

## **Adams – written evidence (FGU0002)**

### **House of Lords Constitution Committee Inquiry into the Future Governance of the UK**

1. As a citizen of Northern Ireland, I'm concerned that improvements in human rights passed in England, particularly LGBT rights, may not apply to Northern Ireland, or may be delayed in their application to NI. Our local government is dominated by fundamentalist religious groups who hold regressive views on LGBT issues.
2. The Good Friday Agreement requires that government and policing bodies in NI respect the European Convention on Human Rights. This is beneficial to citizens of NI. I am concerned about speculation that Westminster may overturn the Human Rights Act, which would undermine this requirement of the Good Friday Agreement. ECHR must continue to be applied dilligently throughout the UK.
3. I'm concerned about the immunity from Freedom of Information Act given to the National Crime Agency, and its implications. There is little public perception here in NI that the NCA is fulfilling its task of tackling organized crime; it is widely believed here that many shops continue to pay protection money to groups such as the UDA, a problem with our local government has not tackled. At the same time, the unprecedented secrecy with which the NCA operates, as a domestic crime squad, makes it difficult for the people to have faith in their activities. The NCA must be held more accountable to the public than it currently is; statistics and figures given its annual reports are not subject to public scrutiny.
4. During the COVID-19 lockdown period, travel remained open between NI and mainland Great Britain. Charts showed the Republic of Ireland had fewer cases per capita. I would have made more sense to limit travel between NI and mainland GB in order to geographically isolate the virus; this would isolate it from human transmission as well as unknown animal vectors. (I would cite the fictional novel World War Z, in which the island of Ireland manages to remain immune to a zombie outbreak by virtue of geographic isolation, allowing both the Queen and Pope are able to take refuge in Ireland.) I suspect the local NI government would not make this decision on their own, as it is dominated by the DUP, a party who wishes to maintain strong connections to GB.
5. A sort of border between NI and mainland Great Britain only causes limited inconvenience to many people, as we need photographic ID to fly to England anyway. It must be remembered, though, that many NI citizens take advantage of their right to possess Irish passports.
6. Remote voting in the House of Commons would enable MPs from Scotland, Northern Ireland, and northern parts of England to vote on issues at Westminster more easily, and thus represent their constituencies.
7. I felt the government's handling of COVID-19 underappreciated the use of masks, and as of March 2021 continues to do so. In Tokyo and other major Japanese cities, masks have been commonly worn for decades to prevent transmission of cold and flu during the winter season, and are highly effective. In NI, where masks are required in a shop but not outside, most people I see will put on their mask while entering a shop and take it off after they leave. (They have masks, and left their home for the sole purpose of going to the shop, but for some reason will not wear in on the street.) Deliverymen likewise routinely fail to wear masks. I also find that shops will still serve customers who

are not wearing their mask or are wearing it incorrectly, and have heard of drivers on public transport feel they are unable to enforce mask-wearing. I feel the government should have done more to normalize mask-wearing at all times when outside of one's home, and worked with major retailers such as supermarkets and newsagents to ensure that masks are displayed on sale as prominently as newspapers. The government should also have worked with broadcasters so that television news and other time-limited broadcasts require newscasters to wear masks, perhaps with the addition of a sign language interpreter to account for the lack of ability for hard-of-hearing read lips. People should also have been advised not to remove their masks when someone has difficulty hearing them; I see people removing their mask and leaning in, which is exactly the wrong behaviour.

*20/03/2021*