

Ulster Democratic Party

Strand 1, Item 4

Strand 2, Items 3 and 4

The Ulster Democratic Party believes that the principle relationship that must be addressed is that between the people of Northern Ireland. If sufficient consensus is not found between Ulster Protestants and Ulster Catholics upon how their society shall be shaped and governed, then it is unlikely that the negotiation process shall succeed. It is this internal relationship which forms the cornerstone of the negotiations.

However we do recognise the need for an agreement which addresses the totality of relationships. The Ulster Democratic Party will pursue such an agreement but not in the shape or form envisaged by the British and Irish governments in their 'Frameworks for the Future'.

There is no consent for the creation of political structures between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, which allow interference in the internal jurisdiction of this part of the United Kingdom. We foresee a friendly and co-operative relationship with the Republic of Ireland on the basis of mutual advantage and transparency. However, we see this within the confines of a wider relationship between other regions of the British Isles and possible only in the context of the removal of political impediments to a co-operative relationship between our jurisdictions.

It cannot be expected that a friendly relationship will develop between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland while there exists no respect for the territorial integrity of Northern Ireland as a legitimate political and geographic entity and as a member region of the United Kingdom.

If greater co-operation were appropriate between our jurisdictions and across the British Isles, a proposed model for such co-operation should conform to the following principles;

It must observe the principle of subsidiarity

It must not create supranational bodies

There must be consent for the relationships and their dynamic

There must be transparency of operation

There must be unanimity of decision making between regions

It must encompass the symmetry of relationships

Co-operation is by definition a voluntary act. The North – South focus of the proposals advanced by the British and Irish governments and the nationalist and republican parties are too narrow and confining and will not provoke the support of the unionist population. The concept is asymmetrical and does not reflect the totality of relationships across the British Isles.

The need for British Isles wide structures is enhanced with the creation of a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly alongside the inevitable emergence of a Northern Ireland legislative assembly. It would be foolish for the regions of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland not to co-operate on a wide range of matters. Indeed issues such as the environment, transport, fishing, narcotics, migration, professional standards, tourism, and agriculture can only be dealt with effectively on a British Isles wide basis.

We believe a council of the British Isles would represent an appropriate model for co-operation between the regions on an issue by issue basis. It would reflect the totality of relationships and recognise the changing needs of the people in Northern Ireland as a region on the periphery of the UK and of the British Isles as a region in itself on the periphery of an evolving Europe.