

3/11/07

Peace in Ireland

FREEDOM, JUSTICE, DEMOCRACY, EQUALITY

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ARRANGEMENTS

A Sinn Féin submission to Strands One and Two of the peace talks.

Relationships with other arrangements.

It is self evident that the relationships between any new arrangements developed in any of the three strands and those in any of the other strands, and beyond, is totally dependant on the nature, form and extent of the arrangements developed and agreed as part of the process of negotiation. The starting point for Sinn Féin in respect of this agenda item, "Relationship with other arrangements", is set firmly in the context of the paper we submitted last week in strands 1 and 2 in which we outlined our view of the nature form and extent of new arrangements.

Sinn Féin seeks the establishment of a 32 county unitary state. This is also the preferred option of the parties which participated in the New Ireland Forum and is a constitutional imperative upheld in Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution.

The issue of sovereignty lies at the core of this process. That is, the power to enact domestic legislation and make international treaties; the power to influence and effect the everyday lives of the people of this island.

Ultimately the power to decide and give effect to new arrangements and the relationship to other arrangements through the enactment of domestic legislation or international treaty resides with the sovereign authority. The outcome of the negotiation on the issue of sovereignty will, above all else, determine the shape and detail of new arrangements and the relationship to other arrangements.

The preferred options of the participants in relation to the key issues of sovereignty, the issue of partition and the constitutional status of the six-counties will be reflected in their submissions on the agenda items of new arrangements. This is as true of the Sinn Féin submission on these matters as it is of the other participants.

Sinn Féin's submission, therefore, is clearly set in the context of our preferred option on the issues of sovereignty, partition and the constitutional status of the six-counties. That is, in the context of a unitary, politically independent, sovereign all-Ireland state.

In this context we believe that new arrangements and their relationship with other arrangements should involve the maximum degree of decentralisation in the interests of maximising local democracy.

The decentralisation of governmental structures could involve Community, District and Regional Councils.

Community Councils could create a process where people would have maximum control over their own affairs. This would stimulate democratic participation by making people accountable for their own communities. Maximum involvement of communities with maximum control over their own affairs would ensure a determined and resolute effort to rectify the present social and economic problems which currently beset local

communities throughout Ireland.

District Councils could have charge of all public services in the sphere of social welfare, education, housing, planning, agriculture, fishing and small industrial development.

Regional Councils. Districts could be grouped in Regions determined by the size of population and geographical area. An exception should be the Gaeltacht region which should be regarded as a Regional Council area despite its lower population.

Ireland as a single unit could have 15 regional councils. That is, the Gaeltacht region; South Connaught; North Connaught, West Ulster; East Ulster; Belfast; South Ulster; North Leinster; Midlands; Dublin; South Leinster; East Munster; West Munster; Cork; North Munster.

The **National Parliament** must arbitrate between the needs of the nation as a whole and the special interests of the different regions.

New arrangements would, of course, include institutional recognition of the special links that exist between the peoples of Ireland and Britain as part of the totality of relationships, while taking account of newly forged links with the rest of Europe. Such institutions must be democratically accountable and must in their functions be open and transparent.