

A NOTE ON BORDER POLLS

Andy Pollak

Andy Pollak was an Irish Times Belfast reporter and editor of Fortnight magazine(1981-1985); coordinator, Opsahl Commission on ways forward for Northern Ireland (1992-1993); founding director, Centre for Cross Border Studies (1999-2013); and co-author, 'Seamus Mallon:A Shared Home Place' (2019).

1. I should make clear from the outset that I am not a fan of **binary referendums** or border polls to resolve complex, existential, zero-sum questions to do with separatism, national

eminent Norwegian human rights lawyer, Torkel Opsahl, canvassed public opinion for ways out of Northern Ireland's violent deadlock and published an influential report (also published as a best-selling book) containing ideas from around 3,000 people. The *Opsahl Report* has been widely recognised as one of the seeds out of which the Northern Ireland peace process grew.

6. Mallon stressed the importance of a new **Opsahl-type initiative**