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9

Consultation on measures to improve the operation of the Northern Ireland Assembly

Chapter 1: Number of seats in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Question 1

The Northern Ireland Assembly should be reduced from 108 members to 96 in line with the Westminster boundary changes. The Assembly should not be reduced any further due to the fact that any less seats would lead to less representation of Northern Irish citizens in the Assembly and may begin to affect the current 'safe' balance of Unionist - Nationalist seats in the Assembly.

Chapter 2: Length of Assembly terms

Question 2

I believe that the Northern Irish people are more than capable of voting in three different elections on one day. One has to ask oneself what difference a few months or a year would make to people's political opinions.

Question 3

I believe the current Northern Ireland Assembly should remain in place until 2015, when there would be an election. The 2015 date should not be changed as the Northern Irish people elected these representatives in the knowledge they would serve 4 year terms.

Question 4

After the 2015 election I believe the Assembly should move to a fixed 5 year term as this would show continued political stability in Northern Ireland and would be, in the long run, be more practical too.

Chapter 3: Multiple Mandates

Question 5

I believe that representatives should be prohibited from "double jobbing" as this is preventing new individuals being able to get elected as well as showing the outside world that the Northern Ireland political scene is only a small, inclusive group.

Question 6

I don't believe MLAs should be prohibited from being members of the House of Lords. This is because the House of Lords does not hold a high a status of the House of Commons and sometimes MLAs are made Peers only in recognition of certain achievements and not as "working peers"

Question 7

It is better to reach an agreement so that such practices can be banned, if necessary after the 2015 elections.

Chapter 4: Government and Opposition

Question 8

I do believe the Northern Ireland Assembly would operate more effectively with a opposition. I think this can

be best achieved by the largest unionist, largest nationalist and largest cross-community party forming the government bloc, with ministries being given using the current d'Hondt method in proportion to the party's strength in the government bloc. I therefore believe the opposition should be comprised of the smaller parties, as long as the two largest parties in the opposition bloc are unionist and nationalist parties. I believe shadow ministries should be given out using the same method as government ministries but at the same time insuring shadow ministries have an equal Unionist - Nationalist distribution.