



UlsterUnionists

Simply British

4 October 2004

Dear Sir/Madam

UUP RESPONSE TO PARTY POLITICAL BROADCASTING PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Ulster Unionist Party believes that Northern Ireland political parties are placed at a distinct disadvantage in not being offered party political broadcasts outside of an election.

We feel that political parties here are missing out on the opportunity to interface and perhaps connect with the public because of the limitations in place. The two principal political parties in the UK had more than 3 times as many broadcasts as our party. This enables them to articulate key messages and better inform the public of their policies. It also enables the public to engage and respond to initiatives from the political parties.

We support the Commission recommendation under paragraph 15 that broadcasters should be obliged to offer broadcasts around key political events to qualifying parties in Northern Ireland.

In addition we share the Commission's analysis in paragraph 15.1 that Northern Ireland parties should be offered similar opportunities as their counterparts in the rest of the UK to prepare broadcasts around key events in the political calendar.

At a time when the Electoral Commission is encouraging the public to come out and vote, it is very important that political parties here are in a position to back up that message by putting their policies across, enabling people to make an informed choice before casting their vote.

In short, the Ulster Unionist Party would like to see a level playing field being created in party political broadcasting across the UK. We believe that we should have the flexibility to prepare and have the opportunity to disseminate party broadcasts at more regular intervals. We would be content if Northern Ireland was brought into line with the rest of the UK in terms of number, timing and intervals of party political broadcast.

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