

76 Comb Avenue,  
Ryeport.  
4/5/91

Dear John,

Not many of my neighbours are optimistic about the current talks, but I hope their pessimism is unfounded.

There is no point in ~~a~~ cosmetic exercises. The basic difficulty, sovereignty, must be successfully resolved.

The only formula I can imagine is the one I sent to you a couple of months ago, so I beg to God you will advocate it, unless you can think of something even better.

To recapitulate, the formula is a very simple concession from both camps. The Nationalists agree to a <sup>range</sup> of relationships with Dublin which stops short of sovereignty. The Unionists similarly agree to deny full sovereignty to Westminster. In both cases the 'external' relationships can be as close or as distant as is mutually agreeable. The relationships need to be negotiable.

The above formula kills three birds with one stone. The Unionists gain freedom from the threat of absorption into the Irish Republic. The Nationalists get rid of the Westminster rule. The people of Northern Ireland are safeguarded from the threat of a Paisley-dominated state by the fact that the external relationships negotiated with Dublin and Westminster could include protection from such an eventuality.

Once these three bog bears have been neutralised, our people and their politicians should be able to start discussing the sort of society