A BELFAST TELEGRAPH/QUEEN'S SURVEY

LPOLLS A

In the final part of the Belfast Telegraph/ Queen's Survey, Colin Irwin reports on the key constitutional issues and discovers strong public support for referendums to move the Stormont talks forward.

PROTESTANT

Part of the United Kingdom

Separate Northern

A new All Ireland State

CATHOLIC

Separate Northern

Part of the United Kingdom 28%

A new All Ireland State 39%

PROTESTANT

North - South Institutions

East - West Institutions

No special relationship

Anglo-Irish Agreement

North - South Institutions

East - West Institutions

CATHOLIC

No special relationship 60%

Anglo-Irish Agreement 18% 9%

Joint Authority 23%

Joint Authority

People longing for real talks to start

VEN if there is a ceasefire and even if the problems of decommissioning can be resolved, could the leading parties ever find some basis for agreement on the political future of Northern Ireland?

The results from the Belfast Telegraph/Queen's Survey suggest it is going to be very difficult to put certain parts of the constitutional puzzle

23%

With regard to the relationships between Northern Ireland, the

United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, please indicate

"Acceptable", "Tolerable" or "Unacceptable"

which of the following options you consider to be "Preferred".

24%

26%

21%

With regard to the status of Northern Ireland please indicate

which of the following options you consider to be "Preferred".

"Acceptable", "Tolerable" or "Unacceptable"

Protestants want to stay in the Union and have an end to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Catholics want North-South institutions and 'responsibility sharing'. Can these different views and aspirations be reconciled?

Many of the parties at the Stormont talks have approached the problem of a negotiated settlement on the principle of "nothing is agreed until everything is

agreed". No-one can say this strategy has worked. Perhaps it is time to try something new.

Tolerable

10% ∭

25%

19%

17%

Preferred

Tolerable

20%

57%

36%

32%

12%

11%

15% / 7%

44%

22%

Unacceptable

64%

52%

Unacceptable

to attempt to settle those matters where there is a basis for some sort of consensus, do that first, gain some confidence, and then move on to the more difficult tasks?

the political future of Northern Ireland was split up into a number of component parts for the opinion poll, dealing

• The

• The relationships bepublic of Ireland;

within Northern Ireland.

The public were given a range of policy options and invited to say which ones they considered to be 'preferred'

For the purposes of the poll these terms have the following

similar to it, would be your

you were given a choice but you could certainly live with

you would be willing to put up Unacceptable — This option is completely unacceptable

part of a peace settlement.

options you consider to be or unacceptable?

Part of the United King-Kingdom.

For Protestants the constitutional status of the Union is not something that is open to great deal of negotiation. Eighty five per cent prefer this option while an almost equal number, 83%, consider a new all Ireland state to be

By way of contrast only 39% of Catholics prefer a united Ireland followed by 28% preferring to remain part of the UK and 23% preferring ioint authority.

Why don't the parties agree With this strategy in mind

status of Northern Ireland:

tween Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and the Re-Regional government

'acceptable', 'tolerable' or unacceptable'.

specific meanings:

Preferred — This may not be exactly what you want but

this option, or something very first choice.

Acceptable Shis option is not what you would prefer if

Tolerable — This option is

not what you want. But, as part of a lasting peace settle-ment for Northern Ireland,

under any circumstances. You would not accept it, even as

Question 1:
With regard to the status of
Northern Ireland please indicate which of the following

 Separate Northern Irish The complete separation of Northern Ireland from both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland and the establishment of a separate state.

dom - No change in the sovereignty of Northern Ireland as part of the United ● A New All Ireland State

— A united single state com-prised of the whole of Ire-

● Joint Authority — Joint authority between the British and Irish governments.
(See tables 1 and 2)

unacceptable.

So Protestants want to maintain the Union and Catholics may be willing to negotiate some sort of acc-



Protest rally 1986: Protestants remain opposed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

tional question. However, their apparent flexibility is largely due to the influence of SDLP supporters.

Seventy eight per cent of Sinn Fein voters prefer a new all-Ireland state and 60% of them consider remaining part of the United Kingdom to be

unacceptable. Clearly the options pre-sented here, while providing some possibilities for constituaccommodation, still have major obstacles to overcome. These difficult issues will probably have to be visited again.

Ouestion 2: With regard to relationships between Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, please indicate which of the following options you consider to b preferred, acceptable, tolerable or unacceptable?

• No special relationships no special arrangements need to be established for the government of Northern Ireland beyond those presently agreed to in international law as part of the international community and as partners in the European Union.

Anglo-Irish Agr government in consultation with the Irish Government under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

● North-South institutions the establishment of a number of joint institutions between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to deal with matters of mutual

● East-West institutions the establishment of a number of joint institutions between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland to deal with matters of mutual in-

(See tables 3 and 4). Catholics clearly prefer North-South institutions with 46% of their number selecting this option as preferred.

Although 60% of Protestants do not want any special relationships to be established with the Republic of Ireland, 17% do want North-South institutions, 21% consider such institutions acceptable and a further 26% are willing to tolerate them as part of a lasting peace settlement.

One thing Protestants do not want is the continuation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Fifty seven per cent consider that option to unacceptable.

So Catholics want North-South institutions and Protes-

Here are some options for the use of referendums in Northern

Ireland. Please indicate which of the following options you

lesser of current evils and may be willing to accept them as

The DUP would be most resistant to such an agreement. Fifty three per cent of their supporters consider such institutions to be unacceptable while only 29% of UUP voters share the same objec-

part of a negotiated settle-

But what are North-South institutions? They can be almost anything from consultative and co-operative bodies that consider agricultural issues, such as what to do about BSE and fowl pest, to executive bodies that could co-ordinate economic development.

Clearly what kinds of institutions have what powers over what areas of public policy are all matters for clarification and much discussion.

With regards to regional government within Northern Ireland please indicate which

Preferred

Acceptable

of the following options you consider to be preferred, acceptable, tolerable or unacceptable?

 Devolved Majority Rule — Government by an elected Northern Ireland Assembly that operates on a basis of simple majority rule.

• Devolved Responsibility
Sharing — Elective govern-

of sharing responsibilities and No Special Regional Government (UK) — Integration into the British state and no separate Northern Ireland

ment that operates on a basis

 No Special Regional Government (Ireland) — Integration into the Irish state and no separate Northern Ireland

 Separate institutions for the two main communities — Creation of separate structures for the government of each of the two main communities in Northern Ire-(See tables 5 and 6).

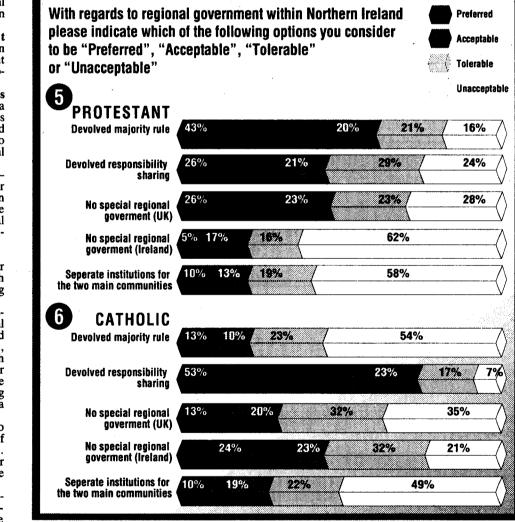
Sharing is the clear reference of 53% of Catholics with only 7% strongly opposed to this Forty three per cent of Protestants would prefer majority rule but 26% also

Devolved Responsibility

prefer responsibility sharing, with a further 21% considering this option to be acceptable and another 29% willing to tolerate it as part of a lasting peace settlement.

As with North-South institutions the concept of devolved responsibility sharing will mean many different things to different people, or for that matter different

Perhaps the local politicians can be pursuaded to use the opportunity presented by the General Election to elaborate on their preferred models for regional government with a view to debating these issues if and when real talks start in



Referendums could bypass politicians

THE political vacuum created by the frustrations of little or no progress at the Stormont talks has very nearly plunged Northern Ireland back into the Troubles at their bloodiest and most violent.

Intransigence and its companion dangers cannot be risked again. When all else fails do the people of Northern Ireland want to be consulted and given an opportunity to play their part in

The Northern Ireland (Entry into Negotiations) Act allows the Secretary of State 'from time to time (to) direct the holding of a referendum for the purpose of obtaining the views of the people of Northern Ireland matter relating to Northern

Ireland' How do the people want this power to be exercised on their behalf? In the survey this question was addressed as

Here are some options for the use of referendums in Northern Ireland. Please indicate which of the following options you consider to be preferred, acceptable, tolerable or unacceptable?

• A referendum to replace the talks — The talks process should be abandoned and the people of Northern Ireland should decide their own political future through a series of referendums

 A referendum to advance the talks -- If the talks become stalled by serious difficulties a few key issues could be placed before the people in a referendum. A referendum to advise

the talks — The issues under discussion at the talks should be placed before the people so that they can advise the politicians on the best way for-

 A referendum to endorse a talks settlement — A referendum should only be used to ascertain the will of the people when a final settlement is been agreed to at the

● No referendums — Only elected politicians should decide the political future of Northern Ireland.

There is little difference in the responses to this question by way of political affiliation

or religious denomination. Everyone in Northern Ireland seems to be of a single mind.

Only 12% of the population want to leave the future of Northern Ireland entirely in the hands of politicians. Seventy per cent find this option unacceptable. But 42% also find the option of replacing the talks by a referendum unacceptable.

Referendums to endorse, advise or advance the talks appear to be the most acceptable options. And of these the most popular overall is a referendum to advance the talks.

This proposal is very clear and to the point — If the talks become stalled by serious difficulties a few key issues could be placed before the people in a referendum. The politicians have now

been fairly warned. If they can not decide the outstanding matters that prevent the establishment of real talks the people of Northern Ireland will be very pleased to do it for them. It should be remembered

ing to have decommissioning problems dealt with by a subcommittee so that the that 69% of the people surveyed for this poll were willmain business of the talks can not be held up.

consider to be "Preferred", "Acceptable", "Tolerable" ← ♦ Tolerable or "Unacceptable" Unacceptable ALL OF NORTHERN IRELAND 42% A referendum to replace the Talks 11% A referendum to advance the Talks 11%/ (22) A referendum to advise the Talks 16%/ 2.5% A referendum to endorse a Talks settlement No referendum GRAPHICS: GRAEME FORSTER

A full 94% also want a negotiated settlement. Armed now with both the legal powers and public support to use a referendum, to resolve a

few key issues, there is surely no reason why that most modest of aspirations, a lasting peace, should continue to be denied.

HOW THE POLL WAS CONDUCTED

■ This poll has been commissioned by the Belfast Telegraph in collaboration with the Institute of Irish Studies at The Queen's University of Belfast.

■ The project has also been supported by a grant from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

■ With the co-operation of members from the ten leading political parties in Northern Ireland the research was carried out by Dr Colin Irwin of the Institute with the additional assistance of Professor Tom Hadden of the Law School and Professor Fred Boal of the Geo-

graphy Department.

Market Research Northern Ireland (MRNI) conducted the fieldwork for the survey between March 12-26 and 932 face-to-face interviews were completed from 32 points across Northern Ireland to give a representative quota sample of the

population. In all respects the poll was undertaken within the guidelines set out by the Market Research Society (UK) and in accordance with their

code of conduct. ■ The opinions expressed in the survey and the conclusions reached are not those of Queen's University.