

MAY 1995

Response to the Framework Document

The Ulster Unionist Party remains ready to talk with Government and other constitutional parties on any agenda which genuinely offers sound government of the province firmly within the structure of the United Kingdom. This is what the Governments' papers singularly fail to do.

The documents published under the collective title 'Frameworks for the Future' are a cunningly contrived snare to enmesh the Ulster people into acquiescing and indeed accelerating the end of the Union and their British identity. The first part deals with internal government in Northern Ireland and the second is the so-called "Framework" for North/South relationships, but the whole is so involved and interlocked that it stands or fails together. They cannot be the 'basis for discussion' as no part can be amended without destroying the whole.

In the coming weeks great efforts will be made to persuade you that the benefits of a continuing cease-fire are a fair price to pay for the sacrifice of your British identity. A cease-fire with the terrorists retaining their weapons and bombs is not Peace. While the Ulster Unionist Party is committed to achieving a real and permanent peace in Northern Ireland, we will not support the surrender of our British heritage by those who seek peace at any price.

John Major in his foreword to the papers says "For reasons which are unique to Northern Ireland, devolution of significant legislative and executive powers has always been a central plank of Government policy for Northern Ireland alone". He has never been able to explain why devolution in Northern Ireland should be different from that elsewhere in the United Kingdom. He is simply brainwashing our people that they must be made different so they may be more easily detached! Certainly we want powers for local politicians. We want to fill the "democratic deficit", but in a British way, not as a stepping stone to Dublin.

Read "Frameworks for the Future" carefully and consider the following:

The Framework Document undermines the principle of consent.

Mr. Major's assertion that the consent of the majority is a guarantee of Northern Ireland remaining within the United Kingdom is meaningless. The whole purpose of the document is ultimately to render such consent unnecessary through a process of "harmonisation" (which means making our systems more like those in the South and less like those in the rest of the United

Kingdom) which will lead inexorably to joint authority between Belfast and Dublin, and ultimately a united Ireland. The will of the greater number would have been turned upside down and a minority could hold the whole system to ransom.

Once again Dublin ducks the issue of Articles 2 & 3.

There is no mention of Articles 2 & 3 of the Republic of Ireland's constitution in the document, and no specific wording is offered for an amendment to the constitution. Dublin's illegal and unilateral claims over the territory of Northern Ireland will remain, they will drop only the claim to a right of jurisdiction. Let us be clear that we continue to strongly oppose any attempt to trade-off our rights as British citizens against Dublin's illegal claims.

The Northern Ireland Assembly would be paralysed and ineffective. The proposed Assembly has very complex and interlocking mechanisms, weighted majorities and a veto by any one of the three-man panel (which must work by unanimity). These, taken together with the powerful all-Ireland superstructures to be imposed upon it, simply render the Assembly unworkable. And because of the "duty to serve" (Framework - para.29) Unionists who opposed the North/

South body would not even be eligible to act as a head of department in the local Assembly.

The proposed North/South body would be an embryonic all-Ireland government.

As a result of the initial designation of executive, harmonising and consultative functions, together with its ability to have unlimited acquisition of further powers, the proposed North/South body would be a third government in Ireland, and very quickly become an all-Ireland administration. The Framework document says that there would be "an obligation on both sides to use their best endeavours to reach agreement on a common policy and to make determined efforts to overcome any obstacles in the way of that objective." (Framework - para.29) In other words we would be pushed down a one-way road to a united Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Assembly would become subservient to Dublin.

The proposed Northern Ireland Assembly, paralysed by its checks and balances, heavily weighted majorities and controlling Panel, would be virtually powerless. Under these circumstances the effective power would shift from the Assembly to the proposed North/South body, and the document envisages no limit to the functions which could be so transferred. (Framework - para.28) Half the joint body would be Dublin government representatives, and at least some of those from Northern Ireland would be republicans, so this would mean the effective con-

trol of the governance of Northern Ireland by Dublin.

If the Assembly collapses, joint authority would be imposed by the two Governments.

In the event that a Northern Ireland Assembly ceased to operate, the two Governments would ensure that the functions of the North/South body continue to develop, whatever the will of the people (Framework - para.47).

The intolerable power and influence of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference would be dramatically increased.

What up to now has been a secret forum in which the Irish Government could put forward views and proposals on the internal affairs of Northern Ireland, would under the proposals in the document be intrusively all-powerful in overriding and controlling the other bodies including the Northern Ireland Assembly. (Framework - para.46)

The Ulster Unionist Party joins with the greater number of people in Northern Ireland and indeed in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland in welcoming Peace. They also look forward to dialogue between the constitutional political parties and Government, leading to the creation of agreed institutions of government and administration of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. Subject to the Republic of Ireland withdrawing unilaterally its illegal claims to Northern Ireland, the Ulster Unionist Party would welcome nor-

mal friendly co-operation with our neighbours in many fields, but they will strenuously resist any attempt to shift the functions of government to the joint North/South body which ultimately would form the basis of an all-Ireland parliament.

The Framework document, then, is not a true framework, rather a full blown and complete treaty between the two governments, whereby the will of the greater number in Northern Ireland to remain firmly in the United Kingdom can be over-ruled and power transferred to a joint body dominated by the Dublin government. The empty boast that sovereignty is unaffected means nothing - of what use is sovereignty when all functions of government are centred in a foreign state?

The Positive Way Forward

The Ulster Unionist Party recognises that the way forward is through the gradual return to normal government on the ground, real democratic local control which enjoys the consent of all constitutional parties, and no contrived bending of the rules towards out-side interference. Let us walk before we run, relearn the skills involved in local administration, and try to build a better tomorrow for all our citizens. We have spelt out the way in which this may be done in our paper, "A Practical Approach to Problem Solving in Ulster."