

LABOUR

Strand Two

Submission on

'Nature, form and extent of new arrangements,

1. Labour reasserts our comment from an earlier submission that no new arrangements will work unless they command widespread acceptance and support from all the people of Ireland.
2. Equally, Labour asserts the fundamental foundation of any new institutions must be that they are democratic, accountable and transparent in their deliberations and actions.
3. Labour supports the general thrust of the Frameworks for the Future documents but feels, that in many respects, they are merely attempting to replicate existing administrative arrangements onto a third tier. What are required are imaginative proposals that are innovative and seriously address the relationships between two states entering the next millium not nineteenth century nation-state politics.
4. The starting point for new arrangements should not be what is symbolic, what lends itself easiest for modifying or what least threatens the vested interests of various bureaucracies. Rather it should be what are the real needs of people and specifically how can people on both sides of the border benefit from and identify with new structures.
5. There is no doubt that there is a need to address the macro issues of all island co-operations. At a time when all our partners in Europe are working hard to remove the distortions of land borders it is absurd that the people of this island are denied the opportunity to fully develop our tourism, agriculture and industry etc.
6. There is equally no doubt that there is, perhaps, an even greater and pressing need for co-operation at a micro level. The 'Framework' document makes little or no mention of issues such as public utilities, schools, health clinics, general practitioner provision or manpower planning. All areas that both impact heavily on the lives of people and which have all been hindered by an 'irrational' land border. Changes at this micro level will benefit everyone and command acceptance and support.
7. Labour would suggest that the 'delicate' issue of cross border policing be addressed and addressed in a manner that meets the needs an all Ireland community faced with major, and developing, cross border crime.
8. The 'governance' of institutions should be imaginatively addressed so that there is no set formula for the form of controlling bodies. Specifically we reject the model of Ministers meeting in private to make appointments and exercising control over those bodies through private inter governmental meetings. In other words the creation of all Ireland or cross border Quangos is not seen as a mechanism for acceptance and support. Such bodies, especially in Northern Ireland, have been a source of alienation so there is no reason to suppose that they will command the support necessary for success.

9. Labour is not prescriptive on the form and remit of new institutions but would propose that different methods of administration be applied depending on the nature and scope of the institution. These would encompass the use of local, regional and national participation as appropriate.
10. While the method of filling Board membership cannot be uniform it should reflect the nature and objectives of the institution. It should also be essentially democratic encompassing local politicians, legislators, direct election and expert appointments.
11. While some appointments would be appropriate to the relevant governments the essential thrust of the democratic ethos should be that the composition of all Bodies be approved by the relevant legislatures and that those legislatures receive and approve reports on the activities of such bodies. It is here that real respect, acceptance and support will be gained for the activities of all institutions.
12. As mentioned elsewhere any new arrangements must be innovative and command widespread support. This will only be achieved if the people of Northern Ireland do not see co-operation as a one way street. There must be a clear and unambiguous statement by the government of the Republic that day to day activities of any new bodies will be ceded to the Boards of those bodies and that matters currently the preserve of 'Dublin' will be devolved to any new bodies.
13. Labour supports the proposal that institutional arrangements should be established to permit the regular meeting of legislatures and administrators within Ireland but would wish to develop this to local and 'regional' arrangements.
14. Based on firm constitutional agreement there is no doubt that the people would benefit from all Ireland and cross border co-operation. However, this cooperation must be based on innovative, democratic and transparent models with the core element that vested interests will not be allowed to attempt to recreate old models for a new future.

24.10.97