

The Labour Party

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Rt Hon Tony Blair MP
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

Dear Tony

Referendum Campaign in Northern Ireland

I am sure you will already have thought about this but I am writing, as I am concerned at the level of work that needs to be done in the referendum campaign in Northern Ireland which will have no party support. In Scotland and Wales, the Labour Party put in £500,000 excluding the cost of press officers, organisers and researchers and money spent by constituency parties.

To win we are going to have to start communicating directly to voters in Northern Ireland, particularly the young. It is in the time before opinions have fully hardened and outside the campaign itself that opinion will be most susceptible to persuasion.

This means that Mo is going to have to get out and do a lot of Q&As with young people, write directly to voters, do broadcasts, obtain endorsements etc. etc. All without any support on the ground from the Labour Party. I know, from my own experience in discussions with politicians in the run-up to the Scottish and Welsh referendums, that the Civil Service were far from co-operative on allocating money, time and resources for the Government's case. What they were prepared to do was very unimaginative and old-fashioned.

We should be in the field polling, not only to test our overall message but also to find out the groups we can most influence. Is this the professional Protestant middle class or the working class? Are they rural or are they town centre? We also need information on propensity to vote. Will young Catholics come out and in what numbers? Turnout of SDLP supporters has been very low in recent elections. We also need to know the best opinion leaders. In Northern Ireland, clearly, some politicians are influential but are there politicians from other countries, business people or celebrities who are influential and listened to?



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I am sorry to go on about this at some length but I do not feel the resources have as yet been allocated and I know for certain we would not have got the turnout in Scotland or won Wales without the Labour Party's involvement. If we are not careful we are going to leave Mo with little organisational support.

If you would like to talk this through, let me know.

Regards


Margaret