

STRAND 2

AN ULSTER UNIONIST PARTY PAPER

ADDRESSING

AGENDA ITEM 6

The Rt Hon James Molyneaux, MP
Councillor Ken Maginnis, MP
Councillor Jim Nicholson, MEP
Dr Christopher McGimpsey 28 August 1992

Item 6 on the approved Agenda for Strand 2 reads:

Fundamental aspects of the problem: underlying realities; identity; allegiance; constitutional.

Underlying realities

We have little to add to those matters identified as the basis for the Report of the Strand 1 Sub-Committee (16 June, 1992) and to the Declaration of Principles which we defined in our submission to the Agenda Setting Meeting for Strand 2.

We would seek to emphasise:

- i that there must be open and unambiguous acknowledgment of the status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland;
- ii that the right of self-determination for the people of Northern Ireland must be inviolate;
- iii that there must be protection of the rights of citizens, groups and communities in accordance with the principles of international law and those established by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and by the Citizens Charter;
- iv that those responsible for the government of Northern Ireland must be the democratic choice of and accountable to the electorate of Northern Ireland;
- v that the government and administration of Northern Ireland must be conducted in accordance with the international obligations of the United Kingdom within the European Community;
- vi that there must be no special arrangements which would derogate from the democratic rights of the people of Northern Ireland.

Identity

The fact is that all the parties around the table are, by now, fully aware of the aspirations and sensitivities of the others. We would reiterate what we have already asserted in our Strand 2 Opening Statement;

"Identification of common interest and a mutual understanding of each other's position is a necessary prerequisite to political progress and cooperation between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic".

The Ulster Unionist Party recognises that the matter of identity is central to the sensitivities and self-esteem of those who would aspire to a United Ireland. In this respect we will be content to give full and proper cognizance to those accepted principles which deal with minority rights.

Allegiance

Ulster Unionists are anxious that neither the issue of identity nor the political aspiration of any participant should be confused with "allegiance".

We hold to the opinion that no society can function properly unless the greater number of its citizens are willing to play their full part in the life of the community.

We do not believe that allegiance exists in limbo. Rather, it derives from attachments and, like a pebble tossed into a pond, generates concentric circles eg, the family, friends and neighbours, a church or association, the local town, the county, the region. This is as evident in Nationalist circles as in those which are Unionist.

Every citizen who rightly demands and achieves his place and role within a community has, first of all, an obligation and duty to that community. Ultimate affection, in aspirational terms, for either London or Dublin should not affect that basic truth.

All democratic societies accept this concept of allegiance as reasonable.

Constitutional

Ulster Unionists respect the Democratic Process. They neither believe that history can be re-written nor that the will of the electorate can be ignored. They adhere to the commonsense approach that, whatever may be the wishes of the electorate in the future, today's mandate must be respected. They do not argue, however, that this absolves those elected from their responsibility to try to reconcile and accommodate differing attitudes within the community.

The inadequacies of the present Direct Rule process combined with the unacceptable Anglo-Irish Conference are evident. The Strand 1 stage has produced a possible blueprint for progress internally. Strand 2 is about how relationships between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland can become constructive and meaningful. Strand 3 should achieve the normalisation of relations between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic.

We wish to re-examine the existing British/Irish structures and to propose (a) improvements where necessary; (b) rationalisation where possible and (c) replacement where they are unfair, unjust or unworkable. These include:

- i The Inter-governmental Council
- ii The Anglo-Irish Conference
- iii The British-Irish Inter-parliamentary Tier
- iv The Biannual Meeting of UK/Irish Prime Ministers

We will be proposing, in Strand 3, that (ii) be replaced by a (*) Council of the British Isles comprising representatives of both the UK and Irish Republic's governments and of any assemblies which may, at any time, be devolved within either jurisdiction.

We will be proposing that the necessity for (i) be re-examined.

Should (iii) continue we will participate in its deliberations.

We will be proposing that (iv) should be coordinated to allow both Prime Ministers to meet with and to address, where it is appropriate, the Inter-Irish Relations Committee.

We will be proposing that any (*) Irish and EC Affairs Committee which may be established within a new devolved Northern Ireland administration should participate, under the rules of that new administration and within the context of the proposed Council of the British Isles, in an (*) Inter-Irish Relations Committee which would facilitate business between the Belfast and Dublin administrations.

The role of such a committee will be to provide a vehicle for dealing with economic, environmental and other matters where it is deemed by the two administrations that there is a common interest and to facilitate better understanding between both Irish traditions and both political entities in Ireland.

General

We consider that those matters at 7, 8, and 9 on the agenda should be dealt with simultaneously with Item 6 and that the specific timetable for these items should be accommodated within a 3-week schedule.

(*) Titles given to proposed new structures need not necessarily be those finally adopted.