

SDLP SUBMISSION ON PRINCIPLES & REQUIREMENTS

Presented to Strand 1 of the All-Party Negotiations - Monday 13th October, 1997

1. TOTALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS

A basic and fundamental principle in our negotiations is that they address the totality of relationships between the participants and their constituencies represented at these talks. In practical terms the Totality of Relationships requires that the only satisfactory outcome to the negotiations will be one which addresses all these relationships together.

2. CONSENT

In determining the nature and extent of constitutional change the issue of consent will be crucial. It is for the people of Ireland alone, North and South, to determine their own future by agreement and consent. Northern Ireland's current status reflects and relies upon the present wish of the majority of the people here. There is a fundamental political difference between nationalists agreeing that there will be no change in the status without consent and the assumption that they must consent to the present status.

3. ALLEGIANCE & SUPPORT

Institutions and structures forming part of any new political arrangements must enjoy the allegiance and support of both major traditions as essential elements of an overall settlement which is honourable and balanced, and must therefore enjoy widespread public support from within both traditions. In this context, and in the context of the totality of relations, it is clear that there can be no internal Northern Ireland settlement.

4. ALLEGIANCE & IDENTITY

To obtain the allegiance and support of both communities it is essential that any new institutions fully acknowledge the two major political traditions which exist in Northern Ireland so that people in both sections of our society see their own identity reflected in them.

5. PARTNERSHIP

An essential principle for any new institutions will be the provision of arrangements for real and democratic partnerships across our divided communities within the North and between North and South. Such partnerships will entail fair and equitable representation for those traditions. Partnership is essential because the consent of the governed is required for stability and legitimacy; it will ensure that any new political arrangements truly provide for new political relationships and the healing of divisions.

6. PARITY OF ESTEEM

It will be essential to the successful establishment and operation of new structures and institutions that they are based on parity of esteem between the two traditions. This principle would necessarily involve mutual recognition of the validity and legitimacy of both traditions and their full expression. This principle also incorporates respect for the civil and religious liberties of both communities, as well as the concept of cultural and linguistic diversity.

7. FUNCTIONS AND POWERS

Agreed institutions must be given responsibility for such functions and have vested in them such powers as will enable them to make significant contributions to the political, social, economic and cultural life of all sections of our community.

8. EQUALITY AND EQUITY

Parity of Esteem as an underlying principle must, of course, be followed through in practice in any new institutions by equity of treatment for both traditions. These institutions must be capable of demonstrating such equity in themselves and in their practical operation, if they are to command the necessary widespread support and respect. New arrangements must reflect and promote equality if they are to succeed in healing divisions.

Equality of treatment through a comprehensive, systematic, effective and entrenched protection for human rights - civil, political and social - should underpin the establishment and operation of agreed institutions and structures.

9. EUROPEAN UNION DIMENSION

The manner in which the EU is evolving has the most profound implications for the political future of this island and any new arrangements must make possible effective and democratic representation of our interests within the EU.

10. INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

It is also important to recognise the widespread international concern and support which now exists and new arrangements should optimise the opportunities which this presents.

11. DURABLE & CAPABLE OF EVOLVING

There is an inherent requirement that any new arrangements should create a sense of confidence and that they are not simply a short term expedient. They must be durable, yet flexible and capable of development to accommodate the dynamic of change within the "totality of relationships".