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# Progressive

# Unionist

# Party



# Policy Document 1987

## Introduction

**It was the huge textile, shipbuilding and industrial bases of Ulster, the Midlands and the industrial regions of the rest of the United Kingdom that put the Great into Great Britain. If Britain once ruled the waves it was by the combined skills of our shipyards. If Britain injected anything positive into its Colonies it was the rapid advancement of industrial technology, spawned in the hard working textile, engineering regions of the Kingdom.**

Now everything changes. The savage advance of modern robotics and automation, the influx of the 'Taiwan Strategy' throughout industry has deprived the nation of its natural industrial prowess and introduced a lousy market, disgracefully financed by our own financial exchanges and controlled by those who 40 years ago would have beheaded our people. Hardly a conciliatory tone, but true nevertheless.

The time has come for radical change. Change which may involve even more radical thinking throughout the land of Ireland, where we have so much in common in pursuance of a better life for all our people. That change must not be interpreted in a divisive way, on the contrary there looms on the horizon a new ideology, an ideology that transcends petty Irish pump politics. This is the ideology of confederation. Whilst most everyone on this island was being exposed to the European confederation few people gave any thought to the idea that a new and genuine Confederation of the British Isles could be a most influential commercial and economic unit outside the European Community. We said this at the Lambeth Conference as far back as 1980. To those who push the idea aside lightly we would ask them to look at the stabilisation created by the Yugoslavian confederation. The proof of the strength of the state emerged on the death of Marshal Tito. Few Western observers predicted a stable future after his death, but they were wrong. The confederation of cultural entities survived, surely a lesson for us all.

## Confederation of the British Isles

Anyone travelling to Northern Ireland and taking a close look at the economic situation must surely be amazed at the numbers of people who now travel from Eire to the North to

purchase most if not all of their goods. The 1986 assessment is that £200m (Eire) are now being spent in Northern Ireland. A most serious situation for the Republic and a total rejection of the 'Failed Northern Entity' propaganda put about by Southern political opportunists.

## The Economy

The Progressive Unionist Party calls for a sound regional planning policy to combat poverty, increase investment in regional industries, pursue progressive education and health policies, not merely for this Region, but for every Region in the United Kingdom. There should be a Committee for Regional Development, formed in conjunction with the Trade Union Movement and all interested Regional political parties.

Large sums of money will be required in all depressed Regions, the National Economic Development Board has clearly indicated in the 1986 Report that very large sums of money will have to be provided if the whole infrastructure network, roads, sewage, water etc. is to be improved or even survive, the future bills will be even greater.

Northern Ireland's regional case is a strong one. Our mass unemployment, high living costs and extensive poverty areas, coupled with low wages produce grim statistics.

We are indeed the most striking example of the results of 60 years of unbridled Tory rule and regional neglect.

## Progressive Alternatives to Bad Regional Policy

- (a) The Fowler Proposal must be halted and reversed.
- (b) Housing development must be expanded to overcome what is

still one of the worst housing problems throughout the Regions. Housing should be provided at an *affordable level* and not merely provided without consideration of cost to tenants.

- (c) Energy costs in Northern Ireland (pegged by a previous Labour Government) should be brought down to lower levels. People forced away from gas should not have to pay more for the alternative heating services.
- (d) Concentrated finances of manufacturing industries should take priority over all industrial expenditure. Financing of service industries should be given lower priority.
- (e) At an opportune time there should be a new financing of tourist facilities and amenities in this Region. There should be a three year ban on all commercial salmon netting in all waters in and around the British Isles and there should be close co-operation between Governments on this issue. There should also be a nautical limit on foreign vessels plundering the fishing grounds of the British Isles. The progressive strategy must be radical and effective.
- (f) There should be a Regional Committee set up to draw up plans for local production of consumer goods, far too many manufactured items and components are made abroad. How many rivets used in our shipyard and aircraft industries are actually made in Northern Ireland? That sad state of affairs applies to thousands of items. A more comprehensive list of Regional Development Areas should be discussed and acted upon in conjunction with the Northern Committee of the ICTU and with an input from interested local political parties.

## Industrial Relations

The British Labour Party should examine the adverse conditions placed upon workers by amendments to Industrial Relations Legislation. The employees rights to unfair dismissal procedure should be restored and enhanced by any incoming Labour Government.

The movement towards cheap youth labour should be halted. All Training (YTP) Schemes should be covered by Department supervision to prevent exploitation of young people. This falsification of unemployment figures should be more fully exposed.

*Health and Social Services.* Britain lags far behind her European partners in many areas. Progressives, like ourselves, would look to the better examples for comparison rather than be continually referred to the plight of the world's worst examples. The problems affecting the elderly, the unemployed and other groups must be tackled and tackled soon before community strife breaks out throughout all of the Regions. Britain, once the founder of the Welfare State now travels towards a state of depression in all areas that should be receiving social priority. How long before we sink to the depths of Mario Biaggi's Bronx.

There are many outstanding issues to be added, but first and foremost

there is the serious issue of deprivation of unemployment benefit from those who have been unemployed for one year or more and are expected to live without any personal income and where the combined income of others in the same family amounts to a mere one third of the average National wage for a worker in 1987!

## Judicial Review

The Progressive Unionist Party has been the only Unionist Party to consistently press for judicial review of court cases that have resulted in most questionable verdicts. The advent of the draconian Diplock Courts brought inevitable bad judgements. The recent spate of Supergrass cases were designed to incarcerate persons who were suspected of political offences in order that political progress could emerge in Northern Ireland. That the strategy failed is now clear to everyone.

However, there are still persons imprisoned on even more flimsy 'evidence' than that used in recent cases. We would ask Parliamentarians to look at the disgraceful procedures adopted during the cases of Regina v Anthony and Others. The case of Cyril Fletcher, jailed on the totally uncorroborated 'statement' of a most dubious witness who has since disappeared. *It should be noted that all questions answered in Parliament surrounding financing of Supergrass*

*cases refer back to finances from 1976 onwards.* We would ask the BLP to follow up with consistency on this issue by pressing for judicial review of these cases. We would also ask the BLP to investigate the present review system now operated by the Prison Services under NIO control, and to implement when possible, a viable and just review system. We would request an on-going liaison with a BLP Committee on these issues.

## Constitutional

There are two major legitimate aspirations in this Region. Nationalists seek unification of Ireland and most Unionists pursue total integration into the British Regional structure. With the present conflict there is little chance of those attitudes changing and the democratic approach is to be pragmatic and recognise the legitimacy of aspirations. Equally it is important to maintain the present policy of 'consent' when considering constitutional movement. To 'actively work' towards unification without the consent of a reasonable majority (say 70 per cent) is undemocratic and a betrayal of the very policy of 'consent'. To actively work against the aspirations of a large majority is a negation of previous consent policies. We would ask the BLP to be clear, concise and democratic in formulating their Policy Document on Northern Ireland. Do not betray your fellow citizens in this Region to appease hollow Nationalism.

PRESENTED TO BRITISH LABOUR PARTY NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON FRIDAY 16th JANUARY 1987