

E. R.

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95/6.

1. Mr Bloomfield 8/6
2. See 4/2

PAB/2890/JI

PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - M



PAB ELECTION ASSESSMENT

In a handful of key constituencies there is the possibility that the seat may change hands, or there are special interest factors which of themselves may have significance in reflecting the view of the electors at large. Earlier PAB Election Assessments have discussed some of these constituencies in some detail. However the overall results will contain points of interest which will be important factors in helping to shape and condition the attitudes of the parties in the aftermath of the Election and any developments which then emerge. This note sets out to highlight these key factors which the parties will nevertheless be watching carefully. Attached are short notes on each of the constituencies (Annex A), a summary of the parties' relative standings in 1983 and 1986 (Annex B) and details of each constituency for 1983 and 1986 with space provided for the 1987 results. (Annex C)

2. Unionists

- (i) Their main interest will be to retain all their 14 seats. Their specific concerns are South Down (which they expect to hold), Newry and Mourne (which they do not expect to regain) and the emerging McCartney threat in North Down.
- (ii) More broadly their campaign solely concerns opposition to the Agreement. They will be seeking therefore to maximise their vote in order to claim they retain the support of an overwhelming number of the majority community. Their total vote in 1983 was 436,696 and in the 15 constituencies fought in 1986 they polled 418,230. The total electorate has increased and in order therefore to maintain in 1987 the same level of support they will need to poll in the region of 450,000 votes. We understand that one of the issues being raised with Unionist canvassers is disquiet about the ineffectiveness of the Unionist campaign and the abstention of MP's from Westminster. Thus if the Unionist poll is lower than,

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say, 440,000 this maybe taken as a signal of disquiet about Unionist tactics, but unless it drops dramatically it should not necessarily be interpreted as a lessening of Unionist opposition to the Agreement.

- (iii) The policy of putting forward agreed Unionist candidates avoids asking the Unionist community to choose between the UUP and DUP and since there is no confrontational campaign, this therefore hides the divisions within and between the 2 parties. (Although it has caused minor splits in each party with McCartney's expulsion and Allister's resignation.) Consequently it will be very difficult to estimate what are the current relative standings of the 2 parties and the Unionist communities view of the policy and tactical differences that exist. It is tempting therefore not to look for indicators from the election results especially if the overall Unionist vote holds up well. However agreed candidates stood in 1986 and it may be worth attempting to put some figures to the votes each party may be looking to achieve in order to maintain its position. In 1986 the UUP and DUP polled 302,198 and 85,239 respectively and extrapolating these results would suggest they could expect total votes of 313,000 and 104,000 respectively this time round. Significant shifts away from these relative strengths, read in conjunction with the individual results of North Belfast and North Down, may be useful indicators of Unionist opinion. (It is known for example that McCusker has been told by businessmen in Portadown that they will not support him as fully as usual.)

3. SDLP

- (i) Their prime aim is to retain both seats, and especially to consolidate Seamus Mallon's, and in addition to win West Belfast (where they feel they have a good chance) and South Down (where they are optimistic).

- (ii) The performance of the SDLP overall will be seen as an indication of the level of acceptance of the Agreement in the minority community. In 1983 they polled 137,012 votes. In order to maintain the impetus gained in the 1986 by-elections we estimate they would have to poll 162,650 votes this time round. However 1986 may have been exceptional and allowing for the increased electorate, close to 160,000 votes would be a good result, about 150,000 would be acceptable but 140,000 would be poor.
- (iii) However not only are votes cast important in this instance. Also significant is the percentage gained of the Nationalist vote. In 1983, in the aftermath of the H Blocks protest and the hunger strikes, Sinn Fein did well attracting 42.8% of the Nationalist vote (and winning West Belfast). In 1986 the Sinn Fein share of the Nationalist vote fell to 35.4% although in the only other indicators we have since (local council by-elections) the Sinn Fein vote has held up quite well. There is therefore apparently a hard core of the Nationalist community who are prepared to condone Republican violence. It remains to be seen if the SDLP can continue to make inroads into Sinn Fein strength, and the percentage of the Nationalist votes gained by the SDLP will have to be above 60%, across the Province, to signal a significant change in attitude.

4. Sinn Fein

- (i) To maintain credibility Adams must retain West Belfast - defeat would be a major blow.
- (ii) The extent to which the Sinn Fein vote holds up will be a signal both of the attitudes of the Nationalist community as a whole and also of the present state of hard-line Republican support. Therefore if the SDLP gain votes at the expense of Sinn Fein (ie the overall Nationalist vote holds up but Sinn Fein's share decreases) then this will be an indication of a shift in nationalist opinion.

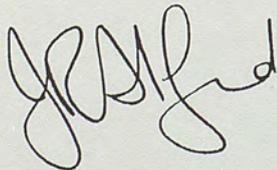
However if Sinn Fein loses votes and the Nationalist vote overall falls by about the same amount there are likely to be two contributory factors. One is a rejection of violent republicanism without a corresponding shift in allegiance to constitutional nationalism. The other may be some indication of the strength of the split within Sinn Fein over the abstentionist vote at the Ard Fheis. Consequently, extrapolating the 1983 and 1986 figures we estimate that Sinn Fein need a total vote of the order of 90,000, in a total nationalist vote of about 260,000, to maintain their position.

5. Alliance

(i) The overall Alliance vote is likely to be small and therefore variations may be of only marginal significance - particularly if there is some tactical voting. They will be concerned however to try to maintain their vote in their areas of relative strength such as North Down where they believe that to stay in second place would be a good result.

6. Workers Party

(i) Their position again, like Alliance, is one where tactical voting could have a disproportionate effect on their vote. They will be particularly interested in putting up a good show in West Belfast and watching how much if any effect Lord Fitt's intervention has on their voting strength - they believe that anything over 3,000 votes in West Belfast will be a good result.



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5 June 1987

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PS/PUS (L&B) - M
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Mr Burns - M
Mr Chesterton - M
Mr Innes
Mr Elliott
Mr Steele
Miss Pease - M
Mr Spence
Mr Wood
Mr Bell - M
Mr G Hewitt
Mr D Kirk - M
Mr Coston
Mr Blackwell
Mr S Hewitt
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Individual Constituencies

Points to watch in individual constituencies are:

- i) West Belfast - The Hendron-Adams struggle, and any effect of the intervention of Millar.
- ii) North Belfast - The Seawright effect on Walker's majority.
- iii) East Belfast - Robinson will win easily, but the performance of new Alliance candidate John Alderdice is of interest.
- iv) South Belfast - Entirely predictable, though there is a minor SDLP/Sinn Fein contest.
- v) North Down - The performance of McCartney as an indication of support for the Campaign for Equal Citizenship and its effect on Kilfedder's majority. Cushnahan's performance will also be of interest.
- vi) South Down - The outside chance of an upset if McGrady gleans enough Sinn Fein votes to oust Powell. Even if he fails the SDLP/Sinn Fein split will be interesting.
- vii) Strangford - An entirely academic exercise, though Addie Morrow's vote could increase.
- viii) Lagan Valley - The SDLP/Sinn Fein contest will be less interesting than whether or not Molyneaux's majority breaks 25,000.
- ix) Upper Bann - A carbon copy of Lagan Valley.
- x) Newry and Armagh - Mallon's success in holding the seat won in 1986 and his position vis-a-vis Sinn Fein. Nicholson's level of support.
- xi) Fermanagh and South Tyrone - Maginnis will win comfortably, but the SDLP/Sinn Fein contest will be keen.
- xii) Mid Ulster - The SDLP/Sinn Fein contest is considerably more interesting than the size of McCrea's majority.

- xiii) Foyle - Hume should consolidate his position against Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness. Campbell's vote is of modest interest.
- xiv) East Londonderry - A minor Sinn Fein/SDLP contest and the presence of the only Ecology Party candidate will not cause William Ross to break sweat.
- xv) North Antrim - Paisley may possibly poll more votes than Molyneaux in Lagan Valley. A further minor scuffle between Sinn Fein and SDLP.
- xvi) East Antrim - Beggs is assured a further term, but Neeson will be keen to do well.
- xvii) South Antrim - Another minor SDLP/Sinn Fein confrontation, but the anonymous Clifford Forsythe will walk it.

NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICAL PARTIES PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS
1983/1986/1987

Party	1983 General Election		1986 By-Election		1987 General Election	
	Votes Cast	%	Votes Cast	%	Votes Cast	%
UUP	259,952	34.0	302,198	51.7		
DUP	152,749	20.0	85,239	14.5		
Other Unionist	23,995	3.1	30,793	5.3		
Alliance	61,275	8.0	32,095	5.5		
SDLP	137,012	17.9	70,917	12.1		
SF	102,701	13.4	38,821	6.6		
WP	14,650	1.9	18,148	3.1		
Others	12,591	1.7	6,777	1.2		
Total Number of Votes Cast	764,925		584,988			

The 1986 by-elections were precipitated by the resignation of all 15 unionist MPs in protest at the Anglo-Irish Agreement signed in November 1985. All except one were subsequently re-elected. The UUP lost one seat to the SDLP. In each case the former MP was not opposed by other Unionist candidates, thus the relative popularity of the UUP and DUP must be treated with caution. The DUP's 85,239 votes were cast in just 3 constituencies and the "other Unionists" 30,793 in just one. The SDLP and SF stood in only 4 of the 15 seats (on each occasion in competition with each other as well as the UUP candidate). The Alliance stood in 5 seats and the Workers' Party in 9. The "others" vote was for "Peter Barry" who stood in 4 seats.