

COMMON ISSUES AND PROPOSITIONS

1. Constitutional Status and Guarantee

- There seems general support for the proposition that Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom; that there should be no change in that position without the consent of a majority of the people who live here; and that at present a majority of the people who live here do not wish for any change.
- More discussion will no doubt take place on the way in which the so-called 'constitutional guarantee' is couched.

2. Nature of the Northern Ireland Community

- There are [at least] two distinct communal identities in Northern Ireland, both of which need to be appropriately accommodated in the political system here, taking account of the wider framework of relationships within these islands.

3. Local Institutions

- There is a need for greater direct local political involvement in the business of governing Northern Ireland.
- There is general support for the transfer to local representatives of legislative as well as executive responsibilities.
- It seems to be generally agreed that simple unfettered majority rule would not be a sufficient basis for any new local institutions.

4. External relationships

- There are relationships external to Northern Ireland which have an important bearing on the political situation in Northern Ireland, the most relevant of which are the relationships with the rest of the United Kingdom, with the rest of the island of Ireland and with the rest of the EC.

- For so long as NI remains a part of the UK the relationship between NI and the UK Government and Parliament will continue to be of central importance. Not only because of the UK Government's responsibility to the community to provide adequate financial resources and the military resources necessary to defeat terrorism but also because of the responsibility of Government and Parliament for matters which are not transferred to any local institutions.

- There seems general support for the proposition that there should ideally be good and harmonious relations between the two parts of Ireland and that practical co-operation in their mutual interest should be encouraged. The more difficult question is the extent to which a formal, perhaps institutionalised, relationship between the two parts of Ireland might help to resolve political tensions and difficulties within the Northern Ireland community. There will clearly be much debate at a later stage on the issues raised by Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution.

- The nature of the future relationship between Northern Ireland and EC institutions clearly needs to be considered.

5. The Three Relationships

- It is accepted around the table that a political accommodation which entailed new and agreed definitions of the relationships with the rest of the UK and with the rest of the island of Ireland would be more stable and satisfactory.

- If in that context it were possible to refine the way in which the relationship between the British and Irish Governments was expressed, so that this was acceptable to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland (as well as to the people of GB and the Republic of Ireland) this would be a desirable objective.

- The analysis reflected in the 26 March statement that the external and internal relationships are interlinked and that real progress will only be possible through finding ways of giving adequate expression to the totality of the three main relationships has been confirmed.

6. Constitutional Politics/Defeating Terrorism

- As noted at an earlier stage all the participants in these Talks are at least united in their opposition to the use of violence and their determination to resolve problems through constitutional means.
- There is general acceptance that no political accommodation could influence a highly committed individual to abandon terrorism, but I detect general assent to the proposition that a prosperous, stable community with vibrant and effective local political institutions might undermine the motivation of at least some terrorists and would indeed make it harder for terrorists to obtain the practical and moral support they require. I of course note and accept the argument that determined and effective security force action will be a necessary component in bringing terrorism to an end.
- Law and order could more effectively be maintained in Northern Ireland if there were a greater basic political consensus leading to wider public support for and confidence in the security forces.
- There was support from both ends of the table for the proposition that it is essential that any local political institutions should be able to exercise significant influence over - or make a substantial input to - the formulation of security policy.

7. Individual Rights

- General support for the establishment of machinery to deal with and correct minority grievances. Entrenchment of individual and community rights.

8. Endorsement

- It is agreed that any political accommodation within Northern Ireland or new institutional arrangements should be subject to endorsement by the people of Northern Ireland, and that when being asked to take a view on these issues the Northern Ireland electorate should be made aware of any proposals regarding the other relevant relationships.

- A case for arguing that any package of propositions which might emerge from the Talks as whole would gain greater political legitimacy if the relevant aspects were endorsed (perhaps simultaneously) by all those likely to be most affected, including the people of the Republic.

9. Commitment

- I think we do all acknowledge the need for realism, commitment, hard work and compromise if suitable institutions, within a wider framework of stable relationships, are to be established.