



**The End of the Strike**

By the middle of 1974 17,500 soldiers were based in Northern Ireland.

Despite their strength, the Army was reluctant to use force to end the strike, arguing that it was a political protest and not a terrorist action.

Harold Wilson, the British Prime Minister, was rapidly losing patience with the continuation of the strike and he showed his anger in a television speech on 25th May.

He condemned the UWC's actions and described those involved in the strike as 'spongers'.

Northern Ireland's unionist population saw Wilson's words as an attack on all of them rather than just a condemnation of the UWC.

As a result, support for the strike increased.

Realising this, the British Government ordered the Army to take control of Northern Ireland's fuel supplies.

This was so that petrol supplies could be maintained for those identified as 'essential workers'.

The UWC responded by ordering its supporters to bring Northern Ireland to a complete shutdown.

On 28th May 1974 Brian Faulkner resigned as Chief Executive; the other unionists in the Executive did the same.

Faulkner took this action because of the refusal of the British Government (and the SDLP) to negotiate with the UWC's leaders.

Power sharing was, therefore, brought to an end.

On 29th May the UWC declared its strike was over; the next day, the power sharing Assembly was suspended and **Direct Rule** re-introduced.



END OF POWER SHARING  
FAULKNER  
RESIGNS

END OF STRIKE

UWC STRIKE



EXECUTIVE TAKES OVER



After the British Government closed Stormont, they decided to replace it with a new **Assembly** and **Executive**



There were a number of new elements to this new system:

- The members of the Assembly would be elected using **proportional representation**.
- The Executive members would come from both unionist and nationalist political parties.
- There would be an **Irish Dimension** in the form of a Council of Ireland that would allow politicians from North and South to meet and discuss issues relevant to both parts of the island.

In addition, the British government would keep power over security and justice in Northern Ireland.



1) BACKGROUND

6) END OF POWERSHARING

5) ULSTER WORKERS STRIKE 1974

4) EXECUTIVE TAKES POWER

1973-74: POWERSHARING: SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT

3) EARLY PROBLEMS

PROBLEMS EMERGE

**Problems for the future**

The Sunningdale Agreement looked like a real breakthrough; however it later became clear that unionist and nationalist leaders believed that they had agreed to different things:

- Brian Faulkner did not believe the Sunningdale Agreement was very important or had changed very much. He later explained that he had only agreed to sign it to get the Irish Government to accept that Northern Ireland was part of the UK.
- The SDLP believed that the Agreement would be a major part in helping to create much closer ties between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

Sunningdale was opposed by paramilitaries from both sides too:

- The day after the Sunningdale Agreement was signed loyalists announced that they were setting up an **Ulster Army Council**. It would resist any significant 'Irish Dimension'.
- The **PIRA** showed its disapproval by exploding a number of bombs in London just before Christmas.

In addition:

- The British Government agreed not to oppose Irish unification if a majority of the people of Northern Ireland wanted it.
- The Irish Government accepted that Irish unity could only ever be achieved peacefully and with the consent of the majority of the people of the North.
- Also at some future date control over internal security issues would be returned to the Stormont Assembly.
- Approval of the decisions made at Sunningdale was to take place at a future conference.

**Reactions**

As usual, there were very different reactions to the British government's plans.



Unionist politicians were divided by the proposed solution:

- Former Prime Minister Brian Faulkner supported the plans and some of his party members agreed with his position.
- Many unionists – including the rest of Faulkner's party, the DUP and the new Vanguard Unionist Progressive Party (set up by William Craig to oppose power-sharing) - were angry at the plans. These different groups came together to form the United Ulster Unionist Council (UUUC). The plan was to oppose the plans for power sharing and an Irish Dimension.

Nationalist politicians were generally happy with the plans for a power sharing Assembly and Executive.

REACTIONS TO PROPOSALS

2) FIRST STEPS

THE IRISH DIMENSION

**The Irish Dimension**

With the plans for power sharing in place, attention turned to agreeing how the Irish Dimension would work.

Northern Ireland's political leaders joined with leading politicians from Britain and Ireland at Sunningdale in England to work out their plans.

At first Ian Paisley and William Craig, the leaders of the anti-power sharing unionists were not invited to attend although at one point they were invited to join the conference.

Both men refused.

On 9th December 1973 the Sunningdale Agreement was signed.

It set out plans for the creation of a two part Council of Ireland:

- A Council of Ministers with 14 members (seven from the power sharing Executive, seven from the Irish Government). The Council would help with the development of North-South co-operation and would eventually be given decision-making powers.
- A 60-member Consultative Assembly (30 from the power sharing Assembly, 30 from **Dáil Éireann**). It was to have 'advisory and review functions' only.

IRISH DIMENSION



Other things agreed



**Election results**

The first elections for the new power sharing Assembly were held in June 1973.

The results were as follows:

Party	Pro- or Anti- Power-sharing	Percentage of vote (%)	Number of seats won
Faulkner Unionists	Pro	29.3	24
UUUC Unionists	Anti	32.1	26
SDLP (Social Democratic and Labour Party)	Pro	22.1	19
APNI (Alliance Party of Northern Ireland)	Pro	9.2	8
NILP (Northern Ireland Labour Party)	Pro	2.6	1

The results showed that:

- The parties in favour of power sharing had won the most seats.
- The number of unionists elected who were against power sharing was greater than the number of pro-power sharing unionists elected.

1973 ELECTIONS

**The New Executive**

In late November 1973, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, William Whitelaw, announced the make-up of the new power sharing Executive.

The Chief Executive was to be Brian Faulkner; his Deputy was to be SDLP Leader Gerry Fitt.

The numbers of ministries to be held by the different parties were as follows:

Unionists	Six ministries
SDLP	Four ministries
Alliance party	One ministry

The Executive was also to have an additional four members but they would not have the right to vote.

Two of these non-voting members were to be from the SDLP, one from the Faulkner Unionists and one Alliance Party member.

THE NEW EXECUTIVE

