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ALLIANCE VIEWS ON AGENDA ITEMS 7,8, & 9

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This paper is intended to describe further our ideas on North/South structures which could be implemented if other matters (eg Articles 2 & 3) were to be satisfactorily resolved.

STRAND 1 Our proposals for institutions for North-South co-operation are based on the assumption that the framework sketched out in Strand 1 for Northern Ireland is adopted, and in any event on the understanding that as wide a range of powers as possible, (not less than in 1973), would be devolved to a responsibility-sharing Northern Ireland Assembly. In so far as the Strand 1 framework is incomplete, we note in passing that one important criteria must be to ensure that the framework is capable of relating effectively to the wider structures here discussed. We also note that it will be necessary at an early stage to return to Strand 1 for further work on the proposed framework.

TRIPARTITE

COUNCIL Given that certain very significant powers, notably in the security field and in some wider economic matters, would remain primarily the responsibility of the Westminster parliament and the British government, we have already proposed, in the context of Strand 3, that there should be a tri-partite structure involving the British government, the Irish government, and a new Northern Ireland administration, to ensure consultation and co-operation on matters of common concern. An inter-parliamentary body, involving representatives from Westminster, the Northern Ireland Assembly, and the Dail, might also be contemplated.

NORTH-SOUTH

STRUCTURES In the interests of better communication and co-operation it is probably best that any new North-South institutional framework should operate within the context of that broader framework, that is, with provision for the North-South elements of the conference to meet separately, or perhaps with observers only from the British government, on matters which were particularly within the remit of the Northern and Southern authorities. As has already been indicated it is clearly essential that the Northern institutions in their final form be such as to ensure both an effective input into Tri-partite and North-South structures, and to ensure the maximum participation and involvement of all democratic parties taking a constructive part in any agreed Northern institutions. That however is primarily a matter for Strand 1. Within the context already indicated collaborative North-South institutions and structures could involve those exercising executive powers in a Northern Ireland Assembly and Ministers from the Dail, and could have a consultative role in regard to matters devolved to a Northern Ireland Assembly and their equivalents in the Republic.

Areas particularly suitable for co-operation might include economic development, tourism, agriculture, environmental protection, and cultural affairs. These would tend to relate essentially to particular departments of government. Other important areas, notably EC affairs and the development of border areas might require wider cross departmental arrangements.

FORMAL

STRUCTURES In any event some wider co-ordinating structure would be needed to ensure co-ordination and to ensure the widest practical involvement and support from the Northern Ireland Assembly. Meetings should be on a regular basis, between the co-ordinating body, respective heads of department or ministers, or inter-departmental committees as appropriate. Such structures would provide for consultation and the exchange of information, and where practical, for the development of common strategies and programmes. Civil servants from each jurisdiction could provide back-up in the form of research, reports and recommendations. Any decision could only be on the basis of full agreement, and would be implemented separately in each jurisdiction by the relevant Head of Department or Minister after appropriate consultations. There could be a permanent secretariat in which officials from each jurisdiction would be represented, remaining answerable to their respective jurisdictions.

While the most fruitful areas of co-operation would clearly be those kinds of areas over which the Northern Ireland Assembly would have direct powers, consultation and discussion might usefully cover much wider areas, such as Irish Government policy in various fields. Structures of the kind suggested here should be capable of flexibility and development. The essential governing features must be the establishment of goodwill, co-operation, mutual respect and, eventually, trust.

CROSS BORDER ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

Alliance has always advocated close economic and social co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. As a Pro-European political party we have recognised the opportunities to increase this collaboration and we are disappointed that more co-operation has not been achieved through the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It is worth noting that in 1985 the Alliance Party made major efforts to salvage the agreement made between the UK Government and the Irish Government to link Northern Ireland with the Rinsale Natural Gas Field. Unfortunately, this opportunity for mutual benefit was squandered and consequently led to the closure of the town gas industry throughout the Province. This paper gives a few examples of

areas where there could be closer co-operation between the North and the South, realising also that there are areas of real competition.

INWARD INVESTMENT

The IDB and IDA have clearly defined roles to attract inward investment to their respective areas. The IDB has specific problems such as terrorism and the MacBride Principles campaign to overcome. There are also occasions when these two government job creation agencies are in direct competition to attract inward investment from the same source. However, this does not rule out worthwhile and positive co-operation, and a reduction of wasteful competition in attracting inward investment to the island.

ENERGY The establishment of an electricity inter-connector between Scotland and Northern Ireland, which will link the island of Ireland with the European Grid, must make the reopening of the North-South inter-connector a priority despite terrorist threats. While Alliance was bitterly disappointed at the breakdown over Kinsale Gas, we believe that the proposed cross-channel natural gas link up with Britain will help both economies in Ireland. Joint studies on indigenous Irish energy resources by our academic institutions are essential. These investigations could consider the best use to be made of resources such as peat, lignite, wave power and wind power. They could also help draw up a long term strategic plan for the future energy needs of the island.

TRANSPORT Ireland is a peripheral area of the EC and both parts of the island are at a disadvantage. The communication network throughout the island needs improvement as do our transport links with the rest of Europe. Despite the road improvements being carried out on the Dunleer By-Pass, the main road between Belfast and Dublin is of very poor quality. A major upgrading of this communication corridor and of the access roads to the ferry ports of Larne and Rosslare must be made a priority. The Belfast-Dublin railway is a good example of cross-border co-operation and the present construction of the cross-city rail link in Belfast will create important opportunities for passenger and freight traffic throughout the island.

Although Ireland is a relatively small land mass we would strongly advocate an investigative study into the development of air routes to network all parts of the island as well as providing linked services for all UK and International Routes. Ireland is on the western extremity of the European land mass, yet limited consideration has been given to co-operation on our maritime links, North and South of the Border. There are opportunities for joint ventures in both parts of the island and perhaps the creation of Free Trade Zones, which could make the island a significant international trading area for EC products.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Regardless of the outcome of the present political talks, serious consideration must be given to means of maximising the economic benefits for the whole of the island of the single European Market. This must surely be regarded as our major priority, and will provide both opportunities and threats. The EC through the Interreg Programme already provides opportunities for important economic co-operation on both sides of the Border. However, Alliance would encourage all areas to take greater advantage of

these EC resources. Public Procurement is an area where we can see opportunities for much greater cross-border co-operation in the public and private sectors.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is our major industry, and producers throughout the island have more interests in common with each other, than they have with Britain. A co-operative approach to agribusiness, agrihealth and European Community financial structuring would be of common advantage to both North and South.

TOURISM

We believe that more radical measures should be taken to build on the existing co-operation between the NITB and Bord Failte. We do not rule out the possibility of one tourist authority for the island, but in any case we believe that the island of Ireland has much to gain from being marketed as one tourist entity. For this reason too, urgent consideration must be given to inter-linked transport facilities.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Both parts of Ireland suffer from chronic unemployment and both areas have responded to the problem by providing worthwhile and imaginative training schemes. There is obviously scope to build on these experience and this will be greatly facilitated by the establishment of SEM.

The purpose of this brief paper is merely to indicate the Alliance view that North-South social and economic co-operation in the public, private and voluntary sectors is a vital element of any successful political settlement, and is indeed essential even in the absence of such an agreement. Progress in these talks is likely to be most rapid if there is an immediate acceptance of this principle, and then a concentration on establishing the relevant structures rather than in trying to provide an exhaustive list of areas of possible co-operation.

FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM AND COMMON INTERESTS AND THEMES