

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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## Local Elections Northern Ireland 1981

This document deals in a preliminary way with the 1981 local elections in Northern Ireland under the following headings:-

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## Local Government Elections Northern Ireland May, 1981

### 1. Introduction

Elections for 526 seats on 26 District Councils took place in Northern Ireland on 20 May 1981. This was the third local election in recent times using the single transferable vote. Previous local elections using the single transferable vote were in 1973 and 1977. The analysis below is based on data taken from the media; official returns will not be available for some time. The detailed comparative figures for the 1977 election are from the Department's own analysis of that election.

### 2. The Campaign

The campaign for the Local Elections was somewhat muted with the main centre of attention in Northern Ireland focused firmly on the continuing hunger strike campaign in Long Kesh, the resulting civil disorder in the streets and the apparent increased polarisation between the communities. The issues on which the election was fought had little to do with the function and activity of local councils, whose powers are in any event minimal, and more to do with the broader political situation. The election was seen to be important as an indicator of where support of the Unionist Community lay and whether the DUP success in the European Elections was a real indicator of the strength and current fortune of that party. On the Official Unionist side there was concern at the prospect of further erosion of their supremacy by the DUP and the election was seen as having an important bearing on the future leadership of Jim Molyneaux. It was also felt that the election would give an indication of the current strength of the SDLP particularly in the light of the Fermanagh/South Tyrone debacle and the H-Blocks situation generally and whether they might lose ground to the more Republican orientated Irish Independence Party who were competing in the election for the first time and who were strongly supportive of the H-Blocks demands.

While the Alliance party had hoped to fight the election on local government issues the other main political parties all referred to, and acknowledged, the significance of the elections in the broader political context. The Unionist Parties fought the election on similar issues with the emphasis rather than the substance being the main differentiating factor. The Official Unionist Party campaigned on three main issues viz the restoration of wider power to the Local Councils, opposition to the Anglo-Irish Study process and Republican violence. The DUP, who almost doubled the number of their candidates from the 1977 elections, campaigned on the security situation, the Anglo-Irish talks and the state of the Northern Ireland economy. While the SDLP in their party manifesto for the campaign dealt with many local council issues they also referred to the significance of the elections in the context of the Anglo-Irish talks and as a gauge of party strengths and reaction to the joint studies.



### 3. Nominations

The number of candidates nominated by each party is given in Table (i). The total number of 1020 nominations represents overall a marginal increase on the 1977 figures. The most significant aspect of the nominations was the dramatic increase in the number of DUP candidates. In 1977 108 candidates were nominated by the DUP: in 1981 206 were nominated. Most of the other main parties maintained more or less the same number of candidates as previously although the Alliance Party dropped their numbers from 145 to 118. The few candidates nominated by the UPNI (7) and the NILP (10) represents the absence of any real strength in these parties and their virtual eclipse. The most significant aspect of the nominations on the Nationalist side was the relatively large number of candidates (46) put forward by the IIP particularly in Omagh, Newry and Mourne, Derry and Fermanagh.

### 4. Turnout

There are no accurate figures to date on the turnout for the election but reports suggest that it may be around 65% which is up about 10% on the 1977 figure when 56.42% of the electorate cast their vote. In local elections in Northern Ireland Nationalist and marginal areas traditionally appear to have a higher turnout than Loyalist areas e.g. in 1977 there was an 84% turnout in Fermanagh and 78% in M/Felt compared to 39% in Larne and 30% in Ballymena. The fact that the Loyalist/Unionist bloc appears to have attracted between them a percentage of the FPV which is at least 5% higher than the 1977 figure is perhaps indicative that the extra turnout compared to 1977 took place particularly in Loyalist/Unionist areas.

### 5. Party Candidates Success Rate

The Parties' success rate (see table (i)) refers to the number of successful candidates relative to the total number of candidates put forward by each party. In this respect the most significant points are:-

- Despite almost doubling their number of candidates from 1977 the DUP achieved a still higher success rate with 68.9% of their candidates being successful compared to 58.5% in 1977.
- While the Official Unionists suffered some reduction in their success rate they still managed to achieve a success rate in the election of 59.4% compared to 64.5% in 1977.
- The most dramatic reduction in success rate was in respect of the Alliance Party who while they reduced the number of their candidates and might have been expected to improve their success rate achieved a success rate of only 32.2% compared to 48.3% in 1977.



- The SDLP increased the number of their candidates marginally and achieved a success rate of 63% compared to 70.8% in 1977.
- The IIP with 46 candidates had less than half of them successful and achieved a success rate of 45.6%

6. First Preference Votes

Tables (ii) and (iii) give a comparison of the FPV 1977 compared to 1981 and also an account of comparative local government trends between 1973 and 1981. The most dramatic outcome of the election has been the major increase in the % of the FPV secured by the DUP and the serious reduction in the FPV suffered by the Alliance Party. The main points that arise under this heading are:-

- The DUP almost doubled their share of the FPV from 12.6% in 1977 to 25.8% in the 1981 election.
- While the OUP lost ground compared to their 1977 performance they still command the highest share of the first preference vote with an estimated 27.2% of the poll. This was a drop of about 2.4% on their 1977 performance of 29.3%.
- Unionist Parties, other than the DUP and OUP, control a relatively insignificant proportion of the FPV - no more than about 3%. From a fairly fragmented Unionist position in 1977 Unionist votes are now more than ever concentrated on the two main Unionist Parties. Overall the Loyalist/Unionist bloc achieved about 56% of the FPV compared to about 51% in 1977. The higher turnout of the electorate mainly in Loyalist areas would appear to be one of the reasons for this increase in support.
- The Alliance Party suffered a major set back and have now only an estimated 8.7% of the FPV compared to 14.24% in 1977. They would appear to be the main losers in the hardening of political attitude with an obvious drift of a large portion of their support to the unionist elements.
- The SDLP, despite the current circumstances, gained 17.5% of the vote compared to 20.46% in 1977. Their performance, however, was still better than their 1973 local election performance when they gained only 13.4% of the FPV.
- The IIP on their first outing gained 3.8% of the poll. Some of this inevitably came from the SDLP but the main likely source of their gains would appear to be other Nationalists and Republican Groups who between them had about 4% of the poll in 1977.



- The proportion of the F.P.V. held by the Non Loyalist/Unionist bloc dropped from 49% in 1977 to about 44% in this election. This loss of 5% was not so much a reduction in the number of Nationalist voters but rather the turnout of a far higher proportion of Loyalist voters than in 1977.

#### 7. Share of Council Seats

Table No. (iv) gives details of the share of the District Councils seats won by each party relative to 1977. The following are the main developments:-

- The DUP almost doubled their Council seats from 74 to 142.
- The Party with the largest number of seats following the election remains the Official Unionist Party with 151 seats. The OUP previously had 178 seats following the 1977 election
- The UUUP lost 6 of the 11 seats held in 1977 leaving them now with only 5 seats while the UPUP (Kilfedder), competing in an election as a party for the first time, also won 5 seats.
- Other Unionist and Loyalists groups who after the 1977 election had 10 seats ended up with 9 seats.
- The NILP and UPNI between them have now only 3 seats compared with 8 in 1977.
- The Alliance Party suffered the most dramatic loss of seats. They lost 32 seats of the 70 they held after the 1977 election and ended up with 38 seats.
- The SDLP suffered a reduction of 8 seats on their 1977 performance ending up with 104 seats compared to 112 after the 1977 election.
- The Irish Independence Party gained 21 seats; they did not contest the 1977 election.
- The Workers Party/Republican Clubs lost half their seats reducing their number to 3 compared to 6 following the 1977 election.
- The Loyalist/Unionist bloc together had an overall much better result of 312 seats in the election (i.e. 60% of the seats) compared to 284 seats in 1977
- The Non-Loyalist/Unionist bloc won a total of 213 (i.e. 40% of the seats) compared to 242 seats (i.e. 46% of the seats) in 1977; the losses being mainly attributable to the poor showing of the Alliance Party.



## 8. Council Composition

The current composition on a party by party basis of each of the 26 District Councils is detailed in Table No. (v). This information is further elaborated in the Annex attached to this note which also gives details of the performance of each of the District Councils between 1977-1981.

## 9. Council Control

Table (vi) shows the situation regarding Council Control in 1981 compared with the situation obtaining following the 1977 elections. The most significant changes are:-

- The only Councils controlled outright by a single party are Ballymena by the DUP, Banbridge by the OUP and Newry and Mourne and Derry by the SDLP.
- Before the election the DUP were in overall control of Ballymena and this remains the only Council in which they have overall control following the election.
- The OUP have ceased to have overall control of Antrim and now remain in overall control of only one District Council, Banbridge.
- Dungannon District Council which had previously been split evenly between the Non-Loyalist/Unionist bloc and the Loyalist/Unionist bloc has fallen under the control of the Loyalist/Unionist bloc.
- The Non-Loyalist/Unionist bloc have gained control of M/Felt which was previously in Loyalist/Unionist hands.
- Fermanagh Council which was previously under the control of the Non-Loyalist/Unionist bloc is now split evenly.
- Overall the Loyalist/Unionist bloc remains in control of 18 of the 26 District Councils as they did following the 1977 elections.
- Overall the Non-Loyalist/Unionist bloc remains in control of 7 of the 26 District Councils as they did in 1977.

## 10. Largest Party in Councils

Table No. (vii) shows which parties are the largest in each of the District Councils following the election and for comparison purposes shows the situation obtaining following the 1977 election. The following are the main developments:-



- Perhaps further indicative of the dramatic success of the DUP is the fact that in 1977 the DUP was the largest single party in only one Council (i.e. Ballymena). They are now the largest party in 8 Councils viz Ards, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Belfast, Carrick, Castlereagh, Larne and Lisburn.
- The OUP are now the largest party in 9 District Councils compared to 11 in 1977.
- The Alliance Party are now the largest party in only 1 District Council (North-Down) compared to 2 following the 1977 election.
- The SDLP are now the largest party in 5 District Councils compared to 6 following the 1977 election.
- 3 Councils have no overall largest party.

#### 11. Party Cohesion

Table (viii) which is based on information given on Radio Ulster on 22 May is indicative of the extent of Party Cohesion and provides an interesting and revealing insight on the destination of first transfers. The following points arise:-

- Of the major Unionist Parties the DUP has the highest level of internal cohesion with 60% of the first transfers going to other DUP candidates. This is a significant improvement on 1977 when overall only 41.8% was transferred to DUP candidates. It should be noted that only 24% of DUP transfers went to the Official Unionist Party.
- There has been a significant reduction in the internal cohesion of the OUP with a large increase in their transfers going to the DUP. In fact 31% of first transfers of the OUP in the election went to the DUP compared to overall only 5.5% in 1977.
- The figures on internal cohesion for the Alliance Party reflects perhaps the turmoil of that party in current circumstances. They have reduced their internal cohesion rate (i.e. from Alliance to Alliance) from almost 40% in 1977 to 29% in this election. They have increased their rate of transfer to the OUP from almost 15% in 1977 to 35% this year. There also has been a significant increase in transfers from Alliance to DUP contestants rising from 1.5% in 1977 to 8% in 1981. Transfers to the SDLP reduced from over 10% to about 9%.
- The SDLP internal cohesion rate has remained remarkably stable and is now 67% compared to 63.5% in 1977. SDLP transfers to Alliance have also remained stable.
- Only 58% of first transfers of the IIP went to the SDLP and significantly, apparently almost 40% of their votes did not transfer at all.



12. Summary of Performance; Party by Party

D.U.P.

Without doubt the DUP have been the most significant gainer in the election and have given further credibility to the high support which was given to Paisley in the European election when he achieved 29.8% of the vote. Despite almost doubling the number of their candidates from 1977 they still achieved a success rate of almost 69% which was marginally better than their 1977 figure, and significantly better than the OUP. The Party almost doubled the number of their seats in the District Councils from 74 to 142 and more than doubled their percentage of the first preference votes from 12.6% to 25.8%. They are the party which have been the greatest beneficiary from the erosion of the middle ground. Despite this they are still in overall control of only one District Council i.e. Ballymena, although they are now the largest single party in 8 District Councils compared to only one before the election. They have also displayed an increasing rate of party cohesion with a transfer policy also significantly tighter than in 1977. Their success had a broad geographical spread. They lost seats in no constituency, held their ground in two (Moyle and Limavady) and they gained (sometimes substantially e.g. Belfast where their representation rose from 7 to 13 seats) in all other constituencies. They are now represented on every District Council in Northern Ireland having previously had no representation in three District Councils (Down, Fermanagh, and Omagh).

The UUUP and UPUP

Both parties provided no serious challenge to the main Unionist parties and they now hold only ten (or 2%) of the 526 District Council seats.

The OUP Party

Despite the major gains by the DUP the OUP is still the largest single party in Northern Ireland. The dramatic DUP gains have not been exclusively at OUP expense. About 59% of their candidates were successful compared to about 64% in 1977. They suffered a loss of 27 seats compared to 1977 but this still leaves them holding 151 seats. Their percentage of the first preference votes was also down on 1977 but only by a few percentage points and is now estimated at 27.3% a drop of about 2.4%. They are in control of only 1 District Council i.e. Banbridge having previously been in control of both Banbridge and Antrim and are the largest party in 9 District Councils compared to 11 following the 1977 election. They have suffered some reduction in internal cohesion with traditional Official Unionist voters showing an increased preference for DUP candidates on their second preferences. While they may have lost ground to the DUP in current circumstances these same current circumstances would appear to have allowed them in turn to gain at least partial compensation from the Alliance Party.

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### UPNI and NILP

Both of these parties are no longer of any significance in electoral terms in Northern Ireland. The leader of the UPNI Mrs. Ann Dixon did not even succeed in holding her seat. The NILP has only one and UPNI only two of the 526 District Council seats.

### Alliance

The Alliance party had the poorest showing ever in a local election in Northern Ireland and lost 32 seats. Less than a third of the candidates they put forward in the election were successful compared to nearly half in the 1977 election. They now hold only 38 seats compared to the 70 held in 1977. They are represented on 14 (compared to 17 previously) of the District Councils. Their percentage of the first preference vote dropped from 14.24% in 1977 to 8.7% in 1981. They would appear to have lost out substantially through an upward hardening of support in the Unionist community. They lost all of their previously held 3 seats in Newry and Mourne, 2 seats in Derry and one in Ballymena. The most damage was done in strong Loyalist East Coast areas and particularly in Belfast where they lost 6 of their 13 seats. It would also appear to have become a less cohesive party than in 1977 and showed greater and increasing tendency to transfer support to the Unionist/Loyalist parties.

### The SDLP

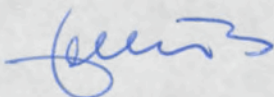
Despite the pressure from other Nationalist groups and the emotional situation generated by the H-Blocks issue the SDLP vote held up reasonably well and the upward hardening on the Unionist/Loyalist side was not quite so much in evidence in the Nationalist vote. About 63% of their candidates eventually gained seats compared to almost 71% of their candidates in the 1977 election. They still have a substantial number of Council seats (104) and lost only 8 of their 1977 total. They are the largest single party in 5 District Councils and share this position in 3 more. Despite the set backs that they suffered they were compensated by gaining overall control of Newry and Mourne and Derry District Councils. Their percentage of the first preference vote was down about 3% from 20.46% to 17.5%. They showed a great deal of internal cohesion despite the current circumstances and managed to ensure that 67% of their first preference went back to SDLP candidates. Their major losses were in Fermanagh and Moyle where they lost 3 seats in each and where 5 seats were gained by the IIP.

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The IIP

The IIP took a supportive stand on the H-Blocks demands and were expected to present a major threat to the SDLP in several areas. Ironically however in two of the areas where they might have been expected to do the greatest damage i.e. Newry and Mourne and Derry the SDLP not only performed well but actually gained control over the District Councils. The IIP had their best showing in Omagh where they gained 5 seats. They are in a position in only about three of the 8 District Councils on which they are represented to seriously affect the activities of the Council. Less than half the candidates they put forward were successful. Overall they gained 21 seats and about 3.8% of the total valid poll. While they picked up some seats from the SDLP particularly in Fermanagh in general they would appear to have gained seats which on previous occasions were held by the Republican Clubs, and former Unity and Derry Nationalist Parties who had at least 12 seats between them following the 1977 election. While a large portion of their first preference transfers went to the SDLP over 40% of their vote apparently did not transfer at all.



Department of Foreign Affairs

27 May 1981.

cc PSM

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	1977	1981
<u>DUP Control:</u>	1. Ballymena	1. Ballymena
<u>Official Unionist:</u> <u>Control</u>	2. Antrim 3. Banbridge	2. Banbridge
<u>Unionist/Loyalist</u> <u>Bloc Control: 1</u>	4. Armagh 5. Ards 6. Ballymoney 7. Belfast 8. Carrick 9. Castlereagh 10. Coleraine 11. Cookstown 12. Craigavon 13. Larne 14. Limavady 15. Lisburn 16. M'felt 17. N'Abbey 18. N. Down	3. Antrim 4. Armagh 5. Ards 6. Ballymoney 7. Belfast 8. Carrick 9. Castlereagh 10. Coleraine 11. Cookstown 12. Craigavon 13. Larne 14. Limavady 15. Lisburn 16. Dungannon 17. N'Abbey 18. N. Down
<u>SDLP Control:</u>	-	19. Newry - Mourne 20. Derry
<u>Alliance Control:</u>	-	-
<u>Non Unionist/Loyalist</u> <u>Bloc Control: 2</u>	19. Moyle 20. Newry Mourne 21. Down 22. Fermanagh 23. Derry 24. Omagh 25. Strabane	21. Moyle 22. Down 23. M'Felt 24. Omagh 25. Strabane
<u>Split Council:</u>	26. Dungannon	26. Fermanagh

1. viz: Official Un., Un, DUP, Vanguard, UPNI, Other Loyalist

2. viz: SDLP, Alliance, Independent, Non Party, Republican Clubs, IIP



Largest Parties in Council 1977-81

District Council	1977	1981
Antrim	Off Un*	Off Un
Ards	Off Un	DUP
Armagh	Off Un	Off Un
Ballymena	DUP*	DUP*
Ballymoney	Off Un	DUP
Banbridge	Off Un*	Off Un*
Belfast	Off Un	DUP
Carrick	Off Un/DUP	DUP
Castlereagh	Alliance	DUP
Coleraine	Off Un	Off Un
Cookstown	SDLP	SDLP
Craigavon	Off Un	Off Un
Down	SDLP	SDLP
Dungannon	Other Un	Off Un
Fermanagh	SDLP	Off Un
Larne	Alliance	DUP
Limavady	Off Un/SDLP	Off Un
Lisburn	Off Un	DUP
Derry	SDLP	SDLP*
M-Felt	SDLP	SDLP
Moyle	IND	SDLP/Off Un
Newry-Mourne	SDLP	SDLP*
Newtownabbey	Off Un	Off Un
N. Down	Off Un /All	All
Omagh	Off Un	SDLP/IIP
Strabane	Off Un/SDLP	DUP/SDLP/IND

\*Largest Party &amp; Control of Council



Table (viii)

Party Cohesion

The following table gives an indication of party cohesion through an analysis of the destination of first transfer votes. These figures are based on a computer analysis given by Radio Ulster on 22 May. The 1977 figures are from the Departments own analysis of the 1977 local elections and refer to all transfers and not just first transfers; nonetheless the comparisons are indicative.

Transfer From	To	1977	1981
DUP	DUP	41. 8%	60%
	OUP	26. 5%	24%
OUP	OUP	65. 4%	50%
	DUP	5. 5%	31%
	UUUP	3. 6%	15%
UPUP	OUP	-	20%
	DUP	-	7%
	UPUP	-	64%
	Alliance	-	9%
Alliance	DUP	1. 5%	8%
	OUP	14.72%	35%
	LOY	-	16%
	Alliance	39. 4%	29%
	SDLP	10.10%	9%
SDLP	SDLP	63. 5%	67%
	Alliance	14. 5%	14%
IIP	SDLP	-	58%
	Not transferred	-	40%



Performance of District Councils 1977-19811. Antrim: 15 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Official Unionist	7	8
DUP	4	3
SDLP	2	-
Alliance	1	2
IIP	1	-
Independent	-	2

Outgoing Council: The Official Unionists had an 8/7 majority. Representation on statutory bodies was 2 OUP (1 Councillor held 2 posts) and 1 Alliance. There were no reports of sectarian behaviour by the Council.

Incoming Council: Off. Unionists lose overall control but remain the dominant party. One Official Unionist loss to DUP and one Alliance loss to SDLP.

2. Ards: 17 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off. Un.	3	6
DUP	7	3
Alliance	3	5
NILP	1	1
SDLP	1	1
Others	-	1
UPUP	2	-

Outgoing Council: The Unionist/Loyalist bloc had a 9 to 8 majority. Representation on statutory bodies was 2 OUP and 2 Alliance. There were no reports of sectarian behaviour by the Council.

Incoming Council: Loyalist control - no change. Four DUP gains from Alliance and Official Unionist.

3. Armagh: 20 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off. Un.	8	9
DUP	3	2
SDLP	7	7
Ind.	1	1
UUUP	1	1

Outgoing Council: The Unionist/Loyalist bloc had a 12 to 8 majority. Representation on statutory bodies was 4 OUP. There were many reports of sectarian behaviour by the Council. The SDLP charged the Council with discrimination on the allocation of Council Committee positions (June 1977). The Council refused to endorse a GAA



application for grant aid (September 1977). During the life of the Council motions were passed demanding 'no truck' with the South (October 1977), calling on Cardinal O'Fiaich to cease giving encouragement to the IRA (January 1978) and calling for ultra tough security measures (October 1979). The Council refused an invitation to the Papal ceremonies in Drogheda. The SDLP reported the Council to the Fair Employment Agency in February 1979, again in February 1980 over 'sectarian' appointments to a number of posts. The Council declined to become involved in the cross-border East Border Region Committee.

Incoming Council: Loyalist parties control - no change. DUP gain one seat from Official Unionists.

#### 4. Ballymena: 21 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off. Un	5	2
DUP	13	11
UN	-	2
Alliance	-	1
Ind/N.Party	3	5

Outgoing Council: The Council was unique being the only Council where the DUP had an overall majority. Representation on statutory bodies was 4 DUP. There were many reports of sectarian behaviour. The refusal by the Councils technical services centre to print programmes which included words in Irish for the GAA annual sports day was referred to the Commissioner of Complaints who ruled that the Council was guilty of 'political bias and prejudice'. The Council quashed an invitation from the British Legion to a Catholic Priest and former Royal Navy Chaplain to conduct a Remembrance Day service and closed the public swimming pool on Sundays to avoid 'a flood of godlessness' in the community. The Council was referred to the Ombudsman for its refusal to include Gaelic games in a coaching scheme entitled to Government grants. The Commissioner of Complaints criticised the Council for its "sectarian stance" in refusing to publish Sunday sport items in its Calendar of Event. The exclusion of Gaelic words from the Calendar was also declared an "offence against Gaelic culture in general".

Incoming Council: No change - DUP control. Two DUP gains from Alliance and Independent.

#### 5. Ballymoney: 16 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off. Un	3	6
DUP	7	3
Alliance	1	1
SDLP	2	3
Ind.	3	3



Outgoing Council: The Unionist/Loyalist bloc had a majority of 10 to 6. Representation on statutory bodies was 3 OUP, 1 SDLP and 1 Ind. There were no reports of sectarian practices by the Council.

Incoming Council: Loyalist parties control. Four DUP gains from Off. Un (2) SDLP (1) and Independent Unionist (1).

6. Banbridge: 15 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off. Un	8	9
DUP	4	3
SDLP	2	2
Ind	1	1

Outgoing Council: The Unionist/Loyalist bloc had a majority of 12 to 3. Representation on statutory bodies was 5 OUP. The Council refused to give aid to the GAA who were taking part in a 'month of sport' in the area although other sports would be council-sponsored. The Council was critical of Cardinal O'Fiach's comments on the Long Kesh/Armagh prison protests and protested to Buckingham Palace at the Queens request that flags be flown at half-mast on the death of Pope John Paul I.

Incoming Council: No change - Off. Unionist control. One DUP gain from Independent Unionist.

7. Belfast: 51 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off. Un	13	15
DUP	15	7
Alliance	7	13
SDLP	6	8
UPNI	1	2
Ind. Unionist	2	2
Rep. Clubs		3
Community		1
Peoples Democracy	2	
Socialist	1	
IRSP	2	
NUPRG	1	
Ind.	1	

Outgoing Council: The Unionist/Loyalist bloc had control by 26 to 25. Representation on statutory bodies was 12 OUP, 3 DUP, 6 All, 1 SDLP and 1 Rep. Clubs. The Council throughout its period of office held to a policy of restricting the opening of cinemas, leisure centres etc. on Sundays. A proposal to elect an SDLP Councillor Lord Mayor and to rotate the post of Mayor was defeated (May 1979). In June 1980



John Carson, OUP was elected Lord Mayor and expelled from the OUP Council group for standing against a party colleague for the position. In October 1980 Mayor Carson led a group of Councillors on a controversial visit to Dublin despite opposition from all 7 DUP members, most Official Unionists and two Ind. Unionists who did not take part in the visit.

Incoming Council: Loyalist control retained. Loss of two seats by Off. Un., six by Alliance and nine gains by DUP.

8. Carrickfergus: 15 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off. Un.	3	5
DUP	7	3
Alliance	3	5
UUUC (Utd/Loy)	-	1
UPNI	-	1
Ind. Unionist	1	
United Loyalist	1	

Outgoing Council: The Unionist/Loyalist bloc had a 9 to 6 majority. Representation on statutory boards was 3 OUP and 1 Alliance. There were no reports of sectarian behaviour by the Council.

Incoming Council: Loyalist controlled. Four DUP gains from Official Unionist (2) and Alliance (2).

9. Castlereagh: 19 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off. Un	5	7
DUP	9	4
Alliance	4	7
Ind. Community	-	1
Ind.	1	

Outgoing Council: The Unionist/Loyalist bloc had a 12 to 7 majority. Representation on statutory bodies was 3 OUP and 1 Alliance. This is the Council on which Peter Robinson MP was an alderman. In 1980 the Council elected a DUP mayor and also excluded Alliance members from any of the committee posts.

Incoming Council: Loyalist controlled - no change. Two DUP gains from Off. Un. and Alliance.



10. Coleraine: 20 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off. Un.	8	10
DUP	6	2
Alliance	1	2
SDLP	2	2
Ind/N. Party	3	3

Outgoing Council: The Unionist/Loyalist bloc had a 15 to 5 majority. Representation on statutory bodies was 3 OUP and 1 Alliance. The SDLP accused the Council majority of blatant descrimination following a decision by the Local Government Staff Commission that the Council had not followed the procedures laid down in the 1973 Local Government Act in its recruitment of a tourism development officer.

Incoming Council: Unionist parties control - no change. Four DUP gains from Official Unionist(2) and Ind/N.Party Unionists (2).

11. Cookstown: 15 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off. Un.	4	4
UUUP	1	3
DUP	3	1
SDLP	5	5
Ind.	2	2

Outgoing Council: The Unionist/Loyalist bloc had a majority of 8 to 7. Representation on statutory bodies was 1 OUP, 1 DUP and 1 UUUP. In June 1977 the SDLP complained that all the major Council posts had gone to Unionists and that only one catholic was employed in the councils office staff. The SDLP also alleged that 6 of the 8 Unionist Councillors had been involved in setting up road blocks during the UWC strike. The Ombudsman found the Council guilty of descrimination against 2 catholics who had unsuccessfully applied for posts with the Council (August 1977). The Council voted not to award any grants to the GAA until such as it changed its rules excluding members of the Northern security forces (June 1978). In 1979 the Council supported a resolution calling for the abolotion of the Fair Employment Agency.

Incoming Council: Loyalist control - no change. Two DUP gains from UUUP.



## 12. Craigavon: 25 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off. Un	9	10
DUP	7	4
UUUP	1	1
Alliance	1	3
SDLP	5	6
Rep. Clubs	2	1

Outgoing Council: The Unionist/Loyalist bloc had a 15 to 10 majority. Representation on statutory bodies was 4 OUP and 1 DUP. The Council maintained a policy of restricting the opening of cinemas, leisure centres etc. on a Sunday. The Council overturned a decision of its recreation committee to lease a portion of land to St. Peters GAA Club. In December, 1978 the Council was found "guilty of political or religious discrimination" by the Fair Employment Agency in rejecting an application from a catholic candidate for a post as recreation officer. In April, 1979 the Mayor and other Unionist Councillors refused to attend the official opening of a Catholic Church in Craigavon. The Council was found guilty by the FEA of unlawful discrimination when a catholic employee as a result of restructuring lost his only meaningful responsibilities (May, 1979).

Incoming Council: Loyalist controlled. Two DUP gains from Alliance and SDLP.

## 13. Down: 20 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
SDLP	9	10
Alliance	1	3
Off. Un.	5	7
DUP	3	
Rep. Clubs	1	
Ind. Socialist	1	

Outgoing Council: The non-Unionist bloc had a 13 to 7 majority. Representation on statutory bodies was 3 SDLP, 3 OUP and 1 Alliance.

Incoming Council: No change - Alliance hold balance of power between Unionists and non-Unionists. One SDLP loss to Ind. Socialist, two Off.Un losses to DUP one Alliance loss to DUP and one Alliance loss to Republican Clubs.



14. Dungannon: 20 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off.Un	8	8
SDLP	3	6
DUP	3	2
Ind.	5	4
IIP	1	

Outgoing Council: The policy of abstention by some of the Independents resulted in a majority for the Unionist bloc. Representation on statutory bodies was 2 SDLP, 2 OUP, 1 DUP, 1 Alliance and 1 Ind. There were no reports of sectarian behaviour by the Council.

Incoming Council: Return to Unionist parties control after deadlock between 1977 and 1981. Three SDLP losses to Independents, IIP and DUP.

15. Fermanagh: 20 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off.UN	8	6
SDLP	4	7
UUUP		3
Unity		2
Ind.	2	2
IIP	4	
DUP	2	

Outgoing Council: Until a by-election gain by the OUP (from the SDLP) in April, 1979, the non-Unionist bloc had an 11 to 9 majority. Representation on statutory bodies was 3 SDLP, 2 OUP and 1 Ind. There were no reports of sectarian practices by the Council.

Incoming Council: No change - Unionist and non-Unionist parties deadlocked. One Off.Un gain from UUUP, one DUP gain from UUUP and three gains from SDLP.



16. Larne: 15 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off.Un.	4	1
DUP	6	3
Vanguard	-	3
Alliance	3	4
SDLP	-	1
Independent	1	2
UUUC	-	1
United Loyalist	1	

Outgoing Council: The Unionist/Loyalist bloc had a majority of 8 to 7. The Un/Loyalists held all three posts on statutory bodies. A Vanguard member was elected Mayor for 1977 and then a DUP member held the position until the end of the Councils term. The Vanguard member and former Mayor resigned from the Council in August 1979 following a row over an accusation that a DUP member of the Council had organised a protest march against an AOH demonstration during which there was some violence. A Council organised memorial service for Lord Mountbatten and 18 soldiers killed at Warrenpoint was boycotted by Alliance Councillors because all religious denominations were not involved. There was much opposition in the Council to plans for a GAA pitch and for a proposal to send a telegram of congratulations to the new Church of Ireland Primate. In August, 1980 there was a major row in the Council over an invitation from Dun Laoghaire to attend their Golden Jubilee celebrations. The DUP mayor led a group of Councillors to Dun Laoghaire in October, 1980 and was as a consequence suspended from his party and later resigned.

Incoming Council: Loyalist controlled. Three DUP gains.

17. Limavady: 15 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Official Un.	6	6
SDLP	5	6
DUP	2	2
Ind.	1	1
IIP	1	

Outgoing Council: The Un/Loyalist bloc which had an 8 to 7 majority held all 3 statutory posts. The SDLP charged the Council with "blatant discrimination" over the appointments made at the first meeting of the newly elected Council. Eighteen out of twenty two appointments on Committees and other bodies to which the Council sends representatives went to Unionists. The SDLP criticised the "blatant sectarian narrow-mindedness of the Unionist majority" following the



refusal of the Council to allow the local squash courts and swimming pool to open on Sundays. An SDLP proposal that the position of chairman should rotate was rejected.

Incoming Council: No change - Loyalist parties control.

18. Lisburn: 23 Seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Official Unionist	8	10
DUP	10	6
UUUP	1	1
UPNI		1
Alliance	2	3
SDLP	2	2

Outgoing Council: The Un/Loyalist bloc had a majority of 18 to 5. The Council throughout its period of office voiced fierce opposition to the Poleglass housing scheme which was designed mainly to meet the housing needs of a large section of the Roman Catholic population of West Belfast. In October 1980 the Councils refusal to provide a refuse collection service for the scheme was overruled by the Department of the Environment. A rejection by the Councils Planning Committee of the divisional planning officers recommendation for the development of playing fields and the building of a pavilion for St. Patricks GAA Club was also overruled. Controversy surrounded the Councils refusal to pass a resolution of sympathy on the death of Pope John Paul I and to send a letter of congratulation to the Church of Ireland Primate elect Mr. John Armstrong.

On 10 December 1980 the Council passed a resolution "deploring the betrayal of the Unionist majority by the British Prime Minister in discussing the internal affairs of Northern Ireland with the Taoiseach" at their summit meeting of 8 December 1980.

Incoming Council: Loyalist control - no change. DUP gain of two seats from the Off.Un.



19. Derry : 27 seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
SDLP	14	13
Off. Un.	4	6
Nationalists	-	4
Alliance	-	2
DUP	5	2
IIP	4	-

Outgoing Council: The Non-Unionist bloc had an 18 to 9 majority which increased to 19 /8 in February, 1979 following a by-election. Representation on statutory bodies was 5 SDLP, 1 OUP, 1 All., 2 Nat.

Incoming Council: SDLP control. Three DUP gains from Alliance and Official Unionist.

20. Magherafelt: 15 seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
SDLP	5	5
Off. Un.	2	4
DUP	4	3
UUUP	1	1
Rep. Clubs	-	1
Ind.	2	-
IIP	1	-

Outgoing Council: The Unionist Loyalist bloc which had an 8/7 majority held all four statutory posts. In August 1977 an SDLP councillor challenged in the High Court a council decision not to include Gaelic football in its summer recreation scheme. The High Court ruled that the Council had acted unlawfully in not including Gaelic football. There was controversy over a council decision of early 1978 to make a donation of £5,000 for widows and dependents of members of the UDR killed by the IRA in South Derry. The Local Government Auditor ruled the payment unlawful. In June 1979 the Council sent a letter of regret to the incoming President of the GAA "that a man from the district should have lowered its name by heading one of the most biased and discriminatory organisations in the country". In February, 1981 the Council passed a motion condemning the outcome of the Dublin summit and utterly repudiating the suggestion that Dublin should be involved in anyway in Northern Ireland affairs.



Incoming Council: Loyalist parties lose control to non-Unionist groupings with the situation reverting to what it was in 1973-77. Loss of 2 Off. Un. seats to Independent and DUP.

21. Moyle: 16 seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Independents	4	6
Off. Un.	4	5
DUP	2	2
SDLP	5	3
Unionist	1	-

Outgoing Council: The Non-Unionist bloc had a 9 to 7 majority. There were no controversies of a sectarian nature during the life of the council.

Incoming Council: Non-Loyalist/Unionist bloc control. Two SDLP gains from Independents.

22. Newry and Mourne: 30 seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off. Un.	6	7
DUP	2	1
Alliance	-	3
SDLP	16	15
Independents	2	4
IIP	4	-

Outgoing Council: The non-unionist bloc had a 22 to 8 majority. All five statutory posts were held by the SDLP. An SDLP member held the chairmanship for the life of the Council. In January 1979 the Fair Employment Agency accused the Council of "benign discrimination" in the appointment of a Protestant to the position of sports development officer. In June 1979 the SDLP were accused of hypocrisy in supporting only their party members for seats on the Councils Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Incoming Council: SDLP overall control. Alliance lose three seats to SDLP and IIP.



23. Newtownabbey: 21 seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
OUP	9	8
Alliance	3	6
DUP	5	4
UPNI	-	1
Loyalist	-	1
Labour	1	1
Independent Unionist	2	-
Independent	1	-

Outgoing Council: The Unionist/Loyalist block had a 14-7 majority. Representation on statutory boards was 5 Unionist Councillors and 1 Alliance Councillor. Alliance held the post of Deputy Mayor. At one point the DUP and Alliance ganged up to put out the sitting OUP Mayor who was then replaced by a DUP Mayor.

Incoming Council: Unionist parties control - no change. Alliance lost three seats to DUP, SDLP and IIP.

24. North Down: 20 seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Alliance	6	7
Off. Un.	4	7
Vanguard	-	2
UPNI	1	1
DUP	5	1
UUUP	-	1
Ind. Unionist	1	1
UPUP	3	-

Outgoing Council: The Unionist/Loyalist bloc had a 13/7 majority which increased to 14/6 following a by-election in February 1980 when Alliance lost a seat to the OUP. The representation on boards was 2 OUP, 1 All, 2 Van, 1 UPNI. There were no reports of sectarian behaviour by the Council.

Incoming Council: Unionist controlled - no change. DUP 4 gains and UUUP 3 gains from Off. Un., UUUP and Alliance.



25. Omagh: 20 seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
IIP	5	-
DUP	4	-
Off. Un.	4	8
SDLP	5	6
Alliance	2	3
Ind.	-	1
Rep. Clubs	-	1
Community	-	1

Outgoing Council: The non-Unionist bloc had a 12-8 majority. An OUP member was elected chairman and the Republic Clubs member vice-chairman. Following the election the chairman stated that "power sharing had been forced on the Unionists because the Alliance Party held the balance of power on the Council". Because of this balance of power the Councils representatives on the various statutory bodies were equally well distributed among the parties. In June 1979 an Alliance member was elected chairman and an SDLP member vice-chairman. In October 1979 the Council approved additional expenditure on a recreation scheme at Loughmacrory despite objections by Unionist members on the grounds that the GAA would benefit. Also in October 1979 the Council rejected on a majority vote a resolution by the Unionist Loyalist group which condemned IRA terrorism and recommended ultra tough security measures. In general there were few controversies of a sectarian nature in this "balanced" Council.

Incoming Council: No change - Alliance hold balance of power between non-Unionists and Unionists. Five IIP gains from SDLP, Rep. Clubs, Alliance and Independents and 4 DUP gains from Off. Unionists.

26. Strabane: 15 seats

<u>Composition</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1977</u>
Off. Un.	3	5
DUP	4	2
SDLP	4	5
Independents	4	3

Outgoing Council: The non-Unionist block had a majority of 8-7. Representation on statutory boards was 3 SDLP, 2 OUP. In April 1978 2 DUP members threatened to resign their seats (but did not) because the Council had engaged in cross border talks. In November 1977 the Loyalists members of the Council objected to the appointment of a Roman Catholic priest to the Management Committee of Castlederg Secondary School. They said that the



appointment appeared to be "a blatant discrimination against the parents and elected representatives of the area". In the Council there is a non-written pact to rotate posts. The Council forwarded congratulations to the Taoiseach on his assuming the Office of the Taoiseach. In a Council vacancy which arose the Independents picked up an SDLP vacancy.

Incoming Council: No change - SDLP/Independents bloc control.  
Off. Unionists lost 2 seats to DUP.

C. O'Riordan  
D.F.A.

27 May, 1981