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Integrating Ulster with rest of UK

As a constitutional lawyer I have recently been invited to give informal advice to a non-sectarian group who want the Conservative and Labour parties to organise in Northern Ireland. I support this aim, and am disposed to help. My preliminary researches have however raised doubts on which I would value the opinion of your readers. From the early 1920s, when Northern Ireland came into separate existence as one part of the United Kingdom, the province has been treated by successive British Governments as significantly different from the remaining part.

Over this period, unavowed official policy seems to have been directed to securing that ultimately Northern Ireland shall be united with the south in one republic. There are several reasons for this policy. Northern Ireland is expensive to service. The Government prefer, if they cannot have an ally across the Irish Sea, to have a neutral rather than a hostile force, which is made more likely if the north is conceded. It has been essential to retain the support of the United States, first against the Germans and later against the Russians. Because of the strong Irish lobby across the Atlantic, this is aided if our Government connives at the idea of ultimate Irish union.

For these reasons I believe the British Government have never wholeheartedly endorsed the concept most Britons innocently believe to be our national aim, namely the complete integration of Northern Ireland with the rest of the United Kingdom. The Anglo-Irish Agreement is the latest manifestation of this. So should I give my modest assistance to those who strive to make the integration of the United Kingdom a reality? Or should I accept that a cynical charade has been going on for the past seventy-odd years, and cynically join those who watch it?¹

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¹ *The Times*, 3 June 1989.