

Progressive Unionist Party of Northern Ireland
Submission to the Confidence Building Liaison Committee
Culture and Identity

The Progressive Unionist Party acknowledges the following cultural traditions in Northern Ireland:-

- (a) The Indigenous Irish-Gaelic culture
- (b) The Anglo-Irish culture, and
- (c) The Ulster-Scots culture
- (d) The cultures of those ethnic groups from other nations who have settled in the Province.

Basic Principles

1. Each of these cultures have their own particular modes of expression and celebration: - language, prose, poetry, drama, music, dance, rituals, symbols and emblems. Very often these modes of expression and celebration are integral to the value and worth of the culture itself. To deny the mode of expression or celebration is to deny the validity of the culture itself, and the authenticity of the people who cherish that culture.

We call upon each party and both governments to validate each of these cultures together with the several modes of expression and celebration associated with them.

2. Each citizen of Northern Ireland has an inalienable right to watch over, promote, protect and enjoy the cultural tradition with which he or she chooses to identify.

We would call upon all parties and both governments to affirm this principle in both word and deed.

3. Both the Anglo-Irish and the Ulster-Scots cultures have been in Ireland long enough to have assimilated elements of the Irish-Gaelic culture and of each others culture. The same is true for the Irish-Gaelic culture. It has embraced elements of both the Anglo-Irish and the Ulster-Scots cultures. For many of us the terms Anglo-Irish and Ulster-Scots have been replaced by the term British and it is in this sense that we regard ourselves as the British presence in Ireland. We have been in Ireland long enough to have acknowledged our Irishness, but without rejecting our inherited British cultural traits or our inherent sense of Britishness.

We would call upon all parties and both governments to acknowledge that each separate culture has been enriched through its interaction with each other and that the development and enjoyment of ones own culture should not be pursued at the expense of, or to the detriment of, another culture.

4. Those of Anglo-Irish and Ulster-Scottish (British) descent have as much right to embrace the term "Irish" as those who claim (often dubiously) to be of pure Irish-Gaelic stock (whatever that might be). Nationalists have no difficulty in accepting the validity of the term "Irish American" yet they ridicule those of us who wish to define our Irishness in terms of our inherited Anglo or Scottish culture and our ongoing sense of Britishness.

We call upon all parties and both governments to validate the right of those unionists *who so desire it* to lay claim to the name "Irish" and to further acknowledge that the terms "Irish" and "Irishness" transcend religion and politics.

Ulster-Scots

The SDLP paper makes reference to the introduction of both English and Lallans into Ulster during the 16th century. We trust that this is an acknowledgement by that party that *Lallans* and its sister language *Ullans* are legitimate linguistic forms.

Despite the existence of a rich literary tradition extending back for centuries, Ulster-Scots (Ullans) is today a highly stigmatised language. Thirty years ago the late Brendan Adams of the Ulster Folk Museum estimated that there were then about 170,000 Ulster-Scots speakers. Philip Robinson of the UlsterScots Academy estimates "that in the absence of census data, around 1 00,000 people in the Ulster-Scots areas of Northern Ireland and Donegal are capable of speaking both Ulster-English and Ulster-Scots." Robinson acknowledges that as few as 15,000 speak only Ulster-Scots.

While the *Progressive Unionist Party* is not involved in the movements seeking to revive Ulster-Scots, we do believe that Ullans is an important part of our British heritage. This is particularly so in relation to the literature of the Ulster Scots community published in the 17th and 18th centuries. It seems strange to us that while nationalists and republicans have much to say about the contribution of Presbyterians to the United Irishmen they have so little to say about the language spoken by the United Irishmen. Many of the writings of the United Irishmen from Antrim and Down were written in classic Ullans. The hostility shown by both nationalists and republicans towards the Ulster Scottish culture in general and the Ulster-Scots language in particular reveals the true extent of their commitment to parity of cultural esteem.

We would submit that Ulster-Scots goes beyond language. There is a rich cultural heritage prelevant in Antrim and Down - Scottish Country Dancing, Scottish Pipe Bands, Piping and Drumming, Burns Clubs etc - which have survived simply because of the participation and contribution of the people who enjoy those activities. While we accept the statement by HMG that financial support for Irish-Gaelic culture should not be used as a benchmark for funding the Ulster-Scots culture we are concerned that both HMG and other funding agencies have been reluctant to treat the promotion of both cultural traditions in an even-handed manner. CCRU has spend more in one year on Irish-Gaelic culture than it has in its 10-year existence on the promotion of Ulster-Scots and other elements of British culture.