

# Pathways to Peace

## Within

## the Union

Ulster Unionist Party, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1997

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#### ANALYSIS

The Talks presided over by Senator Mitchell were created to provide a mechanism for the involvement of Sinn Fein/IRA in the political process.

Senator Mitchell in his report made the assumption that the IRA was genuinely committed to peaceful means (his report was signed in January 1996, before the breakdown of the cease-fire). Both HMG and the Dublin government have been working on the assumption that violence would not return if Sinn Fein had access to the Talks, and designed the process accordingly.

The current position is that SF/IRA is embarked upon a vicious, cynical and provocative campaign whose first objective is the full scale re-engagement of the Loyalist paramilitaries in terrorism.

Ulster Unionists will not allow themselves to be drawn into a position which provides for the arrival at the table of Sinn Fein. There is no evidence, or even a commitment that they are intending to pursue their political objectives by exclusively peaceful means. Quite the reverse. They have comprehensively demonstrated their rejection of the principle of consent, and Ulster Unionists endorse the view, expressed by John Hume, that to vote for Sinn Fein/IRA is to support their murder campaign. Our views on this matter were tabled at the Talks in the Autumn, and remain unchanged. To tolerate their presence can also be interpreted as tolerating their actions.

Decommissioning is an impasse in the Talks because the parties see this issue from totally different angles. SDLP, Dublin and some others see Sinn Fein at the table immediately after a cease-fire, (even if that is tactical), and a signing up to the Mitchell principles. These differences represent the chasm between us, and a bridge over it is not immediately apparent.

While acknowledging that these matters remain the same before during and after the election, Ulster Unionists hope that there will be an opportunity to explore the views recently expressed by John Hume and others, that the Talks can continue without Sinn Fein/IRA.



## ALTERNATIVES

The present hiatus should not be allowed to bring to a halt the political life of our Province however, as there are other areas where progress can be made, alongside the Talks.

UUP feels that there are a wide range of general confidence building measures which can be taken, the effect of which would be the generation of trust and confidence throughout the community.

A protracted general election campaign should not be allowed to paralyse good government in Northern Ireland.

Given that even changes in government have only a marginal effect on the day to day life of the citizen, it is imperative that institutions in the Province be united in ensuring that priority is given to sound administration, unhindered by negative controversies.

It is vital that all those committed to democracy can play a role together to build on the wide areas of common interest that exist, and ensure that there is no political vacuum. In short we must decide on a series of things that we can actually DO.

## ADDRESSING THE ISSUES

UUP believes that a wide range of issues can be addressed, and addressed now. We have proposals covering all relevant relationships, together with proposals in the areas of justice and rights which, because of their special significance, merit particular attention.

These suggestions do not constitute a final resolution to the many problems we face; rather they represent an interim set of common sense proposals, designed to help us work towards solutions, but in a way which involves no constitutional compromise or aspirational sacrifice by anyone. We see these measures being complementary to the Talks.

#### Relations within Northern Ireland.

There is a general desire amongst local politicians to have some influence over our economic, social and political fortunes. Co-operation at Parliamentary level in the Select Committee, and hopefully in an improved Grand Committee, offers a positive example of what can be done. Local economic development has been one of our success stories over the last few years. Councils have been particularly effective here. Good cross party support exists for such work.

Measure 1. UUP envisages that an informal but structured relationship should be put in place between Government and local politicians, (without the necessity for legislation), which would be flexible enough to allow for the 'social partners' perhaps represented by the G7 or similar groups, to make their contribution as well, when required.

The aims would include;- helping in the search for inward investment, the development of partnerships, and a place where local politicians can learn more about the administration of Northern Ireland. Politicians themselves, or with others, could then begin to contribute to policy formation in the social, economic and European portfolios. Other matters could also be raised or referred.

It might be that small groups of politicians, drawn on a proportional basis from those parties currently participating in the Talks, could be invited by the responsible Minister to advise on a department by department basis.

Measure 2. Local Government has been hampered in recent years by the inability of the Association of Local Authorities in Northern Ireland, (ALANI), to attract widespread support; (currently some nationalist controlled Councils are not members; neither are Belfast or Castlereagh). This should be rectified.

UUP is willing to discuss with others a revitalised or replacement body. A new constitution for this body should confine its role to local government matters, and ensure that it is representative of all Councils. Ulster Unionists are prepared to discuss how its principal committees and office-bearers could be reflective of the main political traditions as well as geographic diversity in Northern Ireland.



Relationships outside Northern Ireland.

Ulster Unionists remain totally opposed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, and will continue to seek an alternative to or replacement of this imposed diktat. We will continue to call for the removal of Articles 2&3 of the Irish Republic's Constitution, as we believe it to be unlawful, and a negative factor in Anglo-Irish relations.

Despite these significant obstacles, there continues to be scope for co-operation with the Irish Republic on matters of mutual interest and benefit, as was the case in the days of the Stormont government.

Measure 3. Working within the same informal but structured relationship referred to above, UUP is willing to explore with HMG (outside the scope of the Anglo-Irish Agreement) how matters of mutual interest and benefit can be discussed or pursued with the appropriate representatives (either local or departmental) of the Republic of Ireland.

Ulster Unionists are prepared to discuss with others how we can address the void of misunderstanding that presently exists between politicians in Northern Ireland and those in the Republic of Ireland.

#### JUSTICE AND RIGHTS ISSUES

The whole question of human rights, group rights and other justice issues are very sensitive matters in our situation, but precisely because of this, we must ensure that they are addressed. UUP believes that significant consensus exists on rights issues.

Measure 4. The incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms into UK domestic law would be our first preference, but a local option may also exist. The incorporation of group issues drawing on European examples from OSCE (Organisation on Security and Co-operation in Europe) for instance, must be discussed.

An early academic led conference on these matters might help to clarify the issues and assist the parties in the determination of their policies.

TALKS971.WPS

4th March 1997

PATHWAYS TO PEACE, WITHIN THE UNION. KEY POINTS  
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- \* These proposals are put forward as INTERIM measures to be complementary to the existing Talks, and assist party members to gain knowledge and experience while determining their policies.
- \* These proposals involve no constitutional compromise or aspirational sacrifice by anyone.
- \* Measure 1; how local politicians can assist and advise Ministers on policy formation, while simultaneously gaining experience of administration in the Province.
- \* Measure 2; how a fully representative Local Government Body can be created in Northern Ireland.
- \* Measure 3; how we might pursue matters of mutual interest with the Republic of Ireland, outside the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.
- \* Measure 4; acknowledging the broad consensus that exists on rights issues to reach convergence on implementation; possible use of an academic led conference on the issues.
- \* No legislation required before action can be taken on Measures 1-3, or special conference.
- \* On-going dispute over decommissioning and entry terms for Sinn Fein/IRA would not inhibit progress on these matters.
- \* Ulster Unionists are offering full co-operation to all those fully committed to peaceful means on a wide range of matters that concern the ordinary people, both nationalist and unionist alike; we are extending the hand of friendship so that we might work together thus building up trust which is currently lacking.