

# A STATE APART

## Teachers Notes

### Programme 3

### ULSTER WORKER'S COUNCIL STRIKE

#### CONTENT

This programme deals with the failure of the power-sharing administration in Northern Ireland in 1974. The splits within Unionism and the growing fears of an Irish dimension being introduced through the Council of Ireland are also examined. The Ulster Workers' Council Strike of May 1974 was successful in toppling the fledgling Executive; and the programme charts the organisation and conduct of the strike and the reactions generated by these events.

#### ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The programme covers quite an intricate period where a number of factors combine to set up the Northern Ireland Executive and, subsequently, to bring about its resignation. The emphasis is on relationships not only within Northern Ireland, but with the London and Dublin Governments. The prime perspective on view is that of Unionist resistance to the Council of Ireland and Dublin involvement in Northern Ireland's affairs.

#### KEY SECTIONS

1. The fall of Stormont – IRA campaign continues  
William Whitelaw, Secretary of State, grants political status to prisoners and releases some internees  
IRA ceasefire – June / July 1972 – ends with a return to violence  
The army enters 'no-go' areas in July
2. In 1973, political talks are held in Darlington and the Government announces a new Stormont Assembly with a power-sharing executive  
First mention of Dublin Government involvement through a Council of Ireland  
Unionist opinion is split as opposition to Dublin involvement grows  
The new Executive is announced in November 1973
1. Sunningdale Agreement, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1973, announces a Council of Ireland.  
Loyalist opposition begins to organise.  
Anti-Sunningdale candidates win eleven out of twelve seats in the Westminster election of February 1974
2. The Executive loses support  
Ulster Workers' Council organise a general strike from 15<sup>th</sup> May  
Loyalist paramilitaries 'order' people to stay away from work
3. The effects of the strike and the reaction of the Executive and the British Government  
Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, makes a speech which angers Unionists  
The Executive resigns on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1974

**BEFORE THE PROGRAMME**

- Consider the reasons for the failure of the IRA ceasefire in 1972. Look at the formation of Loyalist paramilitaries in the early seventies.
- Outline the British Government's desire to establish a stable Northern Ireland Government.
- Review Unionist fears of being ruled by a Government in Dublin.

**DURING THE VIEWING**

- Use the Pupil Log to record the sequence of events.
- Compile notes on the main attitudes and perspectives towards power-sharing and the Council of Ireland.

**AFTER THE PROGRAMME**

- Discuss the reasons for the failure of the Executive.
- Consider whether the main reason for the strike was Loyalist opposition to power-sharing or to a Council of Ireland.

**HISTORICAL SKILLS/ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES**

Programme 3 provides opportunities for a greater understanding of a key historical event - the failure of the Power Sharing Executive of 1974, with emphasis on why the Ulster Workers Strike was called and the effects of that strike.

Cause and Consequence and experiences and perspectives  
(Assessment Objective AO1 CCEA GCSE History Specification)