

## PRINCIPLES OF A NEW FRAMEWORK OF GOVERNMENT

In our presentations of the Alliance Analysis of the Problem and The Requirements of a Solution we set out the fundamental principles which inform our approach. This present paper which should be read with the two earlier papers, will examine section one of the EMS Paper, 'Options for New Political Institutions - underlying principles' (CPLI/NS/1992) in the light of our previous contributions, and of the paper on Common Themes which we have just accepted.

We would hope at an early stage to present detailed proposals which would express these underlying principles in institutional form, and would relate to the later sections of the EMS Paper.

## PRINCIPLES OF A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR GOVERNMENT

Paragraphs 1 through 7 are introductory in nature, and we have no comment to make on them.

## AN ALLIANCE PAPER

### ACCEPTABILITY

In para 7 a difference is suggested between criteria which are fundamental and others which may be merely desirable. In our view the fundamental requirement is that expressed in para 10.

Only if we are able to construct a system which is widely acceptable will we achieve a resolution of the difficulties which have brought us to this table. Any system which is not widely acceptable will not be democratically workable, stable or durable. We find the expression of para 10 satisfactory, since it indicates an appropriate and fair role for everyone in Northern Ireland, but we would prefer that in this and subsequent paras. there was a clearer recognition that there are more than two identities in Northern Ireland and that as recognized in para 10, it is one of our aims to ensure that new institutions do not exacerbate the main division in our community, but rather enable a fully pluralist society to develop and function.

5 May 1992

### WORKABILITY, STABILITY AND DURABILITY

We would accept, with the above comments that any new system should be workable. In truth if there is a willingness to work together and consensually, almost any system is workable, but we accept that we should try to find one which can be worked as straightforwardly as possible.

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We would hope at an early stage to present detailed proposals which would express these underlying principles in institutional form, and would relate to the later sections of the HMG Paper.

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### ACCEPTABILITY

In para 7 a difference is suggested between criteria which are fundamental and others which may be merely desirable. In our view **the** fundamental requirement is that expressed in para 10.

Only if we are able to construct a system which is **widely acceptable** will we achieve a resolution of the difficulties which have brought us to this table. Any system which is not widely acceptable will not be democratically workable, stable or durable. We find the expression of para 10 satisfactory, since it indicates an appropriate and fair role for everyone in Northern Ireland, but we would prefer that in this and subsequent paras. there was a greater recognition that there are more than two identities in Northern Ireland and that as recognized in para 15, it should be our aim to ensure that new institutions do not entrench the main division in our community, but rather enable a fully pluralist society to develop and function.

### WORKABILITY, STABILITY AND DURABILITY

We would accept, with the above comments that any new system should be **workable**. In truth if there is a willingness to work together and consensually, almost any system is workable, but we accept that we should try to find one which can be worked as straightforwardly as possible.

We find it difficult to see how a system could be devised, that was democratically designed and that **could** not be paralysed (para 8, line 5/6), but we have ourselves included in our own proposals a recognition of this problem and ways of ameliorating it.

In para 9 **stability and durability** are set forward as criteria, and we would accept these as desirable. These qualities must however be referred to the system and not to the actual government. As described in para 14 it is important that there is, in practice, a realistic prospect of some change and development in the profile of the government in order to maintain the essence of a democracy. The word stability can be used as a euphemism for stagnation. Indeed one problem with the system in operation in Northern Ireland prior to 1972 was that it provided for a government whose durability was so guaranteed that the stability and durability of the whole system was eventually undermined.

#### SELF-SUSTAINABILITY

The issue of **self-sustainability** is raised in para 9, and we would wish to be more clear what is meant here. In other places HMG suggests very definite limitations on the scope of autonomy of any regional administration. In such a case HMG could not but be involved very heavily with the continued governance of Northern Ireland. In our own proposals there is also involvement in the system of making appointments post-election, but this does not **necessarily** involve the Secretary of State in any of the inter-party discussions which would be likely. This is the kind of situation found at a higher level where the head of state may be involved more fully in certain post-election circumstances than in others, but is involved formally on every occasion, through the legal requirement for making appointments.

#### RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Para 11 should more correctly indicate that appropriate relationships are required with UK institutions. It is not simply a matter of preservation since there will be a formalizing of some new relationships, and some previous arrangements will no longer be relevant.

We would also note that any new institutions will have to be capable of the relationships with the EC, noted in the HMG paper (para 3 line 13), and of course competent also of those issues which we will be discussing in Strand 2, in relations with the Republic of Ireland.

## PARTICIPATION

Para 12 is very unclear. Fair participation is important, not just for a period, but always, and in so far as an individual through the courts can exert a quite enormous power on the operations of government, especially using a Bill of Rights, the second part of the para is also imprecise. There may also be a case in **certain elements** of government for disproportionate representation of sectional interests, for example in a balancing instrument. This is not a fundamental or desirable criterion.

Paras 13, 14, and 15 have been referred to in earlier comments, and will be fleshed out in our proposals for institutions.

## EFFECTIVENESS, EFFICIENCY AND DECISIVENESS

Finally in para 16 **effectiveness, efficiency and decisiveness** are set forward as criteria. These are attractive notions, but are always disputed in a democracy.

There are those who would maintain, and not without justification that just as the most efficient, effective and decisive committee is a committee of one. So also, a beneficent dictatorship is the most efficient, effective and decisive form of government. The same might even be said of talks about setting in place a form of government for Northern Ireland. Such criteria can therefore only be seen as being desirable but subsidiary.

In so far as the paragraph refers to clarity of powers in respect of finance, and separation from local government, and from the Secretary of State, we would certainly feel it worthwhile to do our best to ensure that new institutions were clear as to the extents and limits of their functions.