

8/11. The Conference agreed that a Council of Ireland should be set up. It would be confined to representatives of the two parts of Ireland, with appropriate safeguards for the British Government's financial and other interests. It would comprise a Council of Ministers with executive and harmonising functions and a consultative role, and a Consultative Assembly with advisory and review functions. The Council of Ministers would act by unanimity, and would comprise a core of seven members of the Irish Government and an equal number of members of the Northern Ireland Executive with provision for the participation of other non-voting members of the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive or Administration when matters within their departmental competence were discussed. The Council of Ministers would control the functions of the Council. The Chairmanship would rotate on an agreed basis between representatives of the Irish Government and of the Northern Ireland Executive. Arrangements would be made for the location of the first meeting, and the location of subsequent meetings would be determined by the Council. The Consultative Assembly would consist of 60 members, 30 members from Dail Eireann chosen by the Dail on the basis of the single transferable vote, and 30 members from the Northern Ireland Assembly chosen by that Assembly and also on that basis. The members of the Consultative Assembly would be paid allowances. There would be a Secretariat to the Council, which would be kept as small as may be commensurate with efficiency in the operation of the Council. The Secretariat would service the institutions of the Council and would, under the Council of Ministers, supervise the carrying out of the executive and harmonising functions and the consultative role of the Council. The Secretariat would be headed by a Secretary-General.

Following the appointment of a Northern Ireland Executive, the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive would nominate their representatives to a Council of Ireland. The Council of Ministers would then appoint a Secretary-General and decide upon the location of its permanent headquarters. The Secretary-General would be directed to proceed with the drawing up of plans for such headquarters. The Council would also make arrangements for the recruitment of the staff of the Secretariat in a manner and on conditions which will, as far as is practicable, be consistent with those applying to public servants in the two administrations.

9. In the context of its harmonising functions and consultative role, the Council of Ireland would undertake important work, relating, for instance, to the impact of EEC membership. As for executive functions, the first step would be to define and agree these in detail. The conference therefore decided that, in view of the administrative complexities involved, studies should at once be set in hand to identify and report, prior to the second stage of the conference, on areas of common interest in relation to which a Council of Ireland would take executive decisions and, in appropriate cases, be responsible for carrying those decisions into effect. In carrying out these studies, and also in determining what should be done by the Council in terms of harmonisation, the objectives to be borne in mind would include the following:

- (1) to achieve the best utilisation of scarce skills, expertise and resources;
- (2) to avoid, in the interests of economy and efficiency, unnecessary duplication of effort;
and
- (3) to ensure complementary rather than competitive effort where this is to the advantage of agriculture, commerce and industry.

In particular these studies would be directed to identifying, for the purposes of executive action by a Council of Ireland, suitable aspects of activities in the following broad fields:

- (a) exploitation, conservation and development of natural resources and the environment;
- (b) agricultural matters (including agricultural research, animal health and operational aspects of the Common Agriculture Policy), forestry and fisheries;
- (c) co-operative ventures in the fields of trade and industry;
- (d) electricity generation;
- (e) tourism;
- (f) roads and transport;
- (g) advisory services in the field of public health;
- (h) sport, culture and the arts.

It would be for the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly to legislate from time to time as to the extent of functions to be devolved to the Council of Ireland. Where necessary, the British Government will co-operate in this devolution of functions. Initially, the functions to be vested would be those identified in accordance with the procedures set out above and decided at the second stage of the conference to be transferred.