

THE RULE OF LAW

The third of the fundamental principles set out in the Alliance founding document in 1970 begins as follows: "We firmly believe that without universal respect for the law of the land and the authorities appointed to enforce it, there can be no measurable progress....." We believe that this is not only a self-evident principle but also one which commands widespread support in all sections of the community. The major problem remains, how to achieve such respect.

Some of the requirements mentioned above will help, but it is also necessary to deal directly with the control and execution of justice and security policy. This is a matter of such extreme contention that in earlier times Alliance has in the past regarded it with especial caution, however it is clear that a significant input into security policy is necessary for the self-respect, and community respect of a regional administration.

Many other aspects of the administration of justice, (for example prisons, probation service, law reform etc.), could usefully be considered in a regional context and we would wish to fully explore the possibilities.

The principle requirement may again be stated thus:

There is no future for the Northern Ireland community, no security for any family or individual, and no prospect of economic improvement without respect for the Rule of Law. *At every level those who take positions of responsibility and represent all strands in our community, must have, and must exercise, confidence in the law and in those who administer it.*

THE TOTALITY OF RELATIONS

In these talks we have to consider the requirements of relations with the rest of the United Kingdom (strand 1), the Republic of Ireland (largely strand 2), between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland (strand 3), and the rest of the European Community (strand 1/2/3). We have already stated that there is a contribution to be made, and a price to be paid for peace in our community, by those who live outside of Northern Ireland. *The principles upon which such relationships should be established like those of any Northern Ireland structures are those of partnership, workability, democratic accountability, and subsidiarity.*

What are some of the practical requirements which these principles might suggest?

In relation with the rest of the United Kingdom, we would accept that there could usefully be some clarification of the lines of communications, the channels of influence, and the levels of accountability, between a new provincial/regional government and the sovereign government, and between the Westminster MP's elected from Northern Ireland, and the elected representatives of an assembly. The emergence of differing regional institutions in Scotland and Wales, and probably in

London and elsewhere, will ensure that this element of our discussions may be usefully informed by the experience of others.

Relations with the Government of the Republic of Ireland will require changes to Articles 2 & 3 of the constitution of the Republic, but given that prospect we would see it as important that a direct, standing, North/South, government to government relationship, be established, and exemplified by joint commissions on areas of shared practical interest, eg agriculture, energy, tourism etc.

We have previously expressed the view that the totality of relations could usefully be fostered by the 'replacement' of the present bilateral Anglo-Irish Conference with a tripartite council, and an associated tri-partite back-bench parliamentary tier, building on the present bilateral inter-parliamentary body. We still view these as necessary developments.

The growth and development of the European Union, convince us that it is vital that we are able grasp the opportunities offered by this broader framework. To see ourselves as all living within a larger border, rather than living on either sides of various geographical and political dividing lines, opens up the prospect of an increasing sense of shared experience. The economic necessity of representing our people will also help to bind us together as a Northern Ireland community, as has already been seen by the joint activities of the three MEP's. We could learn from the experience of other Europeans who have regional administrations, and who have had to explore their relationships with each other, with the governments of the EU member-states, and with the European institutions. We regard as necessary the elaboration of a direct role for a new assembly and executive, through a Brussels Office, in representations and negotiations with the European Union structures.

PERMANENCE AND STABILITY

After so many years, and indeed generations of violence and instability our people long for a settled peace. The *permanence and stability* of any agreed outcome will be considerably enhanced by its direct endorsement by the people, but if it is to survive the heady endorsement of a referendum, it must also be *workable* in practice, carry out the business of political life in an *efficient and effective* manner, and not be dependent on any particular electoral outcome or inter-party deal.

Clearly the people of Northern Ireland have a primary interest in these issues, but the people of the Republic of Ireland also have a very real interest, and in any case they must express their view positively in a referendum, if there is to be any change, as we maintain there must be, in Articles 2 & 3 of the Republic's constitution. The construction of such a test of public opinion is not a simple matter and will require a good deal of thought and discussion.

All political structures and societies are in the nature of things, temporal, and must have *the capacity to change, grow and develop*. These capacities must be part of any new settlement. Any such capacity must of course be governed, by the other principles of consent, democratic accountability, transparency, and so on.