

NEW ULSTER MOVEMENT

ANNUAL
REPORT
1970/71

3 BOTANIC AVENUE, BELFAST. Phone 27510

N.U.M. ANNUAL REPORT 1970-71

Dear member,

The report which follows is an inadequate summary of the work undertaken during the past 12 months by the executive, on behalf of our members.

Although the majority of people here are deeply depressed by escalating violence and the re-emergence of the "brute" in Ulster life and behaviour, there are signs, for the discerning, that hope, tolerance and reconciliation still play a significant role in our community affairs.

Essentially our function has been to highlight those qualities, especially in the field of politics—to stimulate them and to encourage their growth. The "Peace Rally" in October attended by some 10,000 people (R.U.C. estimate), despite opposition by Paisleyites and explosions by the I.R.A., was one overt sign that fundamentally our community has reserves of goodwill and common sense which the daily presentation of "news" through the mass media appears to deny.

N.U.M. has continued to 'work as a "political catalyst." Ideas, and especially political ideas, are one of the missing ingredients in the political life of our community. We believe we can claim to have stimulated a range of ideas, particularly through our publications and our political discussion groups. Perhaps the most noteworthy were channeled through the booklet "The Reform of Stormont," the theme of which—participation—has been the basic "talking point" of politics since the summer.

Two other key issues must be referred to here. Firstly internment. N.U.M. has consistently opposed the "Special Powers" Act and campaigned for its complete and unequivocal repeal. This remains our position. We have said that "emergency" situations—such as the present I.R.A. campaign of terror—can always be countered, if necessary, by new legislation under the control of the sovereign parliament of Westminster, once the Special Powers Act is repealed.

However, having failed to convince the authorities of the need, down the years, to repeal this legislation, we had to decide our attitude in the light of what was clearly the imminent introduction of internment without trial.

With others we predicted, and warned against, the "polarizing" effect internment would have on the Catholic population, but decided, in the event, to throw our weight on the side of trying to make the **fact** of internment as acceptable as possible. Our advice to the sovereign authority, immediately before the introduction of internment was four fold :—

- (a) That internment here would be a futile operation unless the Republic of Ireland could be persuaded to introduce it at the same time.
- (b) That Protestant extremists must be interned along with I.R.A. extremists.
- (c) That an independent team of Catholic and Protestant lawyers should have immediate and free access to all detainees and all internees.
- (d) That a team of professional welfare workers should be appointed and financed to take care of the women folk and children of those interned,

In the event all of this advice was ignored. Internment has now become a major stumbling block to political change and to the success of the "security" operation. It seems likely that the numbers interned will escalate dramatically before the end of 1971. No community can be happy, or proud, of this state of affairs.

The second issue we wish to highlight relates to the purpose of a subordinate government and the question of participation in government by minorities. We have elaborated our position on these points elsewhere. Suffice to say, in summary, that democracy in Ulster is created and preserved, not by the subordinate parliament of Stormont, but by the sovereign parliament of Westminster.

Ultimately our stability and prosperity (or lack of it) is, at present, Westminster's legal, political and moral responsibility. Stormont's role is an advisory and "helping" one. Hence, the shape, structure and power of Stormont should be based, pragmatically, on the economic, social and regional needs of our community and nothing more.

If this point is accepted then it becomes entirely possible to envisage participation in government by all sorts of minorities (we must guard against the temptation to confuse the issue with "personalities"), provided all those concerned reject violence and illegal methods as means of pursuing their political aims. Until Unionists grasp this point we will never be able to reconcile the people of Northern Ireland one to another. That aim remains the fundamental "raison d'être" of N.U.M.

THE WORK OF N. U. M., 1970-1971

This was the year in which N.U.M. changed its role. From being an electioneering organisation intent on winning political power at Stormont, we became an "ideas" organisation and one which sought to influence and shape political thinking and action in Ulster—and between Ulster and its two neighbors, Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. In particular we sought to :—

- (a) Establish common ground and define areas of co-operation amongst Northern Ireland politicians and political groups.
- (b) Underline the responsibility of Westminster for this part of the United Kingdom.
- (c) Encourage the growth of realism amongst politicians and political groups in the Republic of Ireland.
- (d) Work out and propagate proposals for a lasting peace in Ulster.

We believe that no other group is, perhaps, in quite as good a position to do this kind of work as N.U.M.

Last January, following a one-day conference, the executive set up a team of sub committees charged with pursuing these aims, and the remainder of this report gives a brief account of their activities.

1. THE POLITICAL SUB-COMMITTEE

This small committee of 3/4 of our members has tried to penetrate all the known political groups which make up, or impinge on, the Northern Ireland problem. In private discussions, beyond the glare of television or publicity, we have tried to discover and define areas

of political co-operation and reconciliation. We have ranged in talks from the extreme right wing of the Unionist Party, through its moderate wing, into the middle area held by the Northern Ireland Labour Party, the Liberal Party and the Alliance Party, into the S.D.L.P. and Nationalist Parties and out onto the Republican and Provisional wing of the I.R.A. In addition we have talked with all kinds of fringe political groups including the N.I.C.R.A.; the C.C.D.C.; the Catholic Minority Rights Group; the Movement for Peace in Ireland Group, etc. Outside the province we have talked with Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Irish Labour deputies in the Republic; Conservative and Labour politicians at Westminster and various other British based groups. In all this extensive work only two groups have refused to meet us—the Orange Order and the Political Alliance recently formed by Mr. Desmond Boal.

Formal deputations have been received during the year by Prime Ministers Chichester-Clark and Faulkner, Home Secretary Rt. Hon. Maudling, Minister of Community Relations Rt. Hon. David Bleakley, the chairman of the Community Relations Commission Mr. Maurice Hayes, the U.K. Representative in Northern Ireland, etc.

N.U.M. was invited in September to join the London talks initiated by Mr. Maudling to put the views of our members on the current political situation. We used that opportunity to speak also to a wide range of Conservative Party back benchers and senior civil servants.

In all this work N.U.M. has tried to be positive and constructive. We have acted as a catalyst and a stimulator of ideas. In some respects we have been depressed with the historic intransigence and deep seated fear and mistrust encountered in almost all the groups/people we have met in Northern Ireland. On the other hand we have been encouraged by the vast area of common ground which exists between quite diverse groups—even though the groups concerned are blissfully unaware of such common ground. Ulster's hope lies in highlighting this common ground and in building our future upon it.

2. POLITICAL PUBLICATIONS

Arising from the work of the political sub-committee the executive authorised the publication of two major policy documents—"The Reform of Stormont" and a "Commentary on the programme of reforms for Northern Ireland." The former made a marked impact both here and at Westminster. 4,000 copies were distributed, including all Stormont and Westminster M.P.'s and a further 1,000 re-printed because of demand. Many of the recommendation made in this booklet are now "policy" at both Stormont and Westminster. The Commentary ran to 2,500 copies and was also well received.

In addition we republished and distributed 300 copies of the book, "The Irish Border as a Cultural Divide" by the Dutch geographer Professor Heslinga.

Another initiative by N.U.M. was to obtain from a leading international lawyer — Dr. Maurice Bathurst — an opinion on the legality of the Irish border. Fundamentally we believe little progress can be made over the Northern Ireland problem until "the rule of law" is accepted as the basis for all discussions and the resolution of all disputes. It is interesting to note that neither politicians nor lawyers in the Republic of Ireland have challenged Dr. Bathurst's opinion.

Current publications approved by the executive include a follow up to "The Reform of Stormont" in the light of the N.I. Government's Green Paper on that subject and a commentary on Northern Ireland and the "Common Market." These will be released before the year ends.

3. LAW AND ORDER SUB-COMMITTEE

This committee held private meetings with the Police Authority, the Chief Constable, several judges and lawyers, the G.O.C. and the Commander of Land Forces, youth workers from the Shankill and Andersonstown and various groups in the riot districts of Belfast. They also spent one day at the R.U.C. Training Depot at Enniskillen.

Arising from their recommendations, N.U.M. campaigned for majority verdicts in jury cases; public prosecutors; new techniques of crowd control—especially outside our courts of law; a renewal of the ban on all parades and marches; a ban on all gun clubs and the handing in of all licenced guns. We have continued to try to find a way of helping to regain the acceptance of the R.U.C. as a civilian police force in all parts of our province and amongst all sections of our people. This is a basic point and sooner or later it has to be achieved. The alternative is anarchy and terrorism, with the British Army assuming a role for which it is neither equipped nor trained.

4. HOLIDAY CAMPS

During August N.U.M. held a holiday camp at Ballywalter. Each week 10 children from the Shankill and 10 children from the Falls were invited to use the holiday facilities provided largely by the N.U.M. branches in that area. Contacts were made with the parents of these children and a series of follow-up meetings are planned for this winter. Although many of these children came from some of our most deprived areas and lived in districts in which the bombs and the gun seem to dominate, we were confirmed in our belief that with the right quality of leadership and determination, our "troubles" are far from being insoluble. These were fine people.

5. PETITION FOR SANITY

Because of the insane drift towards Civil War in the late summer N.U.M. launched a 'Petition for Sanity' in which we invited people to register their determination to work for community reconciliation and their refusal to allow the politicians to talk us into civil war, or the terrorists and extremists to push us into civil war. Within 3 weeks 27,000 people had registered their support. Once again we had shown that the potential for reconciliation and co-operation in Ulster is there to be tapped and exploited.

Many of those signing the petition asked for the opportunity to demonstrate their essential unity. We therefore decided to invite a small number of community orientated groups to join with us in organizing a non sectarian, non political "Peace Rally" referred to at the beginning of this report. The occasion provided a deeply moving spectacle of ordinary men and women determined to live at peace with one another irrespective of the divisive influences of either the politicians or the extremists.

A valuable bi-product of the rally was that millions of people in Europe, the Commonwealth and North America were shown a different side to Ulster life and action - co-operation and reconciliation instead of hatred and violence — through the medium of television and the press. Out of this experience we know of at least one major American television company which is putting together a documentary programme on co-operation, harmony and tolerance in Ulster—a welcome redressing of the balance. How unfortunate no British television documentary has yet been produced on this theme !

6. OTHER ACTIVITIES

These are many but perhaps we should refer to only a few. Early in the year we held a successful public meeting in Belfast addressed by Miss Enid Lakeman of the Reform Society on the theme "Proportional Representation in Northern Ireland."

A series of "cases" for prosecution under the "Incitement to Religious Hatred" Act were referred to the Chief Constable and the Attorney General. No action has so far been taken.

The executive responded to an appeal by a group of Catholic mothers involved in the "Vere Foster" School controversy. Ultimately we were happy to see this issue resolved in an intelligent and progressive manner.

The South Tyrone Parliamentary Association applied for and was received into affiliate membership of N.U.M.

The movement received a grant of £1,000 for each of three years from a British charitable trust towards its work of political and social reconciliation in Ulster.

In July the executive urged the Ministry of Community Relations and the Attorney General to publically indicate the dangers of the "New Covenant" sponsored by the Orange Order and in particular the final clause which, in the opinion of many lawyers, could be construed as seditious.

The executive hopes that this report, brief as it is, will encourage all our members to support the work and action of N. U. M., to dedicate themselves to the cause of political and social reconciliation in Northern Ireland and to strive at all times to live at peace with one another

irrespective of the pressures and strains under which all of us are obliged to live at the moment. We are convinced that "the middle ground" is still there to be won in Ulster and we believe that the work of N.U.M. is not without significance.

Yours sincerely,

BRIAN W. WALKER (Chairman)
BRIAN McK. McGUIGAN (Vice-Chairman)
PAT MORROW (Secretary)
MARGARET McALLISTER (Hon. Treasurer).
CECIL HULL (Hon. Treasurer)
NELL GRAY (Assistant Hon. Secretary)
VINCENT ACHESON
MICHAEL BROWN
JOHN P. COOKE
RODGERS COLVILLE
MARIE CREENEY
WILLIAM HURST
DENISE LOWRY
HONOR RUDNITZKY
DANIEL THOMPSON
JOHN WHYTE

Also served for part of the year:

JEAN GRAHAM
WILBUR HANVEY

December, 1971.