power-sharing unionists at being left out of the process of setting up power-sharing. They were not included in the Power-Sharing Executive and were not invited to Sunningdale

The **IRA** opposed power-sharing, believing it fell short of what they wanted, a united Ireland. They continued their bombing campaign 💣

## SUPPORT FOR POWER SHARING

### MODERATE UNIONISTS. 🇬🇧

- Some unionists such as **Brian Faulkner** and his supporters supported power-sharing and took part in the **Executive**
- Faulkner believed power-sharing offered the chance to get rid of **Direct Rule** and **get Stormont back**.
- Faulkner believed that the **Council of Ireland** was merely an **advisory body** to help improve economic relations in Ireland
- Faulkner saw power-sharing as a **tool which he had used to get the Republic of Ireland to accept the position of Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom**

### NATIONALISTS 🇮🇪

- The **SDLP** took part in the Executive. **Gerry Fitt** spoke out against the General Election being held so soon, arguing that people did not yet understand what power-sharing was all about
- The **SDLP saw the Council of Ireland as a chance to build links with the Republic of Ireland** and give it more of a role in Northern Ireland's affairs

### ALLIANCE

- The **Alliance Party** took part in the Executive. They believed it was a chance for peace and progress.