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Title:	Note by Seán Donlon, Department of Foreign Affairs, of a meeting between members of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and Northern Ireland Secretary of State William Whitelaw, and the positive SDLP reaction to the assignment of posts in the new Northern Ireland administration.
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Servant
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The SDLP negotiating team met Whitelaw and his officials at 3.00 pm on 20 November and after a three hour meeting with him went on to meet as many of their Assemblymen and Party Executive members as were assembled at Stormont. At about 8.30 pm Messrs. John Hume, Paddy O'Hanlon, Seamus Mallon and Frank Feely came to have a meal with me at the Greenan Lodge Hotel in Belfast.

2. Their meeting with Whitelaw had, they said, gone very well. At about 3.30 pm he had given them a new document (Annex 1.) about the allocation of posts in what would now be called the "Administration". 11 members of the "Administration" would comprise the Executive on a 6-4-1 formula but the 15 "Administration" posts would be allocated on a 6-6-3 basis, all the Unionists having votes in the Executive. Whitelaw told them that the new proposals, which had also been given that morning to the Alliance Party, would involve an amendment of the NI Constitution Act 1973 but indicated that if the proposals were found acceptable, this could be arranged quickly. In relation to other matters in the 19 November document, Whitelaw made the following points:

- he would see no problem about re-drafting para. 6 to indicate that the agenda for the discussions would include items other than those outlined in (a) to (e);
- para. 6(c) would be strengthened by the addition of harmonisation functions;
- para. 6 (e) and 8 would be redrafted to link policing and common law enforcement;
- para. 9 would be strengthened and could include a reference to permanent releases of detainees as a Christmas goodwill gesture.

3. In regard to the issuing of the invitation to the Tripartite Conference (para. 7), Whitelaw agreed to consider the question of a joint London-Dublin invitation but re-iterated his desire to include Paisley and Craig in the invitation list. He gave three reasons for wanting to do this:

- (1) it might help to defuse loyalist violence if Paisley were kept

in an active role within the political arena;

- (2) Paisley would probably accept the invitation while Craig would almost certainly reject it. The issuing of the invitation would therefore drive a wedge between them and this might also contribute to defusing loyalist violence;
- (3) it would do Dublin good to have to deal with Paisley and learn the hard way that he was not the "saviour of Ireland".

4. The SDLP mood at dinner was euphoric. The party had agreed that the negotiators could accept the new Whitelaw proposals and they had further agreed that Fitt as leader of the party would decide on the allocation of the SDLP posts. They would go for Deputy Chief Executive, Commerce, Health and Social Services, Environment (all with votes) and EEC affairs and Information Services (without vote). They were in such good form that many of them decided to go down for a celebration night's drinking in a pub in Newry!

5. I conveyed the above information orally to the Minister on my return to Dublin late on the evening of 20 November. Arising out of this and other factors, the Minister sent the attached letter (Annex 2) to Paddy Devlin by hand and it reached him before the session of the inter-party talks which began at 10.00 a.m. on 21 November 1973.

6. I returned to Belfast on 21 November a.m. and by pre-arrangement, ^{during a break for lunch at Stormont,} John Hume managed to slip the attached document (Annex 3) and note (Annex 4) out of the meeting and have it conveyed to me at SDLP headquarters. I telephoned the text of both to Mr. C. V. Whelan who gave me the text of a decision (Annex 5) which had just been conveyed to him by the Minister. Hume telephoned SDLP headquarters to ensure that I had got his document and message and I read the decision to him quickly pointing out that it had, of course, been taken without the up-to-date information now available. He undertook to take it into account generally but said that it was likely that the rest of the day would almost certainly be exclusively devoted to the numbers game on which

Faulkner had given early warnings that he was going to be very difficult.

Seán Donlon

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21 November, 1973.