

AEEU RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS ON A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

The AEEU fully supports the aims and objectives, which are stated in the document: 'Making a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland'. It is vital for the future political stability of Northern Ireland that the issues addressed in this document are accepted and fully implemented in Northern Ireland. This is especially important with regards to the sections on Equality and non-discrimination, the rights of women and social, economic and environmental rights.

In recent months we have seen why a Bill of Rights is so important, in terms of the right to education, the rights of children and the rights to freedom of thought, expression, information and association. The AEEU fully supports all initiatives, which will help to ensure peace in Northern Ireland and encourage inward investment and development in the region.

However the AEEU does have some concerns about 2 of the document. While the AEEU supports the institution of the Northern Ireland assembly, the AEEU have always actively campaigned against the introduction of proportional representation in any form. While we acknowledge that Northern Ireland is a special case in terms of the reasons and motivations for this electoral policy, the AEEU maintain that any concessions granted to Northern Ireland will ultimately have an effect on the rest of the United Kingdom. This is especially the case when forms of proportional representation are advocated for the Westminster elections, as this could only be achieved with a change to British statute.

Proportional Representation equals an unstable government and a lack of clear and determined governance. It is unacceptable that a political party who received less than 10% of the national vote should be in a position to dominate policy. This would be of specific concern in Northern Ireland as it could be seen as a mechanism to isolate some religious views while promoting others.

However the AEEU would be happy to assist the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission with any of their work and with the

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implementation of any of the other areas suggested by this document.