

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2014/105/746
Creation Date(s):	25 September 1984
Extent and medium:	3 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

MR. O'Connell
To see pl. and PA

Registry

Mr. McElhinney

S19030

P.M.C.E 3/10/84.

"ULSTER: THE FUTURE ASSURED"

DUP PROPOSALS

The document can be viewed in two ways. Firstly, it is a product of the battle between the two unionist parties in Northern Ireland, designed to maintain the position of the DUP as the firmest defender of the position of the Northern protestants. The Future assured thus takes a hardline approach on issues such as the primacy of the security problem and the need for a military solution to it; the rejection of any approach envisaging a role for the South in a settlement; and the need for devolved government based upon majority rule..

Secondly, however, the proposals can be examined in the wider context of possible political changes in Northern Ireland. Though directed primarily at maintaining the status quo in Northern Ireland, the writers of the document could hardly have avoided being influenced (albeit mostly negatively) by the significant moves which have been made on the nationalist side to formulate the requirements for political progress on the Northern Ireland problem. Thus, though the document begins in unyielding fashion, what follows contains positive elements which demonstrate a willingness to take steps towards a political settlement. This willingness to be somewhat more positive has undoubtedly been influenced by the fact that the OUP in its document The way forward has successfully displayed greater openness to the minority without any backlash from its supporters. The DUP does not wish to be seen to be totally intransigent.

Hints of flexibility on the part of the DUP are all the more important given the uncompromising stance which the party has taken: it may be assumed that any concessions made by the DUP can be sold to the British as an acceptable and uncontroversial part of any settlement.

North/south cooperation:

Following the bald statement that

the issue of the relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic must play no part in the establishment of new political institutions in Ireland...

the DUP concede that

there are areas where cooperation between Northern Ireland and the Republic could be mutually beneficial.

In particular the document mentions

In particular the document mentions

practical schemes of mutual benefit , such as one would expect between members of the EEC...

and calls for the establishment of a committee in the devolved parliament to examine EEC issues, paying 'particular attention' to the relationship with the South.

Articles 2 and 3:

The DUP assert, however, that any progress on cooperation between North and South would depend upon recognition by the South of the status of Northern Ireland, and the abandonment of the claim to sovereignty over the North. At least the concept of a quid pro quo is recognised on this issue, even though what is offered on the Northern side hardly constitutes a meaningful basis for any progress.

Government of Northern Ireland:

Though firm in its commitment to majority government and rejection of any form of power sharing, The future assured does make some attempt to accommodate and give some balancing power to the nationalist community in the political process. It is recognised that 'substantial acceptability must be given to any new system'. One way of achieving this is by the establishment of a system of powerful parliamentary committees covering each of the government departments, with the membership, and chairmanship, being divided evenly between government and opposition. All Bills introduced in the Assembly would be examined by the departmental committees: the DUP would be prepared to agree to the proposal that any Bill rejected by such a committee would need a weighted majority of 60% of those voting to pass its second reading in the parliament.

A further concession to the interests of the minority would be the creation of a Council of Assembly (as originally envisaged in the British Green Paper of 1980) composed equally of government and opposition. The Council would have a limited role in examining and approving certain legislation.

Bill of Rights:

The third area in which The future assured marks a step forward in DUP thinking, and the one in which it is most closely aligned with The way forward and the Forum Report, is in its willingness to accept a Northern Ireland Bill of Rights, which would provide the minority with statutory safeguards against

the abuse of power. A further safeguard is proposed against the passing of discriminatory legislation. The DUP propose that a 30% minority of the devolved parliament should have the right to require the Secretary of State to refer proposed legislation to the judicial committee of the Privy Council to see if it might be void under Section 17 of the Fair Employment Act (1973).

In keeping with this concern with human rights the document goes on to

reaffirm that our party has no desire to exclude elected representatives from the process of influencing government, nor do we wish to deny the minority any of the safeguards and protections which all minorities should rightly enjoy.

Conclusion:

The future assured has little in common with the realities and requirements of the Forum Report. It concentrates instead upon the modalities of re-establishing majority rule in Northern Ireland. Yet, in its efforts to face the problem of how to gain minority acceptance of such a system of government, the DUP has made some faltering steps towards recognising some of the elements which we believe must form the basis of any proposed settlement. The acceptance of cooperation with the South within the EEC context at least, the awareness of the need to give the minority a voice in the proposed devolved parliament, and the recognition of the need for some statutory provision protecting the rights of the minority, are all positive elements which should not be ignored amidst the prevailing spirit of no surrender.

A. Ford
Anglo-Irish Section.
25.9.84