THE FUTURE OF NORTHERN IRELAND: OPINION POLL EXCLUSIVE

What hope for Council of the Isles?

Prime Minister Tony Blair at the Downing Street press conference yesterday after his Council of the Isles talks, which are aimed at moving the Talks process forward.

For most people in Northern Ireland, it was probably a big surprise to learn of his phone call, because the phone bell was the idea worst world and what we have is a body concerned.

Over the years a number of initiatives have been made to find a political solution to the Northern Ireland problem, but none has been successful.

However, the only body that can consider the Anglo-Irish Agreement was the Special Committee of the Statesmanship that is intended to establish a new constitutional settlement in Northern Ireland, and the Council of the Isles.

Most governments are based on a number of principles and the Anglo-Irish Agreement is no exception to that rule. But if these principles, if any, could be a basis for a new society.

With this question in mind, people were asked if they thought the Anglo-Irish Agreement was 'essential' to the stability of Northern Ireland or 'central' to the stability of Northern Ireland. All of the principles, ranging from the possibility of a united Ireland to the appointment of a new constitutional order, were considered 'essential' or 'central' to the stability of Northern Ireland.

Many nationalists and unionists also find the language used in section 75 of the British 1920 Government and Irish 1937 Constitution of the Republic of Ireland to be a litmus test of constitutional changes. Both the British and Irish governments have a responsibility, for the first time, for the implementation of any constitutional changes.

Relational constitutional solutions should also be part of the process of constitutional change, but this question was not asked.

Ritchie, on behalf of the DUP, proposed that the British and Irish governments jointly agree to these principles of constitutional change, or if they agreed to a majority of these principles, if any, could be a basis for a new society.

Is a Council of the Islands or Isles an acceptable replacement for the Anglo-Irish Agreement? In the fourth and final article from the Queen's University/Rowntree Trust opinion poll, DR COLIN IRVINE examines this question and the need for constitutional reform.

CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

In an effort to meet the concerns of the Irish people, the Government of Ireland, in a recent statement, has outlined several possibilities in the manner of the constitutional relationship that exists between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

One can be done by meeting with the British government on the Irish question, the Joint Committee of the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom, and the existing constitutional status of Northern Ireland.

The complete deletion of the Republic's constitutional change activities should be considered to be 'essential' by those who support the position that 70% of Catholics consider such a deletion to be 'unnecessary' as part of a lasting settlement. The Joint Committee is likely to be a compromise, but it is not a compromise.

The answer to the question of whether the Joint Committee of the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom can be used in this manner is not clear.

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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IRELAND AND THE ISLES

Irish and on the island of Ireland as a whole and that all the right of British citizens who come to Britain, should be guaranteed.

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What principles should British and Irish co-operation be based on? Essential Desirable Acceptable Tolerable

Co-operation in Europe

Peace and stability in Northern Ireland

Equal rights in the six major traditions

Rejection of violence for political objectives

Representatives from both communities

The recognition of the present social and values of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland

The right of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland to become independent

A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT

I N BROAD terms, the major elements of a comprehensive settlement will be contained in the opinion poll. The final opinion poll was conducted in December 1999.

A Regional Assembly, comprising representatives of both communities, will be established to deal with a wide range of issues, and will be run by an independent commission of the Community Assembly, the Public Consultation and the Irish Assembly.

A Bill of Rights that deals specifically with the political, social and cultural problems that have arisen in Northern Ireland, and which provides for the implementation of the responsibilities of the Community Assembly, and the promotion of the rights of the citizen, has been introduced.

The public opinion survey was conducted by Market Research Northern Ireland between December 4 and 22 to produce 1,827 completed questionnaires, which represented the cross-section of Northern Ireland in terms of age, gender, social class, educational and geographical area.

The complete findings of the poll will be published in the February issue of Finnmag.