

Aug 3 '94.

Polit
Strategy

Paper from Philip Mc Garry on future strategy.

1) We must come to terms with the reality that people associated with violence are widely accepted as being part of the political process. This is not only due to the response of the media and the position of John Hume but also to demands by Jim Molyneux and other UU's that the UDP be at the conference table.

It is counterproductive being excessively 'precious' about SF/UDP etc, particularly when one considers the statements of Sammy Wilson and others in the DUP. To make some sort of 'moral' issue of SF diminishes our credibility as a serious political party.

Don't forget that from the mid 70's Alliance worked more closely with the Workers' Party than any other party, despite the persistence of 'certain activities'.

Perhaps paradoxically the best way to put SF etc under pressure is to take their arguments at face value and challenge them. When one considers the obvious contradictions this is in fact a fairly easy task which really puts them under pressure (eg my demand that SF clarify its position on the murder of Caroline Moreland, the difference between the killing of Ray Smallwood and SF figures, Adams' debate in Dublin on the motion 'British withdrawal is a prerequisite for peace').

John's intervention in America gave the party great credibility on all sides. It showed that we were a real political party, not a bunch of well-meaning but irrelevant dilettantes.

2) Alliance is the only party to give unambiguous support to the Downing St Declaration and no other document.

We really need to take advantage of this situation by challenging the ambivalence of others. We should be making it clear on an almost daily basis that the document's principles are sacrosanct.

The reality is that the Declaration has changed things permanently ; there can be no going back. Unfortunately we have been unable to convince the public of this, largely because of the fascination with SF and the consequent facile reporting.

We need an issue with which we can be clearly identified. We should take advantage of the one issue which is win, win for us.

One way of making progress seem more likely would be to adopt a word like 'trust' as the pre-requisite for 'real peace'. The Declaration is based upon a new measure of trust between the two Governments and long-term progress can only come if a similar degree of trust manifests itself in N.I.

3) We need to be rather more proactive on core anti-sectarian issues. We have allowed the SDLP to masquerade as the real liberal party.

We should be much more involved in the fair employment area which is now seen by almost everybody as an SDLP issue. It was Alliance that gave the FEA Bob Cooper.

We should be beefing up our ideas on cross-border structures, which will be the crucial substance of the final negotiations. To incorporate ideas such as intense RUC/GARDA co-operation marks out a unique and credible position for ourselves.

We have said nothing on the issue of the British Constitution and the Establishment of the Anglican Church. The Lib Dems have called for disestablishment. Should we enter this debate? What about a radical plan to find employment for 50,000 long term unemployed?

4) Above all we need to be saying things on a daily basis, responding to matters raised by others and running with some of our own issues. Our profile is far too low and every day we allow obvious items to by-pass us.

We need a cadre of several people, equipped with faxes, who are prepared to commit themselves to developing public profiles. The essence of this is the ability to respond immediately to events, particularly with a statement which is more than a straight forward platitude.

For back up to this it would be useful to have a rota arrangement, perhaps with some assistance from some Young Alliance people.

The lifeblood of a political party in N. Ireland is to be seen by the public to be commenting daily on the key issues. We ignore this reality at our peril.

5) We need to be making a bigger effort to influence the opinion makers. This involves getting articles into the Irish Times, Fortnight and the British heavies

We should be getting more people to speak in the Republic and in Britain.

We should be making more effort to 'cultivate' journalists and get to more conferences.

SUMMARY

1) We must acknowledge the reality of the SF/UDP presence and get on with the real task of undermining them by challenging their arguments.

2) We should run much more actively with the Declaration as a crucial turning-point in our history..

3) We need to carve out a number of anti-sectarian issues to pursue proactively.

4) We must increase significantly our output of publicity.

5) The above item can be assisted by 'working' on journalists and other opinion formers.

August 3 1994