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Mr. Ó Tuathail,

I attach an analysis of the "Ulster Clubs" document, "Forward to Victory".

The document's main, and somewhat sinister, interest lies in what it says about the current political situation, that is, that the Unionist campaign devised by the elected representatives is floundering and the extremists are attempting to exploit the vacuum th~~us~~ created.

PJC
P. Collins
3/3/87

ULSTER CLUBS DOCUMENT
"FORWARD TO VICTORY"

The Ulster Clubs propose setting up a Grand Committee and subordinate committees of Anti Anglo-Irish Treaty, External Affairs, Finance and Personnel, Education, Health and Social Services, Home Affairs and Security, the purpose of which would be to supervise and coordinate the protest against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The Grand Committee, under the auspices of which the Committees are appointed and operated, would comprise all 14 Unionist MPs together with 2 representatives from the DUP, OUP, Young Unionists, Young Democrats, Orange Order, the Black Institution, the Apprentice Boys, Ulster Clubs, Independent Orange Order, UDA and the Workers '86 Committee, 14 MPs outnumbered by 22 nominees. These committees are designed to take over certain aspects of Government in Northern Ireland. Among the purposes of these committees are the withholding of taxes, the disruption of normal public services run by the Northern Ireland Office and the invitation to district councils, the Police Authority and other bodies, to vote allegiance to the Grand Committee.

If the plan succeeded it would have the effect of:

- (1) disrupting normal services in Northern Ireland
- (2) being the first step on the road to UDI
- (3) obstructing part of the security forces (the UDR would sympathise with the Grand Committee and great pressure could be brought to bear on the RUC)
- (4) driving an even greater wedge between the Nationalists and the Unionists as Catholics are not offered any part in the whole structure.

- (5) the transfer of legitimacy to govern from Westminster to the Grand Committee
- (6) appearing to be a Committee system of Government, the like of which is normally only instituted in a civil war situation.
- (7) suggesting possible repartition of Northern Ireland; those areas effectively controlled by the Grand Committee demarcating the limits to a new Unionist territory.

The Ulster Clubs' proposals obviously set themselves up as the next stage of the opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, with the task of coordinating existing Unionist opposition, mobilising those sections of the unionist spectrum that comprise the bulk of the unionist public and that has hitherto remained quiescent, and giving effect to the logical conclusion of the "withdrawal of consent", i.e. the withholding of monies normally due to Government.

The whole proposal is an obvious indictment of the Unionist leadership clearly implying that it has failed to mobilise the majority of the Unionist population and coordinate the sundry loyalist organisations. It emphasises that the structure of the proposals gives primacy to the democratic will of the Unionist public expressed by the two mass demonstrations, the re-elections after the Unionist MPs resignations, and the petition for a referendum. The proposals are said to provide "a necessary focus for the allegiance of the Ulster people who in the present circumstances cannot give their loyalty to the Stormont Castle dictators". This presumably includes Secretary of State, Tom King, and by extension means the Government and Parliament at Westminster. The withholding of taxes echoes previous calls made through recent history of "no taxation without representation" and is, whether the Ulster Clubs agree or not, a refutation of the British Government's right to govern Northern Ireland.

Reactions

Speaking for the British Government, the Secretary of State, Tom King, said that "the proposals were totally irresponsible and contrary to any concept of Unionism".

The leadership of main political unionist parties (OUP/DUP) have said there will be a meeting between their recently formed OUP/DUP Task Force and Ulster Club leaders to discuss these proposals. It is obvious that the political parties would be averse to accepting this initiative as it would effectively reduce their authority and take from them their political power. Furthermore, the OUP, who are by nature conservative and would consider themselves loyal British subjects, would find these proposals extremely difficult to accept. In addition, they would be unwilling to enter a partnership with non-elected individuals especially when they are associated with paramilitary elements.

The DUP, on the other hand, though it would not balk at such associations and would have no qualms about such a radical departure, would likewise not surrender their power and their ambitions to occupy the vanguard of the Unionist protest.

While most of the loyalist organisations mentioned have not yet commented, it is expected that some will have difficulty with the proposals. The UDA have said that they welcomed the proposals in the context of their own call for a mutually agreed strategy.

The SDLP spokesman Seamus Mallon, pouring scorn on "this call for a pan-unionist grand committee", dismissed it as idiotic saying "this latest protest plan would make the unionist campaign a laughing stock abroad".

The Alliance party warned that the proposals would take Northern Ireland down the road to UDI. Sinn Féin describe it as sinister and dangerous.

Comment

The proposals are unlikely to be allowed to get off the ground. Coming soon after the UDA "Common Sense" proposals this is yet again an effort to wrest leadership and power away from the OUP/DUP whose campaign against the Agreement has manifestly failed. The proposals which are a logical extension of the adjournment policy (the attempts to withhold rates, etc and the call for the overall withdrawal of consent) puts the OUP/DUP in an obvious dilemma. The unionist political parties now find themselves in a position where they must be seen to initiate some political movement and obviously the recently established Task Force will be used for this purpose. (It has been suggested that the Task Force was set up in anticipation of the Ulster Clubs move).

In the unlikely event that the proposals would receive widespread support among the majority unionist organisations mentioned it would obviously be a dangerous development on the road to UDI and possible re-partition.

It is known that David Trimble, law lecturer at Queen's University, who some time ago aligned himself with the Ulster Clubs, is the chief architect of the document. While considered intelligent he is known to hold extreme views.

In the light of the above it would be best if we did not comment on these proposals.

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