

INTRODUCTION

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Standing at the apex of the decision-making process and receiving papers on a variety of policy matters, the Northern Ireland Cabinet had a unique perspective of the entire devolved administration from 1921 to 1972. Thus the Cabinet Conclusions and related memoranda (PRONI ref. CAB/4) provide an insight into the very heart of government and civil service activities and this undoubtedly explains why the archive is the most frequently consulted of all the official records held in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast (PRONI).

The historical overview both highlights the major issues with which the Cabinet had to deal and helps to place the deliberations of ministers in the context of the period. Following the historical overview is a short explanation of the Cabinet Conclusions files, and at the end of this guide are appendices that list all those who were members of the Cabinet, held junior office in the Government, or served as permanent secretaries between 1921 and 1972.

This introduction covers the premierships of Sir James Craig (later Lord Craigavon), 1921-40, John Andrews, 1940-43, Sir Basil Brooke (later Lord Brookeborough), 1943-63, Captain Terence O'Neill, 1963-69, Major James Chichester-Clarke, 1969-71, and Brian Faulkner, 1971-72.

Historical Overview

Government of Ireland Act

The Government of Ireland Act 1920 provided for the establishment of devolved government in Northern Ireland. The Parliament of Northern Ireland, consisting of the sovereign, Senate and House of Commons, was based on the Westminster model which it was devolved from and subordinate to. The devolved parliament was given power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Northern Ireland subject to certain limitations. The Act set out a list of 'excepted' and 'reserved' matters over which the Northern Ireland Parliament had no powers of legislation. 'Excepted' matters included the Crown, peace and war, the armed forces and external trade, while the principal 'reserved' matters were the postal service and the major sources of revenue. (For further details on which matters were 'excepted', 'reserved' or 'transferred', see A.S. Quekett, *The Constitution of Northern Ireland*, (Belfast, 1928), i, 22-29). The election to the Parliament of Northern Ireland was held on 24 May

1921 and the Ulster Unionist Party under the leadership of Sir James Craig won 40 of the 52 seats. The Government was formed on 7 June 1921 when, prior to the first meeting of the new parliament, the Lord Lieutenant established the Departments of the Government of Northern Ireland and appointed a minister as the head of each of them. Craig closely modelled the practices and procedures of the Northern Ireland Parliament and Government on Westminster and Whitehall and this was reflected in the way the Cabinet system was adopted. In addition to the Department of the Prime Minister, there were six other departments – Finance, Home Affairs, Labour, Education, Agriculture, and Commerce (although until 1925 the latter two departments were the responsibility of one minister. For details of those who served as members of the Cabinet, see Appendix A). Normally meeting fortnightly, the Cabinet considered various issues of a security, financial or economic nature appertaining to Northern Ireland, as well as those political matters affecting its relations with the British Government or the Irish Free State. Administrative support to the Cabinet was provided by the Cabinet Secretariat, an integral part of the Department of the Prime Minister. The Cabinet Secretariat was extremely small but it too was modelled on London. The first Secretary to the Northern Ireland Cabinet was Wilfrid Spender, who managed to pick up the ropes of running a Cabinet Secretariat during a two-day apprenticeship with Sir Maurice Hankey at the Cabinet Offices in London. Apart from the members of the Cabinet itself, only the Secretary and Assistant Secretary were in attendance during all meetings, although certain officials might be invited to attend for a specific item. It is interesting to note that although the idea of a permanent Cabinet Secretariat was still in 1921 a comparative (and by no means unsuspected) innovation in London, with the first Secretary having only been appointed in 1916, specific provision for this function in Northern Ireland was assigned at the outset to the Department of the Prime Minister. In addition to providing the Cabinet Secretariat to service the Cabinet, the Department of the Prime Minister co-ordinated the activities of the Northern Ireland departments and served as the channel of communication between the Government of Northern Ireland and the British Government. The Assistant Secretary to the Cabinet and the Private Secretary to the Prime Minister were often one and the same person. He was able to deal with routine Cabinet business, thus leaving the Secretary free to liaise with the British Government and deal with those other matters for which the Department of the Prime Minister was responsible. (For details of those who served as Secretary and Assistant Secretary to the Northern Ireland Cabinet, see Appendix B).

Finalising devolution

Although the Government of Northern Ireland assumed office on 7 June 1921, it did not at that point enjoy executive and legislative powers for transferred matters and many believed that its prospects of survival were slight. As Professor John Blake has observed, “laws do not make governments. It is easy to draft instruments of government, but to translate them into practice and to give substance and

validity to mere forms may well defeat all the ingenuity of man". While the new Government faced immense administrative difficulties as it attempted to consolidate its authority, it had also to deal with major political and security threats to its very existence. The Northern Ireland Cabinet expected a hostile boycott by the substantial nationalist minority within Northern Ireland of the new institutions of government and may even have been psychologically prepared for an IRA terrorist offensive; however, it was the conciliatory moves by the Westminster Government towards Sinn Fein that most alarmed it.

Sinn Fein insisted that no settlement could be reached if it involved the separation of Northern Ireland from the rest of Ireland. To facilitate a settlement with Sinn Fein the British Government put pressure on the Belfast Cabinet to make major concessions to the ideal of Irish unity. The preferred London option for a settlement was that while Northern Ireland would continue to have a parliament of her own, it would be subordinate not to Westminster but to a parliament in Dublin with dominion status. The Northern Ireland Cabinet refused to negotiate with Sinn Fein until the latter recognised Northern Ireland's right to self-determination and pressed instead for the immediate transfer of executive and legislative powers from London. However, just as the proposed negotiations with Sinn Fein stimulated Ulster Unionist desires to achieve executive and legislative power, so the proposed negotiations persuaded the British Government to ensure that the Ulster Unionist position was not strengthened by building up the administration in Northern Ireland in case it proved an obstacle to a settlement with Sinn Fein.

Formal negotiations between the British Government and Sinn Fein opened in London on 11 October 1921, and communal tensions heightened in Northern Ireland with a new round of serious public disorders. Lacking the powers to govern, the Government of Northern Ireland increasingly lost credibility and thus its ability to restrain those who had previously supported it. Seeing themselves under threat, many individuals took the law into their own hands and the situation further degenerated. Following widespread violence in Northern Ireland in the week 19-25 November (which left 27 dead and 92 injured), power for the Northern Ireland services was partly conferred to the Government of Northern Ireland on 22 November 1921. Although unable to force Craig's Cabinet to accept the sovereignty of a Dublin parliament, the British Government managed to reach a settlement with Sinn Fein on 6 December. The settlement gave virtual independence to Ireland with dominion status similar to Canada and embraced, theoretically at least, all of Ireland. However, it also recognised the existence of Northern Ireland and provision was made for it to opt out of the Irish Free State – as the new Irish Dominion was to be known – if it so wished. If the Belfast Parliament opted to retain Northern Ireland's separate existence then Article 12 provided for a boundary commission, with powers to modify the partition line – although to what extent was left undefined.

Security problems

Although the proposed boundary commission caused the Cabinet in Belfast great anxiety, it was not an immediate problem while, by contrast, the restoration of law and order did require priority attention. As a preliminary to negotiations, Sinn Fein had insisted upon a truce between the Crown forces and the IRA and this had come into operation on 11 July 1921. Although, on the whole, the IRA halted its attacks against the Crown forces, it did not stand down during the truce but rather moved men into Northern Ireland who openly carried out armed training exercises. As communal violence between loyalists and nationalists erupted in Belfast, the IRA fired on loyalists and attacked the police, thus helping to make the violence once again self-perpetuating. In seeking to restore law and order, the efforts of the Northern Ireland Cabinet were hampered by the need to create a new police force, since the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) was to be abolished as a result of the treaty settlement between the British Government and Sinn Fein. Pending the formation of a new force, the Government of Northern Ireland relied heavily on the Ulster Special Constabulary (USC) as its main counter-insurgency weapon. The Cabinet substantially increased the number of full-time 'A' Specials and mobilised, for the first time since the truce, the part-time 'B' Specials. In an attempt to prevent cross-border raids by the IRA, which were inflaming the anger of Belfast loyalists and thus contributing to further communal violence, Craig sought the deployment of additional troops along the border. Working hard to organise a new police force, the Cabinet was able to authorise the formation of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) from 31 May 1922 (when the RIC was disbanded).

Anarchy

Despite the efforts of the Government of Northern Ireland to restore law and order, the situation grew worse and the level of violence reached such heights that many felt the new administration was in danger of collapsing in anarchy. The disorder reached a peak in May 1922 when there were some 606 violent incidents, including widespread arson attacks and 90 murders in Belfast and, as the Cabinet complained, not one murderer was brought to justice. The violence compelled Craig's Government to assert itself and to take full advantage of the powers and forces now at its disposal. On 22 May 1922 the IRA and related organisations were proscribed and internment of terrorist suspects introduced. A curfew between 11 pm and 5 am was rigorously enforced throughout Northern Ireland, and many border roads were closed. The Government mobilised a very large number of 'B' Specials and mounted saturation patrols to prevent movement by terrorists. It also increased the number of searches for persons, arms and ammunition. The Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act 1922, which had been passed the previous month, had extended the use of flogging as a 'special punishment' to act as a deterrent and it was now increasingly used. The special powers made available at this time to the executive and its security forces have been the subject of much criticism, but there can be no doubt

about the effectiveness of such powers. As the counter-insurgency measures of Craig's Government began to take effect, the IRA was forced back on to the defensive and the level of violence began to fall. The outbreak of civil war in the Irish Free State between different factions of the IRA further reduced the threat to Northern Ireland as northern IRA men moved south to join the fray. By the early summer of 1922, the Government of Northern Ireland had defeated the IRA offensive, ended communal violence and managed to restore relative calm to Belfast.

Implementing self-government

Even as Craig's Cabinet struggled for survival against the threats of terrorism and communal violence, it also had to cope with the various administrative problems inherent in establishing a new state. To discharge the various services that had been transferred to it, the Government of Northern Ireland had to create a civil service that could implement the policies and carry out the related administrative tasks. This required the planning of divisions and departments, the recruitment of staff and the obtaining of office accommodation for this staff. To achieve all of this within a few months and ensure that there was no breakdown in services was a difficult task. The Cabinet in Belfast, however, managed to overcome these difficulties by obtaining on loan from London some experienced officers, but the early days of the new administration were something of an adventure. Despite the enormous administrative problems in creating and sustaining the new civil service, there was no breakdown in the public administration in Northern Ireland. The education system was sustained and teachers were paid as normal, pensions and other benefits were processed without delay, and the infrastructure of society was properly maintained. Indeed, not only had self-government been planned and established in Northern Ireland but, with the assumption by Craig's Government of executive powers, it was also effectively consolidated.

Financial difficulties

Despite having overcome major administrative problems and security threats, the Government of Northern Ireland had not yet been able to secure its existence. There was considerable concern about the ability – or possible inability – of Northern Ireland to fund its services and doubts remained whether it could avoid a budget deficit and prevent bankruptcy. The seriousness of the financial situation in the early years of Northern Ireland is illustrated by the frequency with which the issue was discussed in Cabinet. The ability of the Northern Ireland Cabinet to safeguard their financial position was crippled by the severely restricted provisions of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act. By virtue of the Act, most kinds of major taxation were among the matters 'reserved' to the Parliament at Westminster while those taxes to be 'transferred' to the devolved Parliament were few. All of the 'reserved' taxes were imposed and collected at uniform rates throughout the United Kingdom and the amount of revenue to be allocated to Northern Ireland was to be calculated and agreed by the Joint

Exchequer Board. The Board was to consist of representatives from the Crown and the Governments in London and Belfast. However, from Northern Ireland's share of this revenue were deducted, first, the cost of reserved services (for example the Supreme Court), and second, the contribution to be made for imperial services such as defence or diplomatic representation. Only then was the remainder of the revenue available to fund transferred services.

Financing self-government

The post-war depression caused a dramatic fall in revenue from reserved taxation and given that Northern Ireland's contribution to imperial services was set by the 1920 Act for two years, the funds available for transferred services were substantially reduced. The problem was accentuated by a considerable increase in the cost of transferred services, particularly in relation to law and order and unemployment insurance. The Government in Belfast realised that if it was to avoid collapsing under the burden of debt, it had to secure a change in the method of calculating, and a reduction in the size of, its imperial contribution. The Ministry of Finance therefore pressed for a revision of the financial provisions of the 1920 Act. The British Government, however, was most reluctant to agree to a fundamental revision and it was only after persistent representation by the Government of Northern Ireland that it consented in 1923 to refer the matter to arbitration. Officially known as the Northern Ireland Arbitration Committee, it is more generally known as the 'Colwyn Committee' after its chairman, Lord Colwyn. The main responsibility for preparing Northern Ireland's case fell to Sir Ernest Clark, the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Finance and Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Clark sought to demolish the credibility of the method used by the London Treasury to assess the taxable capacity of Northern Ireland and determine what its imperial contribution should be. The kernel of the argument presented by the Government of Northern Ireland was that it should make an imperial contribution according to its taxable capacity (based upon its capacity to raise revenue on the same basis as Great Britain) and only after having met local expenditure. It should hand over any balance in the Northern Ireland budget under agreed conditions, one to be that there was a surplus of a definite amount. The definition of local expenditure for a standard year was a vital factor in calculating the contribution lest abnormal expenditure be perpetuated in the formula. The claims of Northern Ireland were strenuously opposed by the Treasury and bitter wrangling between Belfast and London continued until the final report of the Colwyn Committee was adopted in 1925. The Committee recommended that local expenditure was to be a first charge upon the Northern Ireland Exchequer while the imperial contribution was to be a last rather than a first charge. Furthermore, the imperial contribution was to be related not to the services enjoyed but to the difference between Northern Ireland's revenue and its actual and necessary expenditure. By making Northern Ireland's

imperial contribution a residual sum upon its Exchequer and by removing the threat of bankruptcy, the Colwyn Report helped secure Northern Ireland's existence. However, by defining what expenditure was "actual and necessary", the Colwyn Committee effectively decreed that *per capita* social service expenditure after 1924 should increase in the province only at the same rate as in Britain, a decision that profoundly affected a backward region, as only a higher rate of expenditure could have permitted the 'leeway' to be made up and comparable levels of service attained.

Although the Colwyn Report provided a financial basis that enabled the Government in Northern Ireland to continue in existence, it did not provide freedom for financial or economic development. The fiscal problems of the Government were compounded by a world economic downturn occurring at the same time as Northern Ireland was being established. With only temporary relief, the depression that began in late 1920 was to last for the next 20 years. The casualties of this downturn in the international economy were primary products and the 'old industries' of shipbuilding and textiles, the staples of the Northern Ireland economy. At a time when the new state was trying to wrestle with the mechanics of government, it was having to deal with the economic consequences of a depression whose causes were largely exogenous to Northern Ireland. Moreover, its room for manoeuvre, both constitutionally and financially, was circumscribed by the Government of Ireland Act 1920, and by the Colwyn Report.

The Northern Ireland economy was an integral part of the British economy and, as mentioned earlier, control of policy affecting external commerce was reserved to London. At a time of declining world trade and growing protectionism in the international economy, Northern Ireland was tied in the 1920s to the free trade policy of the British economy. Moreover, the return to gold at pre-war parity locked Northern Ireland into a system of international exchange with an overvalued currency, thereby making its export trade, an important outlet in terms of growth, less competitive. Protectionism could have provided some shelter for the Northern Ireland economy but protectionist measures were only adopted in the 1930s by the London Government when it suited the needs of the British economy as a whole.

The inter-war years

Throughout the inter-war years, the Belfast Government had very limited funds to assist declining industries or attract new ones. It was expected to live off internally generated revenue, yet *per capita* incomes and Government revenue were much lower than in Britain. Therefore, given the Government's commitment to 'parity' in certain social services, to balanced budgets and to a positive imperial contribution, there was little revenue available for development policy, either in the economy or in other areas of the social services. Paradoxically, this 'step-by-step' approach of the Northern

Ireland Government with respect to social expenditure restricted the province's ability to develop a regional policy best suited to dealing with the problems of health, housing, employment and education. Because of these arrangements Northern Ireland, at least until 1936, was treated by the Treasury less generously than other depressed areas, and consequently had to fund a larger proportion of the costs of unemployment relief. These amounted to £400,000 in 1924, rose to £1.2m in 1931 and continued to rise throughout the 1930s. The lack of funds inevitably limited the effectiveness of government policy, particularly towards industry. The help given to shipbuilding under the Loans Guarantee Acts 1922-36, may have helped slow the decline but it did not prevent the closure of the Workman Clark yard in 1935. Nor was the Government any more successful in attracting new industries through the New Industries (Development) Acts of 1932 and 1937. Only one new company of substance established itself in inter-war Northern Ireland – Short Brothers & Harland – and that had very little to do with government intervention. The legislation of the 1930s did little to broaden Northern Ireland's industrial base or alleviate unemployment.

In the realm of agriculture the Government appeared to be taking strong positive action. In the 1920s this was limited to regulating the quality of products sold and encouraging agricultural education, but in the 1930s major initiatives were taken in marketing structures and subsidising production. However, the measures taken in the 1930s were instigated by Westminster, rather than by the Stormont Government, with the reversal of the free trade policy and adoption of imperial preference (in 1932).

The economic climate and ineffectual economic policies resulted in an increase in unemployment, emigration and poverty. This does not mean that there was an absence of economic growth and job opportunities, but the economy as a whole did not expand sufficiently quickly to accommodate both the shedding of labour in the declining sectors and the growth of the work force. The abiding image of this period is that of the 'hungry Thirties' and the Outdoor Relief riots of 1932. In the latter case the Government clashed with the Boards of Guardians, in particular the Belfast Board, over the rates of Outdoor Relief to the long-term unemployed and those who had exhausted their state benefit. The Cabinet, especially Sir Richard Dawson Bates and John Andrews, argued for increases so as to alleviate the hardships suffered by many families. However, the Board of Guardians rejected the advice from the Cabinet and it was only after the riots that substantial increases in the level of relief were awarded. The riots provided further justification for the 'step-by-step' policy in terms of relieving distress and also highlighted the need for a more centralised approach to the problems of the unemployed.

Economic regeneration

The contribution of the Government of Northern Ireland towards economic regeneration was marginal but it must be remembered that the difficulties were caused by problems it could not solve. Indeed, it has been said that with “its largest industries adversely affected by worldwide forces quite outside the control of Ulster’s businessmen, farmers, workers or politicians, there was little that could be done to remedy the situation in the short and medium terms”. As Northern Ireland’s economic base weakened, the undertaking by the Government in Belfast to maintain parity became an even greater burden. This accentuated the differences within the Cabinet between the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Finance. While the former was anxious to ensure that social services were developed in line with those on the mainland, the latter was strongly opposed to such an approach. This opposition sprang not merely from budgetary considerations but also from a belief in the unproductiveness of social expenditure and its harmful effects upon the economy. As the Prime Minister was personally committed to the policy of parity, the efforts of the Minister of Labour to preserve the step-by-step approach were usually successful. Yet this success threatened Northern Ireland with a major budget deficit.

Given its commitment to a balanced budget, the Government of Northern Ireland had no alternative but to seek aid from the British Government. No major increase in funding could be achieved from a reduction in Northern Ireland’s imperial contribution given that it had already dwindled to a negligible amount as revenue declined and expenditure rose. Craig’s Government therefore pressed for a ‘minus contribution’ on the grounds that equality of taxation should mean equality of services and also claimed that Northern Ireland was already making a ‘hidden contribution’. This latter point related to the fact that Northern Ireland was receiving no share of the special duties imposed during the economic war with the Irish Free State, from which Northern Ireland suffered more than the rest of the UK. However, the Treasury refused to agree to a fundamental revision of financial relations and was unwilling to undertake any long-term financial commitments in Northern Ireland. Instead, the Northern Ireland budget was balanced by a number of expedients and by *ad hoc* payments from the Treasury. This juggling, which had to be executed from year to year, offered no long-term solution to Northern Ireland’s financial difficulties and made it impossible for the Government in Belfast to plan with any degree of certainty. Furthermore, members of the Belfast Government resented the need for frequent visits to the Treasury to discuss what aid Northern Ireland might expect and one minister referred to them as “repeated begging expeditions”.

The informality of the discussions between finance ministers and officials from London and Belfast was advantageous to the extent that the *ad hoc* agreements did not require legislation; but they further

reduced the Belfast Government's control over revenue and expenditure. The Joint Exchequer Board should have had a role in determining the attribution of revenue to Northern Ireland but its task gradually became one of simply ratifying agreements already reached. To obtain aid from London, albeit limited, the Northern Ireland Government had to demonstrate to the Treasury that it was not squandering public funds, thus opening the way to the latter's exercising an influence on expenditure in Northern Ireland, even in the area of transferred services. For example, the Government in Northern Ireland was obliged by the Treasury to undertake a revaluation and to compel local authorities to contribute a larger share of the expenditure on education. The Treasury viewed Northern Ireland's economy only in the context of broader imperial needs. In demanding that Northern Ireland's financial practices be brought more into line with those in Britain, it did so even though such changes would cause hardship in Northern Ireland and raise a storm of protest there.

Defending self-government

The Boundary Commission, which emerged from the treaty settlement between the British Government and Sinn Fein, was to cast a shadow on relations between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State. Believing its territory to be under threat, the Belfast Government refused to participate in the Boundary Commission. The Commission nevertheless went ahead and its proceedings rumbled on until 1925. However, when it became clear that it was not going to award a substantial amount of Northern Ireland territory to the Irish Free State and that, furthermore, the revision under consideration would transfer some land from the south to Northern Ireland, the Dublin Government demanded that no recommendation be issued. Instead, an agreement was signed on 3 December 1925 by the British, Northern Ireland and Irish Free State Governments in "a spirit of neighbourly comradeship" which recognised the existing boundary. During the rest of the 1920s relations between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State were fairly good with cross-border co-operation on various issues and the people of both states enjoying peace and stability. However, when Eamonn De Valera became Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of the Dublin Government in 1932, relations between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State cooled somewhat.

Eamonn De Valera

In constitutional matters De Valera pursued a republican policy, attempting to dismantle the treaty settlement by, for example, removing the oath of allegiance to the British Crown from the constitution. This process culminated in the 1937 constitution, which renamed the Free State 'Eire' and formally claimed Northern Ireland as an integral part of the Irish state. This new constitution caused considerable alarm (and resentment) within Northern Ireland and further soured relations. The renewed emphasis by De Valera's Government on Gaelic culture, in particular on the language, further deepened the divisions between Northern Ireland and the Free State. The insistence that

language was an essential badge of nationhood was regarded by the Belfast Cabinet with increasing hostility as “part of the political weaponry of Irish nationalism”. With the onset of the ‘economic war’, as De Valera attempted to end free trade with the UK by the adoption of a strict protectionist programme, Northern Ireland’s cross-border trade was reduced by 61%. The trade restrictions – in addition to affecting businesses in Northern Ireland and causing hardship to consumers in the Free State – helped reinforce partition.

The decline in relations between the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland was mirrored by a deterioration in community relations within the latter. Doctrinal differences between the denominations became more pronounced, particularly after the Eucharistic Congress held in Dublin in June 1932. At a grass-roots level, increased sectarian tensions led to violence as witnessed in the Belfast riots during the summer of 1935. Differences were accentuated by the economic depression and the contraction in employment opportunities that increased the inter-communal competition for what little work was available. Extremist groups emerged which had as their main objective the protection of Protestant employment. Although individual ministers were criticised for apparently encouraging employers to show sectarian preference, the Government itself was criticised by some supporters for being too moderate. The special place afforded by the 1937 Eire constitution to the Roman Catholic Church, along with newspaper accounts of attacks on the small Protestant minority, only served to inflame sectarian prejudice within Northern Ireland. As Northern Ireland and Eire moved increasingly apart, so also did the two communities within Northern Ireland.

Free trade

The economic war seriously dislocated the Eire economy and by the beginning of 1938 the Dublin Government was anxious to negotiate a settlement. The British Government was keen to demonstrate that conciliation could be a useful force in international politics and this helped facilitate an agreement which was reached largely on Eire’s terms. The British Government made considerable financial concessions and most Eire goods were granted free entry into the UK market despite British goods being given less than free access to the Eire market. Though not directly represented in the negotiations, the Government of Northern Ireland had made clear to the British Government the need to safeguard the special interests of Northern Ireland and secure an all-Ireland free trade agreement. De Valera firmly rejected free trade with Northern Ireland and the Belfast Government then considered publicly opposing the overall agreement between London and Dublin as a fundamentally unfair settlement. When Prime Minister Craig hesitated to pursue this course of action, two of his ministers – John Andrews and Sir Basil Brooke – planned to resign and lead opposition to the settlement. A compromise was reached whereby Northern Ireland would accept the agreement, provided it received subventions from the British Government to compensate for the economic

difficulties the agreement would cause. The Treasury undertook to meet the cost of agricultural subsidies, help with possible future budget deficits and provide additional funds to Northern Ireland's unemployment schemes. The Anglo-Irish negotiations of 1938 not only illustrated Northern Ireland's powerlessness to control its economic life and the subordination of Northern Ireland to imperial interests, but also further limited Northern Ireland's freedom of action.

World War

The 'gathering storm' over Europe in the 1930s was a matter for the British Government given that war and peace were 'excepted' from the powers of the Parliament and Government of Northern Ireland. As an integral part of the UK, Northern Ireland entered the war against Germany on 3 September 1939. The 'phoney war' in Europe created a false sense of security and, even after the fall of Europe and the start of heavy air raids on mainland British cities, the people of Northern Ireland continued to be complacent about the possibility of German attack. Many felt that Belfast would not be a target and most believed that it was beyond the bombing range of the Luftwaffe. This complacency was shared, to a large extent, by the Government of Northern Ireland which, in turn, had been so advised by Whitehall. Nevertheless, as early as 1938 it had introduced the Air Raid Precautions Act to prepare and implement civil defence schemes. When war broke out, there was a flurry of activity with trenches being dug in public parks as air-raid shelters, a blackout imposed and a series of measures to regulate the economy being adopted.

The Government's attempt to evacuate 70,000 schoolchildren from Belfast was little short of a fiasco however, with only 7,000 potential evacuees turning up and only a further 1,800 when a second evacuation was organised. The Government lacked the will to enforce the evacuation and the apathy with which people treated it was indicative of the apathy they had for war preparations generally. The Government absorbed many of these attitudes and its enthusiasm waned as civil defence preparations began to slow down. Many councils failed to make proper provision for defence in the event of an air raid, there was no fighter protection for Belfast and few anti-aircraft guns, barrage balloons or searchlights, while the shelters constructed were inadequate in design and number. However, the responsibility for the military defence of Belfast rested with the British Government and not with the Government of Northern Ireland. As Belfast became more of a centre for war production so it became more of a likely target for enemy aircraft. The fall of France made attacks on Belfast more likely and the Northern Ireland Cabinet thus moved to establish in 1940 a Ministry of Public Security that sought, with a deepening sense of urgency, to accelerate the pace of civil defence preparations.

With increasing desperation the Government of Northern Ireland had appealed to London for night-fighters, additional searchlights and anti-aircraft guns, but the enemy struck while negotiations with London dragged on. The Luftwaffe made its first raid on Belfast on the night of 7/8 April 1941, which

resulted in 13 deaths and 81 injuries. This raid was basically exploratory and the Germans launched a major raid on the evening of Easter Tuesday, 15 April 1941. During this raid, which involved some 180 enemy aircraft, an estimated 29,000 incendiaries, 76 land mines and over 200 tons of high explosives were dropped on Belfast. The casualties comprised 878 fatalities (including 385 women and children) and 430 persons seriously injured, while 20,000 people were made homeless and production in key war industries was reduced to 25% of pre-blitz levels. By 29 April, some 100,000 citizens had fled the city and the Government's emergency services were completely overwhelmed by the scale of the disaster. Another major raid on Belfast was carried out by the Luftwaffe on the night of 4/5 May. Although the death toll was lower than that inflicted by the previous raid (199 persons were killed), the city suffered extensive damage from a large number of fires. This raid was known as the 'fire raid' on account of the 95,992 incendiary bombs dropped by the Germans and the large-scale fires that raged out of control for several days.

The active defence of Northern Ireland against enemy invasion was the responsibility of the UK Service Departments, the Government of Northern Ireland remaining responsible only for internal law and order. A Home Defence Executive Committee was appointed in 1940 to co-ordinate security and defence measures between the military and the civil departments. A Home Guard, known as the Ulster Defence Volunteer Force, was established within the existing framework of the Special Constabulary and under the command of the Government of Northern Ireland. This raised the problem of whether the force was technically a police or an army organisation. Under international law, police officers are considered civilians and do not engage in hostilities. On the other hand, the Government in Belfast had no power to raise a fighting force. The problem was partly resolved when the force became the Ulster Home Guard in April 1941 and it was made clear that it would assume full military status in the event of an emergency being declared. Although conscription had not been applied to Northern Ireland by Westminster for fear of the nationalist reaction to it, many entered into the spirit of the war effort by enlisting for service in the Home Guard.

Eire's neutrality

The decision of Eire to remain neutral was an assertion of its sovereignty, but to the Government in Northern Ireland it was "the final rejection by Irish nationalism of all things British". As movement between Eire and Northern Ireland was not restricted, many within the Government in Belfast became increasingly concerned at the employment of migrant workers from Eire. Given the general fear of invasion and sabotage, a permit system was introduced. Enemy aliens, if less of a problem than the IRA in Northern Ireland, could not be overlooked. Accordingly, at the same time as members of the IRA were interned, the police authorities of Northern Ireland, acting on confidential instructions from the Home Office, proceeded to arrest and intern enemy aliens.

The conduct of war was the responsibility of the British Government but, given the nature of the Second World War as a total war, this extended beyond military matters. To assist with the war effort by ensuring that all activities – social and economic – were directed towards a common objective, restrictions were imposed on the civilian population. These regulations covered a host of activities: consumption of coal in the home, petrol on the roads, and paper in schools and government offices; trade with the enemy; exports and the import of many raw materials; the distribution of essential commodities; the felling of trees; the erection of houses; and the laying of new roads. Although these regulations were imposed under Westminster legislation, the enforcement and administration of them was delegated to the Government of Northern Ireland which exercised power on behalf of Westminster on an agency basis. To mobilise the economy for the war effort, an Area Board of the Ministry of Supply was set up in Northern Ireland in 1940 with representatives from British and Northern Ireland departments together with spokesmen for employers and trade union interests. Increasing production meant overcoming manpower problems by achieving the reduction of unemployment and the diversion of labour from non-essential to essential work, the co-ordination of supply with demand, the training, upgrading and dilution of labour, wage regulation, the provision of welfare facilities in factories and on building sites, and the minimising of such friction in industry and agriculture as the dislocation of war conditions engendered.

Mobilisation of labour

The mobilisation of labour in Northern Ireland was slow and it was never complete in that some unemployment persisted. In late 1940, when there was an acute shortage of labour in Great Britain, the unemployment rate in Northern Ireland was still 21%. Although unemployment fell to 5%, there were still nearly 10,000 persons not absorbed into the war effort. While many of these were unskilled labourers whom it was very difficult to utilise, the Government in Belfast did not make effective use of its powers to conscript the unemployed for war-related industrial production. The lack of will to achieve a total mobilisation of manpower was indicative of the half-hearted approach by the Belfast Government in the early years of the war to the overall task of war economics. Northern Ireland had the economic potential to be a thriving centre of war production but it continued to look more like a depressed region. In an attempt to improve matters, Sir Basil Brooke was appointed Minister of Commerce and Production in 1941 and productive capacity was soon being utilised more effectively. The efforts on the part of the Government of Northern Ireland to increase its share of war contracts made Belfast a more likely target for enemy air raids. Because of the hesitant, uninformed and ambiguous information it received from London and the delay in making civil defence preparations, Belfast's air precautions, as mentioned earlier, were largely inadequate. The state of unreadiness was graphically illustrated with the damage inflicted on Belfast by enemy aircraft during raids in April and May 1941. The Government came under renewed and intensified criticism, particularly from within

its own party, for its handling of the war effort. Aside from the horrors of the human loss, the air raids revealed the frightful state of housing, the poor sanitation and the inadequate provision of health care in Belfast. Despite the efforts of Brooke to improve industrial production, Northern Ireland's contribution to the economic war effort was still behind that of the mainland and this was a matter of some concern to several Northern Ireland MPs strongly critical of the Belfast Government.

The Andrews' premiership

Following the death of Lord Craigavon (who had been raised to the peerage in 1927) on 24 November 1940, John Andrews became Prime Minister. He did not appoint any new ministers even though most members of the Cabinet had, like him, served in the Government since 1921. Composed mainly of old men, the Government was perceived by backbench Unionist MPs and the general public as lacking the energy, enthusiasm and foresight to direct the war effort in Northern Ireland or plan for post-war social and economic reconstruction. By-election defeats and the growing popularity of the Northern Ireland Labour Party indicated the growing disenchantment among the Government's traditional supporters. In addition, it was clear that within the Government a number of junior ministers were deeply concerned at its lack of effective leadership and general incompetence. A meeting of the Ulster Unionist Parliamentary Party was held on 28 April 1943 and though no formal vote was taken, as the meeting proceeded Andrews appreciated that he might no longer be able to command a majority. Even if he was successful, it was clear that a considerable number of party members intended to persist in their opposition, six members of the Government threatened to resign, and the party would be irretrievably split. Andrews therefore tendered his resignation to the Governor who, on 1 May 1943, after some delay and confusion, invited Sir Basil Brooke to form a Cabinet.

For many people, Andrews' short premiership is largely overshadowed by that of his predecessor and successor, each of whom held office for almost 20 years. Yet during Andrews' period in power, he had to deal with issues of a political, economic and defence nature which could easily have overwhelmed many.

Sir Basil Brooke

Sir Basil Brooke (1888-1973), Viscount Brookeborough, a distinguished veteran of the First World War, was elected to the Northern Ireland Parliament in 1929 and served as Minister of Agriculture between 1933 and 1941. He was promoted to the Ministry of Commerce by John Andrews and succeeded him as Prime Minister in 1943 amid demands for a more rigorous local war effort. He presided over what was possibly the most progressive and tranquil era in Northern Ireland's history overseeing as he did the implementation in Northern Ireland of the Attlee Government's welfare legislation.

Industrial relations

Within a matter of months Brookeborough's Cabinet was confronted with a continuation of the industrial unrest that had plagued the previous administration. Strikes had been illegal since 1940 and in 1942 trade unions and employers formed Joint Production Committees to help the war effort. However, this action was undermined by militant shop stewards seeking better wages and conditions. In the same year all engineering workers walked out of Short Brothers & Harland following the sacking of a number of shop stewards. The strike spread and the issue was resolved only when the employers conceded to the strikers' demands.

By far the worst outbreak of industrial unrest ever to confront this Belfast Government erupted in February 1944; 20,000 people stopped work and thousands more came out when five shop stewards were sentenced to three months hard labour. The gravity of the situation can be gauged from the minutes of the Cabinet papers at CAB/4/578 (5 April 1944), when the Prime Minister stated that he felt the Government must face up to the possibility of a general strike. The Minister of Home Affairs proposed discussing with the RUC Inspector General the question of police protection for volunteers operating public transport or otherwise engaged in essential work during the emergency. The Minister of Labour confessed that he had not anticipated that the general body of shipyard workers would react in the manner they had to the imprisonment of the five shop stewards and was very concerned about the effect on the war effort if the stoppage continued. The situation was not resolved until April 1944 despite being opposed by trade unions, church leaders and the newspapers.

Improved health services

The Ministry of Health and Local Government was set up in 1944 in response to a series of reports decrying the appalling state of health in Northern Ireland. William Grant was the Minister at the time. Northern Ireland passed two important Health Acts in 1946 that laid the foundation for a modern health service. At this point Northern Ireland hospitals were placed under the jurisdiction of a new Hospitals Authority with the exception of the Mater Infirmorum Hospital in Belfast, the only Catholic voluntary hospital in the province. The Mater refused to come into the state system arguing that it wished to maintain its Catholic ethos. It remained outside the system until 1972.

In the July 1945 general election in Britain, the Labour Party under Clement Attlee won a landslide victory and began to implement a programme of welfare reforms that would have a marked effect on the lives of people in Northern Ireland. The Social Services Agreement and the amalgamation of the Unemployment Funds of Great Britain and Northern Ireland by July 1948 relieved the Stormont Government of most of the costs of national assistance, health provision, pensions and national

insurance including sickness and unemployment benefit. Initially the Belfast Government was suspicious of this magnanimity fearing that a socialist government would increase taxes and that Northern Ireland might suffer some loss of autonomy. However, when it became clear that Northern Ireland's status would not be affected pragmatism prevailed and Northern Ireland went on to enjoy the same levels of social services as the remainder of the UK. According to one observer "in the huge undertaking of delivering and setting up the National Health Service (NHS) in 1948 there was little original work for the Northern Ireland Government to do. Its task was one of negotiating and mounting the legislation and setting up the new bodies by 5 July 1948, D Day for all the new services in the United Kingdom." [John A. Oliver, *Working at Stormont* (New York: Institute of Public Administration, 1978)].

In 1946 the Public Health (Tuberculosis) Act (NI) set up the Northern Ireland Tuberculosis Authority and by September 1947 it had taken full responsibility for the discovery, prevention and treatment of tuberculosis. The worst epidemic of poliomyelitis yet recorded in Northern Ireland occurred in 1947; between 16 June and 31 December 266 confirmed cases occurred, with 25 registered deaths. There was a small outbreak of typhus fever at a travellers' camp in Fintona, Co. Tyrone in July 1948. In 1948 the Government introduced the greatest changes with the passing into law of the Health Services Act (NI), which provided for a free and comprehensive health service for all. The principal executive powers under this Act were entrusted to two new statutory bodies: the Northern Ireland Hospitals Authority (NIHA) and the General Services Board (GSB). The NIHA was responsible for hospital services, specialist services and certain ancillary services such as laboratories, X-rays, blood transfusion and ambulances. It also had a special responsibility under the Mental Health Act (NI) 1948 for mental health and for special care for persons suffering from arrested or incomplete development of mind. The GSB was responsible for doctors, dentists and pharmacists as well as health centres and professional and public health education.

The British legislation establishing the NHS was applied simultaneously in the province in 1948, although it required considerable British subsidies to ensure its success. The net result was that Northern Ireland had a vastly improved health service. By 1959 the scourge of tuberculosis, which had been responsible for half the deaths in the 15-25 age group in 1941, had virtually been eradicated. Prime Minister Brookeborough had regarded the problem as being so urgent that he authorised the setting up of the Tuberculosis Authority in 1941 despite preoccupation with war issues. This Authority was constituted by the passing of an Act in 1946. The work of the Authority was so successful in eradicating tuberculosis that it was dissolved in 1959.

Education

Towards the end of the Second World War, the Northern Ireland Government prepared for a major reorganisation of education along the lines of the Education Act of 1944 in Great Britain (also referred to as the Butler Act). There was, it was felt, a need to make good the neglect of the inter-war years. Nevertheless, three years were to pass before the main elements of the Butler Act were applied to Northern Ireland in the form of the Education Act (NI) 1947. Proposals by the Minister of Education, Lieutenant-Colonel Hall-Thompson, to increase capital grants to schools managed by four-and-two-committees, (mainly Catholic), and to introduce free school milk and lunches to needy children were interpreted by Catholic church leaders as further evidence of pressure being brought to bear in order to force their privately managed schools into the state system. Their response was to demand 100% funding in return for paying 100% taxes. Nor were Protestants particularly happy with the Ministry of Education at this time. A White Paper published in 1944 proposing changes had alarmed them, and they made it known that any abrogation of the religious arrangements in the 1930 Act was unacceptable. In particular they objected to the proposals to repeal previous statutes regulating the conditions of religious instruction in public elementary schools, the proposed conscience clause for teachers and the increased grants for four-and-two schools.

Thus the Belfast Government was caught in the middle between two opposing sides. Protestant education campaigners wanted state schools to be Protestant in staffing and curriculum but would not admit the principle of denominationalism, while the Catholic campaigners would not settle for anything less than the principle of denominationalism. No common ground could be found and this issue rumbled on, becoming the focus of bitter on-going government/clerical disagreement between the years 1945-56. Despite sectarian bickering, Lieutenant Colonel Hall-Thompson's Bill became law in 1947. He resigned two years later, however, when his proposal to pay Catholic teachers' national insurance and superannuation was not supported by Prime Minister Brookeborough. Harry Midgley replaced him as Minister of Education in 1950.

Radical reforms

The radical changes contained in the 1947 Education Act came into operation on 1 April 1948. The Act had 120 provisions, and the main features of its reforms were to convert elementary schools into new primary and secondary schools. Pupils would leave the first level at 11 years of age. The most able 20% would be selected by a qualifying examination for grammar school; the remaining 80% would go to intermediate or technical secondary schools. The raising of the minimum school leaving age was deferred until 1957 when it was set at 15 years of age.

The full social and political impact of educational advances resulting from these reforms was not fully felt until the mid-1960s when, largely as a result of the 1947 Act, higher education became available to all able children regardless of social class as the great majority of pupils in secondary schools had their tuition fees paid by education and library boards. At the time of writing this is still the case. However, education was now organised along strictly segregated lines, with Queen's University in Belfast being the only further education institution where young people of different religions were educated together.

In 1964, a White Paper on Educational Development in Northern Ireland put forward a number of proposals for further progress in the fields of primary, secondary and further education. New targets were set: for example, the replacement of unsatisfactory school buildings, closure of small rural schools and a reduction in class sizes. The White Paper examined the arguments for and against comprehensive education, renamed intermediate schools secondary intermediate schools and made moves to lessen the difference between them and grammar schools. The White Paper proposed modification of the qualifying examination and it was discontinued after 1965 being replaced by the Eleven Plus, with the emphasis on verbal reasoning rather than arithmetic and English tests. The new examination, which was linked to teachers' assessments of pupils, could be taken at a pupil's own school. Despite the name change the stigma of failure remains to this day.

Higher Education

In November 1963, a committee headed by Sir John Lockwood of London University, was appointed by the Minister of Finance to review the facilities for university and higher technical education in Northern Ireland and to make recommendations. The Committee's findings, published as the Lockwood Report, enabled the Belfast Government to make far-reaching plans for higher education in Northern Ireland. It predicted that by 1974, between 8,000 and 9,000 university places would be needed and that this figure would rise to around 13,000 by 1980. It recommended the establishment of a second university that would be complementary to Queen's University, Belfast. The Committee considered several locations for this new university and, having regard to the criteria used by the University Grants Committee, eventually settled on Coleraine, Co. Londonderry as the location for what was to become the New University of Ulster. In February 1966, Professor N.A. Burges was nominated as Vice-Chancellor elect and when the University opened its doors in October 1968 its first intake was of approximately 400 students.

In 1970, under the provisions of the Magee University College Londonderry (NI) Act, Magee University College, situated in the city of Londonderry, became an integral part of the New University.

The IRA

In June 1949, after Eire became the Republic of Ireland, the Westminster Government passed the Ireland Act that gave Stormont the power to decide if and when Northern Ireland's position in the UK would change. This Act was possibly the most substantive Unionist constitutional victory of the post-war era. Meanwhile, there was a general lack of interest in partition on both sides of the border, and the Anti-Partition League, which had been set up to agitate for unity, ceased to be active principally as a result of its poor showing in the 1949 Northern Ireland election.

The IRA launched a border campaign on 12 December 1956 that proved to be the precursor of a sustained assault on the Northern state. In any event it was an abortive exercise and the campaign was called off in March 1962 due to lack of public support and the combined response of both Governments. They cracked down hard on what they saw as an unacceptable challenge to constitutional authority. The IRA had been made illegal in 1931 in the then Irish Free State. As a consequence it was rendered impotent. It did, however, surface again in the 1960s having moved to the left, becoming involved in social and economic agitation. A formal split ensued when in 1969 the militarists broke away and formed the Provisional IRA that became the dominant grouping. The remainder became known as the Official IRA and they suspended military operations in May 1972. The Provisional IRA began a bloody and sustained campaign that continued for the next 30 or so years.

Co-operation

Despite continued bitterness over the constitutional issue, the two Governments co-operated over matters of mutual benefit in the economic sphere, for example, the Foyle Fisheries Commission in 1952, and the Great Northern Railway in 1953. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Ireland joined the European Economic Community (EEC), now known as the European Union (EU), in 1973.

Housing

In the 1951 British general election the Conservatives were returned to power. This meant effectively that Stormont had a free hand to rule Northern Ireland without interference from Westminster. Two of the main issues preoccupying the Belfast Cabinet as they entered the new decade were housing and transport.

As a result of past neglect, the Northern Ireland Government inherited a huge legacy of wretched nineteenth-century dwellings in both Belfast and Londonderry as well as even older cottages in rural areas, a growing population in towns, and virtually no new building since the outbreak of war in 1914. By 1943 the extent of the problem was revealed – particularly the awfulness of the Belfast slums that were unfit for human habitation – and the Belfast Government was galvanised into action.

The Northern Ireland Housing Trust had been created in 1945 and was modelled on the Scottish Special Housing Trust Association (SSHTA), with power to borrow from the government in order to build houses and pay back the capital with interest over 60 years. Its establishment followed a housing survey carried out in 1943, which revealed that 100,000 new houses were needed urgently throughout Northern Ireland, and a further 100,000 were required in order to eradicate the existing slums. The 1956 Housing Act dealt with slum clearance and with improvement grants. The Minister of Health and Local Government, William Grant, persuaded the Government to provide aid in the form of subsidies. The Ministry of Agriculture provided grants for replacing or refurbishing farmhouses and labourers' cottages in response to the unacceptably low quality of rural housing.

The vast increase in public spending on housing meant that the target set by Stormont of 100,000 local authority houses was met by the 1960s – the 100,000th new post-war dwelling was completed in 1962. So acute had been the problem that the Government considered a foray into 'experimental housing'. The Government was approached by two building firms offering to build houses, at their own expense, using new plans and methods of construction. The Government agreed to this scheme, even providing the building sites and material for six houses, on the clear understanding that it was an experiment only. The finished product and its ability to stand up to the vagaries of Northern Ireland weather had to be proven before it would fully commit to this strategy in the long term (CAB/4/1577). Such radical and expensive experiments indicate the acuteness of the housing shortage.

Housing a divided society was fraught with problems and it was this contentious issue that proved to be the nemesis of later governments. It was controversy over the question of fair play in the allocation of houses that was to boil over in 1968, contributing to the growth of the Civil Rights Movement. This aspect of the housing issue can be traced back to 1963, when the Dungannon Homeless Citizens League, advocating direct action, occupied prefabricated buildings due for demolition in Dungannon. The Campaign for Social Justice in Northern Ireland launched in January 1964 sought "equality for all" – in effect an embryonic civil rights movement had begun in Northern Ireland.

The Housing Executive, a comprehensive housing authority providing a wide range of accommodation and housing services across the Province, was established in 1972 and has succeeded in maintaining its reputation for impartiality ever since it published a single standard points system in

April 1973. The Housing Trust had made valiant attempts to create integrated estates and the Housing Executive for a time followed suit. The policy collapsed and henceforth, with the exception of middle-class residential suburbs, segregation seemed the only way to achieve stability in urban and in a few rural areas as well.

Road/rail competition

The history of public transport in Northern Ireland is one of continuous decline in railways as the advantages and flexibility of road transport became increasingly available to the general public, trade and industry. Since the end of the Second World War transport policy in Northern Ireland was concerned with merging the two transport systems into a single entity.

The development of road transport in Northern Ireland in the 1920s destroyed the virtual monopoly that the railways had enjoyed for some 70 years. As a consequence the railways, which were in private ownership, but providing a public transport service, experienced financial difficulty. Railways were at a particular disadvantage in competing with road transport, in view of the fairly extensive and costly railway system and the relatively short distances to be covered.

From 1926-35, the business of carrying passengers by road was regulated by a system of licensing and other measures. By 1933, the operation of omnibuses had become concentrated in the hands of 50 operators owning around 700 vehicles. With the carriage of goods by road there was no corresponding system of licensing, and competition was unregulated and extremely intensive. In an attempt to resolve this problem, the Belfast Government asked Sir Felix Poole to produce a report and his recommendations were implemented in the Road and Railway Transport Act (NI) 1935. This report and the subsequent Act were designed to deal with the problems created by the effect on the railways of competition from road transport. Provision was made under the Act for the co-ordination of road and railway transport. Difficulties were, however, experienced in the implementation of this system as a solution.

Consolidation

All available resources were fully extended for defence purposes during the Second World War, but once peace was restored the earlier difficulties became apparent once more. The Government's White Paper on Public Transport 1946, spelled out that the only reasonable prospect of acquiring an efficient and solvent system of public transport was to merge the Road Transport Board and the principal railway companies into a single entity. The Transport Act (NI) 1948 largely implemented the proposals in the White Paper. This Act set up the publicly owned Ulster Transport Authority (UTA) which was duty bound to provide an efficient, economical and properly integrated system of public

transport for passengers and goods in Northern Ireland. From the start the UTA was susceptible to the same economic forces that had bedevilled the earlier systems. Moreover, the Great Northern Railway Company was also in difficulty, only kept going after 1950 by substantial grants from the Governments of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. In 1953, it was acquired jointly by both Governments under legislation passed simultaneously in both Parliaments setting up the Great Northern Railway (GNR) Board.

In the first five years of the Board's existence its losses in Northern Ireland alone amounted to £2.2m. Accordingly the Northern Ireland Government entered into a new agreement with its southern counterpart in September 1958. This Agreement scheduled to the Transport Act (NI) 1958, ended the joint Board and divided the undertaking between the two Governments. The Act brought the Northern Ireland part under the ownership and control of the UTA as from 1 October 1958.

By 1962 all £10m worth of capital loan liabilities of the UTA were discharged. This left £3m worth of liabilities outstanding and Parliament authorised a grant of up to £4m to meet the continuing losses and capital expenditure. Things could not continue and the Government commissioned Sir Harry Benson to look at the position of the railways and make recommendations about the future. His report was published in July 1963, and was followed by a Government review of all aspects of inland transport.

In 1964 the Belfast Government announced a new policy for public transport in Northern Ireland, namely the abolition of the UTA's statutory monopoly on all public transport, the introduction of licensing schemes for road freight and road passenger service operators with open competition between public and private undertakings, the reorganisation of the UTA and the establishment of a Transport Commission or Holding Company. The proposals were implemented in several stages: the Transport Acts (NI) 1966 and 1967 laid the basis for the new policy, and in 1968 the Government took over the UTA's assets. The new body was, and still is, a commercially orientated organisation.

Trade and industry

The war years were years of considerable expansion. By 1950, Northern Ireland's principal industries were agriculture, textiles, shipbuilding, distilling, manufacture of machinery, aircraft, clothing, ropes and twine, tobacco and food products. The Cabinet's drive for new industry had begun in 1945. Its policy aimed to widen the base of Northern Ireland industry to minimise any slump in the principal industries as well as the creation of new employment.

The anticipated slump in shipbuilding at the end of the war failed to materialise. This was due to several factors such as the maintenance of state controls, unprecedented aid from the United States of America to western Europe under the Marshall Plan^[1] and the fact that war damage had rendered Japanese and German shipyards inoperable. Harland & Wolff, the jewel in the crown of Northern Ireland's economy, was kept busy converting passenger liners that had been co-opted for war work as well as meeting the high demand for merchant vessels and oil tankers. All this combined to keep Harland & Wolff productive throughout the 1950s, out-performing any other UK shipyard.

The building of the luxury liner Canberra changed all that. The company's most valuable contract ever lost Harland & Wolff £1.2m and the yard suffered a traumatic decline in the 1960s. In 1962 Prime Minister Brookeborough called a general election amid fears for the region's future. In 1963 he was forced to stand down and was replaced on 25 March by Captain Terence O'Neill. As far as Harland & Wolff was concerned the clock could not be turned back and in 1968 Edward Heath, the British Prime Minister, was referring to the company when he said he would no longer support 'lame ducks'.

The textile industry had been long established in Northern Ireland and, next to agriculture, the linen industry was the most important industry in employing, directly or indirectly, nearly one-fifth of the workforce in 1947. Employment in the linen industry contracted as the manufacture of man-made fibres took hold following their introduction during the Second World War when linen was in short supply. By the mid-1960s Northern Ireland had become a major centre for the production of rayon, acrilan, nylon, Terylene and ulstron. Throughout the 1960s linen mills continued to lay off workers or close down completely and by the beginning of the 1970s, only 20 firms survived out of the 200 that had been in production in the 1950s. Similarly clothing companies, tobacco-manufacturing firms, food processing plants and aerated water factories all contracted in size. Aircraft manufacture failed to maintain wartime levels of production. Short Brothers & Harland Ltd had been established in Belfast since 1937, and had manufactured many well-known aircraft – the Skyvan freighter and the VC10 – as well as guided missiles, hydraulics and a variety of general engineering products at their works at Queen's Island. Agriculture, which suffered a decline during the war, made a spectacular recovery due to egg, poultry and pig production. Progress in mechanisation, however, reduced employment on the land.

Modernisation

Northern Ireland's main economic hope was to attract new manufacturing to keep unemployment levels down. This had begun post-war. Diversification was essential to minimise the effects of a slow-down in the principal industries. The aim was to establish or expand production in Northern Ireland

by the broadening and strengthening of its industrial base. By 1950 the general structure of Northern Ireland's industries was beginning to show an appreciable degree of diversification, for example, the textile industry was extended to include the spinning of wool and cotton, and the manufacture of carpets and artificial fibres. Engineering broadened to include the manufacture of aircraft, air conditioning units, vehicle bodies, electrical equipment and objects such as clocks, textile machinery, optical components and much more.

Economic difficulties

A report by K.S. Isles and Norman Cuthbert, *An Economic Survey of Northern Ireland*, (London: HMSO, 1957), outlined industry and the high cost of fuel and cross-Channel transport. Against this backdrop Prime Minister Brookeborough commissioned a further report (by Sir Robert Hall) that was published in 1962. Hall's conclusions concurred with those of Isles and Cuthbert and he recommended that the Government should stop supporting declining industries and focus on attracting dynamic outsiders to Northern Ireland. By now, October 1962, unemployment had risen from 6.7% to 7.5% and when the Hall Report was presented to Stormont, the Prime Minister came in for angry criticism. He resigned in March 1963 and was succeeded by Captain Terence O'Neill, the Minister of Finance.

O'Neill's economic strategy

O'Neill's principal aim was "to make Northern Ireland economically stronger and prosperous". Inspired by Sir Robert Matthew's 1962 Belfast Regional Survey and Plan, in his opening speech as Prime Minister he stated that his vision for the future of Northern Ireland included plans for a new motorway, a new airport in Belfast, a new hospital in Londonderry, laboratories and research facilities at Queen's University, Belfast, and "the replacement of derelict slums by modern housing estates". Then, in October 1963, he appointed Tom Wilson and Adam Smith as economic consultants to the Northern Ireland Government and commissioned a report, the Wilson Plan. Published in February 1965, it endorsed Matthew's proposals but went further in recommending additional growth points at Londonderry, Larne, Bangor-Newtonards, Carrickfergus-Carnmoney and Antrim-Ballymena. Moreover the scheme included a new ring road for Belfast, a new city in the centre of the province, four motorways, a second university, a major manpower-training scheme, and 64,000 new houses by 1970. The total cost was reckoned at £900m. Above all the Wilson Plan advocated a more energetic drive to attract new firms into Northern Ireland by way of inducements in the form of tax allowances, investment grants and employment premiums.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation of Protestants and Catholics was also a key part of the new Prime Minister's programme and to this end he arranged a meeting with Sean Lemass, Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland (1959-66). They met at Stormont Castle in January 1965. O'Neill returned the Taoiseach's visit by travelling to Dublin later that year. He also visited Catholic schools and hospitals and met with Cardinal William Conway, Archbishop of Armagh. O'Neill's bridge-building gestures were well received by nationalist leaders, but a number of Unionists believed these attempts to improve community relations would only lead to a weakening of the bulwarks of Unionism. The Revd Dr Ian Paisley, a Unionist and ardent loyalist, objected to these symbolic gestures and was strident in his criticism of the failure of the Unionist Party leadership to meet adequately the economic needs of Protestants.

The Civil Rights Movement

A resistance to change within the Unionist Party coincided with the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement. Its support was drawn from Catholic middle-class nationalists, politicians, a number of Protestant liberals, trade unionists and members of the Northern Ireland Labour Party. It planned to use the same methods of non-violent protest as were being used by Martin Luther King and the American civil rights movement but violence erupted at a march in Londonderry in October 1968. Further civil rights demonstrations took place all over Northern Ireland with the demonstrators demanding 'one man, one vote', an end to discrimination, fair allocation of local council houses and an end to 'gerrymandering'. The problems this violence created for the Belfast Cabinet are manifest in the cabinet papers from October 1968 onwards as they wrestled with each new crisis and assessed the political fallout of events as they unfolded.

Following pressure from Britain, Prime Minister O'Neill announced sweeping reforms of local government. Working-class Protestants who were also living in poor housing conditions resented the attention given to civil rights demands and felt that 'civil rights' meant 'Catholic rights'. Others believed that the old enemy, the IRA, was controlling the civil rights movement as a first step towards a united Ireland.

A protest march from Belfast to Londonderry in January 1969 organised by the People's Democracy (PD), a new socialist/nationalist group, degenerated into sectarian violence. O'Neill responded by announcing a commission of inquiry into accusations that the police, who were present at the scene, appeared to do little to protect the marchers. This prompted the resignation of his Deputy Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner. With his position now weakened, and in an attempt to rout his critics by

mustering massive popular support, O'Neill called a general election for February 1969. The narrowness of his personal victory over the Revd Dr Ian Paisley in his own Bannside constituency further weakened his position. When he decided in April 1969, to grant 'one man, one vote' at the next local government election, his Minister of Agriculture, James Chichester-Clarke, resigned. O'Neill resigned from office on 28 April 1969. He was succeeded by Chichester-Clark.

Meanwhile Catholic demands for reform were becoming more insistent and were accompanied by intensifying loyalist violence. In August 1969 Catholic rioters and the RUC fought each other on the streets of Londonderry for three days. At the same time sectarian violence broke out in Belfast with whole streets burned to the ground. The Northern Ireland Government requested that the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, order British troops into Belfast and Londonderry to relieve the RUC.

The revival of the IRA

The IRA had abandoned its previous campaign of violence in 1962 due to lack of support and interest from a Catholic population in Northern Ireland which was enjoying the material benefits resulting from the introduction of the welfare state. A new more militant IRA, the 'Provisionals', emerged in 1969. They attacked soldiers and the RUC and bombed businesses and shops. Protestant paramilitary groups such as the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) reappeared and began using similar tactics as the IRA to defend the Union.

Violence eased in the autumn of 1970, but escalated again from the beginning of 1971. Chichester-Clark resigned as Prime Minister on 20 March 1971 having lost the confidence of his party when he held back over the proposed introduction of internment and was replaced by Brian Faulkner who, in August 1971, used the Special Powers Act to introduce internment. The Act gave his Government the power to arrest, interrogate and detain without trial, anyone suspected of being involved in the IRA. Internment not only failed to stop violence but actually increased support and sympathy for the IRA as well as becoming a new focus for civil rights protests, including a nationalist rent and rates strike.

On Sunday 30 January 1972, a huge anti-internment march took place in Londonderry. Rioting broke out as the rally ended. Claiming that they had been fired upon, British army paratroopers opened fire on the marchers and 13 civilians were killed. The subsequent Widgery Inquiry set up by the British Government failed to establish that any of the victims were armed. This incident, commonly known as 'Bloody Sunday', was followed by rioting in nationalist areas and by an increase in the IRA's bombing campaign. Fearing that law and order was about to break down completely, Prime Minister Faulkner sought authority to rearm the RUC and to re-establish the 'B' Specials. Instead, Edward Heath, the British Prime Minister, insisted on complete British control of security, including the RUC, as well as full responsibility for law and order, justice and the appointment of the judiciary. When the

Northern Ireland Prime Minister and his Cabinet refused, Prime Minister Heath took the decision to suspend the Stormont parliament and to introduce direct rule of Northern Ireland from Westminster.

Explanation of the Cabinet Conclusions files

In addition to including the minutes of Cabinet decisions (known as Conclusions), each file relating to a meeting contains an agenda, supporting memoranda and associated correspondence. In evaluating these documents it is helpful to understand how the Cabinet operated. Matters for discussion were raised by the circulation of memoranda in advance and were notified in the agenda; ministers who wished to raise a matter orally were expected to notify the Prime Minister and other members in advance. The Conclusions, which are only a short summary of key points discussed and decisions reached, were circulated as soon as possible to those who had been present. The Private Secretary of each minister then replied to indicate whether his minister accepted the Conclusions as drafted or wanted to suggest amendments. In the event of the latter, and assuming the amendments were incorporated, the original and the final draft of the Conclusions were retained by the Cabinet Secretariat. The memoranda relating to issues discussed in Cabinet were also retained, as it was not the general practice to record information in the Conclusions that had already been detailed in the memoranda.

In recording who was present for a meeting of the Cabinet or who was in attendance during a discussion on a particular item, the Conclusions do not name the persons concerned. Since it was the normal practice to refer to individuals by virtue of the office they held, it is necessary to know who held what office at what time. Appendix A lists all those who served in the Northern Ireland Cabinet, while Appendix B lists police officers and senior civil servants frequently in attendance to give a report or explain a particular topic. Appendix C details all those who held junior government office, and Appendix D is an attempt to identify the main officials.

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