

Social Democratic and Labour Party

Nature, Form And Extent of New Arrangements

Strand 1

27th October 1997

Strand 1 - Nature, Form and Extent of New Arrangements

1. The SDLP is committed to the achievement, through the current multi-party negotiations, of a new beginning for relationships within Northern Ireland, within the whole of Ireland, and between all the peoples of these islands, and to reaching agreement on new arrangements to take account of the totality of these relationships. Consequently the SDLP views Strand 1 of these negotiations as addressing only one aspect of the totality of relationships that underlie the conflict in Ireland. In meeting this challenge, it is axiomatic that there can be no purely internal Northern Ireland solution to the problem.
2. It is not simply a matter of what kind of new arrangements might be established within Northern Ireland, but rather what those proposed arrangements can achieve in developing new political relationships and in the healing of divisions. Therefore, in considering the nature, form and extent of Strand 1 arrangements within Northern Ireland, it must be clearly stated that the main purpose is to address relationships within Northern Ireland.
3. An essential requirement of any new arrangements will be the creation of a real and democratic partnership between our divided communities. Such a partnership will entail fair and equitable representation for those communities, and must avoid the mistakes of majoritarianism in decision-making. The decision-making process must involve the maximum possible degree of participation and consensus.
4. New arrangements must respect and reflect the identity and ethos of both traditions. They must be such as to command equality of allegiance from both traditions as the only possible basis upon which a genuine partnership can rest.
5. Strand 1 structures should guarantee that parity of esteem is afforded to the major traditions in Northern Ireland, symbolically and administratively. They should be such as to provide, within the totality of relationships to be addressed, the maximum possible range of functions, and the maximum possible degree of responsibility for those functions. This will encompass the formulation of public policy, and the provision of public services in all relevant socio-economic and cultural areas. They should be based on clearly accepted civil and human rights principles,

and by the establishment of appropriate agencies and mechanisms, should guarantee that in all respects these principles will be upheld.

6. In addition, the importance of the European and International dimensions has become strikingly clear in recent times. Both have a significant part to play in underpinning the peace process, and supporting any agreed new arrangements which may result from these negotiations. Moreover, the political and economic development of both parts of Ireland will be increasingly shaped by the process of European integration and convergence. Strand 1 arrangements (and indeed, the arrangements in the other Strands) must optimise the role which both parts of Ireland can play in these important spheres.

7. If new agreed arrangements in Strand 1 are to meet these various requirements they must be:

- stable and enduring;
- workable, practical and capable of serving the whole community;
- innovative, dynamic and capable of development in accordance with the will of the people represented therein.