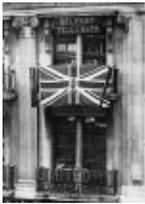




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NORTHERN IRELAND: A DIVIDED COMMUNITY, 1921-1972 CABINET PAPERS OF THE STORMONT ADMINISTRATION



The history of Ireland in the twentieth century was dominated by the political and sectarian divide between the north and the south, leading to sustaining armed violence over several decades. These Government documents of the British administration in Northern Ireland 1921-72 (CAB/4) offer what have been described as the best continuous record of government activity and decision-making in the world, and shows "how government actually worked". The papers contained in *Northern Ireland: A Divided Community, 1921-1972* are a complete digital facsimile of the Cabinet Conclusion files of the Northern Ireland Government, filed as CAB/4 at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). These CAB/4 files contain a full record of every debate and transaction for the entire duration of the Stormont administration, the devolved government of Northern Ireland. Separate files exist for each Cabinet Meeting and include minutes and memoranda. The discussions and decisions reflect the wide range of problems and activities involved in making the new administration work. Topics debated and reported in just one sample year of the Troubles (1970) include: policing, arms and explosives, social need, prevention of incitement to religious hatred, army occupation of factories, road spiking, routing of Orange Day parades, dock strikes, law and order, riots, and the roles of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC).

Date Range: 1921-1972

Content: 71,990 images

Source Library: The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

Detailed Description:

[Link to Northern Ireland Resources](#)

Introduction

The Government of Ireland Act 1920 provided for the partition of Ireland and the establishment of separate parliaments in Belfast and Dublin. The devolved Parliament of Northern Ireland, which moved to Stormont Castle in 1932, was given power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Northern Ireland, subject to certain limitations.

This devolved legislature governed Northern Ireland from 7 June 1921 until 30 March 1972, when Direct Rule from Westminster was imposed by the British government as the Troubles worsened following 'Bloody Sunday'. The Parliament of Ireland was initially suspended, and then formally abolished under the Northern Ireland Constitution Act of 1973.

The Stormont Administration

The Government of Ireland Act 1920 provided for the partition of Ireland and the establishment of parliaments in Belfast and Dublin. Northern Ireland was created from the six counties of Londonderry, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Antrim, Down and Armagh. The Parliament of Northern Ireland, which moved to Stormont Castle in 1932, consisted of the sovereign, Senate and House of Commons, and was based on, although devolved from and subordinate to, the Westminster model. The devolved parliament was given power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Northern Ireland subject to certain limitations. However the Act set out a list of 'excepted' and 'reserved' matters over which the Northern Ireland Parliament had no powers of legislation. The '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.

The first election to the Parliament of Northern Ireland was held in May 1921 when the Ulster Unionist Party, under Sir James Craig, won 40 out of the 52 seats. The new Government, which assumed office on 7 June 1921, consisted of the Department of the Prime Minister and Departments of Finance, Home Affairs, Labour, Education, Agriculture and Commerce. The new Government faced immense administrative difficulties as well as political and security threats. Winning acceptance of the new government by all sectors of Northern Ireland politics and society would be a continuing major challenge.

The Political Issues

The Protestant Ulster Unionist Party won the majority of seats in the first parliament, but it had to rule over a substantial Catholic nationalist minority. Sinn Fein, the Republican party, would not accept a settlement which involved the separation of Northern Ireland from the rest of Ireland. The British government in London would have preferred the Northern Ireland Parliament to have been subordinate to a Dublin government with dominion status. However the Northern Ireland government refused to negotiate with Sinn Fein until it recognised Northern Ireland's right to self-determination. The British government was also reluctant to strengthen the power of the Ulster Unionists as it wanted a settlement with Sinn Fein. The early period of the new government was dominated by law and order issues and problems of financing its services. Taxes were collected by the Government at London and the amount of revenue allocated to Northern Ireland was calculated and agreed by the Joint Exchequer Board.

Cabinet Conclusion Files

The Northern Ireland Cabinet was at the centre of the decision-making process and discussion of policy matters throughout the period of devolved administration from 1921-1972. It met fortnightly to discuss issues of security, finance or economics, and political matters regarding its relations with the British and Irish governments. The Cabinet conclusions and other memoranda, filed as CAB/4 at PRONI, provide an insight into the very heart of government and civil service activities. Their importance explains why the archive is the most frequently consulted of all the official records held at PRONI.

The Cabinet Conclusion files, in addition to including the minutes of Cabinet decisions (known as Conclusions), contained an agenda, supporting memoranda and associated correspondence. Matters for discussion at Cabinet 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 - a short summary of key points discussed and decisions reached - were circulated to those who had been present. Each Private Secretary then replied to indicate whether his minister accepted the Conclusions as drafted or wanted to suggest amendments. The original and the final draft were retained by the Cabinet Secretariat together with the memoranda, as it was not the general practice to record information in the Conclusions that had already been detailed in the memoranda. Participants at each meeting were referred to, not by name but by the office they held. The discussions and decisions reflect the wide range of problems and activities in making the new administration work. These documents represent a full record of every debate and transaction for the entire duration of the Stormont administration, and therefore provide a unique continuous record of how government actually worked.

Prime Ministers of Northern Ireland 1921-1972

Sir James Craig: 7 June 1921 - 24 Nov 1940

John Miller Andrews: 25 November 1940 - 10 April 1943

Sir Basil Brooke: 1 May 1943 - 25 March 1963

Terence O'Neill: 25 March 1963 - 1 May 1969

James Chichester-Clarke: 1 May 1969 - 23 March 1971

Brian Faulkner: 23 March 1971 - 30 March 1972

Key Events

1920: Government of Ireland Act

May 1921: Ulster Unionist Party wins first election. Sir James Craig becomes Prime Minister

July 1921: Northern Ireland Parliament opens in Belfast

Dec 1921: Anglo-Irish Treaty

1922: Civil Authorities (Special Powers Act) introduced

May 1922: IRA and related organisations proscribed and internment introduced. RUC formed

1922-1923: Leech Commission on local government boundaries

1923: Formation of N Ireland Arbitration Committee to address financial arrangements with London Public Record Act (NI)

1923: established the NI Record Office (PRONI)

Dec 1925: Recognition of existing boundaries by British, N Ireland and Irish Free State

1932: Eamonn De Valera becomes PM of Irish Free State

1935: Riots in Belfast

1937: Constitution for Irish Free State as 'Eire'

1938: Anglo-Irish Trade negotiations

2 Sep 1939: Britain & France declare war on Germany

Nov 1940: Death of PM. John Andrews succeeds

April/May 1941: Luftwaffe bomb Belfast, Londonderry, Bangor & Newtownards

May 1943: Andrews resigns. Sir Basil Brooke becomes PM

Feb 1944: Industrial unrest. 20,000 stop work

1944: Ministry of Health and Local Government set up

May 1945: End WWII. Speeches by Churchill and De Valera

July 1945: Labour win General Election under Clement Attlee

April 1948: Education Act (NI) came into operation

1948: Health Services Act

1948: Transport Act (NI)

June 1949: Republic of Ireland declared

1956: Housing Act to deal with slum clearance

Dec 1956-Mar 1962: IRA border campaign

1958: Transport Act (NI)

1962: 100,000th new post-war dwelling completed

Mar 1963: PM Brookeborough resigned. Terence O'Neill becomes PM

Jan 1964: Campaign for Social Justice in N Ireland launched

1964: Lockwood Report on HE in N Ireland

1965: Meetings between O'Neill and Sean Lemass, Taoiseach of Republic of Ireland

Feb 1965: Wilson Plan on economic future published

Oct 1968: Civil Rights March in Londonderry

Jan 1969: Sectarian violence at protest march by People's Democracy

1969: IRA split into Official IRA and Provisional IRA

April 1969: O'Neill resigns ,Chichester-Clark succeeds

Aug 1969: Riots between Catholics and RUC. NI Government requests British troops for Belfast and Londonderry

Mar 1971: Chichester-Clark resigns, replaced by Faulkner

Aug 1971: Faulkner introduces internment under Special Powers Act

30 Jan 1972: Huge anti-internment march in Londonderry 'Bloody Sunday'

1972: British PM suspends Stormont parliament and introduces direct rule from Westminster