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No. 3

NEW IRELAND FORUM

Public Session

Tuesday, 4 October, 1983

Dublin Castle

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NEW IRELAND FORUM

Public Session
Tuesday, 4 October, 1983
Dublin Castle

11.30 a.m.

Chairman: Dr. Colm Ó hEocha.

FIANNA FÁIL

FINE GAEL

MEMBERS

Mr. Charles J. Haughey T.D.	Dr. Garret FitzGerald T.D. The Taoiseach
Mr. Brian Lenihan T.D.	Mr. Peter Barry T.D. Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr. David Andrews T.D.	Miss Myra Barry T.D.
Mr. Gerry Collins T.D.	Senator James Dooge
Mr. Jim Tunney T.D.	Mr. Paddy Harte T.D.
Mr. Ray McSharry T.D.	Mr. John Kelly T.D.
Mr. John Wilson T.D.	Mr. Enda Kenny T.D.
Mrs. Eileen Lemass T.D.	Mr. Maurice Manning T.D.
Dr. Rory O'Hanlon T.D.	

ALTERNATES

Mr. Paudge Brennan T.D.	Mr. David Molony T.D.
Mr. Jackie Fahey T.D.	Mrs. Nora Owen T.D.
Mr. John O'Leary T.D.	Mr. Ivan Yates T.D.
Mr. Jimmy Leonard T.D.	

LABOUR

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY

MEMBERS

Mr. Dick Spring T.D. The Tánaiste and Minister for the Environment	Mr. John Hume M.E.P.
Mr. Frank Cluskey T.D. Minister for Trade, Commerce and Tourism	Mr. Séamus Mallon
Mr. Mervyn Taylor T.D.	Mr. Austin Currie
Mr. Frank Prendergast T.D.	Mr. Joe Hendron
Senator Stephen McGonagle	Mr. E. K. McGrady

ALTERNATES

Mrs. Eileen Desmond T.D.	Mr. Seán Farren
Senator Mary Robinson	Mr. Frank Feely
	Mr. Hugh Logue
	Mr. Paddy O'Donoghue
	Mr. Paschal O'Hare

Chairman (Dr. Colm Ó hEocha): Members of the New Ireland Forum, Ladies and Gentlemen, the meeting is called to order. This morning we start this public session by having a presentation of the views of Mr. Seán MacBride, SC, a gentleman who needs no introduction from me. His distinguished and honoured career is well known to us all and, rather than waste time in my talking about Mr. MacBride to you, it would be far more interesting to use that time in hearing Mr. MacBride's views. He has submitted a long document to the Forum for which we are very thankful and we have all had an opportunity of reading that. With his agreement we will go straight into questions by members of the Forum. I should like to ask the first questioner, Deputy Brian Lenihan, to start.

Deputy Lenihan: Mr. Chairman, would Mr. MacBride accept that a united Ireland is the appropriate framework within which different systems and structures of Government could be developed?

Mr. MacBride: It is essential to recognise that only the Irish people have the right to exercise sovereignty over the country as a whole and that, of course, includes the North as well as the South. It is within that overall framework that I think the time has come when we should look at the political and parliamentary structures we would envisage in a united Ireland.

Deputy D. Andrews: With respect, I find it very difficult to hear the submission of Mr. MacBride.

Mr. MacBride: There are a number of things we should recall at the moment. There has been a tendency on the part of some public figures in recent years to give the impression that they regard Britain's claim to the exercise of sovereignty of portion of the country as being justified. This is in complete contradiction with the attitude of all Irish leaders throughout the centuries. In this century the Irish people asserted in the Declaration of Independence, adopted on 21 January, 1919, and again in the Constitution of this State, adopted on 1 July, 1937 by referendum, and again by resolution unanimously adopted by Dáil Éireann on 10 May, 1949, that they rejected any claim by Britain to exercise sovereignty over any portion of the island. We have to take this as the starting point of any inquiry in search of any solution. We have to accept this as being the minimum requirement upon which a solution must be based.

On the question of self-determination, there are four well recognised principles which determine what constitutes a "national

entity" for the purposes of national self-determination. First of all, there must be a well-defined territorial unit with clearly defined frontiers. Thank goodness, in our case, we are lucky in that the frontiers of the island have been marked for us by the seas around the island and we have no frontier problems. Frontier problems are indeed the cause of many wars around the world at the moment. Secondly, the "national unit" claiming self-determination must have a reasonably homogeneous population. The population of Ireland is probably more homogeneous than the population of most countries of the world.

Its population is of the same colour — white; it has a population which is Christian; there are Catholics and Protestants but by and large there are probably fewer religious tensions here than in most other countries. All religious units, apart from the Jewish confraternity, are Christian. So, the problems from the point of view of the homogeneous population do not exist. The third qualification is that the "national unit" should have a long-standing history. There has been a long-standing Irish history, from the days of Saint Patrick, at least 15 centuries ago. Fourthly, there is the expressed will of the majority of the inhabitants of the unit which claims to be recognised as a national entity. In the case of Ireland roughly 80 per cent of the population of the island as a whole favours a united Ireland. If this is to be examined from the point of view of the population of the area of the "national unit" we could also say that the population inhabiting 80 per cent of the island is also in favour of national unity. There is roughly an 80 per cent majority, taking the numerical population of the country as a whole and also the population of 80 per cent of the territory for national unity. There never has been any legal justification for cutting off those six north-eastern counties from the rest of Ireland. There is no historical or geographical basis for the partition that was established in 1920. At least three of the counties cut off have a majority population in favour of unity with the rest of Ireland.

In the course of the history of the world there have been many cases where minorities have sought to impose their will on the majority and this has been invariably rejected. The most notable of these instances was in the War of Independence in the United States. Here it will be useful to recall a well known statement by President Abraham Lincoln on 18 February 1861 in which he summarised the position in this way:

On what rightful principle may a State being not more than one-fifth part of the nation in soil and population break up the nation and then cause a proportionately larger sub-division of itself in the most arbitrary way?

In the case of Ireland no doubt can exist that it forms a national unit which has the right to exercise national self-determination and it has been recognised for a long time in Europe, America and the rest of the world that Ireland is one nation. The concept which has been developed in recent years that there are two cultures is a completely inimical piece of nonsense. There is no country in which there are not two or more cultures. There are fewer cultures on this island than there are in most other countries. From my experience in the UN in different parts of the world I have known countries with five, six, seven and eight different languages. Switzerland, for instance, has four languages, three official and one other. There are people with different origins, different religions and different cultures but that has not prevented the country from being unified and working effectively as one national unit.

Deputy Lenihan: I take it that Mr. MacBride would accept that the concept of a United Ireland could contain diverse ways and means of accommodating the identities and aspirations of people belonging to various traditions and it need not mean the domination of one tradition by another.

Mr. MacBride: I have dealt with two or three options in my paper that could be taken which would facilitate this. I think we went wrong initially in 1922 by adopting a system of parliamentary government that was not suited to the particular requirements of this country, having regard to its history. I think we need to go right back to the beginnings of this State.

Deputy Lenihan: Would Mr. MacBride accept that the abandonment of the concept of a united Ireland could lead to as dangerous a political situation in Ireland as existed at the time of the civil war?

Mr. MacBride: We have had virtually a state of civil war for almost 60 years now. It surprises me occasionally when people talk down here as if the whole situation only erupted ten or 12 years ago. It existed right from 1920 onwards. Most of you are far too young to remember the pogroms when there were literally hundreds of people massacred and when people had to leave the area. We even had to set up refugee camps down here. There has been a continual state of civil war almost since 1920.

Deputy Lenihan: You were Minister for Foreign Affairs under a Fine Gael Taoiseach and in Coalition with the Fine Gael and Labour Parties. There was, at that time, a bi-partisan policy in relation to Partition. Indeed, in your submission, you referred to a

joint resolution in the Dáil in the names of the Taoiseach, Mr. Costello, and Mr. de Valera who was then leader of the Opposition. Could you describe, in a little more detail, the attitudes of the Coalition parties at that time and why you think a strong affirmation of a joint Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour resolution on the lines of that resolution adopted in 1949 would be helpful in the current situation?

Mr. MacBride: I think it could. The 1949 resolution was the result of very close, careful negotiations which it was my privilege to carry out with the leaders of the different parties at that time. Mr. Costello asked me to conduct negotiations with Mr. de Valera at the time, and with Mr. Norton. The resolution to which I referred in my paper — Part 6 of my submission to the Forum — was the result of an agreed, very carefully worded resolution setting out what the unanimous views of all the parties in the Dáil were at that period.

Deputy Lenihan: Would Mr. MacBride accept the notion that the repeal of certain Articles in the Constitution, notably Articles 2 and 3, would help persuade Northern Unionists to look more favourably on the idea of a United Ireland?

Mr. MacBride: I do not think it would have the slightest effect on the attitude of the hardline Unionists in the North so long as Britain keeps on underwriting their stand against the reunification of the country. On the other hand, and, I think the repeal of Articles 2 or 3 of the Constitution would bring us right back to where we were at the time of the civil war in 1922; I do not think that such a repeal would be accepted by the people here.

Chairman: Deputy Molony.

Deputy Molony: A very interesting part of your submission consisted of the suggestion that a new Ireland should be based, or have structures based, on the Swiss model rather than on the existing models in this country, or the UK system. I am interested to know whether you would envisage that a new Ireland would start out with such a structure or whether there should be intermediate models such as confederation. For example, you suggest that central Government have responsibility for foreign affairs, central finances, security and health. It seems that security is a particular problem in the context of the present Ireland and I wonder how you envisage that security would operate and what structures you would envisage would exist to ensure that there was a trust in different parts of the community in the security system.

Mr. MacBride: Switzerland probably has more security problems than most other countries. It is the European headquarters of the United Nations. There are major international organisations there. There are representatives from nearly all the different warring factions in the world there. Though there is this tremendous decentralisation in Switzerland security works extremely well, very efficiently and there are no problems. If you will permit me, I think that we are inclined to over-emphasise “security” the whole time. “Security” only arises because of the situation. If we could resolve the whole question of Partition then the whole “security” question would vanish by itself. We have got far too much into the habit of thinking in terms of “security”. There is probably no other country in the world which has had so many different Public Safety Acts, Emergency Powers Acts, Offences Against the State Acts, Treason Acts, emergency measures of all kinds. We have nearly deformed our legal system under the umbrella of calls for “security” and I think we should look much more to the task of removing the causes of the insecurity resulting from terrorist activities, the illegal activities that are taking place. You could fill more and more volumes of Statute Books with security measures but this will not remedy the situation. So far none of the measures that have been taken in the North, here or in London, has had the slightest effect on the extent of violence that has been taking place in the North. That is not the remedy. The remedy is to remove the cause of the violence.

Deputy Molony: You would envisage that in a new Ireland we would have structures based on the Swiss model from the very start?

Mr. MacBride: Yes, I think it is a pity that we did not do so from the start, Alfred O’Rahilly was the only person at that time who had a clear vision; he urged that we needed a much more decentralised form of Government. There was a tendency at that period to concentrate on a system of government based on the British model or on the American model. Alfred O’Rahilly pointed out, quite correctly, I think, that we should not model ourselves on a big power but that we should look to models from smaller agricultural countries that had similar problems to the ones we had. He picked on Switzerland as a model. He prepared a draft Constitution which, strangely enough, has vanished. Nobody can find a copy of it. It is quite an extraordinary feature of this period that most of our historians seemed to have glossed over the period of six months from the signing of the Treaty until the civil war started. That was a crucial six months period during which the first Constitution was being drafted. It is only quite recently that some American historians have produced some papers on this period.

These are well worth reading and I would very much urge the members of the Forum to read these papers. They give a fairly good indication of how little thought was given at that period to the questions we are discussing today. At that period the only question being discussed was that of sovereignty, our relationship with the Crown and so on. The issue of a united Ireland, the issue of safeguarding minorities was hardly touched on. It is very interesting to read these papers. We should go right back to square one now. If we do succeed in getting agreement for a united Ireland what kind of united Ireland will it be? Will we keep on trying to develop the present parliamentary centralised system which is not particularly attractive and has very little attraction for people in the North? Or should we have a decentralised federation or confederation of cantons or counties? I think that a confederation of 32 counties would give a tremendous local option to each county and this is something that is desirable and feasible. It is how Switzerland is being run and it is perhaps the best run country in the world, certainly in Europe, and it is probably also the wealthiest country in Europe. The Swiss have been able to operate very successfully a completely decentralised form of government.

Deputy Molony: I should like you to expand on your proposals regarding the protection of individual and minority rights. Specifically, do you think that the rights that are protected in international conventions to which both ourselves and the British Government subscribe are sufficient to cover all of the rights that one would wish to cover so far as the North of Ireland is concerned?

Mr. MacBride: By and large they are, but I would prefer if we would incorporate also in our domestic laws the provisions of the UN Covenants to deal with some additional rights. I have included in my submission a list of international agreements to which we, with the UK and with Belfast, are parties. We would need to go through these to ascertain which would be useful. There is tremendous value in using a mechanism which is already there, which has been accepted and which has been working very efficiently for a period of 30 to 40 years. Certainly this is something that should be looked at. I wish also that we would avail of this occasion to ratify some of the conventions which for some unknown reason we have not ratified. They are not conventions that would cover this particular issue but the fact that we have not ratified them gives us a bad name internationally. The beauty of the European Convention is that it provides a mechanism for the enforcement of the rights guaranteed so that anybody, either North or South, who feels aggrieved can lodge a

complaint with the European Commission on Human Rights and ultimately can go to the European Court on Human Rights. Therefore, we have already a mechanism that is working and is accepted. Without waiting for the reunification of the country we could tomorrow incorporate the provisions of the European Convention into domestic law both down here and in the North. I do not see how the British Government could object to that. In that situation there would be access to the European Commission and to the European Court on Human Rights. If you want to go beyond rights that are not covered by the European Convention, you would have to get the agreement of the Council of Europe that they would be prepared to have such rights included and to amend the Charter accordingly, but this could be done quite easily. I am quite certain that if the British Government and the Irish Government made a joint proposal, vesting the European Commission on Human Rights and the European Court on Human Rights with a special jurisdiction with regard to Ireland, they would agree. We might have to pay the cost of it but I do not think there would be any problem there. The fact is that there is in existence a readymade mechanism which for some reason we have not used.

Deputy Molony: In the summary of your verbal submission and in answer to questions from Deputy Lenihan you made the point — and this is made strongly in paragraph 6 of your original submission — that “the exaggerated emphasis as to the existence of ‘two cultures’ in Ireland are polemical platitudes that could be applied to every country in the world.” I understood you to say also that there is no more religious tension here than is the case in most other developed countries. In reply to my question about the Swiss model you seemed to presume some form of agreement before these structures would come into operation. I am wondering how we can deal with certain problems, although we can say that we have just one Irish culture, and then that within that there are different identities or different interpretations of what being Irish means. I do not wish to become involved in polemical platitudes but there are differences. For example, it seems that the attitude of Northern Unionists to the monarchy is a very important symbol as is, also, their membership of the British Commonwealth which is of extreme importance to them. While these are largely symbolic rather than substantive, they are there. It seems also that the religious tensions in the North are far more acute than are the religious tensions experienced in any other developed country. I am wondering how we might deal with problems like that. On a more practical level we cherish, for example, our neutrality. Neutrality does not exist in Northern Ireland where there are different attitudes towards military alliance. I am wondering how one would deal with these problems.

It is fine to say in one sense that it is polemical to talk about two different cultures. I accept that we are basically Irish but there are different interpretations of what being Irish means.

Mr. MacBride: Let us put it this way: I think you are wrong in regard to Northern Ireland being the only place where there are religious tensions. The tensions in Northern Ireland are political, not religious, but religion has been used to back them up, sometimes irrationally by both sides. There is very little religious basis for the maintenance of Partition or for the reunification of the country. I do not think that religion enters into that. Political parties like to have a fairly monolithic support base. Consequently, the Catholics of Northern Ireland have all the time emphasised the religious aspect so that they might rely on the Catholic votes. Conversely, the Protestants have relied on the religious aspects so to ensure that non-Catholics would vote for their party. If one considers what is happening in Lebanon for instance, where there are massacres on a religious basis every other day of the week, one realises that nothing like that takes place in Northern Ireland. Any massacre that has taken place has been based on political issues and I think that these political issues would disappear very rapidly if Britain ceased to interfere, but so far it has been Britain's policy to maintain Partition. It was Britain who devised Partition and imposed it on the country and who still tries to maintain that Partition. I am confident that the ordinary British people would be glad if the British would pull completely out of the North. They are sick and tired of the situation. From that point of view the Forum comes at a very good time, at a time when there is a receptive attitude in Britain for a solution which would enable Britain to leave Ireland completely.

Chairman: A final question.

Deputy Molony: This is really on a point of clarification. Can you deal with the question of the symbolic importance of the monarchy and of the Commonwealth and also the question of neutrality?

Mr. MacBride: Again, like religion, I think the monarchy and the Commonwealth are a "front". I do not think that the ordinary Northern Unionist cares very much about these matters. In regard to neutrality, the situation is different. I happen to be involved in CND and I visit Belfast frequently on CND matters. We have close collaboration with Protestant Unionists who share our viewpoint, who do not wish to be involved in nuclear war. There is quite a volume of support in Northern Ireland for neutrality, certainly quite a volume of support for excluding Ireland from any nuclear conflict.

Chairman: Deputy Prendergast.

Deputy Prendergast: Drawing on your experience in Irish politics can you envisage a solution without the intervention or mediation of some country outside of Britain and Ireland?

Mr. MacBride: It would, of course, be helpful, to have some body who would bring the parties together around the table all the time but I do not think that is really essential just at the moment. It depends on the Governments. However, I believe the British people would favour any solution which would enable Britain to leave Ireland. I do not think they have any heart for continued occupation. They do not see a reason for it.

Deputy Prendergast: In your experience what role do you think the UN might play in helping to solve the Northern Ireland problem?

Mr. MacBride: I think it would be difficult. I think the Council of Europe could play a role much more easily. If Partition were to get into the UN it would obviously be used by political groupings there for their own purposes and that might have adverse reactions on our own internal situation here. I believe it would be very hard to prevent the communist bloc in those circumstances using it as a stick with which to beat the other side, and so on. So we might get involved in areas of conflict which would not be particularly helpful. That is why I think there is probably a better possibility of doing something through the non-aligned group or the Council of Europe, for instance.

Deputy Prendergast: You say in your submission: "Special courts and extradition are not the areas of co-operation which are particularly attractive; they tend to deform rather than improve respect for the administration of justice". As a lawyer with considerable experience in these matters, why do you think they are not attractive and why, in your view, do they tend to deform rather than improve respect for the administration of justice?

Mr. MacBride: Emergency Powers Acts of one kind or another — call them what you will — are not popular and usually they are not of assistance to the victims, the people who are tried under them. You probably read the other day where a priest in the North said the people have no regard for the law because they do not get a fair trial since the legal system in the North does not provide for a fair trial. Once that kind of argument can be made you are really playing into the hands of those who are using violence.

Deputy Prendergast: What links do you see Northern Ireland maintaining with mainland Britain in a solution to the present problem?

Mr. MacBride: I do not see any particular links other than those we have with other parts of Europe, namely, the links with European States which we have through the Council of Europe or the EEC. The world has changed a great deal. Even Benelux would sound ridiculous nowadays. We have the EEC and the Council of Europe and these are the links which ensure co-operation between the different states.

Deputy Prendergast: How do you visualise Unionist aspirations being satisfied within 32 autonomous counties?

Mr. MacBride: I think the Unionists will continue to take a hard line so long as they feel they have the support of London. Any country can disrupt another country by financing a minority and providing military and political support to a minority. You can disrupt any country if you do that. That is what Britain has been doing and, so long as Britain continues to do that, you will get a small minority in the North who will maintain a hard line.

Deputy Prendergast: Would you accept that Ulster Unionists as a large minority within the whole of Ireland have a right to self-determination?

Mr. MacBride: No, not to self-determination. At the outset I pointed out there are four principles to be satisfied: first of all, it must be a well-defined territorial unit with clearly defined frontiers; secondly, the "national unit" claiming self-determination must have a long history as a "national unit", and, thirdly it must be a homogeneous population, and the population of Ireland is more homogeneous than the population of most countries; fourthly, the express will of the majority of the people and here we have in Ireland a majority population of 80 per cent. Why select six counties? Why not select two counties with a Unionist majority? Why not select the entire province of Ulster of nine counties?

Deputy Prendergast: I accept the idealism of what you are saying but coming to the *Realpolitik* in regard to the level and the depth of intensity of the feeling that persists in the North, whether based on political or religious differences, what are your views on a proposal that joint sovereignty be exercised over the North by Britain and the Republic, even as an interim solution?

Mr. MacBride: I do not think that would provide a solution. I think you would increase the internal tensions and controversy in this part of the country tremendously.

Deputy Prendergast: With regard to the large number of convicted prisoners serving sentences in both parts of the Ireland for offences committed, what do you envisage as a solution?

Mr. MacBride: If there were a solution they would be released. That has happened on different occasions in this country — first of all at the time of the Truce; again at the end of the civil war and again when Mr. de Valera took office in 1932 and again in 1948.

Deputy Prendergast: Finally, you quoted the joint proposition of the then Taoiseach, Deputy Costello, and Deputy de Valera — this was adverted to earlier — adopted in Dáil Éireann in 1949 and you go on to say, and I quote:

that it was the attempts to compromise on these issues that resulted in the Civil War and that are responsible for the turmoil and armed conflicts that have disrupted our country for over sixty years.

Is it your view that any compromise in those areas will not result in a just and politically stable solution?

Mr. MacBride: I think the last 60 years of our history answers that question.

Chairman: Mr. Hugh Logue of the SDLP.

Mr. Hugh Logue: Mr. MacBride, in an earlier answer this morning you spoke of the Irish people's right to sovereignty. Later we will hear from a Unionist spokesman, and we will be grateful to hear from him as we are grateful now to hear from you, and he will deal with what he calls the Unionist right to self-determination. Do you accept that the Irish people are divided on the issue of sovereignty?

Mr. MacBride: The right to sovereignty is vested in the Irish people.

Mr. Hugh Logue: You misunderstood me. You say they have the right to sovereignty?

Mr. MacBride: Yes.

Mr. Hugh Logue: The Unionists will come here tomorrow and say they have the right to self-determination. Do you accept that the Irish people are divided on this issue of sovereignty?

Mr. MacBride: It depends on what you mean by divided. Roughly, the division is 20/80 for the whole of Ireland. I think we have far too readily accepted that certain people in the north-east corner have a right to compel the majority in the rest of Ireland to accept their viewpoint. That is not necessarily an extreme or a republican viewpoint. Would you allow me, Mr. Chairman, to quote from a statement which sets out the position very clearly? It is a statement by the Chaplain to the British House of Commons on 1 December 1980.

The Right Rev. Dr. John Austin Baker, Bishop of Salisbury, a well-known Anglican theologian said in addressing the House of Commons:

No British Government ought ever to forget that this perilous moment, like many before it, is the outworking of a history for which our country is primarily responsible. England seized Ireland for its own military benefit; it planted Protestant settlers there to make it strategically secure; it humiliated and penalised the native Irish and their Catholic religion. And then when it could no longer hold on to the whole island, kept back part of it to be a home for the settlers, descendants, a non-viable solution from which Protestants have suffered as much as anyone. Our injustice created the situation and by constantly repeating that we will retain it as long as the majority wish it, we actively inhibit Protestant and Catholic from working out a new future together. This is the root of violence and the reason why the protesters think of themselves as political offenders.

This is not the viewpoint of a revolutionary or an Irishman. It is the viewpoint of a responsible English bishop who, having examined the position, has put it very clearly and I wish that some of our people here would be as objective as he has been in dealing with it.

Mr. Hugh Logue: I was intimately involved with the hunger strike and I am very aware of the position. To come back to the issue of the assertion of sovereignty. Do you feel that steps are needed to get the Irish people to agree as to how to exercise sovereignty and to come to terms with Catholics and Protestants, those who are Unionists and those who feel that there should be a united Ireland?

Mr. MacBride: Certainly all the minorities should be consulted on this and given an opportunity to express their viewpoint. Steps must be taken to safeguard their rights, their culture and their viewpoints. That is why the Swiss system of Government has so much to be said for it.

Mr. Hugh Logue: We may come to the Swiss system in a moment. Do you, Mr. MacBride, accept that we may have to persuade the Unionists that it is in their interest to become part of an Irish State.

Mr. MacBride: I do not think that I accept this as Mr. Logue puts it, as part of their interest. The British Government will easily outbid on that question of interest. The British Government have made it financially and politically beneficial to the Unionists to hold out. If the British Government cease to want to retain a portion of the country we will have a new situation. The Unionist population will be quite prepared to adopt a reasonable solution.

Mr. Hugh Logue: Would Mr. MacBride advise this Forum to ignore the Unionist and Protestant population and to concentrate on the British Government?

Mr. MacBride: There is not quite a yes or no answer. You should concentrate on getting the British Government to state categorically that they intend to withdraw completely from Ireland and to let the Irish people find a solution or to state that they do not propose to continue to occupy or administer a portion of this country after a period of, say, five years. From that time it will be possible to discuss the situation with the Unionists much more easily than you can at the moment. So long as the Unionist minority feel that they have the backing of the British Government politically, militarily and financially you will not be able to negotiate with them.

Mr. Hugh Logue: We have dealt with the Unionists. Let us look at the British Government that Mr. MacBride feels we should concentrate on. He said earlier he believes that the majority of British people are in favour of getting out of Ireland. Therefore, it would be electorally advantageous for the British parties to go to the country and have a policy of coming out of Ireland, so why is it that British Governments continue to remain in Ireland?

Mr. MacBride: I do not think it would be a very good election issue but I am certain that the majority of the ordinary British people want out of Ireland. They do not know why they are here. Many of them share the viewpoint of the Bishop of Salisbury.

Mr. Hugh Logue: Let us leave the election issue aside. Why do the British Government want to stay in Ireland?

Mr. MacBride: That is a complication which I have discussed on many occasions with different British Governments. The only familiar reason is long-time strategy, but this boiled down to one

issue, the ship-building capacity of the Belfast shipyards in wartime. They regarded this as forming part of the essential balance of naval defence in war-time, therefore, they were afraid that if the country was unified the Belfast shipyards, which were uneconomic in peacetime, would not be maintained and would not be available. That was the reason at that time. Part of the reason is also the long history of the British who are not anti-Irish but who regarded the Irish as being an amusing but unreasonable people and therefore they must look after them. It is hard to eradicate that complex. You get these national complexes in different parts of the world. The British have had Ireland for eight centuries and there is a reluctance to give it up. Ultimately, the ordinary British people will, I believe, conform to the views of the Bishop of Salisbury rather than to the views of Mrs. Thatcher. It is not a good political issue. I do not think a Labour Party will campaign on it, but that is the situation.

Mr. Logue: The shipyard workers will be flattered to know that they are part of the reason for the retention of Northern Ireland with the U.K. In recent times, I brought the shop stewards of the shipyard to meet the Taoiseach, and also the previous Taoiseach, and I am sure we all hope that the shipyard workers will ultimately see their economic interests lie in a coming together of both parts of Ireland.

But can we take the history of the last decade rather than the last war? I am thinking of the strike of 1974 which included the shipyard workers and which is generally regarded as bringing down the power-sharing arrangement. Do you believe that actions like that would be taken again if Britain was to attempt to withdraw and that may be part of the reason why the British are not present insisting on staying in Ireland? How do you deal with that and can you see, in certain circumstances, some Unionists asserting themselves in an independent Northern Ireland?

Mr. MacBride: You are not only dealing with the elected Government of the UK but with the establishment, which has had a long traditional influence. The Admiralty in Britain have always played a very important role in Britain as an island nation and therefore the Admiralty have had a large influence in the concept that Ireland was an essential requirement for the safety of the UK. All this is part of a situation which has been established over a long time, but that has really ceased to count because in strategic terms Ireland no longer counts for anything. Therefore, the Admiralty should not have any influence.

Mr. Hugh Logue: You are not giving any reasons why the British Government want to remain in Ireland and, ultimately, this Forum is dealing with the British Government. The British Government have not given any indication that they want to leave Ireland. Do you think they should be persuaded to leave, and if so what form should the persuasion take?

Mr. MacBride: I think ultimately it will be the British people who will persuade them that they do not want anything more to do with Ireland. There are people in Britain who have started to exhibit that desire. Germany was reluctant to give up its possession of Alsace-Lorraine. No colonial power ever wants to give up any of its possessions. The position of the British people now is that Ireland is no longer of use or interest to them.

Mr. Hugh Logue: You have said we are to ignore the Northern Ireland Unionist population and concentrate on the British, by and large. You have said we ought to ignore the British Government and concentrate entirely on the British people.

Mr. MacBride: I would not regard a Tory Government as having an interest in a completely free Ireland but they will become so if public opinion in Britain indicates a desire that this should be done.

Mr. Hugh Logue: I want you to be precise on this. It seems you are advising the Forum to ignore the Government in Britain. That is what you say, is it not? Can I put to you your 1949 initiative which you have outlined in your paper and in which you participated at the highest level? "Failure" is too strong a word to use here, but why did that initiative not succeed?

Mr. MacBride: We made a good deal of progress. If we had had a united country and a Government much stronger than it was, we could have pushed it through. The position is much stronger now than it has been in the last 30 or 40 years because of Britain's tiredness of the situation. The British people are weary of the position.

Mr. Hugh Logue: As a man who has two notable peace prizes, how do you regard violence?

Mr. MacBride: I think violence is justified only in certain circumstances. I do not think it is justified in Northern Ireland, although I think it can be justified in Southern Africa and in Namibia.

Mr. Hugh Logue: I shall put one final question in relation to the structure you put forward. You suggest moving along to the Swiss system, to the evolution of 32 entities in Ireland. We have just seen a Radio Bill which proposes a radio station for each county, which is regarded as nonsense, never mind a type of local, autonomous parliaments. Bearing in mind that half of the people of the Republic live in one or two counties equalling ten of the north western counties, how would you see this operation working?

Mr. MacBride: This has to be examined. One can look at a country of the size of Switzerland. Some of the Swiss cantons are very small and others are very big. It is a question of examining the political and economic situation in each area. The advantage of using our existing counties is that they have been historically established and that people are more ready to accept county boundaries rather than changing them about. As I have said, this could be examined. The first matter to be considered is the kind of parliamentary institutions or Government in a united Ireland, not a Dublin-dominated centralised Government which I do not think would be a good solution or an attractive one.

Mr. Hugh Logue: I agree.

Mr. MacBride: There is a much more communal affinity between Donegal, Kerry and Antrim than between Antrim, Dublin and Belfast. We should have autonomous areas with a greater degree of individual independence. The best run country in Europe is undoubtedly Switzerland. I have lived in Switzerland and I know that every third or fourth Sunday there is a referendum on one issue or another. Why do we not have a look at that? In Switzerland they have had three or four civil wars. They have had many battles but they have got over them.

Mr. Hugh Logue: I think you are right. We have seen the benefits of decentralisation — we have only to look at SFADCo — but many people here in the Forum might regard your proposals as taking decentralisation to the extreme. Thank you, Mr. MacBride.

Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. MacBride, for your presentation. The next presentation is by the Reverend Brian Lennon. He is welcome. He was educated in UCD and Fordham. He has a strong interest in ecumenism and he is at present a community worker at Portadown. Deputy Myra Barry will put some questions to him.

Deputy M. Barry: What relationship do you see between religion and politics in your local community?

Fr. Lennon: The conflict in Northern Ireland is primarily political. The way the Churches act tends to be reinforced by conflict and conflict reinforces the Churches. I have a number of years experience in ecumenism within Northern Ireland and I think the main differences between the Churches have been political rather than doctrinal differences. I suspect the Churches will not change very much until politics changes. I find that a depressing thing to say, but it is my impression. If I were looking for peaceful developments I would be looking for political changes first. The Churches have helped to lessen the worst effect of the conflict. They have on occasions acted as bridges in a small number of ways. There is a small number of effective and committed ecumenists. One of the problems is that in ecumenical relationships — this is something which only occurred to me recently — Catholics perceive themselves as being politically oppressed by Protestants while Protestants perceive themselves as being religiously oppressed by Catholics. There is something in that. From the point of view of the conflict as a whole the movement must come from the political front. The Churches, obviously, have a responsibility but I see the major change coming from the political structures.

Deputy M. Barry: How significant is the issue of mixed marriages to Northern Protestants? Do you think it would be of value in reducing the tensions if the parties to the Forum, and the Catholic Church authorities in the South, sought a variation for Ireland of the Canon Law provision?

Fr. Lennon: Yes I do. I would not exaggerate the likely effects of that. The present position of the Roman Catholic Church is felt particularly more by Church of Ireland ministers than ministers of other Churches. It is obviously experienced negatively by couples from both sides who are committed to their Churches and want to get married. I believe that for religious reasons, and from the point of view of Roman theology, the rules should be changed but I would not see it as the solution to the problems in Northern Ireland nor would I see it as necessarily reducing the political problems to any large extent. Nonetheless, for religious reasons, I believe it should be done.

Deputy M. Barry: Would you see it as a significant contribution?

Fr. Lennon: In religious terms, yes. Politically, I believe it would be of limited importance.

Deputy M. Barry: You spoke of the Nationalist identity within Northern Ireland and I should like to know what you see as the Nationalist identity?

Fr. Lennon: The word "identity" is a notoriously difficult one to define. In the submission I made to the Forum I was speaking in the main of political identity, not a cultural identity or other types of identity. The Nationalist identity is, I suppose, a contradictory thing like any identity. It is looking back in its myth to a time of being pushed off their land by British settlers, imperial Scotch settlers, while looking forward to a time of a united Ireland without any attempt being made to speak out what a united Ireland would mean in the concrete. I would detect a distance between Northern Nationalists, Nationalists within Northern Ireland, and the rest of the country, the Republic of Ireland, partly because for 50 or 60 years they have lived under a different political structure and partly because the conflict in Northern Ireland dominates most of the social, political and religious life and it does not do so here. I believe there is a difference and one symptom of that is the IRA contention that when they have taken over Northern Ireland they will then get rid of the Southern Dublin Government.

On both sides in the North the identity is potentially self-destructive. There is a bitterness and an anger underlying the whole situation which when it emerges could lead to a very self-destructive thing. At other times I could see Nationalists in the North working with Unionists because they have lived with Unionists and have had some contact with them over 50 or 60 years. When I talk about Irish identity within the North I am talking about something that I see is slightly different from that in the Republic but it is hard to specify exactly what it is. It will be shown in relation to the exercise of political power, the control of the security forces, the symbols of the State and jobs. Those are the areas in which the identity will come out as something causing conflict. They are the four major points where the identity has to be recognised.

Deputy M. Barry: Do the Nationalists feel alienated from Dublin?

Fr. Lennon: I am not sure that they think very much about Dublin at all. If you are talking about alienation I would say they feel alienated from the British Government and at the same time would prefer the British Government to a majority-rule government. Dublin just does not enter into their consciousness. If you ask them who is the Prime Minister, the Taoiseach, I do not know that Dr. FitzGerald would be the first name on their lips.

Deputy M. Barry: Do you think Southern politicians and Southern people are somewhat responsible in that regard?

Fr. Lennon: I asked a question in that paper of the British people as to why they wanted to be in Northern Ireland and I believe the Forum has to ask the question of the people in the Republic, why do they want a united Ireland, and I assume there will be different answers to that and some of the answers may have something to do with domination. One of the problems in the Republic is that the desire for unity never has to face concrete challenges or concrete costs. I am not sure how to deal with that because they are built into the situation. Britain has at least some concrete costs which it has to face. The Republic has Border-related security costs and a loss in tourism. They are substantial but they are not politically important figures; they are not things the politicians toss around. The desire of the Republic for a united Ireland in its Articles 2 and 3 is something that Northern Unionists will immediately harp on very emotionally and see as a grievous insult. Changing this would not necessarily change Northern Unionists. I would suspect that if it is to be changed it should be changed for the sake of the people in the Republic if the people in the Republic consider that a different formula would be a better spelling out of what they want. I would say that also about other matters in the Republic's Constitution.

Deputy M. Barry: You proposed power-sharing but do you believe that Unionists at grassroots level would be prepared to enter into a power-sharing arrangement?

Fr. Lennon: No, offhand I do not. It is one of the two things they are most bitterly opposed to. It is a feature of the insecurity, and a very understandable insecurity, that is felt by the Unionist population. The problem is that if you do not have power-sharing you do not have a proper recognition of the Nationalist identity. The Unionists are entitled to retain their British identity because they see themselves as British and are entitled to that identity, but I do not see them as being entitled to impose that identity on the Nationalists to the exclusion of the Nationalist identity. If there is not power-sharing, or a division of power within Northern Ireland, then the Nationalists will not be involved in the political process. If they are not involved in the political process I cannot see there being any peace.

Deputy M. Barry: How do you see the role of Sinn Féin in this power-sharing framework?

Fr. Lennon: Negative. Sinn Féin would reject the proposals I put forward perhaps on the one ground that in the conditions I have listed for you there is no indication of a British commitment to withdraw. It has occurred to me that if that were the only thing

between Sinn Féin and the Westminster Government, and if Sinn Féin and the Westminster Government genuinely wanted to negotiate which is not, obviously, the current situation, a formula like a British commitment to withdraw might perhaps be worked on by a skilled negotiator but I admit that that is looking for optimism where there are no grounds for it. However, Sinn Féin has to have a role in this. The Forum does not have any Unionist present, it has the representatives of only one section of the Nationalist community within Northern Ireland. The lack of Sinn Féin here, the lack of the people they represent and speak for, the lack of their feel for the situation, is a lack in the Forum's work. I understand the reasons why an invitation did not go to them but the Forum's end results are necessarily going to be poorer because of the lack of Sinn Féin input.

On this I believe there is a danger — I should like to preface my remarks by saying that I totally condemn the IRA violence — of scapegoating the IRA for the total problem. They are not the cause of the total problem. There are a lot of different parties involved in it. IRA violence is a very significant factor within the problem. There are two things about violence: one is that it could be a thought out way of achieving a political aim. In Northern Ireland that is absolutely unjustifiable. It can also be an expression of the way people feel about a situation and an expression of hopelessness. To the extent that it is such an expression it must be listened to and taken seriously. The nuances behind the violence must be entered into. Sinn Féin's role is negative but they represent something like 10 per cent of the people in Northern Ireland. They also have a greater representation in poorer areas and therefore they must be listened to formally or informally.

Deputy M. Barry: Do you think power sharing would work better within a confederation rather than in the loose framework you have set out?

Fr. Lennon: My concern, in the conditions I put forward, was with the situation in Northern Ireland. The wider framework was one that I did not really deal with. The wider framework is important but not as important as the internal framework and what is done in the wider framework should only be done to help the internal framework. A confederation may be the best way but the problem there is that it would take away the objection to the power sharing by the Unionists and it would take away the objection to an Irish dimension, so it would be hitting them with two of the most important things in their view of the situation. It would be strategically easier to go for one of those in the short term.

Deputy M. Barry: How accurately do Nationalist and Unionist politicians represent the communities they purport to represent?

Fr. Lennon: That is hard to answer. There is a two-way flow sometimes between politicians making inflammatory statements and the structure of the situation leading to inflammatory events so that the events and the politicians are feeding off one another in some cases. That is not true of all politicians. It is noteworthy that there seems to be a considerable majority of Protestants who would accept power sharing. That is never borne out in the politicians they elect. That seems to be because the structure of the conflict in Northern Ireland is such that at election time the defences of both sides are aroused and it leads to insecurity and less compromise.

Chairman: Deputy G. Collins.

Deputy G. Collins: Would Fr. Lennon agree that the whole rationale of the Northern Ireland State was the creation and the protection of a permanent Unionist Protestant majority, that Nationalists will not accept domination and Unionists are not prepared to dilute it in Northern Ireland as it is at present constituted, with the result that peace and stability are unobtainable? Would it not be better to accept that Northern Ireland has failed as a political entity on which any consensus is impossible and that new structures are needed?

Fr. Lennon: I accept that new structures are needed. The logic of your argument would mean that the present conflict would be greatly increased because the Unionists who are in the security forces — somebody mentioned that 60 per cent of the security forces were Unionists — would fight and it would seem that most of the people in the Republic do not want to be involved in the fight with Unionists of that sort. It would be a very bloody conflict. The other point is that if Northern Ireland is a failed political entity, and at the moment it is not working, it is because serious efforts have not been made to make it work. Only one serious effort in 50 years, namely in 1974, was made to make it work and that is an inadequate basis for assuming that it cannot be made to work. Unionists under no circumstances will allow the abolition of Northern Ireland because it is their one hope for security. Unionist insecurity is very real. A lot of them are being murdered daily and there is an expectation of being murdered. There is a fear of being absorbed by what they see as an alien culture. In those circumstances they are not open to negotiations on that point.

Deputy G. Collins: It is clearly demonstrable that Northern Ireland has tragically failed as a political, economic and social entity, yet you argue that even in the short term it must continue. Would you not accept that this is totally illogical?

Fr. Lennon: Would you be willing to go to war with Unionists — because Unionists would go to war with you if Northern Ireland were abolished? The second thing is that at no stage in the past 50 years have the British Government set conditions as to the way in which their money was spent in Northern Ireland. One of the major points I was putting in my submission was that, if they did so in an area that was not the most emotional of identity areas for the Unionists, namely in the area of jobs creation, at least a power sharing mechanism in one area of Government could be developed. The recent journey of Mr. Hume and Dr. Paisley to America shows that Unionists and Nationalists in Northern Ireland are willing to work together on jobs creation. If money was tied to that and the only way they could get job creation was by working together it would be significant development. If you say Northern Ireland has failed and that you want it abolished, what would you do with the Unionists who are heavily armed, who are very insecure, have suffered a lot of deaths and are prepared to fight?

Deputy G. Collins: What makes you believe that power sharing is any more acceptable to Unionists than a united Ireland, and is there any way that Unionists can be made to share power given that to work it requires their active participation?

Fr. Lennon: I do not think Unionists would participate in a full power-sharing executive and that is why the proposal I put was not at that level. The other thing that must be faced is that it may be impossible to get a power-sharing executive in Northern Ireland at the moment. If it is, then the question of two identities logically leads to the question of separate government at some level. That is a very depressing conclusion because some people say it will increase the separation between the two groups. I am not sure that that is so. The two groups in some areas in the North are very far apart, the contact between them is minimal. In other areas there is mixing. At the level of local government, greater experimentation could be done with, in some cases, a local Nationalist council dealing with some matters and a local Unionist council dealing with others. Direct rule or the option of some sort of power sharing to deal with different matters may be at a higher level but economic pressure will be necessary to bring that about. The IRA are wrongly using military pressure to get a solution. I wonder why economic and political pressure is not being used to achieve

constructive political roles which the British Government themselves say are constructive.

Deputy G. Collins: What importance do you place on a major effort to eliminate inequalities in employment opportunities between the two communities? Do you think sufficient importance has been attached to that question?

Fr. Lennon: It is very important. The whole economic situation in the North raises questions. There is a very good roads system, a very good phone system in the North and there seems to be a very well educated labour force. There is certainly a large sector of the Northern Ireland economy very lowly paid yet there is no investment coming into Northern Ireland. There is an enormous amount of investment leaving, and I would ask why? The Government say it is due to the Troubles but I wonder about that. Foreign businessmen tend to do their homework and the Troubles do not interfere with the day-to-day lives of the vast majority of the people in Northern Ireland. The lack of jobs is certainly making the problems worse. In some cases a fair distribution of jobs is tied in with housing, and if housing is segregated the work force of a particular area will tend to be of one side or the other. Getting in large factories has to be done at the wider level of Northern Ireland as a whole and the east of Northern Ireland is more economically developed so I can see problems in it but it is central to the whole area because if Nationalists and Unionists were working it would help the situation. I have no doubt about that. The unemployment is unbelievable and the destruction that it is doing to people's lives is very great at the moment.

Deputy G. Collins: What expectations do you find in the Nationalist community in relation to the work of the Forum?

Fr. Lennon: The people among whom I live are not particularly aware of it. The amount that they concentrate on Dublin is very limited. That is all I can say but I am living in one particular area. Some Protestants would be aware of it but I do not think there is a very great awareness. It is not really a big political issue in the North in my limited experience.

Deputy G. Collins: What changes in security policy do you think would help the situation in the North?

Fr. Lennon: This is at the very centre of the whole problem because the people in the security forces and the people who are subject to the security forces are the ones who feel the conflict most. I prefer not to go into the particular behavioural problems

relating to the security forces but there is a basic problem in relation to identity: that is that the security forces report to and are controlled by the British Government which is identified with one side of the community in the eyes of the people in the North. Secondly, the members of the security forces are from one side, mostly. Neither of those two points is the fault of the security forces themselves but they are bearing the brunt of it in the murders that are being committed against them. It would seem to me, therefore, that in the long run and this is not something that could be done in the short run, the security forces will either report to a government that is composed of Nationalists and Unionists or else logically there will have to be two separate security forces, at least for some matters of security. You shake your head at that. I presume you would say that it is a failed political entity but you are still left with the problem that Unionists will not accept that. The dilemma is precisely the Unionists lack of acceptance on the one hand and, secondly, that the security forces at the moment are reflecting a government that is necessarily composed of one of the two identities within Northern Ireland.

Deputy G. Collins: You argue that in order to build a framework, in the short term, for a solution a continuing link with Britain is necessary. As someone who is living in the Nationalist community, do you believe that the Nationalists will ever accept a permanent British role in their affairs?

Fr. Lennon: I think the word "permanent" would be an unfortunate one because it closes off options in the long run but if Nationalists had their own identity within Northern Ireland, then the fact that there is a British identity in London which is ultimately controlling things is not as important. The identity question that I see people concerned about is one that operates at a very local level. There is no question but that Nationalists want a united Ireland, whatever that means. It is not spelt out. I would think that they would be prepared to compromise if they got some of the things that I put forward there. There has been only four months in the past 60 odd years when Nationalists have had any participation in Government in Northern Ireland. It would be worth having a go at a few more months of responsible political activity by Nationalists before concluding that the thing is completely hopeless. There has been only four months.

Chairman: Deputy Desmond.

Deputy E. Desmond: The crucial area of your paper would appear to be dependent on the proposal for power-sharing but I got the impression that this would not be on the lines of the power-sharing

executive. Could you see it working from committees and less from a formalised cabinet structure?

Fr. Lennon: I was hoping you politicians might be able to answer that because my experience of politics is very little. The reason why I was not proposing the 1974 full executive is that it seems to be a question of how much of Unionist insecurity you confront and that is a matter of judgment. I am aware that local councils in Northern Ireland have very little political power but political consciousness at a local level tends to centre around local councils. If a council is Unionist-dominated or if a council is Nationalist-dominated, not in all instances, it tends to be a rather unconstructive battle of words mostly about security matters and constitutional matters. Where there is a clear geographical Nationalist area or a clear geographical Unionist area, if they could only deal with matters that concern their own area it would greatly help. That is not answering your question about a wider structure but I would see that as perhaps being developed through a series of pillars, and the first pillar would be that of a joint Nationalist-Unionist commission to create jobs, handling the money that was made available for the creation of jobs.

Deputy E. Desmond: Do you think we have any reason to be optimistic that the Unionists would accept power sharing now?

Fr. Lennon: The Unionists will not accept power sharing if you simply ask them to. I would have no optimism about that at all, but I would be optimistic about the question of power sharing in relation to jobs because politicians of both sides publicly identify themselves with each other as seeking this. It seems to me that Northern politicians could do just as good a job in creating jobs as any Minister from Westminster because they are living there, it is their own home, they know the situation better and their commitment would presumably be greater. I would have some optimism about that being done if the economic pressure is there because it is unreasonable to ask of either community in Northern Ireland to make great changes on their own, because the pressure on both communities is very intense.

Deputy E. Desmond: You said that Northern Protestants "feared for their political, religious and cultural independence" in 1921. How do you think we could help allay those fears now?

Fr. Lennon: I would not be optimistic about that because the fears are inherent in the situation. Unionists see themselves as dependent on the British Government for their security and to some extent they distrust the British Government and are not sure

how long the British Government will stay behind them. They distrust Nationalists within Northern Ireland who are murdering them and who want a change in the political structure that they see as bringing them under Dublin. It would certainly help the situation to spell out clearly that any Dublin Government would not mean domination over Unionists or would not mean the exclusion of the Unionist identity. The problem there is the same as if I turned round and you gave me an hour to persuade all of you people to become good British citizens. There might be some difficulty about it. It is even more difficult to persuade Unionists in Northern Ireland to become citizens under the Republic or under a Government that is composed of Nationalists. I think the comparison is a reasonable one.

Deputy E. Desmond: Regarding your suggestion of a referendum in Northern Ireland on the question of Northern Ireland staying in the UK but with an agreement on power sharing, would you think that this would be doomed to failure from the outset, with the Unionists voting against it because of its power sharing dimension and with the Nationalists voting against it because of their not wishing to remain within the UK? What hope is there in that sort of situation?

Fr. Lennon: In the Border poll in 1973 the vast majority of people who voted voted in favour of staying within the UK. I would not think there are any circumstances in which Unionists would vote themselves out of the UK but that is a guess on my part. I think the Nationalists would go along with it and I would expect that if the British were to hold a referendum of that nature it would be carried out but there are wiser political minds than mine here in that respect.

Deputy E. Desmond: You make the point in your paper that the opinion polls have shown frequently that there is a large minority of Unionist people who would accept power sharing but politicians do not reflect that situation. You have answered already as to why you think that is the situation but could you go a little further and tell us whether you have views as to why Unionist politicians who attempt to represent the middle-ground situation tend to come to a rather early demise?

Fr. Lennon: He could be called a traitor in the sense of letting the side down and of opening the door for a united Ireland. That would be the kind of allegation that would be thrown at him. In most democracies it is the middle ground that forms Governments but in Northern Ireland the attention is always towards extremities. This is because there are two identities within

Northern Ireland. It is a political unit comprised of two identities. That has the force of saying that what we are talking about would not work, but again, what choice do we have if we want a relatively peaceful future? I agree that middle-ground politicians find it difficult to survive electorally in Northern Ireland.

Chairman: Dr. Hendron.

Dr. Hendron: I agree that security is central but do you agree that identification of the minority with the security system is essential for stability, that it is more essential than a sharing of power over other matters because of the basic desire for peace?

Fr. Lennon: The answer to that always has to be ambiguous. It is the tragedy of the situation that at the moment the chances of Nationalists identifying totally with the security forces is limited. That is a personal judgment. As to whether they should identify with the security forces, they must co-operate with them up to a point. Most of the people among whom I live will work with the security forces on non-political matters while on political matters some may work with the security forces and some may not, but there is that inherent problem for as long as the security forces represent one side of the divide. It is a problem for Nationalists to become involved in the security forces. People have said to me that it is ludicrous to talk about two forms of security forces but I could visualise people from one Nationalist area being police in another Nationalist area, perhaps not in political areas but in other areas. That would do an enormous amount for the identity of the Nationalists and, what is crucial, it would involve Nationalists in responsible police work. One of the problems at the moment is that if one rejects the police one finds a situation where one tends to reject all police work and tends not to do anything about the ordinary problems of the community. No matter what kind of police force there might be, there is the problem of Nationalists overcoming that built-in habit. Therefore, there is a problem in relation to the security forces to which there is no simple answer.

Dr. Hendron: Earlier you mentioned a power sharing-executive and said that such an executive obviously would have to work closely with the security forces. Some years ago people from the minority community were beaten and tortured at Castlereagh interrogation centre but not one of the police who were responsible for those acts has been imprisoned. At this point, supposing there was agreement on a power-sharing executive, how could the minority ever support the present security forces because one would assume that they would become part of that initiative? Castlereagh is only one of the places where these incidents occurred.

Fr. Lennon: I take your point completely. The security forces in Northern Ireland have not brought members of the security forces to justice with any degree of enthusiasm. Therefore, there is a problem but this problem might be overcome by setting up some separate division of the RUC. That might not be acceptable or there might have to be the further step of saying that the RUC would be for the Unionist areas while a separate police force would be needed for Nationalist areas with perhaps a mixed police force for mixed areas. People say that the outlook is very depressing but there is a point that if Nationalists are engaged in police work in their own areas they will be faced with problems of a non-political nature, problems of a kind that the RUC or any other police force must contend with. Therefore, there is a built-in mechanism by which they would start consulting with each other and learning from each other but that would need co-operation. The theory of disassociation need not necessarily lead to a total split between the communities; it could possibly increase it, but I accept that that is being optimistic.

Dr. Hendron: The weakness of that argument lies in the question of who accepts ultimate responsibility in terms of security. You live in Portadown so what would be your assessment of the Protestant reaction if the British were to declare their withdrawal whether within a timetable or otherwise? I would point out that Mr. Seán MacBride has indicated here that the British should make a declaration to withdraw from Ireland. In such circumstances what do you think the Protestant reaction would be?

Fr. Lennon: In such event I might be taking a train for Dublin. The whole question of British withdrawal has to be teased out much more as to what it means. It could mean a whole spectrum of different things. I do not think it is sensible strategically to confront Unionists with power sharing and with the question of British withdrawal because you are confronting a very insecure people, understandably insecure, with the two major planks on which they are basing their survival. I presume the Protestant reaction would be negative. No more than anyone else, I cannot say whether such a situation would lead to a blood-bath but I would prefer to work on short-term goals that would perhaps prepare the ground for wider settlements, maybe many years hence.

Dr. Hendron: I accept that the Unionists are very insecure people but I put it to you that the Nationalist minority are even more insecure as a result of having been walked on and trodden on down through many years. In your document you state that perhaps the most important question to be asked about British involvement in

the conflict is why the Westminster Government remain in Northern Ireland. You gave answers that are accepted by some people in Britain and abroad but I put it to you that after the gross misrule by the British in Northern Ireland and the misrule by the Stormont Government — that Government does not exist any more but it answered to the then British Government for the total inability to resolve the conflict — it is extremely unlikely in the foreseeable future, if they continue as they are now, they will lead us to conflict. Would you not agree there has to be a radical reappraisal of the whole situation?

Fr. Lennon: If I may take your point about Nationalist insecurity, the point of the submission would be to see a way in which that insecurity on the Nationalist side could be lessened while at the same time not controverting the Unionist position too greatly. As regards British Government misrule, I wonder how interested that Government is in the problem. I have had no direct experience of dealing with the British Government but I wonder how seriously they are committed to working on the problem. Certainly there is a difference in urgency in their approach to the problem in Zimbabwe and their approach to the problem in Northern Ireland, and the only time the British Government was seriously involved in it was, in my view, in 1974 in the Sunningdale effort. In regard to the present Assembly, I think the analysis put forward by the Secretary of State laid grounds for optimism, but the actions that followed did not give grounds for optimism. They did not effectively offer, in my judgment, adequate power sharing to the Nationalists. Had that been done the situation would have been different. In the current climate, if you take the present Assembly as a Unionist Assembly, which it is, then the question is what would happen if there was a Nationalist Assembly doing the same type of work? Is that an outrageous suggestion?

Dr. Hendron: You spoke earlier of the question of identity. That is extremely important, and you said one of the essential elements in the solution to the problem is recognition of an Irish identity. What steps would give expression to that? You developed that earlier but I am still not quite clear as to the points you were making and I would appreciate it if you would repeat them.

Fr. Lennon: I am talking about political identity, first of all, and I am looking at the areas in which the group can make political decisions, decisions which are being made and decisions in which Nationalists have no part. That is true at the level of executive government and at the level of security and national symbols, such as flags and anthems, and in related areas. You have the security forces protecting Orange marches through Nationalist areas, for

instance, but you do not have the same forces protecting Nationalist marches through Unionist areas. One of the first things we can do then is to discuss what identity means and in what direction the Nationalist ethic is going in Northern Ireland. I prefer to concentrate on the way in which the Nationalists can express themselves and it seems to me the important areas are executive power, security and nationalism.

Dr. Hendron: What is your definition of security?

Fr. Lennon: I have not dealt with that because it raises the broader spectrum of London-Dublin and, while that is important, it is to me less important than local arrangements.

Dr. Hendron: The whole problem then is a question of security? There is a crisis of identity in the Loyalist community as to whether they are British or Irish. Nationalists have no doubt about their identity but they feel there must be some way in which they can express themselves. That has been a burning question and I do not see how any power-sharing executive in itself expresses the Irish nation in the North. You insist that Northern Ireland is a viable political proposition. You have also said it may be necessary to have two Governments and two security forces. Are you in fact arguing for re-partition or joint sovereignty?

Fr. Lennon: Joint sovereignty may be the answer at the top of the London-Dublin level. I just do not know. I would not use the term two Governments. I would use the term the use of political power of two different groups at two different levels, which is not the same as two full executives. Of course, the question of a national Assembly should be looked at. I would accept that the Nationalist group is not too clear about its own identity. There are doubts and contradictions in it. But the Unionist identity is also not that clear at all. The British identity is a reaction against Irish nationalism. You have two groups who see themselves as different. If they work together under the British Government with some control over some local matters that would be a considerable change from the existing situation, but we stick with Northern Ireland as a viable political unit. I am not saying it is a good political unit. I am saying it is a question of working out how best you can give some political power to different political groups which are different from each other. The question of sovereignty is a prime question. Joint sovereignty may be the answer or the answer may be the British Government. I just do not know.

Dr. Hendron: You mentioned the support of the Dublin Government in power-sharing structures. The Dublin Government have

been spending hundreds of millions for Border security. Do you believe that it is realistic to expect the Dublin Government to support an administration in the North without any say in the political structures set up there?

Fr. Lennon: The answer to that is: What price peace? The Nationalist position is they want a united Ireland, possibly with some administration in Belfast, but at the end of the day the question is how much of the Nationalist position is open to compromise? What you are adumbrating is you are suggesting the Unionists give up the need for power sharing and also give up keeping an Irish Government out of involvement in the North. Now if you ask the Unionists to give up both of those what are the Nationalists on their side prepared to give up? I do not accept that, if these conditions were put into operation, violence would end. The IRA would not accept the situation but I would hope it would be the basis on which Nationalists would get involved and support for the IRA would decline. Remember, after the civil war violence did not run down immediately. There was a gradual rundown throughout the twenties and early thirties.

Dr. Hendron: You implied the Republican movement would be totally opposed to the possibility of the continued existence of the Six Counties as a political entity. What is the basis for that assertion?

Fr. Lennon: It is pure guesswork. I have no substantial evidence to support my argument. I would expect it to level off within two or three years and, when that happens, it may be that greater amount of political negotiability may creep into the area. I accept that this is a very optimistic view. They seem to put forward the view that of the two, Irish unity is more important even than power sharing within the North and if the British were to add that they were going, they say — I do not believe everything they say — that they would then be open to any arrangement that the people of Ireland, whoever they are, would make. Again it is searching around for optimism to make that statement, but within a situation where there really was a desire by the IRA to consider the possible continued existence of Northern Ireland some political unity is possible.

Chairman: Thank you, Dr. Hendron and Fr. Lennon. I would like to compliment with them the 180 people who have made submissions to the Forum to date. Unfortunately, time will not allow us to have each and everyone here in person. We will have an hour and a quarter for lunch and we will reassemble at 2.45 p.m.

Session suspended at 1.30 p.m. until 2.45 p.m.

Chairman: We resume our public session with the presentation of Professor Harkness, Dublin born, reared in Belfast, a distinguished historian who has been a member of many bodies both in the South and the North, Professor of Irish History in Queen's University since 1975. His book, entitled *Northern Ireland Since 1921*, is due for publication next month. The questions will be started by Deputy Yates of Fine Gael.

Deputy Yates: Professor, you referred to Unionists and Protestants and their Britishness. How would you define this sense of Britishness? Would you say that it is an affinity to the Commonwealth or an affinity to the Crown?

Professor Harkness: I do not suggest that either should be exaggerated. There was a time when the people thought themselves to be British-Irish just as the British-Scots or the British-Welsh. Recent events have led them to stress their Britishness alone. It is a question of ethos — the ethos of the country to which they belong, a matter of secular and religious balances. This is much more than a particular concern with Crown or Commonwealth.

Deputy Yates: Do you think that if it is not an affinity to the Crown, related to sovereignty, certain aspects of it would be negotiable?

Professor Harkness: I do not want you to exaggerate "sovereign" or "the Queen". "Sovereignty" is central too, an essential. The fact of their being part of Britain, being part, in this context, of a congenial, can I use the words non-Catholic dominated, or Protestant country is what is important.

Deputy Yates: Mr. MacBride said this morning that affinity to the Crown, or Commonwealth, is a front. Do you agree?

Professor Harkness: I do not, but I would not exaggerate these aspects. The British State has evolved over a long period during which the people of Northern Ireland have played a part — in which they have been at home. It would be very unrealistic to expect them to move outside that.

Deputy Yates: From that, what would you see as the minimal British dimension to a new Ireland?

Professor Harkness: I am more concerned with people than with geographical forms. You might argue that the Irish nation has won its independence, though not all that tidily. I would not really agree with other aspects of a very interesting submission by Mr.

MacBride in terms of the necessity of Ireland being seen as a 32-county island or a whole island. It seems to me that you have to take some recognition of the length of the period and the number of people, the long time which one million people of British stock have been in the north-east corner. Your new Ireland may somehow provide something for those unhappy, unconsulted Irish Nationalists who are included within that domain but I do not think it is in anybody's interest, yours or the interests of Protestant Unionists, to try to embrace them in something called a new Ireland that encompasses the whole island.

Deputy Yates: At the end of your submission you spoke of such matters as "flexible citizenship". Perhaps you could expand on that?

Professor Harkness: Perhaps I could not, actually. What I was trying to suggest as an historian was something which may or may not be true. It seems to me that the hey day of nationalism and of national sovereignty has passed. It is an almost out-of-date concept. The notion of independence is no longer real. In these circumstances political scientists and constitutional lawyers — neither one of which I am — surely ought to be able to move. In the international context, in the continental context and in the E.E. Community context in which we find ourselves, to work out arrangements by which perhaps the Northern Nationalist community can share their identity with the rest of the people of Ireland, of the Nationalist community, perhaps by active dual citizenship. Given some form of arrangement of citizenship, given a wider recognition that so much of our resources and our environment cannot be controlled by nation states, given more emphasis on that wider context, perhaps some of the immediate pains and worries might be reduced.

Deputy Yates: Would you foresee that that would be highly conceivable in a joint sovereignty situation?

Professor Harkness: Not a joint sovereignty of what is called Northern Ireland at the moment, if you mean by that, Dublin-London sovereign control. I do not see that Unionists, a large significant body of British people in the North, would find that acceptable. They would feel that it was a first stage to their rejection by Britain to which they wish to belong, a stage of their abandonment and absorption into the Republic.

Deputy Yates: In your first letter to the Chairman you said that the Northern minority is not unique and that coming to terms with this might be the basis of making a success of United Kingdom

membership. Is that the bedrock of what you see as a solution, with further accommodation for the minority community?

Professor Harkness: We must remember the difficult historical context out of which the present Northern Ireland has grown and the tremendous birth pangs of an arrangement which was not conceived of only as a Parliament for the Six Counties. Out of those difficult times you must see that the Unionist community would regard the Nationalist community as having been a bit unlucky in their location but having their best future in coming to terms with that. It may be that the record of Stormont management was not very encouraging but a lot has happened since Stormont was discontinued. If the Nationalist minority could come to terms with the opportunities now available to them they might find, perhaps to their surprise, that life could be expanded more attractively and that the rest of the island could get on with managing and improving its own affairs.

Deputy Yates: Given the Nationalist bad luck, do you see their luck changing given the Unionist reluctance to involve themselves in power sharing?

Professor Harkness: The Unionists are not entitled to power unless they share it, so it is a question of no power or shared power. That is how it strikes me, replying as a rational human being rather than as a Unionist. Many people have been unlucky in their location. A hard line Unionist would say that if they did not like it they should clear off. Many people on this side of the Border would say the same of the Unionists, that if they were not prepared to accept Southern Ireland Government then they should go back to England or Scotland. The fact is that through historical accident we have a considerable number of people in a part of the United Kingdom, which is distinguishable, with very severe problems. The answer to that problem is not for anyone here to try to absorb a million reluctant Unionists. It would not be very easy to repartition the country and allow a majority of unhappy Northern Nationalists to belong to this State.

Deputy Yates: Surely the point is that because of the reluctance of Unionists to share power and to give a meaningful role to the minority, we here have to look for an Irish dimension?

Professor Harkness: I accept that there should be an Irish dimension which allows greater security for the Nationalist minority but that falls short of absorbing a million reluctant Protestants.

Deputy Yates: What lessons are to be learnt from the failure of Stormont?

Professor Harkness: It is a very disappointing example of a laudable attempt to devolve power. If one were to look at what might have happened had Scotland received a degree of devolution recently, one might have found a dominant political group there without much opportunity of changing. One might have found, for example, a Labour majority with some Scottish nationalist and conservative opponents but without much movement over a long period. If one were talking as a political scientist one could draw conclusions from the failure of Northern Ireland. One would have to look at the unfortunate sequence of events which followed the creation of Northern Ireland. It was never conceived as a single exercise. It was part of the dual parliamentary structure for Ireland to be surmounted by a council. There had to be a parliament in the North and in the South. Powers were to be devolved from both of those to the central council of Ireland, if Irish unity was ever to be restored. If we cast our minds over the events that followed the setting up of Northern Ireland we will see that what was intended did not follow. Perhaps the British Government was irresponsible in allowing Unionists to go unsupervised but they had real difficulties in trying to manage that depressed, resourceless and divided community. One could learn particular lessons but it need not invalidate notions of trying to devolve powers at some level in a number of areas on these islands.

Deputy Yates: Subsequent to the demise of Stormont, would you accept that there has been an increased polarisation of the two communities? How do you see this being reversed given your scenario of within a UK concept minority, greater involvement and so on, and what role do you think the Forum would have there?

Professor Harkness: It is true that violent reaction and militancy achieved some results which had not been achieved by argument. The trouble is that the force and the violence have gone to such lengths now as to be counter-productive. The Unionists' reluctance to have anything to do with the Republic or to have any consideration for a community which it suspects has nurtured the Provisional IRA, is a fact of life. Unionist intransigence has grown enormously. The Forum, by showing the degree of commitment and interest that it has shown by recognising the reality of a million British people on the island, by producing some models of constitutional possibility either on the island or between these islands will demonstrate a lack of the old "four green fields" nationalism and show that there is no desire to overwhelm the

Northern Unionists but a real concern for fairness for Northern Nationalists, and somehow convince moderate Unionists that compromise and co-operation can proceed. The Forum can make a positive contribution to an amelioration of community hostilities but it will have to be handled carefully. It will have to eschew the postures of irredentism and nationalism that has tended to come from Dublin in the past.

Deputy Yates: Given that you see the role of the Forum in that regard, as an historian and on the evidence of other countries with similar political problems, do you see any models of constitutional possibilities that have been successful elsewhere which would be applicable here?

Professor Harkness: I do not. I think the man to answer that is probably Professor John Whyte who, I understand, you are taking from the North and bringing to Dublin. It may be more useful looking to the future, not the past. I feel that the real problems of the world — imbalance of resources, the exhaustion of our global village's amenities, stemming nuclear holocaust and all the other problems that we have to wrestle with —

Deputy Yates: You do not see any compatible situation?

Professor Harkness: No, these are going to lead us into new structures rather than let us look back. I am not an expert and maybe the Swiss example is an ideal one but I think we are looking for new rather than comparable or past examples.

Chairman: Deputy MacSharry.

Deputy MacSharry: A distinguished fellow historian of yours at Queen's University, Dr. Stewart, in his book *The Ulster Crisis* wrote in 1967:

The Protestants' fears about a Dublin Parliament may have been exaggerated, and the History of Ireland since independence has, on the whole tended to suggest that they were.

Would you accept this statement as a balanced judgment?

Professor Harkness: Entirely.

Deputy MacSharry: How can you reconcile it with your own view?

Professor Harkness: My view as a historian agrees entirely with Dr. Stewart but it is not the view of Unionists in Northern Ireland.

Deputy MacSharry: You agree with it but you cannot reconcile your views with it?

Professor Harkness: I agree with it but I do not think a million Northern Unionists agree with it.

Deputy MacSharry: I see by your submission that you say you are a student of Unionism. How long have you been so?

Professor Harkness: Most of my life.

Deputy MacSharry: And you are not engaged actively in Unionist politics?

Professor Harkness: No.

Deputy MacSharry: And you have no intention of being?

Professor Harkness: No.

Deputy MacSharry: I gather you have written your submission not as an individual but as an historian?

Professor Harkness: I am in a difficult situation but I understand that very few Unionist politicians would turn up today or any other day. I felt it absolutely essential that this Forum should grapple with Unionist reality and so I sent in a submission which I felt gave some indication of that Unionist reality.

Deputy MacSharry: As an historian?

Professor Harkness: As someone who lives amongst Unionists.

Deputy MacSharry: You say in your submission that the independent nation state is an out-of-date concept. You used to be of a quite different and opposite opinion. I would like to quote from the preface of your own book *The Restless Dominion*. I quote:

In 1968 the Irish Republic plays an individual role in international affairs. This alert, small nation with a long civilisation and a distinctive anti-imperial history is particularly well-placed in the world of emergent States. Today the Republic of Ireland is as consciously and undeniably independent as any Nation. Sovereign and free it plays its hand more or less in accordance with its own decision.

Could you explain to the Forum the reasons for your complete change of view?

Professor Harkness: I do not think the contrast is quite as sharp as you would imply. I would also say a few years have passed. When I see the word "independent" now it is in inverted commas. Everything any state wishes to do is circumscribed by so many considerations. If, for example, we were worried about the pollution of our shores we could not resolve the problems of ocean pollution ourselves. We could only do so in conjunction with other users of the oceans or other states bordering them. That goes into so many aspects of life whether it is the necessity of raising capital to overcome immediate problems or whatever. There are obviously decisions which can be taken which are independent. You can find an issue on which the people will unite and they will agree to reduce their standard of living and to pull together to solve a particular problem but I think these are few in number and interdependence, mutual dependence, are the realities of the early eighties however much about my youthful optimism may have deemed otherwise in the late sixties.

Deputy MacSharry: With respect, I do not think you have given the reasons for your complete change of view. You said earlier that you were all your life a student of Unionism. You wrote in 1969 what I have quoted and your submission is a total reversal of that.

Professor Harkness: I do not think it relates at all to a study of the action of the Republic of Ireland. The Republic of Ireland is all of the things that I said, though it is circumscribed by more international limitations now. Whether the Republic of Ireland could survive if it tried to incorporate the North of Ireland is what we are talking about.

Deputy MacSharry: But in your submission you say:

The political record of independent Ireland holds no attraction for Unionists.

Professor Harkness: None whatsoever.

Deputy MacSharry: It seems a complete contradiction of what you were saying in 1969.

Professor Harkness: You are assuming that I am a Unionist extolling the virtues of the Republic of Ireland in 1969. I am an historian describing the role of a courageous small nation in difficult times but that is not something that impresses Unionists

who are part of a great empire with very different perspectives and who had then emerged from a war where their commitments to that empire and its allies were enhanced. There is no meeting between these two points and there is no contradiction in what you are saying.

Deputy MacSharry: I could argue about what you have been saying but would you accept that the fundamental flaw of the Northern Ireland State has been its lack of democratic legitimacy?

Professor Harkness: I would accept that. I would accept as an historian that the Northern Ireland State was carved out undemocratically and therefore it is a nonsense to talk subsequently about majorities, minorities and democracy. But I would remind you that the Northern Ireland State was carved out at an extraordinarily difficult time and that it and the Twenty-six County Southern Ireland that was also drawn up, and the Council of Ireland which formed part of that package, were the lowest common denominator acceptable to political parties who had to make the decisions at that time in 1920. The fact that it never proved possible to follow up that design with the centralising of the powers of those two devolved, subordinate Parliaments on to the central Irish Council is a deep tragedy but it is not necessarily the fault of those who drew up the original plan.

Deputy MacSharry: Why then would you accept that we would have to live with this nonsense, as you describe it?

Professor Harkness: I do not think I described it as a nonsense. I described it as a part of a wider plan and the rest of the plan was immediately overturned by events in this part of Ireland. I accept that the present Six Counties is artificially constructed with a built-in majority. That may be an argument—and you may wish to face up to the argument—that you ought to re-partition Ireland. On the other hand, there would be very considerable difficulties and some objections to doing that which might cause some political difficulties but if you want a rearrangement that is something for you to argue for.

Deputy MacSharry: Could you explain on what basis, other than superior physical force, is it justifiable for 900,000 Unionists with British support to force 600,000 Nationalists to be British subjects?

Professor Harkness: An accident of history. You can turn that around and say what argument could justify the inclusion of 900,000 unwilling British citizens in a Republic of Ireland. The fact

is that that particular division was created when Irish Nationalism sought to break away from the United Kingdom and proved powerful enough only to break twenty-six counties away. The Border is not, as you know, a very tidy affair and it is not easy simply to extend the Twenty-six County frontier to make the Irish Nationalist community in the North happy. That is the Border drawn as a compromise in the historical situation. There are many Border Northern Unionists backed by many Unionists who are not on the Border who see their safety in not yielding an inch.

Deputy MacSharry: With British support?

Professor Harkness: But of course. They are British. It is part of Britain.

Deputy MacSharry: Only with British support.

Professor Harkness: You ask them. They will try to do it without British support.

Deputy MacSharry: You are the person representing their point of view so I am asking you.

Professor Harkness: I am not authorised to represent their viewpoint. As a student of Unionism I can only say that they would rather eat grass and do without British support than come in and enjoy RTE.

Deputy MacSharry: Clearly, you disapprove of Irish nationalism but would you not agree that there is more flag waving and drum beating in Belfast, especially at Orange parades, than is the case anywhere else in Ireland? Would you consider "Orangeism" and the recent upsurge of British nationalism as being equally irrelevant and outdated?

Professor Harkness: I find nationalism of any sort reprehensible. There have been times and perhaps there are still occasions when the feeling of nationalist solidarity can be useful. It can get things done and help a young, struggling country to overcome hardship, but by and large I consider it to be destructive. In the community of nations today it is an outdated concept. People can have pride in their locale without seeing the nation state as the be all and the end all. I would condemn the beating of the Lambeg drum just as much as I would condemn the waving of green flags at endless ceremonies in the Republic.

Chairman: Deputy Eileen Desmond of the Labour Party.

Deputy E. Desmond: The Northern Ireland Office have issued revised census figures, an examination of which would seem to indicate that the Catholic population has increased to between 40 and 42 per cent of the overall population. Have you any comment to make on this?

Professor Harkness: Only that there is considerable debate among demographers in the North as to whether the gap will ever be closed. There seems to be evidence also of a proportionate fall in the Catholic birth rate. In time there might be more Catholics than Protestants there but that is still debatable.

Deputy E. Desmond: The Northern Ireland Constitution Act of 1973 and the Sunningdale Communiqué embody the principle that there should be no change in the status of Northern Ireland until such time as the majority desire that change. Do you accept that when the Nationalist population exceeds 50 per cent of the overall population the Unionist population should accept that majority and leave the United Kingdom?

Professor Harkness: Of course I accept it but I do not think that Unionists accept it. They have said that they do not accept it. Obviously, the ball game will have changed somewhat but I suppose there still will be a fair concentration of Unionists in part of the island. Whether they will try to wall themselves up in that part remains to be seen. At the moment I would say that the mood of the Unionists is that they will stand their ground.

Deputy E. Desmond: How do you suggest that the Unionist majority in the North should treat the Catholic minority?

Professor Harkness: Many Unionists in the North treat their Catholic fellow citizens on absolutely equal terms. That is how they should be treated. There have been many successful citizens in the minority community but there has also been a legacy of poorerland, of living further away from the centres of employment and from access to jobs and perhaps there has been inferior education. However, there have been many changes. The latter situation, for instance, has changed but there remains quite some leeway to be made up in terms of economic opportunity. By and large, employers are still, in the majority, Unionists. There remain traditions of inequality that are very difficult to iron out by way of legislation. While there are tensions and while the minority are spoken for by the Provisional IRA as well as by the sane and moderate voice of the SDLP, it is more difficult to iron out those malpractices. I suppose there are still grounds for Protestant employers to be suspicious or for Government hirers of labour to be very worried.

Deputy E. Desmond: Do you consider Unionist voters to be represented adequately by their politicians? We talked earlier of the middleground politician who appears not to be reflected in politics.

Professor Harkness: I thought that Fr. Lennon's entire contribution was extraordinarily well presented and perceptive, and not least on that particular point. The reasons for people being driven to extremities at election time are evident. At the same time I have an admiration for the physical courage of a number of politicians both in the minority and in the majority communities because they live under a great deal of strain so I am reluctant to condemn them out of hand. If there has to be a continued Northern Ireland part of the UK I personally would rather see the action at Westminster. I would rather see the focus there and see Westminster politics incorporate Northern Ireland as opposed to having to rely on the old tribal aspirations that have been with us for so long.

Deputy E. Desmond: Could you elaborate on the way in which the political reflexes and conventions are unacceptable to the Northern Ireland Unionist?

Professor Harkness: That is partly the development of Gaelic Catholic Ireland and partly the result of the PR system. I am not suggesting that Northern politicians would not learn the tricks of the trade but I think they would regard the sort of mechanisms by which politicians gain a following and the conventions that have been established here to be different from the spirit of action and reflexes that particular circumstances can engender in the UK. It is part of the very first question: the Northern Unionist sees himself as British and as part of a very different political context. He does not find attractive an alternative which has established its own congenial conventions which to him are alien.

Deputy E. Desmond: You have used the phrase, "the deep emotional gulf that exists between both sides. "What is your view as to what might be done to bridge that gulf?"

Professor Harkness: This morning there was reference to the religious dimension and properly it was said that religion is a sort of badge that differentiates the communities but let us not overlook that element in the emotional gulf. When one is right it is hard not to be arrogant and that is evident on both sides. The extremes in Catholic as well as in fundamental Protestant quarters have great difficulty in seeing eye to eye. I have no real way of penetrating Presbyterianism, not to mention democratic free presbyterianism, but it is there and is very easy to arouse. It is

emotional and is not subject to rational argument and to nice plans. If the Forum produced a splendid constitutional arrangement it might not necessarily fit the people who would have to operate it.

Deputy E. Desmond: What do you think are the political structures necessary to create a wholesome society in Northern Ireland?

Professor Harkness: You are asking me to solve the problem but I am only an historian trying to chronicle it! I do not have the answers. I can only hope for a greater understanding. Historians can play their part in trying to remove some of the awful black-and-white pictures that people have, the righteous indignation and self-righteousness. One can only try to explain why people have acted as they have acted and try to build up some tolerance and sympathy. I cannot help feeling that perhaps in the face of real human disaster or of tragedy on a wider scale, we on this island, who have a reasonable record for compassion, could not show it more towards each other.

Deputy E. Desmond: Do you accept that Northern Ireland is not part of the United Kingdom in the same way as Yorkshire is?

Professor Harkness: It has had rather extraordinary pretensions to which Yorkshire has never laid claim. Yorkshire never had a parliament. They play rugby against Yorkshire but the analogy is, I suppose, a fair one. It is not as big of course as Yorkshire. It is not as populous. It does not have so many universities. It is very easy to say Northern Ireland gets this and that. In any country there will be areas that get more than others and I think you should talk of Northern Ireland in terms of Merseyside or Cornwall, of some other depressed part of the United Kingdom, but not giving it too much of a panoply of independent power. It has not earned devolution.

Deputy E. Desmond: What do you regard as the British Government's interest in Northern Ireland?

Professor Harkness: It is mainly the difficulty of getting out! How do you get rid of one million citizens? That is the basic difficulty. There are no British precedents.

A member: The French got out of Algeria.

Professor Harkness: The French had great difficulty in doing this. The position was, I think, slightly different but I feel the British

have a very difficult problem and they do not have the answer. Perhaps you could come up with the answer here.

Deputy E. Desmond: Would you care to say what you would like the report from this body to contain?

Professor Harkness: You would have to weigh up how long people had a piece of land in order to have some claim to it and how numerically strong must people be to deserve some kind of consideration. You have to come to terms with 900,000 or one million British people on this island. If you try to concentrate on making life better for the reluctant Nationalist community amongst them that seems to me to be better than simply calling out for the four green fields to be re-united. I am sure that awareness exists and I hope the Forum will, in deploying its expertise, come up with a number of suggestions which will help both communities in Northern Ireland to accept whatever will restore a measure of peace, that measure of peace we all need.

Chairman: Thank you, Deputy Desmond. I am calling Mr. Séamus Mallon.

Mr. Mallon: If I might pursue this question of the Britishness of the Northern Unionist as you have defined it, is it comparable in any way with the Britishness of the White Rhodesians, the British Canadians and the Kenyans?

Professor Harkness: No, I do not actually equate them with these other British people who have gone overseas and evolved according to their own laws. It is impossible to equate them because the Northern Ireland British are still part of the United Kingdom. That is the difference.

Mr. Mallon: You say then it is a matter of distance?

Professor Harkness: It is partly that, but it is also a matter of government and experience. The Northern Irish did not have the degree of opportunity, I suppose, that those out of range of London may have had, although they talk about Dominion status and an independent future.

Mr. Mallon: In terms of their Britishness, you make the point there is a religious context to it. If in its deliberations this Forum were to suggest an Irish State in which by law the President of the country had to be Catholic and only Catholic Bishops could sit in the Seanad would you, and Unionists, look on that as a sectarian State?

Professor Harkness: Of course, and Unionists would not want to be part of it. The fact they are part of a similar type of State is congenial to them.

Mr. Mallon: You talk about full religious freedom.

Professor Harkness: I did not talk about full religious freedom. They have a commitment to religious freedom and toleration but I am not suggesting they live up to it.

Mr. Mallon: On page 1 in the second paragraph you say they are guaranteed full religious freedom. Does that apply to all the people in Northern Ireland?

Professor Harkness: I think it is stated that John Hume seeks a new Ireland that would guarantee full religious freedom. I do not think it is impossible to have a guarantee of full religious freedom for all citizens of Northern Ireland. One of the characteristics of the British state you mentioned is that there has been no agitation by British Catholics. I do not think they have felt oppressed.

Mr. Mallon: Would you agree that in terms of that definition the State is a sectarian State?

Professor Harkness: It is a definition you have given but I accept it has sectarian aspects. It is not, after all, a secular State. It has grown with an established Church.

Mr. Mallon: As an historian can you think of any other country in the free world which has such sectarian clauses in its law?

Professor Harkness: Would you define "the free world" for me?

Mr. Mallon: Perhaps I should re-word the question: can you think of any other country in Western Europe or in the free world which has sectarian elements written into its laws?

Professor Harkness: You are talking now of an unwritten constitution and there are no other parliaments I am aware of in the same position. There may be hundreds of them but I am not well up enough in these matters. There are no other countries in Western Europe which have evolved in quite the same way.

Mr. Mallon: If in the future a state were to evolve in which the laws included something like the Succession Act would that not be pointed to throughout the world as the nucleus of a sectarian state?

Professor Harkness: I am sure it would if it was to be part of a new written constitution. It would be less defensible than something which evolved.

Mr. Mallon: Professor Harkness referred to unhappy minorities of people being unlucky, but says that perhaps the greatest happiness of the greatest number may be the present arrangement, however unpalatable it may be to a few. I do not know how you define happiness. I suggest Dr. Johnson's definition of hope as being the "chief happiness which this world affords", but what hope do the terms of the professor's submission give? Is this hope the supreme happiness? What hope does that give to the people of Northern Ireland who are being told that the only prospect is to accept the benefits of the UK citizenship, especially to those people who have unhappy experience of the benefits of the UK situation?

Professor Harkness: Do you see many benefits flowing to the people of Northern Ireland of any political persuasion in the near future? I am very pessimistic about this. We are in a complex industrial society and I sometimes wonder if the Northern Irish people are really to be any better off than those unfortunates who were brought to West Indian islands to cut sugar cane and then left there when sugar became no longer a viable crop. They are there, they have got statehood, but they have no real means of earning their living. What real means have the people of Northern Ireland of earning their living?

Mr. Mallon: I am not talking in material terms. I am not just talking about that type of hope which is needed to keep a community alive, that type of pride in one's country that is essential for any stable society. I am talking about that type of idealism which any country must have and which seems to be impossible within the context of what you are suggesting we continue.

Professor Harkness: How impossible is it for how many?

Mr. Mallon: Well, you term it a few, I would say it was over 600,000.

Professor Harkness: That is one end of the spectrum and a few is another end of the spectrum. But I am not sure that either is accurate.

Mr. Mallon: In the first sentence of your submission you seem to imply that finding a role for the North's minority community is part of our process and that in turn seems to imply that until now

it has been denied a role. What role do you see for the minority once it has been denied the type of identity which it has been denied in the past? Do you see that denial continuing?

Professor Harkness: I would like to feel that the sort of beginnings of shared responsibility that Father Lennon referred to could be developed in local government and in any over-all form of assembly. The minority community would have as much power and responsibility as anyone else. I would like to see that, following an acceptance by the majority that the Northern minority were not a threat. I believe it is possible to think in those terms, but one community is accused of being supported by Britain and another obviously seen as being backed by Dublin. I wish one could move to the first level of government but I do not know how to do it. I see it more likely within a UK context because fewer people would have to accommodate to it than within a Republic of Ireland context.

Mr. Mallon: Reference was made earlier to the demographic trends which seemed to indicate that the non-Unionist population in Northern Ireland is coming to political reality. If that trend continues as is predicted and at some date in the future a simple majority opts for unity and interdependence, what in the Professor's opinion would the reaction of the Unionists be? Would they accept those wishes of the majority of the people of the North of Ireland or would they then prepare to fight to prevent Irish unity?

Professor Harkness: I take it that Mr. Mallon is nearer to the heartland than I am. I suspect that agitation will commence before the vital hour to prevent all of Northern Ireland being incorporated in the Republic. I am not saying that I approve of it but that is how I understand the mentality of particularly the hardline Unionists.

Mr. Mallon: The British Government have stated that the British Government would not stand in the way of that Irish unity, but then would the Unionists be fighting for their Britishness or to prevent something happening within this island against the expressed wishes of the people of Northern Ireland?

Professor Harkness: They would be fighting for their Britishness and the fact that they were no longer British would not be relevant. They would refuse to go into one state and they would have to find something else.

Mr. Mallon: The Britishness is not just Britishness or the British link?

Professor Harkness: It is very real at the moment but it is conditional.

Mr. Mallon: In those circumstances, subsequent to the creation of a unified, independent State when that demographic trend would have produced the reason, could such a State prosper in peace if the Unionist identity as it is now were so absolutely denied to them as the present system denies identity to the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland?

Professor Harkness: If a united Ireland was to come into being a new constitutional arrangement would be necessary. Ireland would be new yet some people say it would not change. We must make up our minds. If we get to a point where the prospect of a thirty-two county Ireland is real you must decide to what degree to incorporate a secular State as opposed to a country that imposes the majority religion. I have no doubt that from Mr. Mallon's experience of persecution he would not wish to persecute.

Mr. Mallon: That is quite correct. I am wondering whether people in the North do not recognise that this absolute denial to the Irish community of its national identity is storing up for them a not very happy future just as it would if the denial were on the other hand.

Professor Harkness: I am sure you are right but we are moving into a hypothetical situation. The Unionist has his own philosophy of not an inch and he sees no reason why he cannot go on enjoying his farm or his business as part of the UK.

Mr. Mallon: You say that Northern Ireland is better attached to the UK than to be part of a mere thirty-two county Ireland. What has UK membership given to the Northern Ireland people that could justify such an absolute statement? Has it given peace, prosperity, real security or self-respect? Has it given all of the people peace over the past 60 years? Has it given people in Northern Ireland any form of self-respect either in national or international terms? I cannot see how it has. Why is it much better attached?

Professor Harkness: It is terribly easy to see the history of Northern Ireland as one long, sad, sorry story but following the Second World War Northern Ireland did not lack pride in achievement. It followed the welfare state with its enormous benefits for the people of Northern Ireland and the implementation of tremendous infrastructure of a modern state which was built at that time. The Northern Ireland we are talking about, you will agree, was built post-war and provided with hospitals, roads,

telephones and other services. Community tensions were at a minimum, and perhaps a more enlightened leadership then would have taken the problems to more reasonable contentment for all. It did not work like that. There has been a lack of peace and an absence of choice in the past 14 or 15 years. Can you say what possibility Dublin has of shouldering these problems, or whether London has a better capacity to sustain the people?

Mr. Mallon: But all these tensions would be negative rather than positive tensions. What will turn them to positive tensions?

Professor Harkness: You tell me — I do not have the answer.

Chairman: Thank you for delivering your point of view. The next presenter is Mr. Hugh Munro who is an engineer by profession. I do not know how many bridges he has built but he has been the writer of several articles of interest. I call on Deputy Rory O'Hanlon to begin the questions.

Deputy O'Hanlon: You lay stress on whether or not Northern Ireland is a workable political unit. Could you amplify this?

Mr. Munro: This is at the centre of the problem. I do not think I was referring to it as an organisable unit. Anybody who thinks that is easily possible, or who propounds solutions that would lead to internal sovereignty, must explain why Northern Ireland should be an organised political unit. This is a question that is very rarely addressed. There are two answers. We can see Northern Ireland as an organisable political unit because it is a cockpit of two opposing political views, as Belgium was in relation to France and to Holland. Or we can say that in Northern Ireland there is an identity. But the only identity it has as a political unit is in regard to Protestantism. Unionism has nothing to do with it. Unionism would like to see Northern Ireland fully merged in the UK, and if you are saying that Northern Ireland has an identity you are agreeing that Protestantism is of the essence of that identity. If you see the North as a cockpit between Irish Nationalism and Britain, you will tend to something like condominium. But if you see the North as a polity based on an identity, that identity must be Protestantism, which gives you a polity in which 60% of the population are sheep and 40% goats. Seeing this, people tend to jump to the cockpit assumption which is however quite incompatible with the identity assumption.

Deputy O'Hanlon: You emphasise the importance of making a distinction between the Protestant, Catholic and British-Irish aspects?

Mr. Munro: That is a long and a deep one. It has to be done. Of course there are differences which must be jumped. You have to go back to the very nature of Northern Ireland's extraordinary constitutional position inside the UK. It is a separate unit but in a different way from that in which devolution was offered to the Scots and the Welsh. There you had Scottish and Welsh patriotism. Britain has forced a separate political status on Northern Ireland although there is no local patriotism inside it such as in Scotland and Wales. Northern Irish patriotism might motivate a football team, and that is about the total of it. Britain says that Northern Irish continuance inside the UK shall be by way of its being a separate unit; and only Northern Ireland Protestantism identifies with that unit; so that Northern Ireland Protestantism must come to the fore because it identifies with that unit.

Deputy O'Hanlon: Why do you say Britain refuses to integrate Northern Ireland?

Mr. Munro: That is the oldest decision in the world, is it not? That is a political decision taken in the time of Prince John when he came here to run the place as a separate non-integrated kingdom. That will never be changed. I believe it is because all Irish, North and South, are fundamentally alien to the mainland British and she will not let them into the family and that is it.

Deputy O'Hanlon: Will you elaborate on your view as to why it would be unhelpful to change Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution.

Mr. Munro: For several reasons. First of all, it would destabilise the South. I do not see that the South could ever acquiesce in the idea of the Twenty-six Counties as a state of its own. It means the South saying that the people of Crossmaglen, the Shankill and the rest are foreigners and I do not think the South could say that and survive as a stable State. Britain has a vested interest in this State continuing to make verbal claims on her territory because it gives her a stable neighbour. It is also an important release for the North. It entitles the Northern nationalist to get his green passport. If we are going to abolish Articles 2 and 3 then they are British *in toto* from that on. Only blue passports for them. I do not think that can contribute to stability in the North at all. This is a transaction on which I would have grave doubts.

Deputy O'Hanlon: You say that if a solution acceptable to the South is to be arrived at, Northern Ireland must descend into political incoherence and that the immediate need is to minimise the scope for Northern Ireland politics. Will you explain that?

Mr. Munro: I am utterly convinced that if the South is to talk to the North, then the North must speak with a Protestant voice because a Protestant voice is the only voice with which the North can speak. The North will not speak to the South. After all we must be honest about what we are at in this transaction here. If we talk to the North it is a one-sided offer we are making them. We are prepared to talk to the North to make an agreement for unity but we are not going to talk to the North and make an agreement for disunity. Any Protestant who enters into the kind of discussions which members of the Forum might have in mind comes in with a view to surrendering or he does not come in at all. Why should he? There is no point. We do not offer the agreement to disunity because we cannot afford to do it for our own stability in the South. If one expects Protestants to come to talk to the South about Irish unity, it is like asking Ian Paisley to act out the role of the prodigal son to Garret FitzGerald, Charles Haughey or whoever it might be. I do not see him doing that. The other thing is that it simply constructively could not happen. If sometime a movement of opinion grew in the North towards Irish unity the Protestants who have that view will not remain in Protestant parties. They will join mixed religion parties and will disqualify themselves to talk for Protestants. In the end, if discussions were ever held, there would be discussions with non-sectarian Northern people. A debate with Protestants as such will not and could never take place.

Deputy O'Hanlon: You said that the Forum should document the Anglo-Irish problem as the Forum see it and you question if they should go any further as there is no British or Unionist input into it.

Mr. Munro: I suppose I am making that view for selfish reasons as a citizen of the Southern State who wants the Southern State to go on functioning stably and constructively. It seems to me that there are a lot of material points which in the nature of things the Forum cannot discuss. Entry into NATO is an important point and one which is highly relevant and if the Forum were to discuss this matter *in toto* it would have to take cognisance of this but that means a major political decision being taken in semi-public debate. I do not think it is reasonable to expect politicians to do so or for politicians to put themselves in a position where they have to. Diplomacy cannot be carried on in public. All the Republic's cards for any talks on unity could not be put on the table. In reason what the Forum set out to do must in practice be limited. It should not pretend to attack every problem and answer every one.

Chairman: Deputy Prendergast.

Deputy Prendergast: In one section of your contribution, Mr. Munro, you stated that the question must be asked whether London has any real wish to solve the Anglo-Irish problem and this would be an understandable attitude because too many politicians have damaged their careers over Ireland in the past. Surely that position has changed now and I submit you are wrong in that. Would it not be to the political advantage of any British statesman, or stateswoman, who could now solve the Irish problem? Would that person not attract political kudos from all over the world. I could not help thinking this morning of Edmund Burke's dictum that "that nation is not governable which has continually to be suppressed." Effectively, this is an ongoing problem. Somebody already spoke about King John, and the Irish Troubles were also mentioned in Shakespeare's plays. But surely somebody like Mrs. Thatcher who sees herself as an heir of Churchill would attract all the plaudits of the world if she could solve this problem? Will you comment on that?

Mr. Munro: She will also, I am sure, be warned by every adviser she has, as Callaghan was warned, that she should not get lost in the Irish bog. Long experience must make them fear these things. If you want to cross a bog it is marvellous if you know the way across but I do not think they know the way across. They see it as a bog. There is another, and much more serious factor, which came to light during the hunger strike. There is the fact that through the horrible things they do in Britain, or England in particular, the IRA have forced themselves on the consciousness of the British people. They have become I submit, in some sense a useful hate figure for the British people, somewhat in the way that the Jews, who after all had done nothing to deserve it — the IRA have — were a stabilising factor in Germany before the war. It was very clear during the hunger strike when we had two Taoisigh preaching good sense and saying sensible things that to the Prime Minister of Britain there was only one Irishman who mattered and he was Bobby Sands and only one force that mattered, the IRA. This is a very disturbing problem. There was political mileage in English terms to be got, regardless of what happenend in Ireland, by confronting the IRA, and the IRA were confronted. Here is an example of Irish affairs at their most unstable contributing to the stability of the British State. We know our problems are awful but seen from their perspective they are peripheral and quite often there is mileage to be made out of spot interventions in Irish issues and quick withdrawals, but no politician looking at the 800 years would think he would be able to solve it.

Deputy Prendergast: The Bobby Sands issue happened only a year or two ago. The position surely is that Britain must have some

deeper reason for not pulling out of the North, which I suggest is the biggest problem that faces any group who hope ultimately to talk about the unity of Ireland. That must be identified and only then can we talk to the British. It cannot be any longer for economic reasons. Mr. MacBride spoke this morning about the value of the shipyards. Those are gone, there is nothing left there. What is the real reason? Would it be security? I am speaking about the defence of the west and that kind of thing.

Mr. Munro: I am sure it would be security. There are a lot of attractions in the present situation. If they see the Irish problem as intractable and if they see the Northern Loyalists as capable of sustaining an independent state, which I doubt, I would see that they would have real problems because if Ireland were divided into two States both mutually unsympathetic they would have grave difficulty in controlling the island from their security point of view. One or other side would involve themselves outside the British orbit. In the present situation they occupy one-third of the island's population and have sterilised the external politics of the other two-thirds. From the security point of view it is a reasonably stable and good situation and from their point of view, why move away?

Deputy Prendergast: You made the distinction in the Northern Protestant between his unionism and his political Protestantism, but would it not be true that the Protestantism which has contributed so much to the Christian thinking and which has so much to contribute to this island in a future united situation has been damaged by the political Protestantism of the North?

Mr. Munro: I could not agree more. I would hate it to be thought that I would regard political Protestantism as being wrong or that I regarded anyone who voted for the Official Unionist Party or for the DUP as being bigoted. In the situation they are in, whatever stability they have derives from the British connection and that can only be guaranteed by coherent politics. If one takes the Orange order and Dr. Paisley away, Northern Ireland loses all coherence. People who vote for Protestant parties should not be accused of bigotry. They are only acting out of common sense to preserve what stability they have. That is why it is most important that the role of Northern Ireland politics should be minimised as we approach this terrifying 50-50 point. If there is active politics then, you will have a situation where their stability inside the United Kingdom depends on Protestant politics with Protestants being a shrinking number. It is a recipe for trouble. Direct rule by British politicians, with no Assembly, seems to be the only clean way. If the Northern Ireland situation has to be ended by wearing down

the famous 50 per cent figure by Catholic breeding, then it is most important that all scope for Northern Ireland politics in that time be cut to the minimum.

Deputy Prendergast: As James Connolly said, "every society throughout history created its own priests" and I put it to you that what we are witnessing in this island is that politicians have been created by their society and they do not lead but merely reflect the situation. Northern politicians reflect the feeling of their constituents rather than lead. That brings me on to another question. I believe that churches have a far greater role to play in the ultimate unity of this country, as great a role as the politicians. I would like your comment on that. Is it a good or bad thing, whatever way one looks at it, that politicians by and large reflect the confessional views of their own background and that they would respond to that given the situation that there are many Protestants and Catholics who would move into the middle ground if they were given the lead by their Churches? It is important to ask you that, given your polarisation of the Catholic/Protestant concept of your thesis.

Mr. Munro: I am sure that all clergymen and particularly Protestants agonise over the way in which they are sucked into politics. If Protestant politics is the key to social stability, if they argue for a new dispensation they are arguing for chaos and instability and they are sensed by their people to be doing so. They are in a horrible situation. I do not see how they can lead as long as Britain has created this situation where you have a political unit whose whole essence is based on a religious division and if you try to soften that division you disintegrate the political unit, you put clergymen on both sides in a hell of a situation.

Deputy Prendergast: What are your comments on what is called the right of Unionists to remain British, given that they and their ancestors have occupied that part of Ireland for some centuries.

Mr. Munro: They are not British for a start. The name of the State in which they live is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the longest title of any State on the surface of this globe. It is written in this way to make it clear that Northern Ireland is not part of Great Britain. It could be called Great Britain if Northern Ireland were British. It would be the obvious thing to do. But they go to those lengths to make sure that they are seen not to be. I do not see them as being British. One might call them the Crown's Irish, that might be a better description.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Prendergast. Now I call on Deputy John Kelly of Fine Gael.

Deputy Kelly: Your submission, detailed and interesting though it is, has a very dogmatic air about it. Paragraph after paragraph contain expressions like "this could only happen" or such and such a thing "could never happen". Although you do not tend towards concrete recommendations I would like to test some of the ideas which you put up in a fairly definite form. Would you not agree that most ordinary people, most voters North and South are not political, still less religious fundamentalists, and are more anxious to get on with their own lives and leave high aspirations to their politicians; and are willing to settle for compromises which may be less than satisfactory to academic standards, and for only superficial achievements of the aspirations which they allow their politicians to impute to them as a mass?

Mr. Munro: Yes, I would.

Deputy Kelly: Let me bring you through a small number of the points which you make. You say that political Protestantism and Unionism are separate forms of fuel, with the Northern political majority. "Political Protestantism", the rest of the world might think, would mean something like an attachment to a secular State with freedom of worship, free press, freedom of assembly and association and so on. If that is what you mean, virtually every Catholic is a political Protestant. But if that is not what you mean, is it not the case that what you are really saying is shorthand for the invincible atavistic repugnance which the Northern majority feel towards the idea of being dominated by the people whom their ancestors settled among by force? Is that, in other words, what the real problem is? And your talking about political Protestantism is shorthand for that? And if that is the problem have we not unearthed it and is it not the case that we are doing nothing about it?

Mr. Munro: I notice that you made a quick jump from your first question to your second question. Your first question said that a great number of people were apolitical, looking for stability and want to get on with their lives, and I would agree. Now you have begun to ascribe great importance to some atavistic force. It would be crazy to deny that Ian Paisley represents something but I do not think one could ever hold that he represents or that that particular atavistic thing represents 50 per cent of Northern Ireland, maybe 30 per cent or 35 per cent. Beyond that there are what we might call the moderate Protestants, if you like, the apolitical people of whom you spoke first. They are the determining people and they cleave to political Protestantism as a guarantee of their stability.

Deputy Kelly: Is it not the point, and you are not addressing yourself to it, that the difficulty we are facing, and which has brought us here today and other days, lies in the mind in varying degrees of strength and that questions of prediction, of prophesy about what will or will not work, are really beside the point. The question, as I would see it, is what can we do to get nearer that mind and simultaneously produce some system or solution which is humanly tolerable?

Mr. Munro: That mind cannot talk to you, will not talk to anybody in the South, because in any dispensation other than the present one, political Protestantism would not exist. Let us reflect on its enormous limitations as a political force. It can come to a view on nothing, on no social issue, on no economic issue. It could not survive in a united Ireland because it would not have anything to say. It is there to keep Northern Ireland for the union. That is its job. In a united Ireland it would cease to exist and it will not talk to you about an amelioration of any kind because it knows that you are talking about a situation in which it has no role.

Deputy Kelly: Is this not another example of the Mosaic dogmatism which is to be found in your submission? You say this particular form of political belief could not survive in a united Ireland. This would entirely depend on what we would be getting in the area labelled a united Ireland. Suppose the united Ireland were contrived in such a way as specifically to make this survival possible?

Mr. Munro: You mean create a Lebanon, a state in which specific creeds have political roles to play?

Deputy Kelly: I do not think anyone is talking about a particular creed because even Protestantism itself has many dimensions to it. I am speaking about the political faith or the political motivation which I take you to be describing under the label "political Protestantism". If we were able to contrive simultaneously a weakening of the emotional repugnance and a legal framework which gave some play to political Protestantism, in whatever shape, surely you would wish to withdraw your prophesy that it never could work?

Mr. Munro: I think that is appallingly insulting to the North. We are talking about an issue around which people die. We are talking about sovereignty. What the IRA die for, what the RUC risk their lives for, what the UDA and the UVF and the INLA risk their lives for is sovereignty. You seem to be saying that you are going to deal with an issue which is causing trouble at the higher level of

sovereignty by tinkering around at the lower level of religion. Are we to say that the RUC risk their lives for continued access to divorce and contraception? I do not think it can be said and to say so seems to me to devalue everything that the North is about. If one says that liberalisation of the Southern State is an aid towards Irish unity one must be saying that the Northern majority are in some sense Irish but not willing to come in with us because of religious factors, that they are predisposed to be Irish because, after all, if they were British what would be the point of liberalising the South there they already have everything they want. For this to make sense you must be saying then they are Irish who will not come in with the South because we are not liberal enough. That is a most extraordinary thing to say because, whatever tinge of discrimination there is in the South, and it is not great — I am sure it is less than it is in Britain towards Catholics — one could not say remotely that it was such as would warrant a change of nationality.

Deputy Kelly: It is because of the very fact that people are dying that something less than a fundamentalist solution of this problem is what we should be striving for. You do not seem to be willing to concede or conceive of such a thing, because when somebody envisages it your reply is that they are insulting everything that Northern unionism is all about. We must start from the position that Northern unionism has claimed and asserted too much. If anybody is selling unionism and the people who support it short, it is perhaps yourself. May I take you to the question of Sunningdale which you mention briefly, far too briefly I thought. You mentioned that in the 1974 election there was a majority, albeit a marginal majority, against power sharing but surely you would agree that a very large number of people who might think of themselves as Unionists, even then after the IRA had done their damndest to wreck the whole thing, supported power sharing and saw it as a way out?

Mr. Munro: Of course. Some of them did support it.

Deputy Kelly: And would you not agree that that vote in 1974 took place after a period during which every conceivable malignant force in the country had tried to wreck the Sunningdale experiment so that the factors behind that vote are not simply an irremovable attachment to political Protestantism in the way that you suggest?

Mr. Munro: Everybody must agree to differ on that. I would have thought that the Ulster workers' strike produced a situation in which moderate Protestant opinion was drawn into semi-militancy in a way in which it has never been drawn before or since because

of their regarding the power-sharing proposal as fundamentally unstable.

Deputy Kelly: We need not argue about past history, but do you not agree that the "fundamental instability" you describe is claiming too much for your retrospective analysis of the situation? It did not in fact work, but that does not prove that it was fundamentally unstable. I might remind you that the total anti-Sunningdale UUUC vote in 1974 was just more than 50 per cent, not even 51 per cent, after all the provocation to which the Unionist side had been subjected, partly innocently by the euphoria which was too visible in Dublin and partly malignantly by the IRA who instead of stepping down the violence enhanced it.

Mr. Munro: All I can say is that there is only one fact in this argument and so far as the argument is concerned I win, one nil. The power-sharing concept did perish in instability.

Chairman: A final question.

Deputy Kelly: You assert in your submission that the Southern Irish would not wish to make a federal solution work. Where is your evidence for that statement or can you say what group in the country, apart from the IRA, have ever formally denounced a federal solution?

Mr. Munro: A federal solution conceived on the basis that South and North are equal partners involves the South in abandoning its Irish identity, Irishness belonging now to the totality of the two, and you would then have to work a Southern sub-policy inside the larger Irish institution, whatever it might be. We are back then to the old problem of identity. If the identifying principle of the North is Protestantism, the identifying principle of the South is Catholicism. I refuse to believe that the Southern State would accept a Catholic identity which would be thrust on it by the federal solution. It would simply say, "we are the true Irish" which would wreck the equal logic of the scheme.

Mr. Farren: Following up that last point, can you give a brief definition of the term, "Irish nation"? It is one of the few essential terms which you do not define in your submission. I ask the question because you suggest that perhaps the Forum will face one of its most difficult tasks if it tries to offer a new definition of Irishness to embrace different traditions of that Irishness.

Mr. Munro: I feel confident that this is what will evolve. I do not have great theological views of nations. In practice, nations are

people thrown together but there must be a principle behind the nation if it is to survive and to be stable. African states all crumble into military dictatorships because they do not have behind them a unifying principle. For a nation to survive there must be behind it an idea for which soldiers and policemen will risk their lives. We found something like that in the South but it is not adequate for the North. I am not saying this is easy but I am sure that our idea of the nation must be expanded and changed to welcome and include the North in some way but not so far as to minimise the effective strength of whatever is the principle behind the State. Therefore, whatever the idea may be, it cannot be widened too far. It may well be that it is not widened very much and that Irish unity will come about because the northern Irish at length realise that all they can hope for from Britain is colonial status and that we are the only people who can offer them a nationality in which they can be full participants. That may be all we offer them.

Mr. Farren: So all you are saying is that we should seek to create some new concept of Irish nationality without helping us in any sense to identify what might be the strands of that nationality.

Mr. Munro: I am sure that some genuflections in the direction of the Crown would be of help or that some form of continued joint citizenship would be of help but we cannot go very far without destabilising our own State so there is a real problem.

Mr. Farren: In other words, we are in a *cul-de-sac* situation.

Mr. Munro: No. I would have thought that the Northern State is disintegrating before our eyes and that that process is continuing.

Mr. Farren: You are saying, then, that we should be satisfied with the *status quo*.

Mr. Munro: One never should be satisfied with the *status quo* but I am saying that we should not destabilise the State we have.

Mr. Farren: On the point about the integration of Northern Ireland with Britain, you invite the Forum as a primary task to call Britain's bluff on this issue. I put it to you that history has already done that and that the Forum would be justified in accepting that integration will not happen. Therefore, I fail to understand why you emphasise so strongly this particular tactic.

Mr. Munro: It is because I cannot conceive of anything that would be of more value in moving towards a solution than a declaration by Britain that the northern Irish were not co-nationals with the

mainland British. Short of withdrawal that is something which can be done. It is a fact which Britain refuses to admit but if she did admit it, would not the ice begin to melt?

Mr. Farren: Would you accept that it was explicit at Sunningdale?

Mr. Munro: Yes. It was implicit, stated by omission if you like, in the sense that they were told that if they wished to opt out they could do so. Kent, for instance, would hardly be offered the right to opt out of the UK. The mere fact of being told that they might opt out was an admission that the northern people are not of the nation but a clearer statement would be of help. UK Ministers used to say regularly that Northern Ireland was an integral part of the UK but to say that is to try and reassure people when in fact there is no intention of offering them co-nationality.

Mr. Farren: Despite all the contradictions and tensions and the consequent instability which clearly you expose in Northern Ireland's present constitutional position, you seem to think that London may find this position the most workable of any arrangement that could be suggested. Is this because you think that London considers that any move would precipitate chaos?

Mr. Munro: I am sure it is that but I must say that the Bobby Sands episode was for me profoundly disturbing — the complete indifference to an immediate and practical amelioration of conditions in Ireland without having any effect on mainland politics, just being pushed aside because it did not suit to do otherwise. That was disturbing.

Mr. Farren: You are not specific in terms of suggesting a solution but you come up with the idea of traditional unity though you see that only being achieved as a result of chaos. You are hardly suggesting that the Forum should either contrive at chaos or encourage it in any way. Therefore, I am forced to assume that you are forced to favour the cockpit solution, which is joint sovereignty, although you do not argue very strongly for that. Could you elaborate on that and also on the assumption I am making that you see unity only emerging out of chaos?

Mr. Munro: Did I use the word "chaos"?

Mr. Farren: The word you used was "incoherence".

Mr. Munro: That is a different thing, certainly in terms of vibrations.

Mr. Haughey: Mr. Munro is an engineer.

Mr. Munro: I can see no way forward except through Northern Ireland descending into incoherence. Every attempt to make it work sharpens and fosters sectarian politics and makes the situation worse just at a time when we are moving into a 50/50 situation. It seems to me that to propose solutions of that kind is very worrying indeed.

Mr. Farren: Yet you find yourself forced, I think, to give some credibility to the cockpit assumption as the basis for seeking a solution.

Mr. Munro: No, not really. The cockpit assumption is much more sensible than the identity assumption.

Mr. Farren: Furthermore, you say we should not change Articles 2 and 3 because, if we did so, it would destabilise society and you say we cannot change Protestantism in the North because that will destabilise also. Are you in favour of the *status quo*?

Mr. Munro: I am in favour of evolution proceeding in the most quiet and peaceful form. I do not think attempts to find solutions just because we have an understandable urge and need to find them is wise unless we are very sure. If we do not have what is better the best thing is to nudge things along as best we can. This problem will solve itself in ten or 20 years.

Mr. Farren: What you are saying is we should have no politics in Northern Ireland but let the two Governments shoulder the responsibility themselves.

Mr. Munro: Let the British Government take the responsibility. Let there be direct rule.

Mr. Farren: What about the Nationalist community in the North?

Mr. Munro: I would have thought they are better served, and have been better served, under direct rule than any solution in which democratic power was organised on a sectarian basis. I agree it is very hard on politicians and we should at all times recognise the extraordinary energy and industry of people who soldier on in a difficult situation and who would naturally like to have power and exercise power. That is understandable but I still see risks for the

community in stirring the sectarian pot by giving Northern Ireland politicians power to exercise.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Munro. The Forum is now adjourned until 11.30 a.m. tomorrow. It will be a private session. The public session will take place at 2.15 p.m.

4.45 p.m. Session concluded.

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No. 4

NEW IRELAND FORUM

Public Session

Wednesday, 5 October, 1983

Dublin Castle

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Chairman: Dr. Colin O'Riada.

FLANNA TAIL

FINE GALL

MEMBERS

Mr. Charles J. Haughey T.D.	Dr. Garret FitzGerald T.D.
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Dr. Roy O'Donoghue T.D.	Mr. Eoin Kenny T.D.
	Mr. Maurice Manning T.D.

NEW IRELAND FORUM

ALTERNATES

Public Session
 Wednesday, 5 October, 1983
 Dublin Castle

LABOUR

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY

MEMBERS

Mr. Dick Spring T.D. The Taoiseach and Minister for the Environment	Mr. John Hume M.E.P.
Mr. Frank Cluskey T.D. Minister for Trade, Commerce and Tourism	Mr. Stanis Mallon
Mr. Mervyn Taylor T.D.	Mr. Austin Currie
Mr. Frank Prendergast T.D.	Mr. John Hendon
Senator Stephen McGonagle	Mr. K. McCready

2.15 p.m.

ALTERNATES

Mrs. Eileen Desmond T.D.	Mr. John Farren
Senator Mary Robinson	Mr. Frank Feely
	Mr. Hugh Logue
	Mr. Paddy O'Donoghue
	Mr. Pádraig O'Hare

Chairman: Dr. Colm Ó hEocha.

FIANNA FáIL

FINE GAEL

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Dr. Rory O'Hanlon T.D.	Mr. Enda Kenny T.D.
	Mr. Maurice Manning T.D.

ALTERNATES

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Mr. Jackie Fahey T.D.	Mrs. Nora Owen T.D.
Mr. John O'Leary T.D.	Mr. Ivan Yates T.D.
Mr. Jimmy Leonard T.D.	

LABOUR

**SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC
AND LABOUR PARTY**

MEMBERS

Mr. Dick Spring T.D.	Mr. John Hume M.E.P.
The Tánaiste and Minister for the Environment	Mr. Séamus Mallon
Mr. Frank Cluskey T.D.	Mr. Austin Currie
Minister for Trade, Commerce and Tourism	Mr. Joe Hendron
Mr. Mervyn Taylor T.D.	Mr. E. K. McGrady
Mr. Frank Prendergast T.D.	
Senator Stephen McGonagle	

ALTERNATES

Mrs. Eileen Desmond T.D.	Mr. Seán Farren
Senator Mary Robinson	Mr. Frank Feely
	Mr. Hugh Logue
	Mr. Paddy O'Donoghue
	Mr. Paschal O'Hare

Chairman: (Dr. Colm Ó hEocha): Members of the New Ireland Forum, we go into public session. Our first presentation this afternoon is by Robin Glendinning, who is a founder member of the Alliance Party. A Northerner himself, he was educated both in Belfast and Dublin. A historian now teaching at the Royal Belfast Academical Institute. He is also a playwright, having had a play produced at the Dublin Theatre Festival in 1981. The first questioner for Mr. Glendinning is Mr. Séamus Mallon of the SDLP.

Mr. Mallon: In your introduction, Mr. Glendinning, you are not concerned with the Forum's constitutional proposals but the Forum's approach to the words "by consent". What do you mean by "consent" when applied to the people of Northern Ireland? In your document you deal with only one consent, that is majority consent, and at no stage do you make any reference to the consent of what is now the minority. What do you yourself mean by consent?

Mr. Glendinning: When I referred to the business of consent of the people of Northern Ireland I referred to the position of Northern Ireland, its constitutional position as part of the United Kingdom. I assume that the members of the Forum are presenting plans and schemes to try to change that, and that must be done by our consent. I am not talking about the possibility of power sharing, in which I believe. I am not talking about equality before the law, in which I believe. I am not talking about all the ways we might make Northern Ireland more acceptable to the Northern minority. What I am saying is that the Northern majority have been, whether you like it or not, accorded the right to consent to any change in their constitutional position. Any approach that is made to them on the basis of free consent must recognise their right to say no as well as yes.

Mr. Mallon: In your presentation you referred to consent as applying to the people of Northern Ireland but you never referred to a consensus or to the consent of 42 per cent of the population of Northern Ireland. You ignored them. Is that not a flaw in your argument?

Mr. Glendinning: No. My argument is that the right of consent has been confirmed again and again. For instance, your party's constitution seeks the unity of Ireland with the consent of the majority of Northern Ireland. That is in your constitution. You seek unity on that basis. We are talking about the link with the UK. We are not talking about systems of government. My argument is that the Border was drawn in order to give the Unionists in Northern Ireland the right to self-determination. That meant that half a

million people were denied the same right, but that right having been given, I do not see how you can possibly take it away if you believe in unity by consent. Do you think you can get a new Ireland without consent of the majority in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Mallon: You referred to the right of Northern Unionists to say no. Have they got an unqualified right to say no?

Mr. Glendinning: The right must be qualified by the consent of the present minority.

Mr. Mallon: Have the Northern Unionists an unqualified right to say no? Must that right not be qualified by the interests of the minority, by the interests of Britain and by the interests of the people of the Republic of Ireland? If all these interests happen to gel, and if the Northern Unionists still said no, would you still defend the right of the Northern Unionists to say no and let all the others take the consequences?

Mr. Glendinning: The Unionists do not have the right to discriminate against people. They do not have the right to have security policies which discriminate against people. They do not have the right, in these circumstances, to be given majority rule again within Northern Ireland. Ultimately, on their ultimate destiny, on their nationality, on the people they feel they are, they have that right. On that point it is very easy to say that because all these people say to them, "We are offering you this, and that", that they would be unreasonable to say no. I argue in the paper that to be unreasonable on an attitude like that one could say that the Irish Republicans were unreasonable not to accept certain offers when that ultimate question came. The Unionists have that right. If you believe in consent you have to persuade Unionists that it is better for them that a united Ireland, a new Ireland, new arrangements, are in their interests. They have to give that consent freely and you have got to accept that.

Mr. Mallon: I will try again. If the interests of the present minority community in Northern Ireland, the Republic and Britain gel are you still saying that the Unionists have that right to say no?

Mr. Glendinning: If you go to the Unionists under those circumstances or any circumstances and say, "Your right to consent is now over", you are in a very dangerous situation. I believe that under those circumstances the Unionists would fight.

Mr. Mallon: I detect, rightly or wrongly, in your document a strange dichotomy because at one stage you seem to be saying that

self-determination for the Unionists is something because there were imperatives which forced it on Britain. You used the words, in page 3:

... partition ... forced on the British government by a million Unionists.

You backed that up by force of numbers and an implied threat to fight. On the other hand you were talking about a right to self-determination. You said:

... the first thing I ask the Forum to do is to speak in these terms, in terms of Unionists' right of self-determination.

I do not know if you would agree with me that there is that dichotomy between the imperative of self-determination and the right to self-determination.

Mr. Glendinning: People who have rights to self-determination will have them ignored if there are not sufficient numbers and if there is not sufficient strength among those people. I am afraid that is the way most of the borders were drawn from 1918 and to whenever after the World War. The first part of my argument is that the Unionists, in the election on which Republicans base their case for a Sinn Féin Ireland, were accorded a very high degree of local majority. I want the Forum to recognise that the terms, the border was a gerrymander, the border is an artificial line, are neat uses of phraseology to ignore the fact of a million Unionists who do not want a united Ireland. That is the fact you are facing. Unfortunately, the right is backed by numbers and it is backed — I am afraid I have to tell you — in such a way that an attempt to overthrow that right will be met very probably with arms.

Mr. Mallon: I should like to try to pursue that. First, we should get it right that there are not one million Unionists in Northern Ireland. It seems to be implied in your document that if you have got sufficient numbers and that your threat of force is sufficiently potent that confers a right, the right in this case to be the right to self-determination.

Mr. Glendinning: The argument is that the election conferred the right. Those other things are there as well and they are the things that, as a practical politician, you have to face. That is why I am saying it is there, there it is, that is what you are dealing with; do not fool yourself, that that is not what you are dealing with.

Mr. Mallon: I should like to take that a stage further. At present — you referred to this in political terms — in the constituencies of Foyle, mid-Ulster, Fermanagh-South Tyrone, Newry and Armagh

and South Down there is an expressed majority against Partition . . .

Mr. Glendinning: There is an argument to say that the Border was drawn in the wrong place.

Mr. Mallon: I am taking the previous point when you spoke of force of numbers. Does that confer on the non-Unionist population of those constituencies which make up all of Northern Ireland west of the Bann a right to self-determination?

Mr. Glendinning: The terms in which this right has been given to the Unionists has been expressed by successive British Governments and agreed by Governments in the Republic. For instance, the Republic's declaration at Sunningdale clearly accords this right. There is no other way of reading it than according that right. That was an accord to which you and your party were signatories. It speaks of the people of Northern Ireland and that is all of the Six Counties. I would accept a situation where a majority of the people of Northern Ireland voted the other way. I believe most Unionists would accept that but you have to persuade them, you cannot force them. To remove that right, which has been granted to them, is tantamount to forcing them and you cannot be in favour of forcing them by saying, "The British agree, the Northern minority agree, the Southern Government agree and you must do this." You cannot on the one hand say you are in favour of unity by consent and on the other hand say your consent can only mean that you have to agree. What you are saying is that consent in those circumstances must mean to argue about whether you are going to lose 3-0 or 2-0 and that is not consent.

Mr. Mallon: I am not saying that but I am trying to find out what you are saying.

Mr. Glendinning: It is clear what I am saying.

Mr. Mallon: Let us take that a little further and I believe there is an interesting point here. If the present demographic trends continue and at some future date a simple majority — I repeat, simple majority — of the people in Northern Ireland said they wanted to end Partition and wanted a unified independent State would you be arguing in those circumstances for the absolute right of self-determination in that case to the exclusion of any rights of what would then be the minority in Ireland, the people who are now Unionists?

Mr. Glendinning: If that happened we would be in an extremely dangerous situation. If we produced a 50 per cent plus one majority in favour of a united Ireland within Northern Ireland on the basis of demographic trends I believe we would be in an extremely dangerous situation. That situation, however, would be very different. It would be very different if that 50 per cent plus one majority was made up not just of Nationalists but of a substantial section of Unionist voters who changed their minds. That would involve consent.

Mr. Mallon: If, without that, if indeed the demographic trend was such that without Unionists being converted to this idea, a simple majority said they wanted a united, independent Ireland would you, and would the Unionist population, accept that as the democratic right to self-determination as stated and established by yourself in your document?

Mr. Glendinning: I do not know whether they would but I said that was a very dangerous situation. I hope it does not happen. To produce that situation is the sort of thing the Provos are trying to do. That is what they are aiming at. I think we would be in a very dangerous situation. I personally would accept it, yes.

Mr. Mallon: As a democrat and in the terms of your own definition do you think the Unionists would accept that?

Mr. Glendinning: I do not know. I think we would be in a very dangerous situation.

Mr. Mallon: I agree.

Chairman: I call on Deputy John Wilson of Fianna Fáil.

Deputy Wilson: Mr. Glendinning, arising out of what Mr. Mallon asked you, are you not asking the Forum to accept that Unionists in the North should have self-determination and that Nationalists should not have, in other words Unionists stand up, Croppies lie down?

Mr. Glendinning: Yes, unfortunately the way the self-determination was given to the Unionists meant that half a million Nationalists lost the right of self-determination. That is what happens when you draw lines round people to give them the right to self-determination. It happened to the Czechs and the Slovaks, to all sorts of people. It happened here. What I am asking you to recognise is that it was done, that it happened, it is there and to undo it is going to be damn difficult.

Deputy Wilson: Would Mr. Glendinning agree that the Croppies are right in saying: "We will not lie down and that we will pursue our objective?"

Mr. Glendinning: I do not know what that means.

Deputy Wilson: That they do not accept the right of the Unionist majority to deprive them of fundamental rights and to deprive them of their own identity.

Mr. Glendinning: There is every possible gradation of response among the Catholic community. There are members of the Catholic community in the North who have become senior civil servants and members who have become judges. There are members who support the Alliance Party and there are members who support the SDLP and there are those who contest the Unionist right with arms, the Provisional IRA. I would ask the Unionists "What are you going to do?". They have done nothing about people who have lost these fundamental rights. I think another effort should be made to produce power sharing, another effort should be made to produce an institutionalised Irish dimension, that we should do the best we possibly can on these grounds. I am just telling you what the facts are. Those are the facts.

Deputy Wilson: I know the statistics and the positions in the administration are thin on the ground. Would you agree that all violence should be condemned including the use of force on which, and not on democratic argument, the Unionist position is based?

Mr. Glendinning: Why is the Unionist position based on that? The Unionists had as much right to claim self-determination as a result of the 1918 election as Sinn Féin had.

Deputy Wilson: I do not think many people in this room will accept that proposition.

Mr. Glendinning: You only have to look at the results to see that it is so.

Deputy Wilson: There were Unionists also in the Southern part of the country who when the *raison d'être* for unionism in the Southern part of the country had gone came into the political parties in the South of Ireland and played an honourable part in the country ever since.

Mr. Glendinning: It is irrelevant.

Deputy Wilson: Am I right in thinking that the Alliance Party do not really represent the middle ground — I am relying on your paper and on other papers from the Alliance Party — but are, in effect, the party of moderate Unionism?

Mr. Glendinning: I was not aware the Alliance Party had made a submission to the Forum.

Deputy Wilson: No, but from other documents I have read.

Mr. Glendinning: I am not here to argue the position of the Alliance Party. I am here to try to argue with you that you are in trouble if you try to upset the Unionists' right to consent. If you are interested in a united Ireland or a new Ireland based on consent you have to face the problem of what you are going to do with the Unionist population who have been accorded this right and what your response is going to be to that.

Deputy Wilson: We deny the right to the people to whom we are supposed to have accorded the right.

Mr. Glendinning: Have you accorded them that right?

Deputy Wilson: I am talking about the UK Government. Basically we have denied them —

Mr. Glendinning: Mr. Haughey said in a joint statement with Mrs. Thatcher:

While agreeing that a change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the agreement of the majority there . . .

What does that mean?

Deputy Wilson: I accept that it means what it says. I also accept the difficulty you had in replying to Mr. Mallon when he asked you what would happen if there was demographically a majority in favour of a united Ireland.

Mr. Glendinning: I do not think I am in nearly as much difficulty as you are.

Deputy Wilson: I am not in any difficulty. On the question of consent, can you recall any occasion when the Unionist political parties sought of the Nationalist minority or of the people of Ireland agreement or consent to the maintenance of Northern Ireland as a State separate from the rest of Ireland and linked to

Britain and do you think that such consent should be required or is it unnecessary?

Mr. Glendinning: Brian Faulkner did it. He took the gentlemen opposite me — the SDLP — into the Cabinet. He made an agreement with the Republic and with Britain, signed an accord, set up a Council of Ireland. He was defeated but he did it.

Deputy Wilson: Was he defeated by force or by demographic process?

Mr. Glendinning: He lost an election. The January-February election, following the Assembly election which was most unfortunate. Then the Northern majority would not accept the Council of Ireland and his administration fell. You cannot say that no Unionist has attempted it. I think it should be tried again.

Deputy Wilson: The election was a Westminster election.

Mr. Glendinning: I do not know what difference that makes. If you add up the votes against Brian Faulkner and for Brian Faulkner you find that he loses.

Deputy Wilson: It was not a vote for the actual —

Mr. Glendinning: I am sorry, Mr. Wilson.

Deputy Wilson: You mentioned, and Unionist propagandists generally mention, a million people who want no part of an Irish Republic. You have been talking about elections. The figures in the 1983 Westminster election were Unionists 412,701: Non-Unionists 352,224. Is it not time to stop the propagandistic use of the million Protestants and use realistic figures to indicate the truth of the situation on the ground?

Mr. Glendinning: I do not know what point you are making. There is still a substantial Unionist majority in favour of the present status. If you are really interested in producing a solution by an imbalanced emigration from Northern Ireland because of the present violence and forcing things along that way, I do not think we are going to get very far. We do not know what the most recent statistics from the census are but the latest efforts of the demographers at Queens say that it is unlikely there will be a Nationalist majority within Northern Ireland, if present trends continue, before 2020 or 2030 and some of them say that there will never be such a majority. To hope that they are going to outbreed us is, I think, unrealistic.

Deputy Wilson: What I asked was for a touch of realism in the Unionist propaganda. It would bring an air of reality to it if we simply said there was a Unionist majority of 60,000.

Mr. Glendinning: I do not agree that there is a Unionist majority of merely 60,000.

Deputy Wilson: Well, that is what I read here. Would you accept that there is a difference between seeking consent to constitutional change from the present position and seeking consent to new political structures? Would you accept that the question of requiring consent for a withdrawal of the British guarantee is one thing and the need for consent to new political structures is another, and that one cannot validly hold that consent is not required for the first part but is required for the second part?

Mr. Glendinning: Do you mean that consent is required for a change in the Unionist guarantee?

Deputy Wilson: The British guarantee is what I mentioned first and what I mean is that consent in regard to that is not necessary but that consent for new political structures might be considered.

Mr. Glendinning: The British guarantee provides that there shall be no change without the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. What objection do you have to that?

Deputy Wilson: Is there not a world of difference in saying that a United Ireland can come about only with the consent of the majority in Northern Ireland and in saying that consent would be required in order for any change to be made in the existing constitutional position?

Mr. Glendinning: There is no difference between the two. To say that the British must change the terms of their guarantee is to say that the British must stop saying that there will be no change without the consent of the people in Northern Ireland and then that the Unionists must be allowed to consent to the changes that are about to take place. You may not hold both positions at once. Either you are in favour of consent or you are not. If the British say something and you say it also then you are agreeing the point. It is impossible to argue about the word "consent".

Deputy Wilson: I asked you for a distinction between the two.

Mr. Glendinning: I do not understand a distinction between the two and I find your position in this regard to be illogical.

Deputy Wilson: Do you attach any importance to the statement of the then British Prime Minister that whether the Unionists liked it or not, they would not be allowed join a united Ireland at that particular time?

Mr. Glendinning: I do not attach any importance to that.

Chairman: Senator Mary Robinson of the Labour Party.

Senator Robinson: In your submission you consider at some length the different attitudes and perceptions of the traditions and aspirations on this island and you emphasise the importance of the British guarantee. At page 6 you set out the wording: "there will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom unless and until the majority of the people of Northern Ireland express a wish for such a change". Do you accept that the wording and indeed the focus of that guarantee is on constitutional jurisdiction and that by concentrating on territorial constitutional jurisdiction Northern Ireland is rendered constitutionally part of the UK and therefore an internal problem of the UK?

Mr. Glendinning: I accept that is so.

Senator Robinson: Do you believe that Northern Ireland can be described in terms of being purely an internal problem of the UK?

Mr. Glendinning: I do not believe that Northern Ireland is part of the UK in the way that Yorkshire, for instance, is part of the UK. It would be foolish to believe that since there are 500,000 Nationalists who do not accept the present position. I understand the difficulty about the constitutional guarantee. The Unionists perceive it as their guarantee that nothing is to be done regarding the link with the UK. It is important to realise how they perceive the guarantee. If I were speaking to a Unionist Forum instead of a Nationalist Forum I would say to them that 500,000 people have been denied the right that was given to Unionists and that the area cannot be governed simply as if it were part of the UK in the same way as Yorkshire is part of the UK. I would say what they must accord to the Nationalist population and that they must seek a consensus within Northern Ireland and make concessions. I would tell Unionists that if they failed to do that they would be in danger of losing the sympathy of the world in terms of their ultimate destiny.

Senator Robinson: Do you accept that the precise wording of the guarantee as set out in your submission is deceptive in that in

securing to Northern Ireland its status as part of the UK it is not allowing for the important difference of Northern Ireland *vis-à-vis* other parts of the UK?

Mr. Glendinning: It would be dangerous to tamper with the present wording. I consider the Sunningdale wording to be best. That was wording that was agreed between the Irish and the British Governments together. Are you pressing for the fact that the guarantee should be made conditional on Unionist good behaviour or something like that?

Senator Robinson: No. The point of my questioning, following on the other questions, is that the emphasis of the guarantee is on a constitutional jurisdiction over territory. Do you accept that the importance of that is in terms of a guarantee against the fears and the threat posed to the Unionist majority in Northern Ireland? The way in which it is framed seems to me to be both inaccurate and too absolute. It is inaccurate in predicating that Northern Ireland is purely an internal British problem. I think you accept that.

Mr. Glendinning: I would not like to go too far on that point. In a sense the Northern Ireland problem is internal in that we are and will continue to be governed from Westminster. It would be tampering with the guarantee in a very dangerous way to suggest such arrangements as joint sovereignty. The Unionists were able to allege successfully to their people that the Council of Ireland was tampering with the guarantee despite the fact that the guarantee was there in that agreement.

Senator Robinson: Let me put it another way. In speaking of the concept of self-determination or of the right to self-determination, you posit an absolute right of self-determination of the Unionist majority. You emphasise that this cannot be interfered with without their consent and that means that they alone, exclusively, must be enabled to consent if they so wish. This involves an acceptance that they may not consent. Though speaking in absolute terms of the right to self-determination of the Unionist majority, you said in reply to Mr. Mallon that you regretted that the institutionalising of the Border eliminated the right to self-determination on the part of the minority. Is there not an imbalance in the approach to what is either a right or is not a right? Is it not correct that this right of self-determination has not been eliminated or wiped out? It may not be allowed to develop but it has not been wiped out.

Mr. Glendinning: I think the right to self-determination was given to the Unionists. That is the crucial point. It was given to them.

You may argue all you like that it should not have been, but it was, and the reason I emphasise the idea of the right to self-determination is that I would like a new phraseology to develop about the Border. There is an extraordinary way in which Nationalist republicans talk about the Border — the sectarian division, a sectarian head count, *et cetera, et cetera*. That is true. It is all those things but it is also a line which gave the Unionists the right to self-determination and that is why I use that phrase in particular because I would like people to recognise that it was that that was done when the Border was drawn. That is the reality you face in trying to get it changed.

Senator Robinson: Would you accept that instead of positing it as Unionists being given an absolute right to self-determination and a Nationalist majority being deprived of the right to self-determination progress might be made in recognising a qualified right to self-determination by both traditions?

Mr. Glendinning: Do you mean you want to change the British guarantee?

Senator Robinson: I am inviting you to answer the question in terms of the right to self-determination because, if the right is there, it is inherently there under the constitutional framework and, if it is inherently there at a particular point in time, are we not talking about qualified rights to self-determination?

Mr. Glendinning: I suppose we are. I suppose you could argue that the inherent right to self-determination of the Protestant population in Southern Ireland disappeared. I just do not think you can alter the British guarantee with impunity.

Senator Robinson: If you accept in your own terms a qualified right to self-determination of the Nationalist minority in Northern Ireland, how would you envisage that being given institutional expression?

Mr. Glendinning: I think very much an all-party government, something like a council of Ireland, some attempts being made along those lines. Basically, I think the Unionists because of their peculiar situation, because they were given this right, must concede a good deal to the National minority. It seems to me right if that were done, if for instance the Southern political parties and the British Government were to agree, and even the members of the Forum, that there could be no change without the consent of the majority of the people in Northern Ireland, and if we were to get progress in Northern Ireland towards power sharing, then we

would have a solution where it would be possible for Nationalists within Northern Ireland and people who accepted the democratic process ideals to persuade the Unionists, their fellow countrymen, to think in a different way, then it would be possible, in a Border poll, for instance, to put the options to them in detail.

Senator Robinson: A final question. If I may turn from the emphasis on the British guarantee to Unionists, to the reaction in the North towards the recent constitutional referendum. What, in your view, are the long-term repercussions of that?

Mr. Glendinning: It confirms every Unionist's fears. I was myself horrified and I sent money to the side which lost.

Senator Robinson: That is short-term. What about the long-term?

Mr. Glendinning: I think the short-term has in a sense an effect on the long term. Anyone who is in favour of a united Ireland and tries to persuade Unionists by producing that kind of exercise almost makes one despair.

Chairman: I am calling on Deputy Maurice Manning of Fine Gael.

Deputy Manning: One of the assertions which is made frequently about Northern Ireland is that it is a failed political entity. It was made by Deputy Haughey on 23 September. What is your reaction when that sort of charge or assertion is made?

Mr. Glendinning: It just makes one very annoyed. I live in a failed political entity apparently.
(Interruptions.)

Deputy Manning: Is it a failed entity?

Mr. Glendinning: These things are relative. This is a point I should like to make without interruption. These things are relative. I go to work and I get paid and, as far as security is concerned, things are far better now than they were eight, nine or ten years ago. To tell me I am in a failed political entity and therefore must seek some kind of change puts my back up and I think it does the same in the case of a great many other people.

Deputy Manning: One of the reasons some would give for the fact that Northern Ireland is less than a fully successful political entity is that, for whatever reason, Unionists have failed to recognise the validity of a Nationalist identity and Nationalist aspirations and in fact for many decades probably have tried to crush this. Is there

today any greater awareness among Unionists of a genuine, legitimate Nationalist identity and national aspirations?

Mr. Glendinning: I would find it very hard to say. Among the DUP and Official Unionists, unfortunately I doubt it. I agree that that is a total failure of the Unionists. I would not have got into politics if I did not believe it was worthwhile trying to unite the moderate Nationalist and the moderate Unionist in some kind of internal solution. I am sorry to say I doubt if that is possible now. The very fact they are not prepared to come here and put their point of view proves it and one of the difficulties is that they are not directly approached. You always seem to approach other people. You approach the British Government, the Americans and Europe and tell them to tell the Unionists to face facts, tell the Unionists to do this and that. You never, or very seldom, make an effort directly to the Unionists. You do not say to them if and when you come to see that a united Ireland is in your interest, then here is the plan we offer. Today I am making a plea to the Forum that this is your approach to the Unionists. I would also make a plea that you do not hawk your report around America, Britain and Europe, but you put it to the Unionists, leave it on the table and wait for the reaction. If you believe consent comes to that.

Deputy Manning: One of the impressions of the group in Northern Ireland last week was that opinion was more polarised than it had been over the past 15 years. Is there any evidence that there is any intention on the part of the Unionists to listen to the most constructive proposals from people who want change?

Mr. Glendinning: No.

Deputy Manning: When you say "Do not hawk this around the rest of the world —"

Mr. Glendinning: What will the rest of the world be able to do with Unionists? You will have to leave it and let time work.

Deputy Manning: One encouraging thing to us in the Republic about the Alliance Party is that over the years they have been trying to find political structures and to inject some imagination into the politics of Northern Ireland. In your research and experience is it possible to find a structure to accommodate the identity and aspirations of both traditions?

Mr. Glendinning: We were close to it on one occasion to which I have already referred. We should make another attempt to go down that road before we try any dangerous experiments.

Deputy Manning: You were talking about Sunningdale and probably that is not on at the present time. If you were talking to the people here, and your own people, are there any modifications or new approach which would make co-existence in Northern Ireland easier at present?

Mr. Glendinning: It is a very bleak prospect, but at Sunningdale we took the best action. There were difficulties in producing a new constitution and there was the continued violence of the IRA. Reference was made by certain Dublin leader writers to a plan and the Unionists were able to represent the Sunningdale Agreement as a sell-out. Unfortunately, it was very difficult in the circumstances to defend it. I remember that period and unfortunately it went down. There have been numerous opinion polls which have shown that power sharing is acceptable. Another attempt should be made to get that.

Deputy Manning: To get back to the question of Unionism, is it possible in any way to persuade Unionists that it would be more advantageous for them to be substantial partners in some sovereign country, with all the potential and safeguards that offers, rather than being a minor and derided province of some larger entity which has little time for them?

Mr. Glendinning: No, they do not see it that way. It is hard to explain to Southerners why Unionists wish to remain part of the British nation united with Westminster. They have a kind of love-hate relationship with Westminster but it is very strong and powerful. To tell them that their province is a mess does not cut any ice.

Deputy Manning: On the question of identity, would you recognise the honesty and place of the Nationalist aspiration?

Mr. Glendinning: Yes.

Deputy Manning: You say that very few Unionists would recognise that. How could the Nationalist people get across to the people they must live with the legitimacy of their own aspiration?

Mr. Glendinning: When I said that very few Unionists recognise it, I think I meant Unionist politicians. Individual Unionists would be prepared to recognise it. There is a majority for power sharing in Northern Ireland when it is not a party political issue. There are all sorts of ways of attempting to recognise this. If all those people who are prepared to take part in the political expression were prepared to recognise the right of the majority of the people to agree to any change, if that were recognised by everyone, the Unionists

could not argue they were under threat. I would like to see the guarantee being changed in this way, not its wording being changed because that would be dangerous, but the guarantee being a joint guarantee of the British and Irish Governments that there be no change. If we get that and if there was clearly, over a time, no political threat to the Unionists and Ian Paisley was not able to allege that there was a threat, a great many things would be possible. But if you approach the problem and say to the Unionists, "Face up to this, boys, this is what is going to happen, you had better agree to it because the British are going and you will not get anywhere", they will be paranoid about any change you demand.

Deputy Manning: If they were able to say, faced with the prospect of a break in the Northern Ireland question, that there would be full and complete equality and the same rights for the majority and the minority, how could you guarantee to the Nationalists their rights of identity, freedom of expression and sovereignty?

Mr. Glendinning: If they were playing a full part in the developed government of Northern Ireland it would be the best guarantee of that.

Deputy Manning: Is that all you have to offer on that?

Mr. Glendinning: At the moment. I think the Anglo-Irish Council might help. I could go into a whole series of suggestions but they are not germane to the point I am making here. My party have a great many ideas on that subject but I am not speaking on them.

Chairman: A final question.

Deputy Manning: This Forum is about peace and ways of finding reconciliation in this island. If you were to give some advice to me as to what we could best do to achieve those objectives what would be your first consideration?

Mr. Glendinning: Recognise realities, particularly of the Unionist bloc, and hasten very slowly.

Chairman: Thank you, Deputy Manning, and thank you Mr. Glendinning for coming from Belfast to be with us and to put your point of view. This Forum is very pleased to have had an opportunity of hearing you.

The next presentation is by Senator Robb. I need hardly introduce him. He is a colleague of many of you in Seanad Éireann. Also he has served here as a member of the RTE Authority. He is an

eminent consultant surgeon and he is here in his capacity as Chairman of the New Ireland Group. For some questions to Senator Robb I call first Deputy Eileen Desmond of the Labour Party.

Deputy E. Desmond: This is a very interesting submission and because it is so lengthy and well spelt out, questions may not be as numerous as they might be on some occasions. Do you believe that changes in the law in the Republic of Ireland will affect Unionist minds and attitudes towards a United Ireland?

Senator Robb: Ireland at the moment is going through a great phase of change and must face up to that and the need for it. If there is a reappraisal of the Catholic ethos, this is doing something to promote a better climate. Will changing the laws in the South bring about a consensus? I say no, but it would improve the climate in which so much more can be debated.

Deputy E. Desmond: You emphasised the difficulty of co-operation because of the confessional nature of the Irish Republic. What in your view are the implications of the recent constitutional amendment?

Senator Robb: When the constitutional amendment proposal was being debated I would share the view of Mr. Glendinning that it confirmed for Northern Unionists and Loyalists that the Republic was a Catholic State for Catholic people. Yesterday, before I left Ballymoney I met a man who said to me: "You are a fool; they will change nothing down there". I told him he was quite wrong. What I regard as being important is that only one third of the people in the Republic voted to change the Constitution. Is it not time to look at the democratic weapon, a referendum, and ask why so few people voted for the change?

Deputy E. Desmond: Can we take it that the constitutional change will not mean any long-term effects in this respect?

Senator Robb: First of all, in the short-term it had a devastating effect on Northern Loyalist and Unionist opinion, particularly because they thought you wanted to confirm the confessional State. I do not think it will have such a devastating effect when it seeps into Northern consciousness that only one third voted for it. If we are to have a new Ireland we must have a consensus that will accept unity.

Deputy E. Desmond: How would you propose to give to the Nationalists an identity?

Senator Robb: I should like to take this opportunity to deal with and to develop the discussion that was begun by Mr. Glendinning of self-determination and consensus. When we are talking about the right of people to self-determination, particularly those in Northern Ireland, we must refer to the right to self-determination enshrined in the United Nations human rights provisions. Such provisions become a recipe for war rather than peace if you have two or more groups who advert to the concept of democracy without first taking people into partnership. Where there is consensus, only then does a majority vote become part of the democratic process, but if there is not a sense of partnership, as in Northern Ireland, the majority vote becomes majority rule, which is not democratic because it is not based on partnership.

Deputy E. Desmond: What happens when you cannot get consensus?

Senator Robb: I would like to have been able to answer for Mr. Glendinning on this. When you have not consensus, you have the position that a sizeable minority may wish to secede. The final point I would make is that short of secession there are numerous political devices to which we have never really addressed ourselves in Ireland. A lot of give and take is required here and that is what we should be addressing ourselves to.

Deputy E. Desmond: In the course of your submission, you look for leadership which would change attitudes, and you refer to partnership. You suggest that Protestant Ireland should think about its attitude to Catholic Ireland in the past and ask whether this may not have much to do with the violence.

Senator Robb: First of all, one has to acknowledge the right of any people, including, for instance, those in the Kingdom of Kerry, to self-determination. That is a right which derives from the achievement of consensus. There are natural political divisions to which one can advert. A political solution of itself cannot bring about an enduring solution because of the presence of violence and hatred. We must advert also to the part that symbolism must play. For instance, in Austria symbolism played a great part in bringing the people together. We have got symbolism but we have a need for leadership.

Chairman: I call Deputy Owen.

Deputy Owen: On the question of constitutional and legislative changes, when Mr. Glendinning was questioned by Deputy Manning about any changes he could suggest to encourage Union-

ists to accept Nationalists in a kinder light, can you say that if we were to change laws we would get any further along the line? Article 44 was changed but it did not make any difference.

Senator Robb: I believe one has to start by accepting Mr. Glendinning's baseline, that the present Unionist population of Northern Ireland do not want to come into an all-Ireland. That is his baseline and I accept it. On the other hand, I believe that if we take into account the reality of the situation which is that an increasing number of people in Britain want out of Ireland, if we take into account the reality of the situation which is that an increasing number of people living in the Republic are somewhat hesitant about the enthusiasm they may have had ten or 20 years ago for a united Ireland, and if we consider the various political forms that are available to allow a consensus to emerge in Northern Ireland, we can move forward. Part of that is to see some sort of signal come from the Republic saying, "yes, we realise that your tradition has been different from ours; yes, we want to send up smoke signals that we are prepared to change. For example, Article 41 of the Constitution could be amended to affirm the right of parents to bring their children up in the religion of their choice without interference. Something along those lines would help because of the innate fear in Unionist minds of the outreach of the Catholic Church. Much of that may be myth but to those who perceive it, or who want to perceive it for political reasons it is very real and it is certainly manipulated and used. Gestures to try to defuse the ecclesiastical imperialism, if one wants to be strong about it, or the ecclesiastical outreach of Catholicism as it is perceived by Northern Protestants would certainly change the climate. That is only part of the problem. Changing the climate is one thing but the most important thing is to grapple with the constitutional issue in a democratic fashion.

Deputy Owen: You would see it then as a gesture, as a setting down of a baseline?

Senator Robb: As a very important gesture. Let us take another example. If, tomorrow morning, you allowed old age pensioners from Northern Ireland to have free travel in the South — that may sound a very simple thing — a gesture which would cost practically nothing, it would have an impact out of all proportion to the cost of the procedure.

Deputy Owen: In your submission you mentioned the setting up of a New Ireland Constitutional Convention while on another page you mentioned a Northern Constitutional Convention. I should like to know if they are one and the same thing. Who should take

part in them? Are you suggesting that they should complete their work before we get off base one.

Senator Robb: No. Supposing the two sovereign Governments were to acknowledge the right of any people to self-determination in accordance with UN covenants and if they were also to acknowledge that that right to self-determination derives from the achievement of consensus, that would be tantamount to the people of Britain confirming, or they could say, "yes, we do want to leave Northern Ireland and we will do so at the end of a specified period unless by the end of that time there has clearly emerged consensus, that is a majority in each of the sectarian communities, for remaining in the United Kingdom. I do not want that. I do not know if Mr. Glendinning wants it. As a democrat, however, I acknowledge that if the majority of both sectarian communities in Northern Ireland wanted to remain in the United Kingdom I would have to concede on the basis of consensus. If at the same stage, the Dublin Government acknowledge that the right to self-determination derives from the achievement of consensus, that would be tantamount to saying, "yes, we will also give to any people, including the people of Northern Ireland, the right to self-determination deriving from the achievement of consensus. At that juncture, under-pinned by Anglo-Irish détente and in the knowledge that if it collapses it will not collapse into a bloody civil war because trust has developed between London and Dublin, a Northern Convention could be set up and charged to find a solution based on consensus.

At that juncture, the people in the North would be looking at the various options and devices, confederation, federation, consociation, the canton systems. They could look at the use of referenda, proportional voting systems or devolution of power to the people in the communities. There are many devices which with imagination applied could achieve a solution and not in the 21st century, in this century. It is at that juncture that the new people like myself would be pushing for the new Ireland option because we believe passionately that it is the only solution that has hope of starting to conclude, once and for all, the bitter cycle of recurring violence that has plagued this island for so long. Secondly — this is where I would disagree with Sir Charles Carter — we would be able to divert the energy which is at present absorbed into this vexed question into relevant matters with regard to the desperate state of the economy, North and South. I maintain that it is partition economics, partition politics, and partition conflict that has left both parts of this island impoverished. If we are going to move forward we should look to see if it is possible to find a principle on which the various parties, North, South, Dublin and London, can

agree. From that principle we could build a lot. The new Ireland convention was referred to. At a Northern Ireland convention of that nature I suggested, those who are looking at the new Ireland option would lay down conditions for it. How could any Dublin Government refuse conditions that were not totally unreasonable if they were laid down by the people of the North with regard to our future on this island. One of those conditions would be an all-Ireland convention to thrash out a new constitution which would reflect the consensus that should be the basis to the claim to unity.

Deputy Owen: Does the Senator think it is realistic that if there was a Northern constitutional convention set up the Unionists would sit down with the Nationalists and work out a new constitutional arrangement?

Senator Robb: The point I have tried to stress over the clinking of coffee cups and spoons is that they would not do so at present but if they are faced with the truth which is that the British people want out, and if they are also faced, hopefully, with a new appraisal coming from the South that they are not going to be denied their right to self-determination based on consensus, then I believe they would sit down. Supposing it does not work out and one does not have to be accused, as I have been, of being in cloud cuckoo land, to realise that it might not work out, at least at that stage we would have Anglo-Irish détente and we might move on then to what I would view as an admission of total defeat, some condominium arrangement. A condominium at that stage might be relevant but I do not think it is now.

Deputy Owen: You cite denominational education as a major factor in sustaining sectarianism and I should like to know where you place the blame, if blame there is, for the continuing existence of denominational education? I should like your comment on an opinion that may be held that denominational education is seen by Catholics and Protestants as the only way to retain their identity.

Senator Robb: About denominational education I should like to state that when the Stormont Government was founded in the twenties, a secular education proposal was introduced and the first people to object were the Protestant churches. Hot on their feet, as we might expect, were the Catholic Church. To that I would say, a plague on both your Houses. Apart from that, there was an Education Act in 1925 and another in 1930 which gradually moved us towards denominational education because whether we like it or not State schools are, by and large, Protestant schools and the other schools are Catholic schools. The question I should like to ask Catholic Ireland in particular because they happen to be the

majority on this island, is, "You may talk about discrimination in the North of Ireland but if you insist on keeping the children separate at primary level, do your damndest to keep them separate at secondary level, if you weep crocodile tears if they cannot be kept separate at third level, what do you expect at the fourth level of mature citizen, especially in a tight employment situation, other than discrimination?" People will be more attracted to employ those that they understand and less attracted to employ those from whom they have been alienated in the process of growing up. I hope nobody is making the point that secretarian education is the cause of the problem but dealing with it is part of the solution.

Deputy Owen: I see the Chairman indicating time to me so I will quickly run through a few other points. Could you explain to us what you mean by "positive neutrality" and how does it differ from the present policy of neutrality?

Senator Robb: If you look at the history of neutrality in Ireland, neutrality was, in a way, the litmus test of independence at one stage. There then was a phase of reassessment when people were looking at the possibility of joining up with NATO if the Partition question could be sorted out. I feel now, with the world poised for self-annihilation, that small countries like Ireland have a tremendous opportunity to play a positive role, along with what are being referred to as the fourth world countries, and to evolve a policy of neutrality which is not seen to be a holier than thou attitude: "we are neutral, we are pure and the rest are not". It is a question of exporting the idealism of the peacemakers around the world. It is in that context that I underline those eight points for positive neutrality. I believe that Ireland has a unique position in relation to Europe, America and the Third World, to play a role in a nuclear age which will start to disarm the world but if we are only concerned with our purity, or to quote from Senator Michael D. Higgins, if we want an abortion-free zone, a divorce-free zone and a nuclear-free zone we will go nowhere. If, on the other hand, we start to think about what we can export that is of value to the rest of the world that is a big role for Ireland to adopt, a philosophy of neutrality, not making a sanctimonious virtue of it.

Chairman: I call on Deputy David Andrews of Fianna Fáil.

Deputy D. Andrews: I have six questions which are brief and I hope to the point. To return to Deputy Manning's last question to Mr. Glendinning, could you describe for us the New Ireland Movement and outline the contribution you believe it can make towards the achievement of a political solution?

Senator Robb: If any of you read Mr. Glendinning's criticism of it in *Fortnight* magazine, it might put it into perspective. First, it is a New Ireland Group. There was a New Ireland Movement in the early seventies which for a number of reasons fizzled out. The New Ireland Group arose in the aftermath of the hunger strike when some people were desperate to have something done. I have no illusions whatever about it. I would be the first to acknowledge that I do not represent any significant number of Protestants in Northern Ireland but I do detect that individual Protestants are beginning to wonder what is to be their future and particularly what sort of future there will be for their children and their children's children. I brought two friends with me today. One of them works and lives in East Belfast and runs the Welders Club of Harland and Wolff. He and many of his friends are not in the privileged position in which I happen to be. I could get up in the morning and go but there are many people who are stuck in Northern Ireland whether they like it or not, employed or more likely unemployed. We are trying to engage them in thinking about an altogether different type of Ireland than that with which they have been presented up to now.

Deputy D. Andrews: Would you accept that this New Ireland Group would support a united Ireland under the right conditions, and what can be done to build support for this objective, particularly in the Protestant community?

Senator Robb: Let us be clear that in the Protestant psyche a united Ireland implies absorption of the Six into the Twenty-six. I do not think anybody in this room is talking about being absorbed by the Republic. The New Ireland concept, which I am sure everyone here adheres to is the idea of transcending the idea of victory and defeat and of trying to build something new not only in relation to resolving the cyclical violence of the historical conflict but also in seeing it as an opportunity to face up to the challenge of the new high technology era and to try to deal with the social implications in a much more imaginative and courageous way than has been done so far. What can we do to help the Protestants? First of all, we have heard that change might be attempted in the Republic. If change is brought about in the Republic it will change the climate. I do not think you can expect any dramatic results but I think that immediate reforms should not be used as bargaining counters but as gestures of goodwill. What is important is to stress to the Northern majority or the Irish minority that you acknowledge that they have a right to self-determination but that that right is no more or no less than anybody's right and must be derived from the achievement of consensus and that you are, therefore, going to ask them to think how can they devise political

structures which will protect their identity and promote their opportunity and that of their children so we can move forward together. It is important to look at what they feel. I am an Irishman and I make no apologies for it and never have, but I recognise that most of my Protestant kith and kin see themselves as British. I would say to the Forum — and Desmond Fennell was one of the first to point this out — that you cannot remove from a man what he feels he is. Therefore, I conclude that the British-Irish have as much right as the Jewish-Irish or the Gaelic-Irish to play their unique role in Ireland provided they do not bring with them the imperialism that is inherent in the tradition and which is a threat to those who do not belong to it. However, there are two imperialisms in Ireland. There is not just British imperialism; there is, as perceived by the Irish minority, the Northern Protestants, a Catholic imperialism. It may be a matter of a joke here in the Republic with a radical young generation who are not following in the traditions of their forebears, but as perceived from Northern Ireland and particularly when subjected to the demagoguery of some of our Protestant leaders, it is a very real thing and has to be defused. Where there is myth get rid of it, where it is real, start to negotiate about it and where negotiations cannot resolve the matter in the immediate, let us set up some sort of structure which will allow that degree of autonomy that would be necessary in Northern Ireland. The British dimension is a thing to which you must also address yourself.

Deputy D. Andrews: Would you say that the Unionists are suffering from some sort of political illness, like political schizophrenia? How do you accommodate people who wish to be British and Irish at the same time?

Senator Robb: I do not think the Unionists are the only ones suffering from it. The possibility of dual citizenship has been alluded to. If we are to have a new Ireland that is significant. At the end of the day, Irish citizenship will be the only relevant citizenship for all the people of the island but, in order to get the show on the road and for an indefinite transition period, since the duration of the transition period will depend on the success of the operation, dual citizenship should be allowed. Secondly, I would suggest that through the Anglo-Irish Council and the whole Anglo-Irish process we might look at the possibility of some sort of council, a council of the "WISE" as I have referred to it — a council of the Welsh, the Irish, the Scots and the English. Why not have such a council meeting in somewhere like the Isle of Man once every ten years. If we are to use imagination and if we are to have symbolism, let us start to think on those lines. The reference to dealing with the political institutional difficulties for people in

the archipelago is not made with any neo-imperial overtones because I want no part of that. Another point I would make is that the late President de Valera did have an association with the Commonwealth which, in its time, was probably anathema to the establishment figures inside the Commonwealth. The late Mr. Churchill adverted to that and said that de Valera's move to the position he held in the Commonwealth might well mean the disintegration of the Commonwealth. There is a case for looking at the possibility of some association with the commonwealth of nations which is no longer called the British Commonwealth but in which there are many republics. Without in any way trying to invite Ireland to participate in a neo-imperialist situation, I might ask if there are not positive reasons whereby belonging to this loosely arranged organisation might afford us the opportunity of a further input into world affairs? It would certainly have an effect on Loyalist consciousness if any new arrangement, such as a loose arrangement with the Commonwealth, were to be arrived at. I do not see that any such form of external association would cost the Irish Republic a great deal when one realises that there are many republics in that association.

Deputy D. Andrews: Mr. de Valera said also that Ireland would never be used by anyone as a backdoor for an attack on Britain. You dealt also with the principle of positive neutrality. To what extent do you think your view in that regard is shared by the Northern population?

Senator Robb: Because of their allegiance to Britain, the Northern population probably find it difficult to accept the idea of neutrality. I say that in the context also of the importance of the part they played in the Second World War and also in the Battle of the Somme in the First World War. I might mention, that in the First World War there were more Catholic Irishmen than Protestant Irishmen fighting for the forces of the Crown while in the Second World War there were more Southern Irishmen than Northern Irishmen fighting against the forces of fascism. The Northern population would tend to see neutrality as a threat to Britain but I would say that is nonsense and that positive neutrality is the best safeguard the people in Britain can have. The paranoia that Britain has had for so long about the western flank is one of the reasons for progress being impeded politically in terms of the development of an all-Ireland which would be friendly to Britain. There are four matters about which the British people are concerned. First is the question of withdrawing from Ireland in an undemocratic fashion. I have dealt with that in alluding to the principle of self-determination. Secondly, they are frightened about their western flank but I think a commitment given uncom-

promisingly on positive neutrality would deal with that. Thirdly, the British do not want to be seen to capitulate to paramilitary terrorism. I have referred to that also in the document. Lastly, there is the bloody civil war side of it. I believe that if the Anglo-Irish process is developed and if we give the people of the North another chance along the lines I indicated in answers to a previous question, should the whole thing then collapse, the Anglo-Irish process would be the best safeguard against bloody civil war.

Deputy D. Andrews: In relation to your very interesting view and to your 170-page document on the question of Northern representation in the Oireachtas, would you develop that a little?

Senator Robb: As you might well imagine, we had a great deal of debate about Articles 2 and 3. I have always maintained — and I wrote this in a pamphlet in the mid-seventies — that if there were a unilateral movement from Dublin or from London, the situation could be dangerous. Thankfully, we have reached a point where London and Dublin seem to be understanding each other better. Therefore, it seems to me, that although Articles 2 and 3 are now understood generally to be expressing an aspiration rather than a claim that is sustainable in law, they are perceived in loyalist consciousness as the claim of the Twenty-six to the Six and they are also seen in minority consciousness as a protection which the minority have in the event of any loyalist attempt to take over Northern Ireland. Therefore, if Articles 2 and 3 mean anything, we must allow the people of the North to negotiate for certain privileges in the South of a kind that might not be available to people of other nations. Perhaps the reason for my being here is the existence of Articles 2 and 3. What we suggested was that the Seanad should be opened up to make available 20 seats for Northern representation on the basis of the political party strength in the North. Many of those seats would not be occupied. I do not know if Mr. Glendinning's would but certainly Unionist seats would be unoccupied. However, they would be a reminder of what has yet to be done. We might even reach the point of having a real input from the North at least into the southern Seanad. The other point we made was that if the SDLP were represented in numbers in the Seanad they would be able, if they cannot do so already, to put their case forcibly about the needs of the minority in the North to the Southern political establishment. Likewise, the Southern political establishment, if they considered it useful, might encourage the SDLP to participate again in the Northern Assembly in the short term. In saying that, nobody is suggesting that the Northern Assembly will arrive at a constitutional solution but if you live away from the levers of power in the North at the moment — I speak now as a doctor — you find that everything

that is decided is decided by civil servants who are to a large degree unaccountable, though less so recently, or by English Ministers who fly in and fly out, shift hospitals and close schools and so on. These people are unaccountable to us and very often they are also inaccessible. In that sense, I say that the Northern Assembly question needs to be considered.

Deputy D. Andrews: On the question of sectarianism, would you accept that to the greatest possible extent there is no sectarianism in the South?

Senator Robb: Let us use the analogy of the flea and the elephant. If the flea is sitting opposite the elephant he will not talk about sectarianism and the elephant will not be worried about sectarianism. There are so few Protestants in the Republic that the issue of sectarianism does not arise as it does in a situation in which there is nearer to a 50-50 ratio. Let us be fair also, and say that anyone who knows anything about Ireland will acknowledge that after Partition the Southern Protestants who were the much better off section of the community did not seem to be over-disadvantaged. I doubt if until in the recent debate on the amendment of the Constitution the Southern Protestant was adequately heard. One of the great things about the amendment debate was that, whether one agreed with it or whether one did not, at least the Southern Protestant was saying, "We have a stake in this country because we are Irishmen and we are going to make a statement of that case". There is no overt sectarianism in the South. As a privileged professional person I have never been aware of any sectarianism but I wonder how easy it is in a community hall in the West, for instance, for the minority to challenge the *status quo*. It is easy for them to participate but one wonders if they keep quiet because it is better to do so and, perhaps, there is a bit of guilt about past history or possibly everything is rosy in the garden but, from the Northern point of view, looking at the South through Northern eyes, everything is not rosy in the South. Speaking personally, I have never been aware of any sectarianism.

Chairman: I am calling on Dr. Joe Hendron of the SDLP.

Dr. Hendron: It is some years now since you made a public statement following the Abercorn restaurant explosion in Belfast in which a number of people were killed. At that time, in your capacity as surgeon, you said that doctors and surgeons might be able to put bones together but they could not heal the sick minds in a divided community. Many years have now passed and people have suffered and died during those years and there is still great division. Would you agree that successive British Governments are

guilty of gross negligence in that, with the exception of Sunningdale, they have taken no radical initiative to resolve the conflict?

Senator Robb: If you go back to the early twenties and look at the situation that prevailed in the immediate aftermath of the first World War, at that stage minority rights were important. People were certainly not thinking in terms of consensus. The imperialism of the nation state was still rampant and in that context there was an attempt — I mentioned one example — at setting up a state. But one of the problems was that the Protestant community have always had this fear — possibly associated with some degree of guilt — that what they have would be taken away from them some day and they have, therefore, developed this dreadful defensive mentality. In the context in which it has developed it is quite understandable, but I think we must now start looking to the future. If your question is, was Stormont a success, it was not. If your question is, was everything about it bad, my answer is no, everything about it was not bad. If your question is, that now we have faced 60 years of failure and ten years of violence, has the time not come to look to the future and think to the future, then my answer is “Yes”.

Dr. Hendron: In your document, you have put great emphasis on the Anglo-Irish process, and rightly so, but on the question of the guarantee, as you recall in the Atkins round table conference in January-February 1980 three political parties went to that, including the SDLP. But the Unionist Party did not go and the reason why Mr. Molyneux did not go was that he said the only place to discuss the matter was in Westminster. Because of the unilateral guarantee given to the Loyalist community they are not prepared to co-operate. Would you agree that this guarantee is a great obstacle in any movement towards ending the conflict?

Senator Robb: I accept it is an obstacle but I would also ask you to consider very seriously how it can be removed in a democratic fashion. I have alluded to that already. I believe the British people want to leave Northern Ireland and if there were a referendum in Britain, properly worded, I believe there would be a positive response. I also believe they would find it extremely difficult to vote to exclude part of what they see as the United Kingdom, albeit the un-united part of the United Kingdom, against the wishes of the majority in that part and the reason why they cannot do that is that they do not make a distinction as regards living in a country where until recently — I stress until recently — there was a consensus in one part and no consensus in the other part, Northern Ireland — and so you have to devise a formula whereby the British can express their desire to leave without interfering with the funda-

mental democratic right of the people of Northern Ireland based on consensus to remain in the United Kingdom should that be their wish. You know as well as I do, you will not get consensus for that option. But if they did that, the Loyalist community, faced with the truth, if they had any self-respect, as I believe they have, a great many would say that, if these people are actually telling us they want to go then what sort of self-respect have we got in trying to cling on to them. How can we devise a formula which allows us to live in Ireland, as British Irishmen, based on a long tradition that it is British and, remember, You cannot remove from a man what he feels he is?

Dr. Hendron: You said some time ago — it follows on what you have said there — that the Loyalist community in general in Northern Ireland could negotiate from a position of strength, a strength they undoubtedly have, and it is tragic they should have to await the day when Britain will, I believe, get out. Do you believe that the Protestant community should pay more attention to this particular aspect? It is some years now since you first said that. I presume you still accept it?

Senator Robb: I maintain the Protestant community in Northern Ireland run the risk of being spurned for various reasons as the result of a mandate in a general election, spurned by the people to whom they have given allegiance for so long. They run the risk of being catapulted into an Ireland which has no attraction for them and, therefore, while there is still time, they should seize the chance to determine the position. We want to look at how we elect this Northern Convention to which Deputy Owen alluded. There is a list system which has never been tried in Ireland which has come in in a number of countries in Europe. We want to get into our minds the concept of an indefinite transition period of time, to challenge people rather than threaten them and evolve a solution. We want to look at the dual citizenship and to ensure that what Cardinal O Fiach has said is acceptable to him is screamed from the rooftops, that there will be an explicit separation of Church and State in Ireland even though it is not so in England. I have alluded to the Canadian charter of Rights and Freedoms which is particularly germane to Northern Ireland. It represents a degree of autonomy. It should encourage ecclesiastical initiative. You in the Northern minority who know how it feels to be labelled second-class citizens, must ask, how does it feel as an Irishman at the time of the inter-marriage of the two traditions to be labelled as a second-class partner? There is an effect of other two-tradition States. Are the people of the Republic who put their Catholicism first and Republicanism second prepared to face up to these changes? If not, we are having a discussion which is based on

hypocrisy. Let us get this cleared up. Irishmen who are seated around this Forum should address themselves to that.

The other point is the economic underpinning of the transitional period. I do not want to live in a country that has a begging bowl in its hands, but if anybody takes the trouble to read high technology economy he will find that we put around ideas for galvanising the people and using resources in the country so that we have a viable economy. We should not be ashamed to ask for support from Europe and North America, but we must see that not as a solution to our economic problems but as the means of movement.

Dr. Hendron: Following on what we were saying earlier, in the terms of the British Government and people, we said the majority of the British people want out of Ireland. If the present or a future British Government were to indicate to you their desire to get out of Ireland over a period of time, what would you see as the effect of that on the Protestant community?

Senator Robb: If it was said like that it would be disastrous. You are getting into confrontational politics. You are putting people who already feel cornered in a cul-de-sac, particularly if the irredentism of the 26-County Ireland is pursued stridently. That combination would be disastrous and on that I would agree with Mr. Glendinning.

Chairman: A final question.

Dr. Hendron: You are Chairman of the New Ireland Group. It is impossible for you to assess your popularity, but could you give some indication of the group's popularity in terms of the influence they have on Northern Ireland Protestants?

Senator Robb: I can share a little humour with you. As I mentioned previously, and I hope it is taken in the right spirit, perhaps my greatest strength is that nobody knows my weakness. What effect does the group have on Northern Protestants? I have no illusions whatsoever. All I can say is that I believe in what they are doing. They are a small group. It would have been nice to be able to turn around and say that they have 10,000 members. They have not. They will continue as long as I have push in me to keep it going, as long as I have fellow-compatriots like Jack McDowell and Tom Stoddart who are sitting over there this afternoon.

Chairman: I am sure that members of the Forum are aware that we are long over time. Have I agreement to go on until 5 o'clock at the latest?

Agreed.

Chairman: Thank you, Senator Robb. The next presentation is by Mr. Michael McKeown who is a teacher. He has taught in England as well as in Northern Ireland and is at present teaching in Blackrock in Dublin. He has been associated with the National Democratic Foundation of which he was Chairman. He was editor of the *New Nation* and of the *Fortnight Review*. The first questioner is Deputy Paddy Harte, Fine Gael.

Deputy Harte: Thank you for your submission. Senator Robb ended on a humorous note and I would like to start on a humorous note. You produced your document on 12 July which is, of course, the birthday of Charlie Tully, star footballer for Belfast/Glasgow Celtic. In your submission you have changed the trend of the debate so far as to put the spotlight on a different emphasis. You make different points concerning sovereignty, the creation of Border agencies and a new analysis of Southern politics and Governments. You question the validity of the 1922 Treaty and in doing that you say that Catholic Emancipation shifted the direction of authority in Ireland. Could you explain the thinking which makes you arrive at these conclusions.

Mr. McKeown: I might have known that a Donegal man would have known about Glasgow and Charlie Tully. The historical analysis, which is one weakness that the teacher, as distinct from the politician, is trapped into — shows an attempt to say that the nation is there as it has emerged and is still emerging in Africa. Things happen in their time. Violence perhaps expedites things and perhaps distorts and diverts them, but there is a fullness of time for things to happen. What happened in Ireland in the last century was that shifts in the political structures because of the events that took place put the Protestant community out on a limb and, before they had time to be pulled back and grafted back on to the major body politic, the events of 1916 and 1921 had taken place and consequently this group showed as having no point of identity with the dominant politics and mores and since then it has not been able to graft itself on to the main body by attempting to recast its constitution and Protestant identity. The trouble in coming to terms with that when you try to probe and say: "What does this mean to you?" is that it is expressed only in terms of anti-Catholicism and of not wanting to be under Maynooth.

Ten years ago we looked for changes. Mr. Desmond Boal spoke about the Protestant way of life. I know what the Protestant way of life is all about. I lived with it for 45 years. I have lived all my life in a Protestant community. A protestant neighbour said to me

one day that Blackpool is nearly as bad as Dublin. I am talking about the tangible things in the Protestant way of life and I do not think they would be under threat. I do not think there is any reason for these negative attempts to foster suspicion and fear and so on.

Deputy Harte: You have pointed to the weaknesses in Southern and Northern attitudes and you suggest a form of treaty between Britain and the Republic in regard to fundamental laws. You did not refer to Northern Nationalists. Do you suggest that the original Treaty should be re-negotiated?

Mr. McKeown: I am saying that when the British Government agree to recognise the legitimate claims of the Government of the Republic in discussing the future Government of Northern Ireland these discussions should involve a re-negotiation of the Treaty. We had Mr. Glendinning and others talking about the minority rights. This is a philosophical area and it is very dangerous for politicians to tamper with philosophy or for philosophers to enter the field of politics. If you go into negotiations on any topic you must consider rights, and they were not thought about in 1921, and rights have not been accorded since. There must be meaningful negotiations, and the Government of the Republic will have to be involved as well as spokesmen of the Northern Nationalists.

Deputy Harte: The Treaty is the basis of the relationship between Britain and Ireland, and in your submission you found much wrong with the Treaty. You said it is not the terms of the Treaty that made it fail but the way in which it has been used. You also suggest that the attitudes of Southern politicians, and their political outlook, give them an amount of independence and this made them pursue partisan policies and that this played into the hands of Northern Unionists. Is that a clear assessment of your submission?

Mr. McKeown: It is a fair assessment. It might appear to be attributing blame but it is a recognition of political reality. Public representatives in the South were not susceptible to pressure from Northern Ireland. It is the responsibility of politicians to respond to pressures and this can be seen in all sorts of ways. I have to drive to Derry often and the further I go along the road the narrower the breen becomes when I am looking for a vote. It gets narrower and narrower, particularly as the road gets nearer to the Border.

I have referred to the transport system between Dublin and Belfast. Last week we were in search of a Presidential candidate but I did not see anybody approaching people in the North in regard to

how a Presidential candidate might be selected. Senator Robb spoke about political representation in Seanad Éireann. I welcome his participation, but apart from political representation and a Northern political voice in the Southern structure there is a need for a Northern non-political forum such as this in which all sorts of non-political agencies and organisations would represent the people. There is a need for a standing body composed of public representatives to consider the implications for the North of Southern legislation. Instead of that we have to nobble Cabinet Ministers as often as possible.

Deputy Harte: You suggest the bringing in of Catholics in Northern Ireland to help in the running of the Northern State. What would you say if the reverse were to happen in regard to the running of the Republic?

Mr. McKeown: That is a difficult one, but it is crucially important. It underlines the urgency in this area. I am afraid that this generation will be added to other generations in the matter of compromising, in the matter of settling for second best, in the manner of trading off. The Protestant community in the North have taken a long time to learn. Indeed, the entire Northern community have taken a long time to learn. I should like to see less willingness to compromise or to take second best.

Deputy Harte: Are you saying that if the Unionists do not try to make the Nationalists part of the North they cannot cry "wolf" if the Nationalists want to be part of the South?

Mr. McKeown: That is logic but that is not politics because they may well cry "wolf".

Deputy Harte: My final question deals with a subject I have been very critical of for the last four or five years and it was also mentioned by you. Do you think there was enough political consideration given to us joining the European Monetary System which resulted in two currencies being part of the island and a currency border between the North and South? Are you saying in the language I have been using that it was a mistake?

Mr. McKeown: No, I am not saying it was a mistake because I am not an economist. I do not know whether it would be more beneficial to the Republic in the long run but the decision, I believe, was taken with scant regard to its impact upon inter-change, North and South. Governments have to make decisions and hard choices and at a Cabinet meeting some member may say that this will have malign implications but I worry that maybe it was not said. There

has not been a forum in which that could be said but it has been an awful break in the unity of the country.

Deputy Harte: Would you conclude that it is inconsistent to talk about the political unity of Ireland and at the same time to talk about economic independence?

Mr. McKeown: No, it is the job of politicians to reconcile inconsistencies and I have every faith in them.

Chairman: I call on Deputy Prendergast on behalf of the Labour Party.

Deputy Prendergast: I was very impressed with Mr. McKeown's paper. I should like to ask him at the outset if he would accept that no matter what this State did in the last 60 years the Unionists would still not agree to join some type of a united Ireland or a political arrangement of that nature?

Mr. McKeown: Yes.

Deputy Prendergast: Would you agree that if the Unionists in the North had over the past 60 years treated the Nationalists well and fairly, which manifestly they have not, you would still have the Nationalist aspiration for a breakaway from the Northern Ireland political arrangements?

Mr. McKeown: I find that question less easy to answer. I am sure that there would have been people who would have held to an old ideal and yearned for the idealistic vision of a united Ireland but I do not think you would have had 2,000 people dead as we have had over the past 13 years.

Deputy Prendergast: In your document, you said that the great variety in the domestic profiles of individual nation states suggests that there is no natural criterion of nationhood which might support the thesis that the manifest destiny of the people of the 32 counties of Ireland is to organise themselves politically within one sovereign state. Will you expand on that?

Mr. McKeown: I do not think that just because you have a land mass which is bounded by water — that is what land masses have got to be bounded by anyway — that it automatically follows that you are going to have one country, one state. Europe is a land mass, but yet it consists of a variety of nation states. It goes back to the answer to Deputy Harte's question about my belief in an evolutionary social process. In the fullness of time, possibly,

somebody living on the Waterside or somebody living in the Braide Valley could have seen that he had a very strong common interest and identity with somebody living in Caherciveen, Dungloe or whatever, but people did not get that time or, if it had been there, there was a political disruption and since that time it has been in the interests of a particular group to obscure that identity, to try to make people reject it, to try to suggest that if it was ever recognised it would be recognised in such a manner which would be prejudicial to the interests of the man in the Waterside.

Deputy Prendergast: What in your view as a Nationalist could be done to overcome Unionist intransigence.

Mr. McKeown: I do not think you are going to get an overnight conversion of Unionists or anything like that. However, there are people in the Northern Protestant community who are sufficiently open-minded to try to look at where they are going, what their future is and so on. The New Ireland Group represent such people. We have, first of all, to see that they are not embarrassed by manifestations of the Republican spirit but, more important, we have got to create a situation where the Unionists in Northern Ireland can see that in fact not only is the South not a threatening place but it is opening up to them the key to a fuller life, to better economic opportunities and a more stable domestic life. It is reflected, I hope, in the present negotiations about Kinsale gas. It is reflected in another way in the suggestions Senator Robb made about pensioners of the North having access to free travel in the South. What is a nation? Surely, it is a combination of elements where every individual, every corporate group can seek to draw on the resources of the nation, seek to share them and form a common loyalty. When Northern Unionists see that co-operation between the North and South does not necessarily threaten their right to maintain a sabbatharian Sunday or whatever but gives them a wider dimension in life, a greater opportunity, then you will get some sort of opening. Why, for instance, do third level students in the Border countries automatically look to Dublin instead of looking to the Northern institutions to attend? It would be beneficial for Northern Unionists to have third level students coming from the Republic sitting in on lectures in the North.

Deputy Prendergast: Do you believe that violence can be eradicated from Northern Ireland without a united Ireland being attained first?

Mr. McKeown: No. I am making you a straight answer.

Deputy Prendergast: You suggest a forum of cross-Border interests, for example the unions, the Churches, sporting and cultural bodies, the banks and commercial interests, and point to the fact that they have operated on this cross-Border basis for many years. I was involved in the sporting and trade union arrangements for some years. Is your position there, while very idealistic, not almost impractical, in so far as I would contend that the very reason they have existed as long as they have is that they chose deliberately to ignore the Border as a factor? Had it cropped up certainly in the sporting areas you would not have had the present level of success?

Mr. McKeown: That is a very important comment. Once you politicise something in relation to the Border you jeopardise it. The sort of institution I had in mind could probably operate without the sharp political dimension being obvious. I think the Government in Dublin give funds to sporting bodies. The Government in the North give funds to sporting bodies. Who knows how the IRFU shifts its funds around? There are issues that can be discussed. There is to be a curriculum examinations board here. That will determine how people are admitted to third level in the South. It will determine their academic profiles and so on. There are something like 1,000 students from the North in third level in the Republic at present. You must protect their right of access to this. There is a need for a Northern channel to speak to that board.

Deputy Prendergast: What would you, as a Nationalist, wish the Forum report to contain as a result of your attendance here today?

Mr. McKeown: I would want it to contain a statement that the political parties in the Republic, speaking as elected representatives of the Twenty-Six Counties, restated a total commitment to the eventual emergence of a thirty-two county State regardless of internal structures. I would like it to state its commitment to the belief that this aspiration does not justify and is besmirched by bloodshed and death and might be delayed by it, I am not sure about that. I would like it to say that the concerns of the traditionally loyalist people of the North are legitimate and as dear to this group as are the concerns of the northern nationalists. I would like it to say that no one group can call a halt to the march of a nation. I would like it to say to the British Government: "It is time you talked to us about the future and in the meantime we are ready to put everything on the table."

Chairman: I call on Mr. Paddy O'Donoghue of the SDLP.

Mr. O'Donoghue: Thank you, Mr. McKeown, for your interesting and comprehensive submission. Northern Ireland has been described in various terms over the years. It has been described as unworkable, a failed political entity. You describe it as a closed system which is incapable of accommodating peaceful change and development. Do you think that under this closed system and the constitutional arrangements that exist it is impossible to make political progress or do you think it is a legitimate system?

Mr. McKeown: Legitimacy derives, to some extent, from efficacy. If it works it becomes legitimate. I do not believe there is any cause for optimism, that a reversion to Stormont or anything of that nature will offer any grounds for peace or stability in Northern Ireland.

Mr. O'Donoghue: Your document appears to suggest that under the present arrangements we could make progress, without changing the constitutional status of the two States? Is that what you believe or do you think there is a need to change the constitutional arrangements before we can make progress?

Mr. McKeown: I do not think there can be any progress until there is a Southern involvement in the structuring of the Northern Ireland entity or until there is some sort of international agreement. I do not want to say condominium — that is pushing it too far — but there has got to be a mechanism for people within Northern Ireland to appeal to a higher tribunal than any that has been offered to them so far.

Mr. O'Donoghue: You talked about a supranational authority and you mentioned a number of cross-Border committees to deal with trade. You mentioned a comprehensive trans-Border authority. Do you feel this is the way we should proceed with the cross-Border committees and could you enlarge on the supranational authority?

Mr. McKeown: The point that Mr. Prendergast made was well taken and Mr. Glendinning commented on the reaction to Sunningdale and the over jubilation of some Southern papers. The difficulty is that when you make something tangible and visible you immediately provide a focus for hostility, for criticism and so on. The type of inter-government committees I am talking about probably operate on an *ad hoc* basis at present. They could operate with a fairly low public profile except for those people who are availing of their services. There is a need for a more visible body which would co-ordinate their efforts and monitor the whole procedure. It would be seen by Unionists and portrayed by

Unionists as the thin end of the wedge — the council of Ireland. That is the sort of risk that has to be taken. When you talk about respecting Unionist rights I do not think you can respect their paranoia.

Mr. O'Donoghue: You mentioned Sunningdale. In your opinion, what was it that the Unionists opposed most in the Sunningdale agreement?

Mr. McKeown: I would not agree with Mr. Glendinning on this. What has happened has been a sort of process of legitimising a particular event. It has been legitimised because a lot of people feel guilty about what they did. I worked in east Belfast at that time. I was aware of the strike being on for five days and my Protestant colleagues, and some of them would have been loyalist, were unaware that there was a strike on. It was not until the British Government withdrew the executive power of the Executive that the Executive collapsed. They created a power vacuum and, to me, it was most insulting because I was walking to work through Protestant districts faced with the Protestant hoods blocking the way and then, when I walked into a Catholic district, it was a matter of being stopped by the British Army, frisked and searched. The whole situation was an abdication on the part of the British Government, an abdication responding to an initiative and an adventure which did not have any clear political purpose but which did have the clear purpose of demonstration, repudiation and so on. It was only when it proved totally successful that it became necessary to ask what the justification for it was. The British Government were happy to accept the justification offered by Unionist politicians who had wanted to distance themselves totally from the operation initially but who tried to get in on the act only when it looked like being successful. That is a rather long-winded way of saying that I do not think anybody who lived through that can say with certainty what the main impulse of it was. I would put it in this loose sort of way: it was a massive gesture against a changed world, against Christopher Columbus arriving home and saying that the world is not flat, that it is round, and then the flat-earthers coming out and making their protest. Because the Executive had no executive function in terms of law and order, the strike succeeded.

Mr. O'Donoghue: Would you say that it was the composition of the Executive or the threat of the Council of Ireland that was the most important aspect in Unionist hostility at that time?

Mr. McKeown: If I had to plump for one aspect, I would say that power sharing was the most important aspect. They were reacting

to the power sharing that was there then. The Council of Ireland had not come into being. It was purely notional. If one wants to bring people out on to the streets one succeeds by bringing them out on something concrete and Gerry Fitt up at Stormont was very hard to take.

Mr. O'Donoghue: Yet, opinion polls have shown that more than 50 per cent of the Protestant Unionist population are in favour of power sharing. Can you account for the fact that, with the exception of the Alliance, the Unionist political parties are totally against power sharing?

Mr. McKeown: That is a very difficult question to answer but I would be inclined to say they are opposed to power sharing because history has confirmed them in the belief that, if they say no to the British Government, the British will say, "That is all right; we will not push you".

Mr. O'Donoghue: The guarantee and the veto.

Mr. McKeown: Yes, if you like. The attitude "not an inch" has stood them in good stead. They are prepared to defy and ignore the British Government. In those circumstances, why should they look for compromise?

Mr. O'Donoghue: In your submission you examine the attitude of Southerners to the Irish Nationalist case and you suggest that there is a high level of disenchantment with the traditional nationalism that exists south of the Border. How deep do you think that disenchantment is? Is it likely to continue or will it diminish? As a Northerner who has lived here for the past five years perhaps you would let us have your views on that.

Mr. McKeown: That, too, is very difficult to answer. I do not wish to become paranoid about the way in which threatened Northerners in the South refer to themselves as white Russians, in a sense of alienation as it were. People from Cork or from Galway will say to me that I have come down here from Belfast to get a good job in Dublin. By way of reply I say to them that, since they have come up from Cork, what is the difference? For people who have never had to face the situation at a practical level it is difficult to say what their level of commitment is to this issue.

Chairman: We pass now to Deputy Rory O'Hanlon of Fianna Fáil.

Deputy O'Hanlon: You point out that the Nationalist minority in Northern Ireland at 40 per cent is nearly twice as large as the Protestant minority in the whole island. Can that 40 per cent of the population in the Six Counties be coerced into accepting British rule against their will?

Mr. McKeown: Unfortunately, the younger generation of that 40 per cent are demonstrating that they cannot be coerced into a British rule situation against their will. I say "unfortunately" because people are dying as a consequence.

Deputy O'Hanlon: Have the Unionist loyalists ever accepted political solutions proposed by Westminster?

Mr. McKeown: I would say not. I cannot think of an example of that having happened.

Deputy O'Hanlon: Following on your answer to Mr. O'Donoghue on the question of Unionist opposition to change, which is epitomised by the slogan "not an inch", do you believe that at the end of the day the British Government will have to insist on progress?

Mr. McKeown: I think so. No matter what this Forum might say, no matter how they might lean over backwards, in the final analysis the only way forward will entail some sort of pressure from the British Government on the Unionist people to sit down and talk. This puts someone like myself in a very awkward and invidious position because I would inveigh against the exercise of British authority in Northern Ireland. It puts me in a position of saying, "You do to them what you have done to us". I would be hoping not to go the whole way down that road. There are ways of applying pressure short of the pressure being exerted on the Nationalist community.

Deputy O'Hanlon: You state that the recognition by most Northern Nationalists of the Government of the Republic as the constitutional and legitimate voice of all the people of Ireland has been the factor which has inhibited many Nationalists from having recourse to physical force and that that recognition hinges on the Southern State's continued constitutional claim to embody the whole population. Perhaps you could elaborate on that.

Mr. McKeown: In the search for legitimacy, for a moral basis and for particular political stances, that has been a source of support to many Nationalists in the North, perhaps to the whole Nationalist community, namely, the belief that somewhere out there are a Government who have a moral responsibility because of their having assumed the role of being responsive to the concerns of the Nationalists, of being willing to look after their interests, or of going to Strasbourg on their behalf. In addition, a body, imperfect though it is because it represents only 26 of the 32 counties, is in some way the authentic voice of the Irish nation. A legal formula which enshrines that is important. I did suggest that it might be possible to devise other formulae which would make this explicit and clear but which would take it out of what might be its controversial position in the Constitution.

Deputy O'Hanlon: You are aware of the number of cross-Border development committees consisting of local authority members on each side. How would you see these develop in a more meaningful way?

Mr. McKeown: Development at the human level rather than at major political institutional levels is crucial and deserves every encouragement. Out of the work generated by such groups will come the notion of shared identity to which I have referred. I am equally certain that in some of the districts in the North in which these committees are engaged, when they become involved in hard politics, in matters of the allocation of resources and into the question of decisions about whether a road goes here or a bridge goes there, the pressure will build up for participation, for representation and so on. I realise that the DUP are not serving on these committees. It is at the stage of the type of hard politics to which I have referred that people will be forced to recognise the commonality of the interests of both sides.

Chairman: On behalf of the Forum, I thank Mr. McKeown.

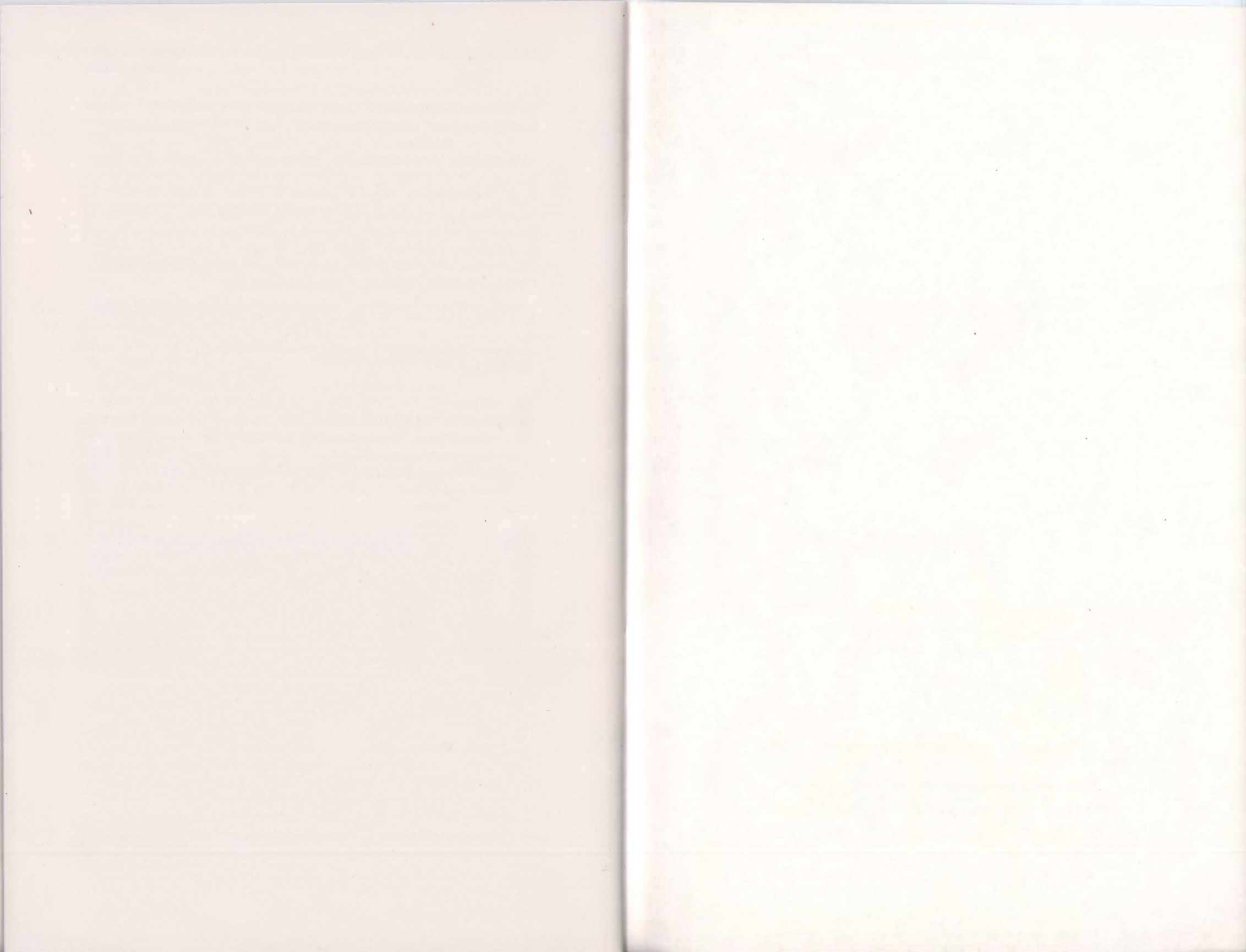
5 p.m. Session concluded.

for particular political reasons, that has been a source of support to many Nationalists in the North. Perhaps to the whole of the country, and certainly to a number of the most prominent politicians and public figures, who have a strong feeling of loyalty to the Government, and who are in a position to bring influence to bear on the Government, or of going to Government on their own, in addition to the body, important though it is because it represents only 25 of the 32 counties, is to some extent the ultimate source of the Irish nation. It might be thought to derive other influences from other sources, but the crisis and clear-cut situation which has arisen in the North is its controversial position in the Constitution.

Deputy O'Hanlon: You are saying that the Government is a development committee for the North, and that it is a more meaningful body than you see there developing in a more meaningful way. I am not sure that I would agree with that.

Mr. McKewen: Development at the human level rather than at the political level, is the only way in which the North can be developed. The Government of the North is a development committee for the North, and it is a more meaningful body than you see there developing in a more meaningful way. I am not sure that I would agree with that.

Deputy O'Hanlon: You say that the recognition by some Northern Nationalists of the Government of the Republic as the constitutional and legitimate voice of all the people of Ireland has been the factor which has inhibited many Nationalists from having recourse to physical force and that recognition hinges on the Southern State's continued constitutional claim to embody the whole population. Perhaps you could elaborate on that.



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