

Irish Gov

Draft language on principles

General: These principles will be invoked by the British/unionists in any subsequent discussions on actual structures. If the overall description of principles is a modest "lowest common denominator" between the unionist and nationalist positions this will be used later to prevent North/South institutions having the scope and dynamism the nationalist community would need. We must therefore seek to give them a "spin" which will ensure that the proposed institutions will lay a good foundation for future convergence and agreement between the two parts of Ireland, have real impact and have a dynamic for future growth built in to them. The basic test is that northern nationalists should be able to identify with them as something new and worthwhile.

British text

1. "Such as to give expression and validity to each main tradition".

Too weak (and it can be argued that each tradition already has validity). Suggest language from the preamble of the Anglo-Irish Agreement

"Such as will be a forum for efforts to reconcile and acknowledge the rights of the two major traditions that exist in Ireland, represented on the one hand by those who wish for no change in the present status of Northern Ireland and on the other hand by those who aspire to a sovereign united Ireland achieved by peaceful means".

This does not actively exclude all other currents of nationalism but rightly acknowledges that constitutional nationalism is the major tradition.

Since it is already an agreed principle between the two Governments it can reasonably be expected to feature in a new agreement.

Proposed new principle:

2. Such as to "give satisfactory and meaningful expression to the aspirations of both communities in Northern Ireland where these are not otherwise adequately provided for".

The argument is that the unionist aspiration is fully catered for as long as Northern Ireland is part of the UK. This denies the nationalist aspiration for contact and union with the rest of Ireland. The troubles have flowed from this denial, which should be remedied, both on grounds of justice and to meet the criterion that both communities in NI must be able to identify with the institutions governing them. (This proposal will open up the basic argument with the unionists).

British text:

3. "Such as to encourage, promote and develop improved relations and better understanding between main traditions and between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland".

This is harmless in itself, but very weak as a mandate. The Forum Report par 5.5 contains good language (admittedly applying to Irish unity) but which would also serve as a strong mandate for North/South bodies short of unity.

Adapting the wording slightly, Ministers might propose some of the following. If delegates find the unity context in the Forum and object, it can be argued these are very positive objectives in themselves which should still be aimed for even if unity is not at present realisable.

Adopted Forum text:

- such as to provide a satisfactory framework for mutual interaction and enrichment between the two traditions.
- to be a framework within which agreed institutions could apply economic policies suited to the particular and largely similar circumstances and interests of both parts

of the island, and in which economies of scale and the possibilities of integrated planning could be fully exploited.

- to ensure the advancement in the European Community of the common interests of Ireland, North and South and for the contribution, based on distinctive shared values, which the people of all traditions can make to the European and international communities.
- to prevent the dissipation of energies in wasteful divisions and redirect efforts towards constructive endeavour, thus giving a major impetus to the social, cultural and economic development of the entire island.

British text:

4. "Conducive to a new spirit of cordial cooperation and friendship, bringing a united effort for the common good, between the peoples of the island of Ireland".

Again, not objectionable, apart from the pointed reference to the peoples of the island of Ireland. The singular word 'people' is neutral for both sides and should be used instead. However the overall balance of the principles must provide a stronger mandate than this.

5. British text: "legitimate in the sense of respecting the democratic rights of the people of Northern Ireland and the people of the Republic of Ireland".

This is tricky as there is a difference of principle between unionism and nationalism as to whether the democratic rights of the people of NI should or should not include a partial or full right to self-determination for Northern Ireland. On the other hand nationalists accept in the Agreement that there would be no change in the status of NI without the democratic agreement of a majority there. The text also begs questions

about the rights of the majority/minority in Northern Ireland.
Perhaps suggest the wording on 5.2.4 of the Forum Report.

"legitimate in the sense of respecting the validity of
both the nationalist and unionist identities in Ireland
and the democratic right of every citizen on the island".