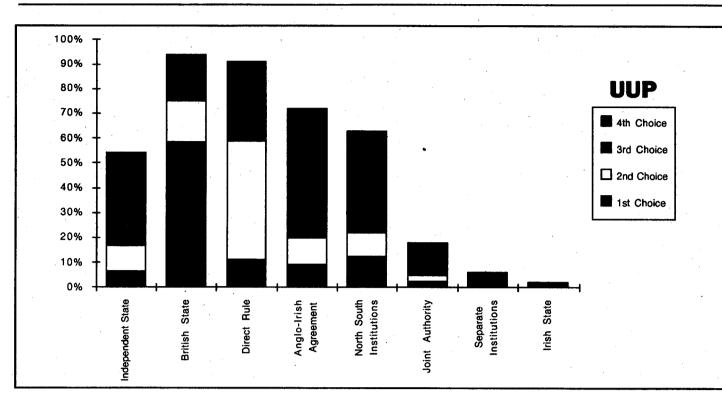
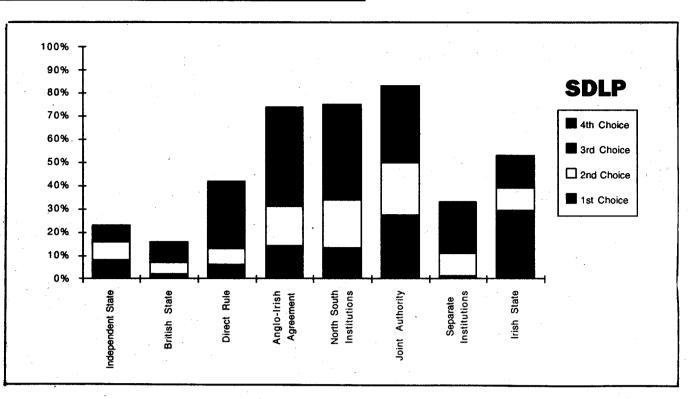
VOTERS GIVE THEIR VIEWS ON WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT





The battle for the middle ground

IN the recent Rowntree poll on 'Peace Building and Public Policy in Northern Ireland' a random sample of the population were asked to put eight options for the future political development of the province in their order of preference.

When the results from the 715 completed questionnaires are analysed for each of the five main political parties, Alliance voters, predictably, favour the middle ground compromises as their first

SDLP and UUP supporters reach this same point of agreement with their third choice while DUP and Sinn Fein voters find these pro-posals most difficult to accept reaching them only as a fourth

Clearly the best prospects for a negotiated settlement at the Peace Talks rests with the NORTHERN Ireland is arguably the 'graveyard' of political deals and compromises. Three members of Queen's University explore the constitutional question and ask if the parties represented at the Talks can reach agreement on the future governance of the province. Colin Irwin reports on the findings of their research.

SDLP and UUP, as they would be able to carry the majority of the Catholic/ Nationalist and Protestant/ Unionist communities with them at a referendum. Such an agreement could also be expected to receive the support of the Alliance

Party and probably some of the other smaller parties represented at the Talks. The SDLP and UUP would appear to have an electoral mandate to shape the terms and conditions for the future

governance of the province.

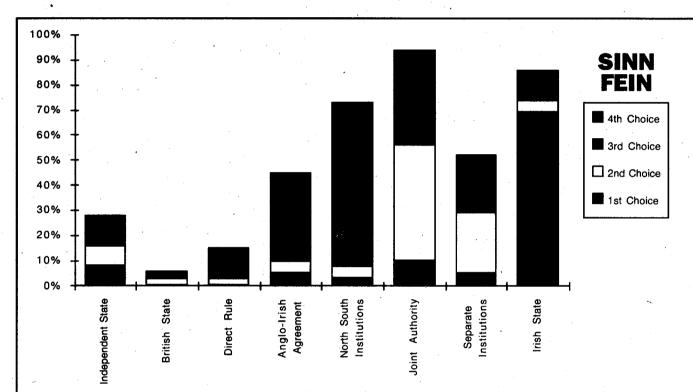
But this summer's marching season has shaken everyone's confidence to the core. At this critical time in the peace process the results of the public opinion survey suggest several opportunities for significant advances to be made by focusing on what is

Firstly, the elimination of political arrangements unacceptable to all parties — an Independent State and Separate Institutions for the management of a segregated

Secondly, the elimination of political arrangements that are completely unacceptable to one community or the other — full incorporation into either the British or Irish State with no other political arrangements.

Finally, some DUP and Sinn Fein supporters will find it very difficult to reach the middle ground, others will find it easier, but the graphs clearly indicate a few are there already. These people require special consideration and every encouragement to be politically bold.

●Peace Building and Public Policy in Northern Ireland is a research project undertaken by Dr Colin Irwin of the Institute Dr Colin Irwin of the Institute of Irish Studies, Professor Tom Hadden of the Law School and Professor Fred Boal of the Geography Department, all at The Queen's University of Belfast. The work is being funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.



The decision is yours

You can try the question if you wish. It appeared in the questionnaire as follows:

"Here are some alternative options for the future development of Northern Ireland. Please read them carefully and then tick them in your order of preference below".

OPTION A — Separate Northern Irish state THE complete separation of Northern Ireland from both

90%

80% 70%

60%

30%

the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland and the establishment of a separate state within the European

OPTION B — full incorporation into the British

Direct rule from Westminster and local government similar to the rest of the United Kingdom with no Northern Ireland Assembly or separate laws for Northern Ireland and no Anglo-Irish

OPTION C — Continued

Direct Rule (no change)

The continuation of direct rule from London in consultation with the Irish Government under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

OPTION D - Power sharing and the Anglo-Irish Government by a Northern Ireland Assembly and power sharing executive under the authority of the British Government but in consultation with the Irish Govern-

ment under the terms of the

DUP

4th Choice

■ 3rd Choice

2nd Choice

st Choice

Anglo-Irish Agreement.

OPTION E - Power sharing with north-south institutions but no joint authority

Government by a Northern Ireland Assembly, power sharing executive and a number of joint institutions established with the Republic of Ireland to deal with matters of mutual interest. (But these arrangements will not include joint authority between the British and Irish Govern-

OPTION F - Joint authority and power

Government by joint authority between the British and Irish Governments in association with an elected power sharing executive and

OPTION G — Separate institutions for the two main

communities Creation of separate structures for the government of communities in Northern Ireland, subject to joint authority by the British and Irish

OPTION H — Full incorporation into the Irish state Full incorporation of Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland to create a single state within the European

An American in an alien culture

abroad, it is difficult to escape the power of the American media. A few years ago I visited Indonesia with a group of American women to produce a cross-cultural

theatre project. Our Indonesian counterparts were initially oddly quiet and surveyed our group thoughtfully. A month later one of them explained the awkward meeting. "We thought you would all be better looking," she told me, pointing helplessly towards a re-run of Beverly Hills 90210 Though no one in Belfast has been quite so frank about

my failure to live up to expectations, I've encoun-tered a variety of over-idealised impressions of the United States. A ticket-taker at the cinema

asked me: "Are you from America?" When I nodded,

he gushed: "It must be brilliant! I wish I was there." When I asked him why, he looked at me strangely and pointed towards the movie

Last week a student excitedly told me he was leaving for Kansas State to earn a PhD. He couldn't wait to get to America where "things are really happen-

was hesitant to tell him that Kansas was not exactly the most "happening" place. However, he remained undaunted in his goal to "marry an American girl and

get a green card".

While many believe in the promise of America, there is also some degree of resent-ment towards the self-centred nature of the United States. After watching Independence Day, where American know-how saves the world, the audience seemed resigned to such a turn of events.

. It is common knowledge

that America is egotistical. "It is because your country is so young," one man patiently told me in a pub. "It is still an

Though the inward-gaze of America cannot be denied, it has a tendency to be blown a little out of proportion. During the Olympics, the Telegraph reported that "Americans were apoplectic with rage" over the outstanding performance of Michelle

While some US journalists were unfairly cynical and suspicious of Smith's achievements, it is also unfair to generalise such sentiments to all Americans.

As summed up in the Wall Street Journal, while the cameras focus on the US athletes "the rest of us are rooting for grandma's home country, for the underdog and the best athletes to take

medals home". Similarly, here in Belfast, people also feel misrepresented by the media. Most are quick to tell me that the impressions of Northern Ireland I've gleaned from coverage back in America are probably inaccurate, that most people want peace, that life is, fairly normal here.
"The television would have

you believe that we all carry

around guns wherever we go," a shopkeeper told me.
"But there's nothing further from the truth.

It is true that the Belfast I am visiting is a very different place from the one I saw on television. I've met young people relieved by their A level results, patient bus drivers and overheard lovers quarrel in the city centre.

It is almost a cliche to mention the kindness and

hospitality I've received. The countryside is breathtaking of course I will recommend it to my friends at home.

However, what has struck me about Belfast is not only the explosive events, but the

complexity and subtlety with which tension pervades every The buzz of the helicopters, the changes in body language, the careful avoidance of cer-

tain subjects. The silences. Despite it all, I admit that I am somewhat grateful for the presence of American television in Belfast. It provides a common ground and has served as the starting point for

many conversations. And thank goodness the BBC shows re-runs of The X-Files. After all, what would an American do without a few

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