

John,

Here are a few thoughts after I have read the response papers. My ideas may not be useful but I thought I'd write them down on paper and they may give you some help in completing the paper.

- (a) The nettle of Articles 2 & 3 must be grasped firmly by us from the outset as it is clear from all response papers that this will be the main hurdle to be crossed. I do agree with you concerning the PD's use of the word aspiration in their proposal of amending. The SDLP claim the right to speak for all Catholics in Northern Ireland and sometimes use the term constitutional nationalists to cover them in pre supposing that all Catholics feel that it is imperative that they are allowed an identity that is synonymous with Irish unity and which precludes all reference to the status quo of Northern Ireland.

It is generally felt that most if not all Catholics actually feel that a United Ireland is an aspiration within any governmental institution to hold aspirations and articulated within their language, culture, music etc without fear of recrimination from any source. Both the Irish Government and SDLP whilst upholding the right of legitimacy of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland who they contest are marginalised and must be given full recognition to continue to marginalise people like ourselves who they obviously feel will fall into whatever structure is agreed because we have no fixed principles of self determination. We should therefore continue to emphasise our principles as stated in our opening paper inspite of dismissive attitudes of others.

- (b) It is also clear from papers that we are still at the stage of point scoring in refusal to compromise. There is rhetoric, passionate in the ROI paper or banal as in HMG's, in all the papers they all state an apparent willingness to try and understand each other but it is clear that basic distrust still abounds and preconditions are being laid down albeit cloaked in either abusive or clawing terms, depending on whose paper it is.

We should remind all delegates that principled compromise will have to be considered and all aspects to all the problems, allegiance, identity, themes and principles etc, must be re-examined constructively from every angle in the light of all the papers and comments therein.

It is clear that although all papers and statements have been closely studied these have been done by the point of view of destructive criticism or cynicism and not with a firm purpose of understanding and information seeking. Before we can begin to seriously consider aspects of nation and state, identity and allegiance, self determination and respectful recognition we must all approach the papers and comments in a spirit of true reconciliation - something which has been clearly lacking so far in most delegations.

- (c) HMG must play a stronger and clearer role if only to supervise and guide the Unionists with the reassurance that the Union is not for sale at the bargain price at their expense or expediency of HMG.

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