

Copy handed to
Clerk's office
by H. Craig



UNIONIST PARTY

9 HAWTHORNDEN ROAD
BELFAST BT4 3JU

9th September 1975.

4.15. OTV
5.00. ABC.

Mr. Cecil Harvey,
Chief Whip,
VANGUARD UNIONIST PARTY.

Dear Cecil,

I have considered some of the very grave consequences which must follow the acceptance by the Convention Coalition of Dr. Paisley's motion which excludes the S.D.L.P. regardless of policy or circumstances from participation with the U.U.U.C. in a Coalition Government. I cannot say that such a Coalition would ever have come into existence because I do not know whether the S.D.L.P. would have supported the U.U.U.C. proposals for the return of a Northern Ireland Parliament and Government, and if so, whether they would have served in a U.U.U.C. majority government on the basis of a strong law and order policy together with social and economic policies of reconstruction. I do know that S.D.L.P. were prepared to seriously and sincerely examine our proposals including a strong law and order policy under the control of a Northern Ireland Parliament and Government. For my part, I entered these discussions honestly and sincerely seeking agreement and I know that S.D.L.P. recognised that I did so whilst committed firmly and rigidly to the principles of British Parliamentary Government. The fact that S.D.L.P. have done so notwithstanding their own sincere but opposing convictions is a gesture for the good of the Province and deserved better from us. It is difficult to see how the S.D.L.P. can continue to explore our proposals in a search for an agreement. If the position is not retrieved then, to put it at the very minimum, the U.U.U.C. have devalued the Convention.

I must also consider the matter in the light of our electoral undertakings. As I understand it, we pledged ourselves to work unremittingly and whole-heartedly for the re-establishment of the Northern Ireland Parliament with very important changes designed to have a greater involvement in the Parliamentary processes of all M.P.'s, particularly those belonging to minority parties.

Yours sincerely,
Mr. Craig
Leader
VANGUARD UNIONIST PARTY

We also declared that we would talk to all elected representatives in search of the widest possible agreement. We have been less than whole-hearted in our endeavours and in the process we have made more difficult, if not impossible, the establishment of a meaningful Parliament and Government in the British sense. We may have even made it difficult to have an agreement that would have enabled us to disagree in a constructive friendly atmosphere.

It is no argument to say that we were about to breach our undertaking on power-sharing. Power-sharing was never on the table for discussion except for a fleeting instant when D.U.P. proposed it for a second tier in the executive in the form of administrative committees to run departments. It did not generate any real discussion let alone support. Coalition government in accordance with British practice cannot be equated with the ill-named concept of power-sharing as invented in 1973 which by law guaranteed not only minority positions in the Executive but gave them real power. Any Coalition government only comes into existence by agreement, an agreement which covers every aspect of Government policy, and such a government is at the end of the day a majority government with the Prime Minister hiring and firing so that government policy is not only conscientiously upheld but honestly implemented.

The Ulster people want a Parliament, and in these dreadful days more than ever, they want law and order with internal security in Ulster hands. I cannot say with conviction that we are going the right way about it.

I have no alternative but to review my position and that will involve a whole series of decisions. The one thing that is clear at this present time is that my role at Westminster is more important than ever. My attitude to the Convention and the Convention Coalition needs to be re-examined and this I will do quickly, bearing in mind my desire for the Convention to succeed by way of agreement. I have however decided to resign my leadership of the Vanguard Convention Party, having regard to the fact that only six Vanguard members supported yesterday a motion to delay the decision until the whole matter could be further investigated. I would suggest that you proceed to elect a leader. In the meantime I have cancelled all speaking engagements for this week, commencing with my Dungannon meeting tonight. I shall take steps to see that the Province and the Party are fully apprised of the situation and all the reasons for my actions.

I have released this letter to the News media.

Yours sincerely,

Wm. Craig.
Leader.

VANGUARD UNIONIST PARTY.