

Progressive Unionist Party

11 February 1998

Submission to Strand Two

As part of a three strand political process expected to address the deep divisions and mistrust which exist among the peoples of the British Isles, we advocate that exploration of the strand 2 element to those discussions focus upon two major questions,

- 1) How do we give practical expression to the emotional difficulties articulated by Irish Nationalism?
- 2) What are the implications for the quest for lasting political stability in relation to the creation of North/South institutions?

It has been clear that Irish Nationalism sees the two as inter-linked. That may well be the case from a Nationalist perspective. However, it is, of course, not as simple as that from a Unionist viewpoint.

We advise that we too are well aware of the need to create circumstances wherein all the peoples of these islands could re-engage in rational and meaningful relationships more akin to the needs and demands we will experience with the advent of a new millenium. With that in mind we have been prepared to explore the possibility of a new and more radical method of governance for Northern Ireland and complimentary to that, creation of institutions of trust to embrace the totality of relationships within these islands.

A strong Assembly in Northern Ireland, representative of the divisions so evident, weilding authority together for the good of all the people, could be an equal partner with the Oireachtas in areas of mutual co-operation benefiting both jurisdictions across a wide range of issues. No greater purpose could exist that, through genuine co-operation, we could for the first time build trust and appreciation for each other within this divided island.

‘Ministers’ from each jurisdiction with full authority for their competency, (from a Northern Ireland Assembly we might anticipate the Chair and Deputy-Chair engaging with their ministerial counterparts in the Irish Republic), could service staff to maintain continuity and facilitate liaison.

The Council and all its functions would be the joint responsibility of both legislatures. This would include costs.

In the event that no agreement can be reached - then no agreement can be reached.

It is the intention of the Progressive Unionist Party, as far as in us lies, to ensure the establishment of a SETTLEMENT. It is our desire, and we sincerely hope, the desire of others, that the creation of democratic structures within the agreed SETTLEMENT would command allegiance across all traditions, generating an atmosphere where trust and co-operation would replace the enmity which has hitherto been our past.

The watchwords for us now and in the future are ACCOUNTABILITY, RATIFIABILITY and TRANSPARENCY!