

Ulster Democratic Party

Draft list of "confidence building measures"

20th October 1997

1) Articles 2&3

The British Government should actively lobby the Irish Government for the abrogation of articles 2 & 3.

The illegal Irish claim to Northern Ireland is an impediment to the peace process. It undermines the confidence of the people of Northern Ireland in the negotiations. It also contradicts the *stated* position of the Irish government as a neutral facilitator.

2) HMG pro-unionism

The British Government should be committed to advocating the unionist case in order to counter-balance the position of the Irish Government which under the leadership of Bertie Ahern quite clearly sees itself as promoting the nationalist case. Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom. The British Government under the leadership of Tony Blair maintains that it is committed to maintaining the Union. Thus, by definition, the Government should have the same interest in Northern Ireland as it does in Scotland, England and Wales. A statement to this fact would greatly enhance unionist confidence in the negotiation process as it would level the playing field.

3) Economic development of deprived Protestant areas.

Unionist and Loyalist fears of a "sell-out" are particularly high in those areas which have not only borne the brunt of the conflict but have also remained economically deprived. Confidence in the peace process can only be achieved if the benefits of such peace can be seen. Thus far, the only visual evidence has been in republican and nationalist areas, further contributing to the fear that unionists cannot gain from participating in the current negotiations. The economic development of deprived Protestant areas would increase confidence in the political process.

4) Official recognition of the maintenance of the Loyalist Cease-fire and movement on Loyalist prisoners.

The Combined Loyalist Military Command has held the cease-fire for over three years. It maintained the cease-fire even after the IRA resumption of violence in February 1996. Yet, this achievement has neither been officially recognised nor has any movement been made on

Loyalist prisoners who played a key role in bringing about the cessation of violence in the first place. This is starkly contrasted by the government's reaction to republicans who were wooed for a reinstatement of their cease-fire and rewarded with a number of confidence building measures upon its delivery. The message the government is sending is clear, violence pays. Confidence in the Loyalist community could be raised by proper, official recognition of the maintenance of the Loyalist cease-fire, and by movement on Loyalist prisoners.

5) Fair Employment

Measures which would remove the application of reverse discrimination from fair employment practice. The Protestant community has suffered most heavily from this problem. The only way to address disparity between the communities in employment figures is by the creation of more real jobs.

6) Civil and Cultural Rights

The recognition of civil and cultural rights and for them to be enshrined within a protective mechanism, such a Bill of Rights.

7) Local Powers

The devolution of some powers to local councils, such as planning and building control.

8) Protestant Alienation

It is important that steps be taken to address the severe feeling of Protestant alienation felt within rural border areas, in particular isolated areas which have suffered most heavily from persecution, discrimination and a genocidal form of ethnic cleansing throughout the past 27 years.