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No. 11

NEW IRELAND FORUM

Public Session

Thursday, 19 January, 1984

Dublin Castle

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NEW IRELAND FORUM

Public Session

Thursday, 19 January, 1984

Dublin Castle

11.30 a.m.

Chairman: Dr. Colm Ó hEocha.

FIANNA FÁIL

FINE GAEL

MEMBERS

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Mr. Brian Lenihan T.D.	Mr. Peter Barry T.D., Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Mr. David Andrews T.D.	Miss Myra Barry T.D.
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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

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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., The Tánaiste and Minister for Energy.	Mr. John Hume M.E.P.
Mr. Frank Cluskey T.D.,	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: Members of the New Ireland Forum, we now meet in public session. The first presentation this morning is by Mrs. Sylvia Meehan whom we welcome. She chairs the Employment Equality Agency which is an independent body set up in 1977. Before that she was vice-principal of Cabinteely Community School and was active in women's organisations and in the trade union movement. The presentation this morning by Mrs. Meehan is made in her personal capacity. To begin, I call on Mr. Paddy O'Donoghue of the SDLP.

Mr. O'Donoghue: You are welcome to the Forum. Your submission deals in broad terms with the status of women in both parts of our divided country. Would it be your opinion that in a New Ireland the interaction of the Protestant ethos in the North and the Catholic Nationalist ethos could produce a more liberal and concerned society?

Mrs. Meehan: Yes, I think it could. Thank you for your welcome. I regard it as a great privilege to be here. My answer to the question is yes, because I think that, as you described it, both parts of our divided country have, in their governmental provisions, been overly influenced by a dominant religious tradition. I am extremely sensitive to promoting total freedom for people to follow whatever religious practice they wish. On the other hand, I am also concerned that people, particularly women, should be allowed to demonstrate their true attitudes and needs without being hampered or having these needs examined with reference to some other tradition. For instance, in the South of Ireland the progress of an amount of legislation which in its effect is particularly relevant to women's needs, though of course the legislation applies to both sexes, is looked on in an overall question as to what that society is deemed to say it wishes. When we talk this morning about discrimination against women we should also be aware that the word "discrimination" has relevance too to differences in religious tradition. Discrimination cannot be measured by looking at the percentage of people who either say they suffer from this situation or who oneself would deem suffer from discrimination. Discrimination in human, individual rights, is fully effective in one person. To say that in a new Ireland it would be possible to have a Constitution that first fully accepted human rights in general is not something which takes us right down to the effect on lives of women in regard to trade, occupation and profession. We need an equality term in our Constitution which refers to equality as between men and women, which would in practice have the effect of giving women equality in employment and in the privacy of the family and in social and commercial dealings.

Mr. O'Donoghue: You deal extensively in your submission with the potential contribution of women to the economic and political life of the country. You say this contribution has been suppressed. Who has carried out the suppression?

Mrs. Meehan: The ethos of the country, also the structure and, indeed, coming from one Article — I am now using the 1937 Constitution — certain parts if not all of Article 41 and I refer to the section in the Constitution which refers to support for the woman in the home. It sounds well and it means well. Its origin in 1937 would, I think, be related to a social situation at the time and a particular form of thinking. I am not the first person to say that that phrase in the Constitution which is looked on usually and superficially as being beneficial to women is, in fact, very damaging to them. Before the Constitution was put to the people, Dorothy Macardle, who was a Republican historian, objected to it and analysed the difficulties it would cause to women. Campaigns were also run at that time to object to this section. We have that on record. It is not something that is said now in the light of any kind of movement of social thinking. One particular part of the Constitution refers to women's contribution in the home and thereby categorises the contribution women can give to their country and this may exclude public life. My professional interest, as you know, is in equality of opportunity in employment for women. Allied to that is the ability of women to contribute in forming social policy and public policy. That particular part of the Constitution really sets the scene by which women are categorised. They will never of course, be detached from the family responsibilities in their personal lives and neither I nor anybody else would wish that, but their family responsibilities are not catered for in the organisation of work, of our legal system and, really coming back to it, in our Constitution. Therefore, at the end of the first page of my submission I say that the first essential is that *all policy*, and first in the Constitution and also any kind of Government policy, economic, social and political, must be examined with reference to the *consequences* it would have for women. That has not happened yet in the North or South. It has not happened either within the contributions that the Forum has prepared for itself in its economic analyses. There is small reference to this. Unless this question of the interests of 51 per cent of the population is tackled with the intention of achieving new objectives there will be no change.

Mr. O'Donoghue: May I ask your opinion on a section of Article 41.3.1° which says:

The State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack.

Would you agree with this constitutional provision or would you wish to have it removed?

Mrs. Meehan: Of course I do not challenge, or support attacks upon the family. It is when you take the whole section together that it defines a very narrow type of family. I believe it is not a constitutional framework that supports the family but it does of course support marriage in so far as it builds civil and religious marriage together as being incapable of being terminated at the wish of the parties. The protection for the family — yes, but I do not believe that part of the Constitution does, in fact, protect the true family in which women have a particular position.

Mr. O'Donoghue: Would you wish to have that Article removed from the Constitution?

Mrs. Meehan: Yes, changed. When I say removed it does not mean that I would remove the whole essence — I would not like to be translated as saying that I wished to see the family attacked. I believe that in fact the family is a unit of society which continues and that women adapt within the family. For instance, women in the North of Ireland whose family life is under particular stress due to the absence of male relatives for reasons economic or political, adapt and keep the society together. Our Constitution as it is framed will not do anything for them. If you are asking me directly about the possibility of terminating marriage, civil marriage, yes, I would support removing that part of the Constitution because every effort should be made to enable that. It is not enough to argue superficially that many people do not want to be pressured into divorce — those people who wish for religious marriage and wish never to have this terminated should have their wishes totally protected. On the other hand, a number of people in our society, North and South, would have different views. Equally, their freedom to treat marriage as a civil contract and terminable should be catered for. Because of a number of reasons, particularly economic and social development and urbanisation, the trend towards the request for such provision that is not to have a blanket refusal for the termination of marriage and ability to remarry is increasing. Not to allow people to have their civil rights in this matter does nothing to change their practice, their wishes, but the adaptation of many people to a situation where they do not have civil and legal rights in the matter in itself creates problems in society and other problems within the family structure.

We all know it certainly creates problems in property areas and in regard to the rights of children as individuals and their education.

Mr. O'Donoghue: I know you have a particular interest in discrimination in employment and that you are concerned with that in your everyday work. This is dealt with by the Sex (Discrimination) Act, 1976 and by the 1977 Employment Equality Act, in the Republic. Would the incorporation of the best features of these two Acts provide adequate legislative safeguards for women in the field of employment?

Mrs. Meehan: Yes. Permit me if I smile about the "adequate legislative protection". Legislative protection is absolutely needed as a base standard from which one goes forward. It is the implementation of that legislation throughout Government policy first — which is not necessarily at one with its own legislation — which is equally important. As regards the Northern Ireland instrument dealing with equality of provision, it does go further than ours in that it covers goods and services and also education. Ours does not. We have a particular need for an extension to goods and services and a need also to include education. I am more interested in the take-up and effectiveness of the implementation of policy in this regard rather than in the precise point of having an individual make a claim regarding education. Education does have an effect on training opportunities and a marked effect on the career and progress of a man or woman in the take-up of employment. There is a differential between the sexes on both sides of the Border. Practical measures must be taken and in all I am talking about there are objectives to be stated and methods defined and it is important not to waste time on analyses of who is doing what and causing it but rather to try to achieve a good objective.

Mr. O'Donoghue: The best features of the Northern Ireland Equal Opportunities Act and the Employment Equality Act in the South taken together would probably satisfy you as an implementing agent. We will let that go and refer to what you said about education and the lack of provision for that in the Southern Act. Can you expand on the discrimination against women which you allege exists in education and explain — I could not understand it — what you mean by saying "ancillary educational services such as school libraries, physical education and child care have specific effects on women's education"? I would have thought they would have specific effects on everybody's education.

Mrs. Meehan: They have effects, but they have specific effects upon women which will have a more consequential detriment for them. I agree they will have effects on both men and women. If we are looking at the situation of women and measuring where they are at the moment, we should accept that there is a case for positive action since the structures have been designed fairly neutrally; however this does not take account of indirect discrimination where neutral practices can have a different impact on the sexes. That is why I wrote as I did. I am talking about education and training not only for those of compulsory school leaving age but in the 16 to 21 gap. We must take account of the normal realities in the life of a woman which may well, particularly at the level of disadvantage, include early marriage, early child-bearing. The realities and consequences of that come in a woman's life perhaps more in her twenties than has been taken note of. There is a strong need for an analysis of the necessity for women in that age group to have education and training. They are over compulsory school leaving age. Training facilities offered by industrial training authorities are under a general type of training which publicly subsidised and designed for a neutral mass, not specifically designed for the particular needs of women as expressed by themselves. There is great need for consultation on the needs of women rather than analyses of why they have failed to take the same level of benefit from overall designs. They have not failed but the benefit has not been designed to suit what they wanted.

Chairman: Next we have Senator Mary Robinson on behalf of the Labour Party.

Senator Robinson: I would like to extend a warm welcome to you on behalf of the Labour group. Both in your submission and in your earlier replies this morning you placed emphasis on the economic structures and the acceptance *in advance* of the formulation of economic, social and political policy that the situation of women must be seen as a crucial factor. You said that this is not the case in either part of Ireland at the moment and that it has not been sufficiently reflected in the economic studies that the Forum has produced. Could you give some practical examples of what you mean by that framework and where it has not happened, some cases even recently where this has not occurred?

Mrs. Meehan: We all recognise phrases such as employment policies, industrialisation, need to bring in wealth-producing industries and organisations. In so far as the situation of women has been considered by, say, grant-aiding authorities in relation to

creating employment, undoubtedly surveys have been done in regard to the availability in the population of women say of a particular age. We have an extremely high level in the South of well-trained, highly educated young women who stay at school for a very long period compared with other countries and therefore there is their availability and usefulness in certain industrial organisation. That is not the kind of prior thinking I am talking about. I am talking about having full social planning without which economic and political decisions will invariably go wrong in a short or middle length of time. That kind of planning has not been undertaken even in relation to such trends as the increasing number of women, married women in Ireland who have participated in employment. In 1971, taking women as a percentage of the labour force, 3.5 per cent of them were married; in 1981, having come through the beginning of a very severe recession the figure had risen to 8.8 per cent. The number of married women in employment is still a very low percentage of the work force but it is an increasingly upward trend. Most of the women in this part of the country are in full-time rather than part-time employment. If this piece of information and this trend has been so well documented, economic and social planning should have taken account of it, recognise that it is a rising trend and have built into plans provisions for child care, reorganisation of working time and a commitment to remove any disability which affects those who work part-time rather than full-time and also a commitment to look at the structure of women's employment which is very narrowly categorised — young women go into employment mainly in areas where there is no further training. That is the difference there. These questions, all of which are extremely simple and well known, do not appear to have been taken as part of the *background* for decisions which affect everybody and affect the wealth of the country and certainly affect the application and provision of social welfare. It is the absence of this prior thinking which leaves a number of anomalies in our social welfare code.

Senator Robinson: In the area of family law, you have made it clear that you would favour an amendment to the provision of Article 41 which refers to the special position of women in the home and also to the prohibition on divorce. Do you see these as amendments in some long-term context of a united Ireland or do you think we should seek to make these changes for the promotion of the situation of women now, leading perhaps ultimately to better reconciliation?

Mrs. Meehan: I do, and if I may be allowed to extend that, I would feel it would be incredibly hypocritical and I should not be here if am recommending changes only when uncertainly foreseen

circumstances arise. I believe that the standards I have outlined are correct because these are the way in which women in society will have their status fully recognised and be able to contribute. To delay any of these interventions depending on whether one's hope of a united Ireland is near or far would not be the right basis for making changes. It is because the changes are beneficial that I believe they will attract the loyalty and support of women who are citizens. They have not been looked on as full citizens in that while they have voting rights their needs have not been built into a planned Constitution, nor anticipated and catered for by social and economic policy.

Senator Robinson: In that connection, have you become aware of women travelling to Northern Ireland for advice in the area of family planning, or medical advice which they believe would not be available in this part of the country?

Mrs. Meehan: Yes. I am quite sure that everyone in the room is well aware of the fact that freedom to avail oneself of health care dealing with human reproduction — that includes the whole range of family planning and contraception — is a matter of considerable ease to persons of a certain level of education and income, and also nearness to facilities. I doubt if anybody will disagree with me on that in practice. I am also aware, in my social capacity, of women who will use facilities wherever they are near to them. Obviously some people will be much nearer to the Border and have travelled there and will use the facilities. That is a statement really of their need. Usually the travelling is done for very serious reasons and on medical advice. The pressure for change, therefore, may not come from those who would be well versed and articulate in expressing it because they do not have a personal need; they avail themselves of facilities across the Border, but women without money cannot do so.

Senator Robinson: You call in your submission for a programme of action, both North and South, to eradicate persistent sex discrimination. You refer to the fact that there is already active co-operation between your organisation and your sister organisation in the North. How do you see such a programme being developed? Could it be developed under present circumstances or would it require further structures in a New Ireland context?

Mrs. Meehan: From our part in the Employment Equality Agency it could well be developed. I have close contacts and a high degree of co-operation with the Northern Ireland Equal Opportunities Commission. I hope these structures would be flexible enough to allow us to engage in joint campaigns. A programme of positive

action may well be first one of information and awareness, because without that awareness people are unlikely to demand what I believe within our laws they are capable of demanding. I am talking about the work place and working organisations. Similarly in the case of another organisation with which I have been involved, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, there is no Border there and I have participated in discussions and I am well aware of what women's needs are as they express them themselves. There might be some problems about co-operation, when you have slightly different pieces of legislation and different systems of administration. To whom do you look for objective political and economic support? There will be a practical problem there.

The main problem for women now is the question of equality of pay and conditions and opportunity where they find themselves in the segregated work force. At public service level there are other problems and research shows that discrimination is at work there too. In regard to industrial and service employment the categorisation of male and female into particular sections of work makes it very important that women themselves should understand what is equal pay for work of equal value or of comparable value. The value of allowing the North and South Agency and Commission to work together is to educate, inform and make people aware of what the options are. They can then choose more freely. I would be very strong supporter of such a campaign because the present detrimental effects on women are the same even if the legislation is minimally different.

Senator Robinson: Your emphasis on education leads me to the next question on curriculum development. We have a new board established. What do you think should be the priorities in curriculum development which would lead to greater participation by women?

Mrs. Meehan: The priority in curriculum development is to try to ensure that the form of education provided for children and young people should be linked to the needs of the individual. If you go for a labour market type of educational programme, you will be wrong because the labour market will have changed. Curriculum policy about personal development and educational provision to develop innate capacities and characteristics, raises the question of division of facilities and giving boys and girls different provisions in academic and practical education. This has very serious consequences. It is not only that a girl who is denied classes in woodwork or metalwork inevitably is disadvantaged because she has not progressed in them at school, but also educationally in personal development it means that she has been denied an

opportunity to know herself her own capacities. Of course, it is necessary for a curriculum development body or policy making board to take account of present and future needs in the employment field. There will be likely trends but the education must be open enough for people to take up options. Obviously, it would have been a serious situation one hundred years ago if you did not know how to read and write. Now science and technology are more and more part of our daily world, and consequently important in educational or employment opportunities. There has been a distinct difference in provision for males and females. Aspects like that have to be considered but I would not wish to be recorded as saying that it should be a labour market policy of education. That is not only philosophically wrong but it is practically foolish.

Senator Robinson: Given the context and background against which this Forum was established and the aspirations reflected in it, what do you think should be the priority of the Forum? Could you identify what you would regard as our great and immediate priority?

Mrs. Meehan: This Forum should analyse, without fear of what answers will come, the situation under headings of political, economic, social and anything ancillary. The Forum should not be afraid of the answers but should take on board that they are talking about a population composed of individuals, to understand that the effects of the past 60 years have created some division in aspirations between North and South. Because of the lack of knowledge among populations on both sides of the Border we have been aware of, but have not understood the division in religious and political fields. The divided religious and political aspirations in the North of Ireland have certainly created a disaffected part of the population who could not relate to the Government of the area in which they reside. Their lack of faith and demonstrated lack of good experience of what purported to be a constitutional and parliamentary democracy must be taken into account when one looks at their consequential reactive behaviour. The behaviour of any population will be fully human and that means it will always be adaptable. If there is an adaptation to very adverse circumstances one must not be surprised and it is not very profitable to label one set of actions as violent. The actions represent a reaction against the Government they have been faced with.

As regards an analysis of what happened in the South — you have asked a very wide-ranging question — as part of the answer only I suppose I can go back to my main theme, the apathy pertaining to women in the South. The so called apathy pertaining to women in the South has changed rapidly in the past ten years. I would say this

is a measure of their pragmatism. The level of education which has been provided for women in the South has now led them to aspire to be very free, active and anxious to avail themselves of opportunity. Therefore you *can* see changes in behaviour of women; however, their apathy could certainly be seen in the results of the 1979 local elections. The percentage of women elected to positions there and even the percentage of female candidates was miserably low. I expect that we will see a marked change when there are new elections. The Forum should look at these strong indicators in the behaviour of people and where the behaviour does not conform to what one would wish to be the norm you should look at the reasons. I am afraid too often people look only to providing assertiveness training courses and confidence building programmes for women without changing the structural obstacles that women face in institutions and in their daily lives. While I agree that training is necessary this may imply that the victim is responsible for her situation.

Similarly I think that underlying reasons should be looked at seriously, North and South. If we are about finding a State which has political stability, which is the prerequisite, then whatever is making that State politically unstable should be looked at, and accepted as the basic cause of conflict which may have no means of expression other than violence.

Chairman: Thank you, Senator Robinson. I now call on Deputy Eileen Lemass on behalf of Fianna Fail.

Deputy Lemass: You are very welcome to the Forum, Mrs. Meehan. In your submission you point out the disadvantages that women suffer, both North and South. Do you think that in a New Ireland the position of all women would have a better chance of improving?

Mrs. Meehan: Yes, I think so. This is partly contained in one answer I have already given in so far as the practice, the ethos and the structures of both societies have been affected, and damaged, by having a partition of the country. We are talking about a New Ireland, about bringing to an end the 26 county state. We would end that State if it were 32 counties. Similarly we would end the six if it were 32 counties. The divisions and distinctions which pertain, to the existence of Partition naturally would be assumed to go. How would women fare? I have said already that an amount of social policy in the Twenty-six Counties was originally dictated by one particular section and here we are talking about the dominant religion. It was dictated by a religious philosophy rather than a necessity to adapt to what appeared to be the general requirements

of the society at that time including the specific requirements of women. While it included a certain tolerance for people who were not of the Roman Catholic persuasion who are mainly identified as being in the Church of Ireland or other Protestant Churches. That type of toleration however did not give that small part of the population a very supported role in their participation in political life in the country, and presumably confirmed what may have been their original detachment and dislike of our political entity.

Similarly, the division of aspirations in the Six Counties certainly created a State in which, as it turned out and, in fact, if you look at the analysis in the take up of education, in employment, in housing, in control of wealth and so on, there was a difference. My main theme is that discrimination was at work. I believe that in an amalgamation of the population — we may be talking about territory but I would prefer to describe it as an amalgamation of the population and the talents of all Irish people — there would be more freedom for the individual talents to be expressed. I think the framework of a Constitution designed now must take account of the advances that women themselves have made in stating their political demands. Indeed, the Government here, and recent successive Governments, have, for the normal and right political reasons, been responding to pressure by women as voters. Women in the South of Ireland have shown that they are ready to place their votes in relation to their demands as met, so their demands are actually being faced and put into programmes. However, it is a very minimal and slow growth and the removal of Partition would benefit everybody in the sharing of information, identification of needs and, incredibly important for us here as well as in the Six Counties, freedom to express needs without being overwhelmed by a very damaging majority viewpoint.

Deputy Lemass: To what extent do you believe that women, both North and South, have lost faith in the constitutional and party structures? What are your reasons for believing this and do you think that in a new Ireland situation that faith might be restored?

Mrs. Meehan: I would hope it would be restored. One of the measures of losing faith in the political structures in the Republic is demonstrated to a large extent by the very small number of women who seek a particular profile within local elections, and public policy and their lack of models. Women are not normally expected to express their loss of faith in the constitutional and party structure by demonstrations and violence. This is partly because there are specific reasons why they cannot organise as a unit to make political demands.

In the North of Ireland it is not merely the political instability but the whole civil instability and the military presence that must be observed. You asked me how do I know. I suppose I observe and meet groups of women. If I am talking to women and they are talking about educational provisions, employment provisions or social welfare provisions and it happens to be a group which is largely or mainly composed of women who live on the Northern side of the Border, they do not spend any time talking about their allegiance or lack of allegiance to a constitutional and parliamentary system. They talk about the disabilities they face, the deprivation they face within their families, their insecurity, the type of job structure which is available to them, linked to their educational disadvantage and their appalling situation in the midst of violence matched by an increasing and demonstrated courage in dealing with the daily problems of life. We can but guess at the problems of women who bring up children where all the models for those children must be described as violent if you have a conflict situation. You and I would know the difficulty in bringing up children in order to conform to what must be a hollow sound about constitutional structures when the practical reality of life is that you would hope but not be reassured that your child would have some normality and non-violent example to follow.

I cannot give you similar comparable practical examples of women in the South of Ireland having no faith. They do vote on a normal pattern. They do not necessarily participate in public life but in regard to employment, social welfare and education there has been no fall-off in their demands to me for information on structures coming from the EEC. That is quite relevant because they do not *seem* to have faith in their political representatives taking up their views, pressing for them in Government programmes. There is a difference, of course, in their relationship to women like yourself who are elected representatives. I am sure you know that you will get more pressure from women and more faith that you will support them. It is not because you are an elected representative so much as their assumption that as another woman you should take on board their particular needs. That is an evidence of a lack of faith in a political system as whole, as well as an affirmation by women that women in public life are a necessity, not just an admirable symptom of public life.

Deputy Lemass: Under the heading "Health and Social Welfare" you referred to family planning and access to all forms of contraception and also to certain health benefits and the differences regarding those matters between North and South. How important do you regard those differences?

Mrs. Meehan: One hundred per cent important. If one wants to be a sociologist or a commentator one may or may not find that a large or a small or a middle percentage of the population is disadvantaged but since the consequences are all effects which happen in one individual person they are 100 per cent important. You and I would know a number of women who have particular health needs. Depending on whether or not they are dependants of a contributor to a social welfare system their health needs are catered for under public service arrangements or private service arrangements, but these distinctions do not affect the person's physical requirements in regard to access to any aspect of family planning, whether the need is related to information, knowledge and awareness, or to any means which will be deemed by that person to be right and necessary to achieve family planning or contraceptive measures. It is essential that there should be freedom to avail oneself of one's chosen method of contraception because it is a matter of individual rights. I do not believe that the availability of knowledge, information and access to a full range of family planning and contraceptive measures have a detrimental effect on society. What might have a detrimental effect on society would be the manipulation, perhaps by a profit-making organisation, of women for any reason. Other than that it is essential for them as individuals to seek and to find the best answer to their own problems. It is of enormous significance. It does affect the attitude of women to the society in which they live. Their attitude towards authority is either one of total subjection and, therefore, there is no critical faculty, which is really a loss to the community, or blank and very obstinate suffering. That does no good to a country.

Deputy Lemass: I have several other questions but I am only allowed one more. How has the situation of women, North and South, been affected by Partition?

Mrs. Meehan: People here would know the date on which Partition started. Then came the necessity to devise systems which catered for a Twenty-six County entity with aspirations to a Thirty-two County entity, or a Six County entity with no official aspirations to a Thirty-two County entity. Consequences followed and I think they have narrowed the range of participation of women. They certainly have narrowed the range of options. If we were to use as an example the situation of women in the North of Ireland, undoubtedly there are common elements, but how these are expressed and how they are dealt with by their public representatives, is affected by Partition politics. The participation of women in political parties is also strongly affected by the presence of Partition. That sounds a very general answer but we would also see that the existence of

Partition has had an effect on women's lives North of the Border as to where they lived, what kind of education and training and schools their children went to, the kind of provision they would have got out of them which, in a large measure, is similar to the effects of sex categorisation in the schools with which we are familiar. There would be a higher percentage of people from Catholic or Nationalist backgrounds having degrees in subjects such as liberal arts subjects — rather than technical studies. You will find a much bigger proportion of male children in families not Catholic and Nationalist, leaving school at an earlier stage. Why? Because they could have availed themselves of apprenticeships more easily. Similarly you will see a pattern in the South. Girls will stay on in school longer because the option of leaving for craft or trade apprenticeship is not there for them. All these situations taken together have had an effect on the situation of women. They have had an effect on the education that they may have seemed to seek but that was merely adaptive choice depending on what they were led to believe would be most useful.

The existence of Partition has had an effect upon the whole broad range of social issues. It has put an added burden on women in dividing them from each other. One way to progress in regard to the situation of women is to try to create structures whereby women, whether in rural isolated areas or urban areas, or whatever their education or level of privilege or background is, should come together on a common identity. Certainly the existence of Partition and the stress and instability and anything that has happened in the last ten years in relation to violence, both North and South, has polarised and stopped the coming together of women. From that you may see that different structures, were inevitably devised and designed for reasons others than the needs of women. Women are seen as a numerical part of the group rather than as a distinct entity with special needs. The important thing is that *the situation of women, and consideration of how any Government policy can affect this, is an essential prerequisite* before you embark upon your social, economic and political planning and carrying it out.

Chairman: Thank you, Deputy Lemass. I now call on Deputy David Molony of Fine Gael.

Deputy Molony: You are welcome, Mrs. Meehan. I know that in the course of your work you find many aspects of life in Southern Ireland that you would like to see changed in order to overcome discrimination against women and I am sure your sister organisation in the North of Ireland sees many aspects of life there that they would like to see changed. In the context of our deliberations, the

question I would like to ask you is whether you could briefly and in priority order set out for me those characteristics or features of our legal system and our social system in the South of Ireland that are most unattractive to Northern women?

Mrs. Meehan: The easiest item to categorise would be the lack of availability of divorce proceedings. In fact, internationally, and I meet women from many countries, that is always looked on with astonishment and as a distinct disadvantage to both parties. The reason why that is so important is that the legal framework of marriage has not yet changed enough. The consequences of being married are presumably beneficial on a personal level to both sexes but legally the disadvantages for women remain in relation to the independence of earning one's own income, the independence of one's status if one is a necessary recipient of social welfare, the independence of one's status in regard to property matters and family home, and the problems which affect a woman if the marriage is at risk. There is now in the South protection of the family home for the wife and there is beginning to be a recognition of the value of the unpaid work which has been a woman's contribution. These are remarkable advances in the South. The real disadvantage is the question of the restriction of access to employment which can develop into a lifetime career for women.

Deputy Molony: When you say there is a difficulty in regard to access to employment are you saying that is a specific characteristic of our system in the South of Ireland as compared with the North of Ireland?

Mrs. Meehan: No, I think there are difficulties on both sides of the Border.

Deputy Molony: What I want you to do is to set out for us, in priority order, the specific features of our systems down here, legal and social, that are most unattractive to Northern women. I know there are things that should be changed on both sides.

Mrs. Meehan: Northern women would also look at educational provision, scholarship and further training. The reason why I have to be tentative here and unable to give you a fully categorised answer is because the assumptions may not actually be 100 per cent correct. *I am not talking about my assumptions* but of the perceptions that people have. Undoubtedly the perceptions that Northern women have of life in the South are not necessarily the reality as we know it.

You asked me to list under a strict legal framework, however a great deal of the differential has to do with the ethos and atmosphere which comes out of a religiously divided schooling system linked to a single sex schooling rather than differences in a legal framework. I therefore cannot tell you that it is just a legal framework here in the South. In regard to the availability of multi-denominational education, you could say that while not many people appear to demand this in the North of Ireland the kind of ethos which comes out of one single pattern of education and one single dominant type of authority appears to make the South seem unattractive to women in the North. It may be that we are not talking about a legal structure but about familiarisation and information. As far as education is concerned, the take-up of proper equality provisions, North and South, is not very much different but the reaction in the South is now becoming quite strong on that level. Sexism in education is now being generally looked on as a distinct disadvantage. Also I think something extremely unattractive to Northern women would be the availability of follow-on education and training provisions which are seen to be more liberal and more financially endowed in the North of Ireland than in the South. To go from one set of benefits to a lesser set of benefits would obviously be totally unattractive to women. Then of course, there is the whole range of the framework and access to family planning and all the health benefits which appear to be more beneficial in the North than in the South. Mind you, I think it could be improved there as well as here. Those are the broad headlines of what people currently *perceive*. I do not know if that is the full story but that is what they would say.

Deputy Molony: In the context of divorce, education, scholarship opportunities and additional training and family planning and in the context of what you said to us about the ethos of this country, it has been put to the Forum that where there is a very substantial Catholic ethos and consensus we should not feel it necessary to apologise that our legal system, constitutional or statutory, reflects Catholic values. What is your view on that?

Mrs. Meehan: In so far as people perceive Catholic values to be the highest values they can aspire to, then naturally they will wish their legal system to reflect that. Secondly, if their highest values are, in fact, freedom for people to devise and live their own lives, that would also be part of a Catholic ethos, then there would be no problem but, of course the second part is often omitted. I would say that any legal system must have built into it a guarantee that people have true freedom to follow whatever religious tenets they wish but religious toleration and religious freedom have to be given to individuals, not to institutions.

Deputy Molony: On page 3 of your submission you refer to marriage law and you say:

In marriage law there is a need to distinguish between civil and religious contracts, allowance for the termination of the civil contract and remarriage.

Do you envisage that we have two separate forms of ceremony — a civil one and a religious one — and do you envisage that where there is a matrimonial breakdown the State would have the right to dissolve the civil one? Would you elaborate on your proposals?

Mrs. Meehan: I think the contracts should be seen separately. I cannot think of any State that would ever take upon itself the right to intervene in a religious contract but it is sometimes extremely difficult to divide the two. Even if one does and has a civil contract of marriage the religious contract cannot be terminated. However, individual rights of people should be recognised and they should have a right to terminate a civil contract. The State should recognise that and keep very well away from any interference or even view of religious contracts which must be left to the privacy of individual persons. We are aware that in regard to religious contracts in many other countries where civil divorce exists the intention of any religious institution is to help its members to be civilly obedient. Therefore, any question of terminating a religious part of a contract is taken in conformity with the wish of that person to end the civil one. You cannot, for instance, look for a dissolution of a religious marriage without also stating your intention of having a civil dissolution. That is normal practice. The absence of divorce can have as many detrimental effects on the social fabric as it is argued its presence would have. People in the end will behave adaptively to the needs of their lives as they see them. These will include their own reaction to their own faith and commitment, but their own faith and commitment will be seen by them alongside their need to serve their lives and their families as they wish and if they do that by, in practical terms, terminating a marriage and in practical terms starting another union which merely does not have the legal flavour of marriage this is not any protection of the family. Since we recognise that second unions are an increasing trend we must, for social and political reasons, look to that trend and serve the needs of the people. What is the point of having a Government institution or a legal system which does not serve the needs of the people as they express them?

Deputy Molony: You say in your submission:

A majority of women in the North, from both Unionist and

Nationalist traditions would not wish to endure the present constraints in the South which limit access to health care information regarding family planning and access to all forms of contraception.

I have to ask you what changes you would like to see in our laws down here to overcome that difficulty?

Mrs. Meehan: The practical question is availability of access. I have already explained that there is a criss-cross between practice and law which cannot be good for the social fabric. We should remove any legal barriers which are there, in any legislation regarding family planning. There should be no distinction made in access as between publicly provided health services and private practice. In relation to any form of contraception which does not specifically require the intervention of a doctor there should be no restriction at all. It is civilly more peaceful not to have a legal restriction which inevitably is broken. This is not so much a change in the law as provision of access to information to women in rural areas because there is a more severe restriction there. I would favour a review of any legal provisions that are there and then stating the objective, which is full freedom of access to and provision of information. In that we would be following a United Nations convention to which in some ways we give lip service. I have not been asked to make a particular reference to the United Nations convention on eliminating discrimination against women which I referred to in my submission. I would like to link that with the European convention regarding human rights. It is very necessary for any country, which is truly independent and which recognises its own importance in the world, to take account of international agreements. We should not say simply they do not suit us, but should allow our own beliefs about the strength of our civil liberties to be reviewed by other people. A subjective look at one's own standard of civil liberties is always likely to try to hide our faults. We should be open and free. If we give lip service to conventions we should ratify them and introduce legal measures to achieve them and also have programmes which will achieve their objectives. At that stage we can forget about the international circumstances, and at that stage we devise our own methods and programmes to achieve the objective of freedom which includes equality for women.

Deputy Molony: You have outlined in your presentation as well as your submission substantial differences between the North and South in different respects as far as women are concerned. I understood you to say in reply to another question that you think the situation would not be nearly as bad so far as women are concerned

if we had a united Ireland. My question is this. The fact is that we do not have a united Ireland; we have a partitioned Ireland. The differences you know so well are there and are very real. Do you believe that we have to make many changes down here before we can contemplate a united Ireland? Or do you believe we can find different structures that bring together the North and South in some way or other before we can bring about the changes to which you refer? Do you follow my question?

Mrs. Meehan: I do. I have already said that what I would recommend in regard to improving the status of women in our society — anyone here can define it either as Twenty-six, Six or Thirty-two; I am talking of a society, a population composed of individuals — are right designs and programmes which have not really been put into effect in either part of the island. To be sincere, I obviously have to say that we set about constructing that framework for that part of the population for which at the moment we in the South are legislating. To do otherwise would make more difficult reunification of our country. It is obviously not the only thing that needs to be done. Leaving aside the Twenty-six and the Six there is also the question of the United Kingdom and its views on the Twenty-six counties. In a sense we must look at what changes have come about, where the gap has been concerned with women North and South. If you are looking at the Six counties within the limit of the Thirty-two, these are subjective questions. I do not believe that the tightness of the Six Counties and its society and the inbuilt stresses which allowed the initiation of Partition could have given women in the North of Ireland any better situation than women in the South. They have been given a replication of legislation which came to them from another source rather than from their own Government naturally responding. I do not know if their own Government would have so responded. It would seem that it might not have because the problem about Partition is that it creates two closed societies very much to the detriment of both and, because of that, it prevents women, North and South, uniting on common needs which if answered in Government policies would in themselves be good for the whole population and in particular could have assisted the development of women.

Chairman: Thank you, Mrs. Meehan, for sharing your views with us this morning. We will now break for lunch. We shall have three presentations this afternoon.

Sitting suspended at 12.45 p.m. and resumed at 2.15 p.m.

Chairman: We now resume our public session. The next presentation is made by two brothers, Christopher McGimpsey and his brother, Michael. They are from Belfast. Christopher is a graduate of Syracuse University, New York, and also has a Ph.D. from Edinburgh as an historian. Michael is a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin. They are both company directors and they both want to make it quite clear that while they are members of the Official Unionist Party they are not official spokesmen for the party. They are appearing here without the knowledge or sanction of the Official Unionist Party. We thank them for their submission and their attendance. I am particularly grateful to them because they agreed not to make their presentation this morning in order to facilitate the work of the Forum. To begin the questioning I now call on Deputy Enda Kenny of Fine Gael.

Deputy Kenny: As the first declared members of the Official Unionist Party I welcome you to the Forum and thank you for coming. May I ask why you saw fit to attend here and send in a submission in view of the fact that you do not have official sanction from your party?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: Briefly, the reason we came to Dublin today is not to give credence to the Forum — we do not believe that in a population of 4.5 million, two County Down men coming here will alter the situation very much. We are realistic and recognise the fact that you will be making a final report which you will hope will be realistic. I was not happy with the sort of representatives of the Northern majority that came down here supposedly representing Unionism. Our party and the other Unionist parties felt that they were not in a position to attend and I felt that if only to breathe a sense of reality into the proceedings so that your final report will have some indication of Unionist fears and attitudes that someone in an individual capacity should come down and address the members. It was on those grounds that my brother and I came down. While the Chairman has mentioned that we have no sanction from the OUP, it is only fair to stress that while we are members of the Official Unionist Party we are on what might be described as the left-wing of that party. We cannot say that we come here before you today truly as typical Unionists because a typical Unionist would not come to Dublin and address the Forum. Nevertheless, I believe we are typical enough, that we can come here and give you what in our opinion is an authentic Unionist voice. Lastly, I should say that we are not politicians, we are active in politics; perhaps we can say workers or activists, but we are not trained in the intricacies of political oratory. If you wished to ask us leading questions and

subsequently misconstrue our replies — which I am sure none of you will wish to do — you would find it a very simple task.

Deputy Kenny: I assure you we do not want to do that. In what way do you consider the representatives of the majority in Northern Ireland who have attended here have lacked reality in their discussions with us?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: The major political party within the Unionist family within Northern Ireland is the Official Unionist Party. I believe no member of that party has come down. I have read some of the submissions from Protestants from Northern Ireland. I speak as a Unionist, not as a Protestant, and as such I find much with which I disagree. I do not want to go into specifics but there was so much that we thought we should come down and try to make clear to you what the Unionist people feel, what they aspire to and oppose. Those representatives of the majority community who came to Dublin I think left a lot unsaid which we think you should hear and we are here to give you that opportunity, if you ask us questions and hear our replies.

Deputy Kenny: You refer in your submission to a united Ireland and to unity. What precisely do you mean by those terms?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: I think a united Ireland and unity are synonymous. My stance on a united Ireland and unity, if that is the question, is that I do not believe the Official Unionists or the Unionist people at all are in any way interested in a united Ireland. I believe they are opposed to a united Ireland today as were their fathers and grandfathers. I do not believe that any Southern Irish Government could make up an attractive enough package to attract us into a united Ireland because our British identity is part really of our feeling that we are British and you could not be within a united Ireland and be British at the same time. What I am saying is that while blueprints are all very well and while it is certainly a positive step that you should meet here and try to discuss what you think the shape of the New Ireland should be, do not expect the Unionists suddenly to say: "Those guys have come up with something good: we should think about that". We do not want a united Ireland almost under any terms as it stands at present.

Deputy Kenny: Could you be a little more specific and refer to the things you considered the representatives from Northern Ireland left unsaid in their discussions here?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: I think the real issue for the Unionist population of Northern Ireland is one of simple identity. We identify with the United Kingdom and regard ourselves as British. We have shared psychological bonds with the people of the United Kingdom, bonds of blood and history, common adversity, shared experience, shared emotional bonds. We are not so much saying that we are against a united Ireland as that we are pro Union with the rest of the United Kingdom. We wish to remain British and intend to remain British. Our real tradition is our British citizenship. The SDLP have said that a united Ireland will come about with us not losing our traditions but we fail to see how we can remain part of the United Kingdom and still be part of a united Ireland.

Deputy Kenny: If you say that the only viable alternative is within the present political system and considering you regard your Britishness as being very important, how do you reconcile that with the fact that you state in your submission that there is a growing mistrust of Westminster and its institutions?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: I would say that the mistrust of Westminster is more in terms of its accessibility. It is remote and therefore insensitive in many ways to the real issues on the ground in Northern Ireland. That is why we believe that a devolved Parliament in Northern Ireland is so important. Remember, we do not have representative councils with power; we do not have a devolved Parliament; we simply have 11 members in Westminster; 11 in 700 almost and that gives us very little voice. It is not so much mistrust of Westminster as the remoteness of it and its response and sensitivity to us.

Deputy Kenny: You describe the growth of community associations as being phenomenal. What reasons would you advance for this? What vehicle would you see as filling in the tier between Government and councils so that discussions could take place on a reasonable basis between the people of Northern Ireland?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: There is quite clearly a political void in Northern Ireland between the tier of local councils and Westminster. There has been a growth in community associations and I think that is a response to this void. The SDLP have been at great pains to point out the sort of threat some of these community associations are falling under from undesirable and paramilitary organisations. There must be a middle tier between councils and Westminster. The obvious middle tier is a form of devolved Government. The community association is involved in activities

within the community and cannot take any broader views. I believe there must be some form of devolved Government in Northern Ireland. I believe that the assembly is the best that we are going to get and I think both the Nationalists minority and the Unionist majority should be able to go into the Assembly and try to make it work. I think that is the only way this void can be filled.

Deputy Kenny: The SDLP have chosen not to attend at the Assembly and the Unionists have withdrawn from it for some time now. If you say that unity is not on, could I ask you from a Unionist point of view what you consider is on within the present political framework of Northern Ireland?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: I think what is on is for both sides in the North of Ireland to admit that there have been mistakes, that each have made errors. I do not believe that the one side has cornered the market on generosity, on liberalism or progressive thinking. I am willing to accept that we have both made mistakes. We must accept the reality of our past and it is a shared past. We should sit down and I would believe that the SDLP should say: "As long as there is a majority of 50 per cent plus one voter Northern Ireland exists because we are democrats; we will work Northern Ireland to the best of our ability until such time as 50 per cent and one voter decide that it should cease to exist." I believe Southern Irish parties should say: "We no longer wish to claim jurisdiction over the people of Northern Ireland; we should remove Articles 2 and 3 from the Constitution and we should endorse and support the activities of the SDLP in trying to make some sort of internal solution work within Northern Ireland for the time being." I do not believe the SDLP could take that courageous stance without the support and backing of each of the parties here in the Republic.

Deputy Kenny: Assuming the importance of your Britishness and taking into account recent British White Papers which indicate that under a British referendum system, if a majority in Northern Ireland decided to dispense with the link with Britain, what would be the reaction of the Unionists in such a situation?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: A referendum in Britain could well give the result that the British people wished to break the link. A referendum in the United Kingdom could also support hanging. It is not because a referendum says it is right that it necessarily is right. I think breaking the link would be disastrous for Northern Ireland. I do not see the Northern Ireland Unionist immediately turning towards a united Ireland simply because the link is broken.

Deputy Kenny: You referred quite a lot in your submission to extradition. Do you consider that there have been significant changes in the South in relation to extradition in recent years and do you regard it as being acceptable to the SDLP and the Southern parties as a gesture of peace and goodwill. You say no reasonable Unionist would deny an effective role to the minority in an Northern Ireland Government. Why, then, have you consistently opposed power-sharing with the Nationalists?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: I am quite willing to accept that the most recent Supreme Court decision appears to suggest that the Republic of Ireland has taken a small and faltering step towards extraditing criminals from the Republic to the North where they have committed heinous crimes. I would like to see not only the Judiciary in the Republic saying extradition for terrorist offences is on; I would like to see the Dáil and the three major political parties in the Republic saying the same thing and making a policy statement as such. It would also require the SDLP to back such a policy statement. If such a movement were made and extradition seen to be effective, efficient and thoroughgoing and if, as I have outlined before, the legitimate representatives of the Northern majority and minority come together and say: "We will work Northern Ireland as long as the people want it," then I believe anything could be up for grabs. As I say in the submission, you could be surprised how generous we might be.

Chairman: Next, on behalf of the SDLP, I call Mr. McGrady.

Mr. McGrady: I endorse Deputy Kenny's welcome of you to the Forum. It is probably symptomatic of the problems of Northern Ireland and Ireland as a whole that three County Down people have to travel so far to meet each other. I would not subscribe to the view that three County Down men could not solve the problem. Your initial response to the first question was an emphasis on the British dimension of your way of life but from the Nationalist point of view of the North we do not see very great distinguishing features in our colleagues in the North that makes you British in any respect. I think your culture, your religious attitudes, your political attitudes make you more akin to Irish than to British. What are these distinguishing features that differentiate you from the rest of us? How would you extend the rights of the Nationalist community to be Irish as you wish your rights to be British?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: I think the real test of our citizenship is simply the question: what do you think you are. In the overwhelming

majority of cases among the Unionist population in Northern Ireland, the answer simply is: "We are British." That is our heritage and our tradition. We have been British for many generations and we hope to stay British for many generations more. In terms of the Nationalist population there is certainly a problem. Democratically, we have the right to remain British as long as we are in the majority in Northern Ireland and you could only have a united Ireland when Nationalists become the majority there.

Mr. McGrady: I do not think I have really got an answer. I was asking what distinguishing features there are that make you British as distinct from Irish. I shall let that go. I did notice an article once in the *Methodist Newsletter* which stated that the foundation of Northern Ireland was based on two principal pillars of the State which were expressed at the time of its foundation, its Britishness and its Protestantism. Do you accept that those are the two pillars of the establishment of the Northern Ireland State and that they continue to be so? Secondly, how does one who does not subscribe to either of those participate in such a State?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: There is no doubt that when Northern Ireland was set up those were the two pillars upon which our desire to stay British or not to be incorporated in a 32-county State rested, our Britishness and our Protestantism. Similarly, when the Irish Republic was set up in the then Irish Free State it rested upon two pillars, that of Gaelic or Irishness and Catholicism. The major problem, no matter what way we look at it, when you have divided loyalties as you say your Britishness is non-existent; you are not a Protestant, how could you identify with the Northern Ireland State? I would say to you I am not a Catholic; I am not Celtic or Gaelic; how could I identify as a minority within an united Irish State? The situation is that neither the majority nor the minority in Northern Ireland are going to find an ideal situation. The only answer is for us to come together and try to work out, warts and all as best we can, the best and most suitable method of controlling ourselves, controlling the extremists in both our communities, hoping for peace and reconciliation and good neighbourliness. That really is the only thing I think we can look for at present and I have tried to outline one way in which I feel that could be achieved.

Mr. McGrady: If we establish the right that you have to be British I am still not clear as to whether you are agreeing that for instance I would have the right to be Irish and in what way you would accommodate that within a Northern Irish State.

Mr. C. McGimpsey: I should add that I also feel myself Irish. I am very proud of being Irish. Where you and I would differ, Mr. McGrady, is that I do not define Irishness as being ruled by a 32-county legislator in Dublin. I would imagine that I am probably as Irish as you; that there is as much Irish blood in me as there is in you. But to accept that position does not mean that I must therefore be a Nationalist. I do not see any reason why Irish Catholics should not be Unionists and I know some who are. The Leader of the Official Unionist Party has appealed to Irish Catholics who feel any way Unionist to join the party and help make Northern Ireland work. Consequently, we are sometimes inclined to miss some points. It is not purely semantics. You can be Irish and British at the same time. I would suggest that everyone in the North of Ireland is both Irish and British irrespective of whether you feel yourself to be one or the other. You are subjectively still both. I am as proud of being Irish as any man in this room probably but I have been born a Unionist and I suspect I shall die a Unionist. I do not see myself ever wishing to be incorporated into a 32-county Irish Republic.

Mr. McGrady: I could accept that possibly if you had not in your paper completely interchanged at will the terms Unionist and Protestant. For instance, you say that Unionists strongly oppose a united Ireland, as did their forefathers before them. You go on in the same strain to say that therefore it is incumbent on the Nationalists in Ireland to persuade Protestants. . . . You have interchanged continually the words "Unionist" and "Protestant". Not being a Protestant, I cannot be a Unionist or not being a Unionist, I cannot be a Protestant. That is a difficulty. Do you see these as being the same terminology?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: No, I do not in fact.

Mr. McGrady: It appears in your paper as such.

Mr. C. McGimpsey: I appreciate that. It is general, as you know, both North and South of the Border to use the terms interchangeably. I feel I am a Unionist. I say I come here today as a Unionist. I took pains to say that I do not come down here as a Protestant. I am a supporter of a particular political ideology. I would like to see that ideology not exclusive but general so that anyone of any religious persuasion could join it. Admittedly I have fallen into the trap as we so often do, of occasionally in an unguarded moment making the terms interchangeable. That does not reflect my belief. There have been over the years many Protestant Nationalists. They did not always cease to be Protestants

when they became Nationalists. I do not think the terminology is interchangeable on either side.

Mr. McGrady: You state fairly categorically that Unionists are opposed to reunification and therefore that it could not happen. How would you think the average unionist, with a small "un" if there is such a thing, would respond to a question such as this: are you opposed to reconciliation in Ireland leading to the disappearance of the Border?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: Yes, we would be opposed to the disappearance of the Border.

Mr. McGrady: You would be opposed to reconciliation in Ireland leading to the abolition of the Border? I just want to be clear about that.

Mr. M. McGimpsey: I am not opposed to reconciliation; I am opposed to the ending of the Border because that breaks my citizenship with the rest of the United Kingdom. I cannot see how I can be a citizen of the UK and a citizen of an all-Ireland Republic at the same time. It escapes me.

Mr. McGrady: Does that answer then preclude the possibility of reconciliation within Northern Ireland?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: I do not believe it does preclude reconciliation within Northern Ireland. In fact I think the only hope of reconciliation among the communities in Northern Ireland is within the framework of Northern Ireland.

Mr. McGrady: But in order for reconciliation to take place on your terms in Northern Ireland all the Irish Nationalists would have to become Unionists and almost by definition, Protestants.

Mr. M. McGimpsey: I am not saying that. We are not saying that Irish Nationalists have to give up their aspirations. What they must do is wait until they are in the majority and then they can decide what they want to do with Northern Ireland. But in the meantime, as long as the majority of the citizens of Northern Ireland — and it is a substantial majority — wish Northern Ireland to remain as part of the United Kingdom I think the Nationalist population must accept that as the democratic will. If we have the right to say "yes" to a united Ireland, surely we have the right to say "no" to a united Ireland?

Mr. McGrady: That brings us back in a full circle to the question of how you would accommodate the aspirations of the Nationalist population. You did say that we should accommodate majority rule in spite of the history we have had for 60 years and your colleague, Harold McCusker, said that even though 51 per cent in Northern Ireland voted for a united Ireland it would still be resisted. How do you respond to that?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: I would say that the resistance would be on purely democratic and constitutional lines, attempting to persuade Nationalists not to vote us into a united Ireland and out of the United Kingdom. We are democrats. We have to accept the will of the majority of people. If the majority of people in Northern Ireland vote in a Border poll for a united Ireland and we cannot persuade them otherwise, we are stuck with it; just as at the present time the majority of people in Northern Ireland have voted in Border polls to keep us part of the United Kingdom, and I think you are stuck with that.

Mr. McGrady: You have indicated that the Unionist position in Northern Ireland is stronger today than ever before and yet many of the presentations made to us by Northern Unionists indicate that what they call their reaction is one of fear, fear for their position. Is there any compatibility between what you say is a stronger position and that of one who is fearful for his position and can that fear be accommodated in a new dimension?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: I think what I have said in the submission is that we believe our position to be as strong today as was the position of our forefathers. Certainly Unionists in the North of Ireland are fearful, particularly those who are subjected to a pogrom round the Border, sectarian killings by Republican gunmen. Nevertheless, if the representatives of the Nationalist community in the whole island of Ireland were to come out and say: "We are going to help you every way we can to stop these terrorists, to make them amenable to justice. We do not want to take you over by force. You will not be coerced" — if such a step were taken I believe the Unionists would lose much of their fear and there would be less likelihood of friction between the communities if the two communities ceased to fear each other.

Mr. McGrady: Mr. McGrady: What would be your Unionist attitude if some way could be found to reconcile your British citizenship with some form of a united Ireland?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: I still say that it escapes me how I can be a citizen of the United Kingdom and a citizen of a sovereign Irish Republic at the same time. It escapes me entirely.

Mr. McGrady: You do not see any benefit in having a sort of joint sovereignty or any aspect of evolution like that that would promote reconciliation both North and South and accommodate your tradition and my tradition?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: Joint sovereignty?

Mr. McGrady: Not of itself but like that without being specific — some arrangement that could accommodate both?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: I really do not see us in Ireland at present being in a position where the Nationalists of Ireland could put forward a blueprint that we would accept. When you talk about blueprints or joint sovereignty, condominium status or whatever, you are really at the discussions we are going to have with the port and cigars. What you have done here today is to sit down at the table. There is a long way to go before you can even reach that. What I am suggesting as the best way forward to get peace and reconciliation and a bit of harmony in this island is for us to try and recognise the differences, recognise that partition is with us and let us work towards reconciliation and peace. I do not want a united Ireland. What my children will want, my grandchildren or my great grandchildren, I do not know. It is possible that at some time in the hazy future Unionists will feel they want a united Ireland; but it is also quite possible, as studies like Professor Rose has done before the troubles started show, that given ten years of normalcy many Northern Catholics would cease to aspire to a united Ireland.

Mr. McGrady: In that time do you see a possibility that some means could be found to accommodate British citizenship within some form of a united Ireland even in the future?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: At the present time there is no bottom line, no price that the Unionists want for a united Ireland. There is no bottom line for us to get rid of the Border. We do not want to get rid of the Border. We are not anti-Dublin; we are not anti-the southern Irish people. What we are is pro-British. We are Unionists and we are pro the union with the United Kingdom.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. McGrady. Now I call on Senator Mary Robinson of the Labour Party.

Senator Robinson: I, too, would like again to begin by welcoming you both warmly to the Forum, welcoming you for caring enough about what is happening on this island to come and speak to us very frankly. My first question focuses on a issue that you raised in your written submission and which also has been raised in the questions put to you by Deputy Kenny. It is the question of extradition. You said in your written submission:

In terms of Unionist politics, the winning of extradition would strengthen the hand of moderate Unionism and further tip the scales away from the DUP.

I would like to put it to you that you have won extradition in that sense, that the legal case law on extradition now is not a small step, as you described it earlier, but a very far-reaching fundamental step on this issue. In order to make the point I would like to quote the relevant passage from the Supreme Court judgment in the McGlinchey case which was handed down by the Supreme Court in December 1982. The Chief Justice on behalf of the Court, in considering the constitutional question of whether there could be extradition for a political offence, said as follows:

The excusing *per se* of murder and of offences involving violence and the infliction of human suffering done by, or at the behest of, self-ordained arbiters is the very antithesis of the ordinances of christianity and civilisation and of the basic requirements of political activity. Under the Act the onus of establishing that the offence in question is either a political offence or one connected with a political offence as a reason for not handing over a person sought on a warrant properly endorsed under Part III is upon the person who seeks asylum in our jurisdiction. In my view this plaintiff has singularly failed to discharge that onus.

I think that would be interpreted as meaning that if a warrant issues from the Northern Ireland authorities seeking the extradition of a person for the kinds of offences the Chief Justice set out, murder or any allied — to use your own terminology — heinous offence, then a person would be under present law extradited. That is the rule of law as it applies here. I would like to ask you whether you two were aware of this judgment before you came to the Forum and whether there is a general awareness in the Unionist community that that is the state of the law?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: We had been made aware of this judgment prior to coming to Dublin. There is not, unfortunately, a general awareness in the North of Ireland as to that ruling. It takes us one

step there, as you suggest. Perhaps it is longer than I mentioned. Over the next year or so we will see how the courts interpret that ruling when extradition warrants are brought. Hopefully the RUC will now apply for a number of extradition warrants and hopefully your courts will rule that they have been guilty of terrorist rather than political crimes and they will be extradited. If that is the case I think we are close to a position where the Unionists will start to look less unfavourably towards the Republic of Ireland which they at present see as a haven for republican terrorists. I applaud that ruling. I am delighted to see this movement in this direction. It is very much a case now of suck it and see. Over the next year we will suck it and if it works out sweet I would say one of the irritating elements in this equation will have been neutralised.

Senator Robinson: I should perhaps mention for completeness that, partly because that is a very far-reaching ruling, there is at present a challenge to the constitutionality of the Act being heard in the Court. I would like to turn now to another issue that you raised in your written submission and also spoke about earlier. That is the gap or void that exists at present in Northern Ireland. Is it your view that that gap at a community level, has widened over the last few years, that the gap is more of a polarisation between the communities?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: I would undoubtedly say, yes, that is true. I would say that as a result of the IRA terror campaign over the last 13 years the gap has widened. It is wider than ever before. It is an abyss and the real obstacle to peace and reconciliation between the two communities in Northern Ireland remains the terror tactics of the IRA who have committed some of the most vile deeds in Irish history within the last 13 years. You know how the people of the South reacted to the recent killing of a guard and a soldier. We have been reacting like that to the killing of our soldiers, our police, our UDR men and our civilians over the last 13 years.

Senator Robinson: If the gap is as wide as that, is it bridgeable by possible political solutions such as power-sharing? Has the situation on the ground gone beyond that political response? Can the two communities be brought together on a formula that has not been offered generously or worked in the past, such as power-sharing?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: I believe where there is life there is hope and I think there is still hope in Northern Ireland. I believe that if the legitimate representatives of the Northern majority and minority communities were to come together and try to thrash out some sort of an arrangement within the existing constitutional framework

there is still hope. However, if we continue to meet with a virtual Unionist forum at Stormont and the SDLP continue only to work for peace and reconciliation through a forum in Dublin, the void will eventually get so big there will be no future and when there is no future for politics and reasoned thinking all that is left is the gun. That is what worries me and that is one of the major reasons why we came down here today.

Senator Robinson: I think your concern in that regard is a concern that would be widely shared in this Forum. If the situation is deteriorating, if there is a wide polarisation on the ground between the communities and a mutual distrust and a difficulty in coming together, how do you see, within purely a context of Northern Ireland, the possibility of political movement? How do you see structures developing purely in the context of Northern Ireland with no wider framework or no other input?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: Obviously the development of structures — we are now very much in the lap of the gods — depends upon accommodation that can be hammered out between people like Mr. Hume and Mr. Molyneux within a Northern Ireland framework.

Senator Robinson: But has that not been tried and been singularly unsuccessful?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: Because something has failed once is not to say that it is never possible for it to work in the future. There were specific reasons why power-sharing failed the last time. One of the major reasons was the institutional link between North and South which is total anathema to the Unionist population. If power-sharing was tried again with no institutional link, with a strong thorough-going extradition policy and with the support and sympathy of the people of the Republic of Ireland and their elected representatives, I think it is possible, once again, to make some sort of devolved assembly in Northern Ireland work. I feel it is not only possible, it is really our only alternative to the gunman and that is why anyone with any sense of goodwill or any desire for peace should be trying to sit down round a table, as we are doing today, and trying to discuss our problems and see if we can work out an accommodation.

Senator Robinson: May I come to the question of identity? It is obviously a very complex question. You both made clear the importance of your British identity and yet you equally proudly said you are Irish and your Irishness is not in question. If that is the case,

and I think that would be representative of a very broad section of people in Northern Ireland, is the challenge to us not to devise the reflection of this duality, to devise ways in which on this island your Britishness is not threatened but your Irishness is an Irishness that brings you together with other Irish people on this island, Irish people such as the Nationalist community in the North and indeed Irish people on this part of the island? Should there not be an expression of that Irishness in a more structural sense than exists at the moment?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: As I have said, I cannot see how I can be a citizen of the United Kingdom and also a citizen of a sovereign Irish Republic. The dearest thing to us is not so much anti-unity with the rest of Ireland but union with the United Kingdom. We are bound psychologically; we are bound in terms of shared experience and emotional bonds. We regard ourselves as British. The vast majority of Unionists in the North see themselves as British and part of the problem is those people who seek to take away our citizenship.

Senator Robinson: You say in your submission, and indeed there has been some evidence of it today, that you are secure and that you are as sure now as you ever were of the Unionist position and yet a lot of what you say displays a basic insecurity. There is a greater void than there has ever been. There is a lack of any political coming together. If you had the pen and could write the script how would you write the formula over the next ten to 15 years on this island? What would you write into it?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: We have discussed a number of problems that face the Unionist community in Northern Ireland. We have said that there is the remoteness of Westminster, the fear of Southern Irish imperialism, the fear of militant republicanism in the North and yet I have also said that I feel as Irish as the next man. The question then is how do you define your Irishness. I define my Irishness as being an Irishman of Irish blood living in Ireland. I define my Britishness as being an Irishman of Irish blood living in that part of Ireland that did not secede from the rest of the United Kingdom. I believe it is still possible for Irishmen north of the Border to come together and live and work together within a Northern Ireland setting and, at the same time, enjoy the support, which would have to be a two-way thing, of course, of the Southern Irish population. I do not see the reconciling of the Irish and British traditions as being dependent upon unity. We must retain our Britishness because we are British. The only way we can retain our Britishness is with the Border. It is the continued existence of the Border which is going to retain our

Britishness. If we work with the Nationalist community in the North and enjoy a good relationship with the Nationalist community in the South we will have gone towards harmony with the Irish section of our population. We did not ask you to leave the UK. You left it. That might have been good for you but it is not going to be good for us. What a united Ireland is going to do is give you your Irishness but it is going to strip us of our Britishness.

Chairman: Thank you, Senator Robinson. I now pass to Deputy Jim Tunney of Fianna Fáil.

Deputy Tunney: I would like to be associated with the words of warm welcome extended to the McGimpsey brothers for their interest and their courage in coming among us. Would they agree that the absence of a formal Unionist submission to this Forum is both unfortunate and regrettable?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: I believe it is the reality of the political situation in Northern Ireland at present that it would have been impossible for one of the Unionist parties to come here and make a formal submission. I can accept our party leadership's position in that they felt it was impossible for them to do that. Nevertheless, we felt that a Unionist voice had to be heard. Somebody had to come down and say the things we are saying and explain our position. As our party could not do it we took it upon ourselves. We make no claim to be the best representatives or the best orators for the Unionist position but we took it upon ourselves to try to bring some of the realities of Ulster Unionism into this Forum so that you would know the reality you are dealing with and that reality might be reflected in your final report.

Deputy Tunney: Yes, but would you accept that ideally it would have been better had there been an authoritative, formal submission by the Unionists?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: I do not believe that was ever on, taking the political *status quo* in Northern Ireland at present. I just do not feel that was possible. It might have been nice if it could have been possible but with the Nationalist community refusing to listen to Unionist voices in the North it would have been very difficult and I think it would be unfair to expect Unionists to come down here and listen to Nationalist voices in the South. If the SDLP had been in the Assembly perhaps the case would have been different, I do not know, but I do not think it was ever viable for the Unionist parties to come down. Possibly if all three had got together and said, "We will

come down together as representatives of the whole Unionist community" but all three would not do that. The DUP would not have come down and I do not think it would have been viable for one or even two of the three to come down on their own.

Deputy Tunney: May I invite you to comment on what appears to be the systematic boycott by the Unionists of any contact with constitutional politicians in Southern Ireland?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: I was not aware of any systematic boycott by Unionist politicians of politicians down South. I have been at a political conference in Trinity College at which I heard David Cooke and Bob McCartney speak. I understand Bob McCartney has been speaking to a Young Fine Gael convention. I know that Bob McCartney spoke to Dr. FitzGerald, the Taoiseach. Harold McCusker was down. Edgar Graham, the young Assembly man who was murdered just a few weeks ago, was in Cork talking about the Unionist viewpoint one week before he was killed. I am not aware of any boycott.

Deputy Tunney: I would not want to be flippant but I think our Taoiseach would be the first to contend that everybody in Trinity College is not a constitutional politician. I am referring to the happenings of last week. I was talking about consultation with constitutional politicians which, to me, seems not to have taken place in the fashion it might have and without this I think peace is impossible. Do you think peace is possible without consultations between the Unionists and constitutional politicians from Southern Ireland?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: It is my opinion that if you think you can promote peace you should talk to anyone who is committed to peace. If Mr. Tunney would like to come up and stay with me I will invite a couple of Unionist politicians to my house. We will have a good feed and a couple of drinks and you can chat to them all night as long as my wife does not throw us out if we get too rowdy. Come up North and I am quite sure I can persuade some constitutional Unionist politicians to meet you and talk with you. I cannot guarantee that you will agree with each other but at least you can sit and talk.

Deputy Tunney: Thank you, and I accept that invitation. Would you accept that the refusal to accept what is called the Irish dimension flies in the face of historical facts, immediate and remote, and until such acceptance is acknowledged we cannot move towards a peaceful solution?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: I have already gone on record as saying I am as proud of my Irishness as the next man. The very fact that somewhere between a third and two-fifths of the population of Northern Ireland look upon themselves as Irish is an Irish dimension. What I have said and must reiterate is that no institutional Irish dimension in the form of a Council of Ireland or anything in that line will ever promote peace. What it will do is give enough fire to the extremists on the Unionist side to make sure that peace could not come about. If you define progress and peace as being dependent on some institutionalised Irish dimension in the form of the Council of Ireland or something like that, I am afraid that will never come about. It would be my opinion that an institutionalised Irish dimension of such a nature would indeed be a retrogressive step and would detract from the moves for peace and would not aid them.

Deputy Tunney: Would you accept that it is the very existence of Northern Ireland that is the real problem and the real cause of violence and that as long as you deny that position you automatically pre-empt any solution?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: No, I would not accept that the existence of Northern Ireland is the real problem, not by any means. It has been said often that Northern Ireland was set up on a head count. Well, then, by definition so was the South except there were more heads to count down here. I do not see that the existence of Northern Ireland is a problem for peace.

Deputy Tunney: Well, if that is not the reason for it what is, in your opinion?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: I think the real cause of violence at the present time is the refusal of the minority population in the North of Ireland to accept the democratically expressed will of the majority to remain part of the United Kingdom. That is the problem.

Deputy Tunney: You say in your paper that the Unionist position is secure and there is little reason to make any conciliatory moves. Would you accept that that is the position because of the massive military, political and economic support which is given by the British Government?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: No, I would not. The reason our position is secure is because I do not believe the British Government have either the political will or the power to push us out of the United Kingdom. If they did that the Unionist population would resist. I do not

believe that the Irish Republic would have the military power or the political will to forcibly coerce us into a united Ireland. It is along those lines that I feel our position is secure. We are here and we are here to stay and while we are in the majority I do not believe we can be coerced or forced into a united Ireland even if tomorrow the Dáil and Westminster were jointly to say that on next Friday afternoon Northern Ireland would cease to exist. It would not have altered anything. It would not have changed the problems nor would it have watered down one iota our desire to remain British and our desire not to be incorporated into a 32 county Irish State.

Deputy Tunney: In your paper you evoke the spectre of civil war. Could I ask you to comment on two occasions — 1914 and, 60 years afterwards, 1974 — when such a war was threatened, whether it was the Loyalists themselves or whether it was not as a result of the unpreparedness of the British Government to carry out normal legal requirements in the North that was responsible for what might be regarded as Loyalist victories?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: With regard to 1974, I take it you mean the workers' strike. What brought down the power-sharing Executive was the Council of Ireland on the one hand and the violence from Republican sources, the dynamics of which led to violence from Unionist sources and — let us be honest — Unionists can, when under threat, be just as violent as Republicans. What really caused the workers' strike in effect was the inability of the leaders of the Nationalist community to deliver on the violence. There was an escalation of IRA violence at that time and the Protestants unfortunately reacted and fought same with same. If there had been no Council of Ireland and there had been a de-escalation of Republican violence I do not think we would have been in the position of having the Ulster workers' strike at all. I think those are the two factors that caused it. I have to say that I abhor Unionist violence as much as I abhor Republican violence. We should all honestly say that. Talking about Unionist violence in 1914 and 1974 should also be coupled with condemnation of Republican violence in 1982 or 1983 or 1916.

Deputy Tunney: That goes without saying, I am sure, for everybody here. In your opinion then, the Loyalist threat of civil war would not be regarded by you as perhaps a method of intimidation or an endeavour by them to inhibit the British Government?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: Really all I can say is to reiterate my view on why the power-sharing Executive failed. I do not think Protestants

like power-sharing all that much but they were prepared to take it. They did not like the Council of Ireland — that was for sure — but the one thing that seemed to be promised to us by Nationalist politicians in the North was that the violence would go. This was the one thing the minority population wanted in some form of sharing power, and the minority Nationalist politicians in the North could not deliver on the violence. The IRA bombed harder than ever during the power-sharing Executive. More people, I believe, died during that period of the power-sharing Executive as a result of Republican violence than at any other time.

Deputy Tunney: I think it was Christopher who said earlier that he belonged to that part of Ireland which did not cede from the United Kingdom. Would he accept as a historian that that part of Ireland had already ceded from Ireland?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: I do not believe that there are natural frontiers, natural geographical frontiers to nations. If you look back to the end of the 19th century and earlier you discover that the people in Ulster often felt themselves to be distinctive from the people of the rest of Ireland. They did not necessarily then translate that into political terms. The distinctiveness of the people of what is now Northern Ireland perhaps made it inevitable that there would be a partitioned State. You felt it was a good thing to leave, and perhaps it has been. We felt it was better for us to remain and we feel that it has been an advantage to remain within the United Kingdom.

Deputy Tunney: My final question — I notice that in your *curriculum vitae* you are a trained historian — is to ask you in what esteem you would hold A. P. D. Taylor, a distinguished British historian?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: A. J. P. Taylor?

Deputy Tunney: Yes.

Mr. M. McGimpsey: Yes, I have read some of his books. I think his works on Germany are excellent.

Deputy Tunney: I will give you a comment which he has made. I think he has written in all 28 books on Germany and other countries but mostly on England and Southern Ireland. If he states that the British presence in Ireland makes the problem more difficult to solve and that the first thing that should happen is British troops out of Ireland, would you reject or accept his comment?

Mr. M. McGimpsey: The real British presence in Ireland is not the 10,000 or 12,000 British soldiers in Northern Ireland. The real British presence is not the administration at Stormont. The real British presence in Ireland is one million people, one million Unionists living in the North of Ireland. That is the British presence. When you talk about British withdrawal you mean withdrawal of those citizens. When you talk about British withdrawal you mean withdrawal of those citizens. When you talk about “Brits out” you must include the one million Brits who live in the North.

Deputy Tunney: No. My question was referring precisely to the troops. A.J.P. talked about the troops. Would you agree with him that if the troops were to withdraw the position would be better?

Mr. C. McGimpsey: No, I would not.

Deputy Tunney: Thank you.

Chairman: That concludes the presentation by Michael and Christopher McGimpsey. We are very grateful to them for having come here. The next presentation is by Mr. Clive Soley who is a Member of the House of Commons at Westminster. He is a graduate of the University of Strathclyde, Southampton. Prior to his being elected to the House of Commons he was Senior Probation Officer with the Inner London Probation Service for something in the order of nine years. He has been junior Opposition Front Bench spokesman on Northern Ireland since April 1982. I call on Deputy G. Collins to start the questioning for Fianna Fáil.

Deputy G. Collins: First, I want to say that we are delighted Mr. Soley is here and we thank him very much for coming. Does your party believe that Partition is morally wrong and has no democratic legitimacy?

Mr. Soley: Yes. First of all may I congratulate you here on the initiative that was taken to set up this Forum which I think was a very good and useful one? I think the British Labour Movement have always taken the view that Ireland ought to have been united. Those who know their Labour history better than I do will know that that was the view taken in 1920. Like a number of other problems in relation to Northern Ireland I think it has faded into the background of British history since that date until the outbreak of the Troubles in 1969.

Deputy G. Collins: You are aware that recently the senior

spokesman for your party said in an interview with *Fortnight Magazine* and I quote: "We have no moral duty to withdraw from Ireland and in a way our policy should be more reassuring than the Tories" — he meant to the Unionists. Would you care to comment on that?

Mr. Soley: It is always difficult when a new spokesman takes over in any position of that nature, but let me say this, there is something that is very true about that. My reading of the situation is that Unionists feel acutely suspicious about respective British Governments which have talked about maintaining the union but acted as though they do not really believe in it. That is what is meant by that part. What we are saying now, and saying very clearly, is that the British Government ought to have a view on the desirability of that Border and our view is that the Border ought to go, that it must be done by consent because there is no way we know of by which you can get one million people to live with another four million people in peace unless there is a degree of consent. The fear among many Unionists is that they are pushed by stealth via the back door into a united Ireland. That fear is directed at the Conservative party as much as it has been against the Labour party in the past. At least we are doing it by the front door now, that is what I am saying to you.

Deputy G. Collins: At the Stockholm Conference on Tuesday of this week the American Secretary of State, Mr. Shultz, stated that the United States does not recognise the legitimacy of the artificially imposed division of Europe and that the attempt to impose division on Europe is inevitably a source of instability and tension. Do you feel that situation also exists in this island?

Mr. Soley: Yes, I have always made it clear and have said on many occasions that I think the division of Ireland was a political and economic disaster for Ireland. It should never have happened. If we had all the advantage of hindsight it might have been different. But that is not the problem; I am a politician not a historian. I can pass judgment on what people did in the past but frankly that will not solve the problem. The problem is that we have to achieve a united Ireland and we have to do that in a way that makes sufficient people who have the Unionist culture as well as of the majority culture in the island of Ireland accept that their future lies together in a united, peaceful and prosperous Ireland.

Deputy G. Collins: Much of the policy of the Labour Party is to inject more money into Northern Ireland even though the British subvention already amounts to 30 per cent of GDP. Would you

agree that subvention is unevenly distributed, that there is not enough attempt to use it to clean up the effects of decades of Unionist discrimination?

Mr. Soley: We certainly do need to look at that area more closely than we have done. It is significant that direct rule from Westminster has been regarded by sections of both sides of the community as better than the previous Unionist administration. I have made the point on a number of occasions that if the Unionists had brought the minority community along with them into government and had not discriminated against them, particularly in housing and in employment, the history of Northern Ireland might have been different. It is very difficult to change that sort of discrimination and I am not sure we will be able to change it simply by money. Changing attitudes is notoriously difficult but I think it will become easier if we do use the money appropriately. It becomes even easier if we are clear about our political objectives and those political objectives must be about a united Ireland by consent. There are many ways in which that can be achieved. There are many very flexible and innovative steps that can be taken along that road. I am not suggesting one quick overnight solution because there is not one to my knowledge, but I am suggesting that if we are clear about our longer term objectives then we might make more progress in getting rid of the discrimination in the long term though not in the short term.

Deputy G. Collins: Why do you assume that it would not be possible to protect the cultural and religious identities of Northern Unionists within a unitary state? Is Great Britain not a unitary state and has it not for centuries attempted to incorporate within it the cultural and religious identities of Welsh and Scottish citizens?

Mr. Soley: Yes, that is quite true, but I do not think any two situations are ever quite identical. It is the history of Ireland that makes for that difference. I would be happy to say, yes, it could be but as a logical consequence of that I would then have to say that the Irish Constitution would have to be changed very dramatically. I am not sure if it is right or necessary to say to the Irish people that is what is necessary in order to win the consent of the other one million people. I would far rather go down the other road and say that the federal system, for example, is a well established way of dealing with different cultural and religious identities, well established in a number of countries and might be the most appropriate one in this case also.

Deputy G. Collins: Would you agree that the idea of an all-Ireland political structure is not practicable? Would you accept that a partly British controlled police force would be totally unacceptable anywhere in the Twenty-six Counties and would represent a gross infringement of sovereignty? Would you also accept that gardaí who went North to enforce British law and prop up British rule in Northern Ireland would very likely be shot at from both sides?

Mr. Soley: There is obviously a danger of that, but may I approach it from the other end and say this: if you are not serious about some form of unity in your criminal justice system you are not serious about a united Ireland. The two must necessarily go together. The criminal justice system is the third arm of the State, so to speak, and therefore you must have a movement towards that at some stage. What that stage is and how you do it is open to a number of possible policies. I would suggest that at some time what might be a useful first step would be the recruitment and training of a new police force, recruited and trained in different institutions, not from existing police forces — although I would not rule that out entirely but I would have thought not from them initially — and used and deployed where thought appropriate by the British and Irish Governments as long as that was part of the context of winning the consent of the Unionist people for an all-Ireland settlement.

Deputy G. Collins: Would your party support the idea of an all-party constitutional conference like the Lancaster House conference on Rhodesia as a prelude to British withdrawal?

Mr. Soley: We have not actually considered that in detail but I am sure we would not rule it out and if that were put to us and it seemed an appropriate and constructive step to take — yes. One of the things I want to emphasise here is that we are looking for very flexible, very innovative approaches to what is an extremely difficult problem. We are not here to propose overnight solutions to it but we are saying that we will look at any suggestions that take us away from the very static position we have reached in Northern Ireland. This is one of the reasons why we welcome the Forum which did seem to be a very genuine attempt to break out of that trap.

Chairman: Thank you, Deputy Collins. We next have Deputy Manning on behalf of Fine Gael.

Deputy Manning: You are very welcome, Mr. Soley. May I begin in the House of Commons, because for us one of the very disappointing things over the past number of years has been the

seemingly low level of interest among MPs — less so in your party I must say — in this whole problem. Yet, I think it is true that any resolution of the problem is going to need a lot of political goodwill and courage and information in the House of Commons to see it through. Is there any indication that there has been a change in recent times on this?

Mr. Soley: I think there is a change although it is not as big as I would wish. I welcome that question, if I may say so, for this reason. One of the things I sometimes find I have to say to an Irish audience, whether it is North or South, is about the problem of why the British shrug their shoulders. In a way, the British find it much easier to talk about Lebanon, Nicaragua, Poland or Afghanistan where we have very limited power rather than Northern Ireland where we have a great deal of power. It is this basic fallacy of successive British Governments — which I think we have all fallen for and the British people also — of assuming that the problem is an Irish problem that enables you to say that the Irish do not know what they believe in but, my God, they are prepared to fight for it. That sort of phrase which you will frequently hear among British people is significant because it indicates, apart from other things, that they regard the Unionists and the Protestants as Irish too and in a way they are saying, “A plague on both of you.” They would write both groups off. I think it is grossly unfair, very unreasonable and above all, of course, it ignores the British responsibility in the problem. Having said that, it is still very difficult to get British people to take an interest in the problem which they still see as a problem for the Irish. My argument is very centrally that the British do have to decide what their policy is. I think if the British Government are guilty of anything in this it is not of having tried to make the Border work. If there is any guilt around — and I am not thinking of guilt in any wicked sense here but simply in terms of failure to solve a very difficult problem — it has been in our real indecisiveness. We have not taken a decision on whether or not we want that Border to exist. Therefore the Unionists feel insecure because they fear betrayal. The Republicans feel that they have no hope talking to a British Government and the British sit back and say, “We would love to help you and whatever you want we will go along with it but we are sorry we cannot help you unless you decide.” Of course it is not like that, because as I have tried to point out in my rather brief notes that I sent to you, in a way the only power that both the Unionists and the Republicans have in Northern Ireland is negative power, the power to stop things happening. I see it as being very much a question of political power where both groups are powerful enough to stop the other side from getting their own way but neither are powerful enough totally to dominate the other.

Deputy Manning: Thank you, but that is not quite the answer to the question. It is the answer to two or three other questions. If we produce a report here which is imaginative and constructive and if we arrive in the House of Commons with this report, are there many people like you there who will be interested and open minded or will we find that we are on stoney ground?

Mr. Soley: I am sorry if I was not specific enough on that. Yes, I think the interest is growing and certainly what I am arguing for with very much the support of Peter Archer, my shadow Cabinet fellow, and other Members, is that we use the occasion of the Forum report for a debate in Parliament. I cannot guarantee that I will achieve that because obviously that is dependent on Government business to some extent — not entirely — but I would hope to do that and I would hope it gets wide publicity.

Deputy Manning: May I stay at the top table and bring in a question which includes our two friends from County Down? You say it is a British problem but would you not agree that it is a British problem, not just because your soldiers are there and your politicians are there but because a large number of people feel themselves to be British like our two friends from County Down? How do you respond to that and to the protecting of their rights and their identity within some sort of resolution?

Mr. Soley: I think one of the problems for the Unionists is that they feel very strongly that they are British whereas the British tend to feel very ambivalent towards them and say, "Not really, you are really Irish." I think that causes acute insecurity because it is a case of wanting to be close to one group while that group is busy pushing you away and saying, "No, thank you; keep your distance," which does not exactly encourage confidence and security. I think we can deal with that. It is one of the reasons why I put very high on the agenda the question of joint citizenship. I listened to the evidence given by the two members of the Official Unionist Party and again I congratulate them very much on being here. I think it is excellent. A point I would make is that it is perfectly possible to have joint citizenship. I do not see any reason why the people who live on the island of Ireland cannot have an Irish passport and a British passport and use them as they think appropriate. Indeed, the British have been very free with their favours in the past in regard to passports. I am not saying they are as free as they used to be or anything like it, but I am saying that the very close relationship between Ireland and Britain has been artificially pushed apart by the Border. If we could have things like joint citizenship which

obviously involves joint voting rights, the ability to stand in each other's elections and all the other rights that go with that, you have gone a long way towards meeting a considerable number of the anxieties of ordinary Unionists. You have not met them all but you have met a considerable number of them.

Deputy Manning: One of the points you make and something that comes across very clearly in your submission is that you favour some sort of federal idea, but you say that we should not spell it out too much. Why should we not spell this out at this stage?

Mr. Soley: If somebody could spell out to me in advance something as detailed and complicated as that they would have immense powers of insight which certainly I do not feel I possess. If you think of the groups involved in the discussions, they would not just be the Unionists and the Republicans but the various parties within them. It would not just be the various parties in the South of Ireland; it would be the parties in Britain also. The very nature of political discussion says there will be all sorts of moves within that. I would feel very dubious about making great predictions. What I am trying to say when I talk about the federal aspect is that I think it is a way of recognising the legitimate rights of, and very strong points within the Unionist culture and making sure that we are able to show a majority of the Unionists that their culture will be preserved and protected in an all-Ireland settlement. That is what you have to show at the end of the day. That is incredibly important to the Unionists who I do think see themselves as having a separate and very clear identifiable culture. I think that is right and that they do have that. That has to be protected and, perhaps, most important of all, they have to recognise that it is being protected. In a way, I think the situation in Northern Ireland is that the fear of fear is greater than the fear itself, if you see what I mean.

Deputy Manning: Is there not a problem here for us? Up to now we talked in very general terms about safeguards, about all the guarantees that would be there in some sort of new idea, new State or new situation and we have been accused of not spelling out the details. Is it not more important if we want to win the support of people whom we are trying to persuade that we tell them exactly up front what it is going to be like and what is going to be there?

Mr. Soley: Yes, but I think the way you do it is perhaps different. You do not spell out a constitution and say this will be the constitution and it will come in on Day Six or whatever. I think what you do is take steps, some of which I have hinted at in the

paper, particularly on harmonisation of economic and social matters, particularly on structures designed to protect the rights of citizens like joint citizenship and so on. You do specific things and you talk about those rather than some grand final plan at which you arrive on a particular date in a time to come.

Deputy Manning: If you were in this Forum and you were here as an adviser about our report, if you wanted us to get a hearing to show that we are serious — and we are very serious indeed — what sort of things would you like to see in our report at the end of the day?

Mr. Soley: That is an extremely difficult question to answer because obviously I would like to see a recommendation along the lines of moving towards a united Ireland by consent. That is an important part to me as a spokesman for the Labour Party. Having said that, if you are putting the question in the context of getting a debate and discussion in Britain I think you must put down alternatives. Perhaps one of the most helpful things would be to put down some of the consequences of alternatives. For example, one of the things that is not understood, I think, in Britain as a whole, is that if you favoured a solution of Northern Ireland being part of the United Kingdom, you have to talk about fully integrating it with all that that implies. Nobody in Britain, frankly, has ever talked about that. The British have always treated Northern Ireland very differently. So have the British political parties which in itself says an awful lot. I do think you would need perhaps to talk about the various options and where you think the logic of some of those options would lead you if you follow them through.

Deputy Manning: Does that not mean to a certain extent — to go back to the point I made — spelling out ideas in fairly hard detail rather than just academic models or structures which could lead to a great deal of debate without getting anywhere?

Mr. Soley: Do not misunderstand me; if you can do it, I shall be very pleased and I shall read it with great interest. I am just not convinced that that sort of detailed prediction is possible in politics. If you can do it I shall read it with interest and I would not want to discourage it.

Deputy Manning: You spoke in your submission about the question of consent. It is a very short paper that you have given us; it is an outline of ideas. You make the point that consent must not mean a veto but can you see consent? Obviously it means far more than that. Could you try to amplify what you mean by consent?

Mr. Soley: Yes. The point I would make has I think already been made and it is that one of my nightmares is if we got 51 per cent voting yes and 49 per cent voting no. We all know that of the 49 per cent a very large number would fight and fight as efficiently and as harshly as some of the Republican groups have fought. In a way it is not a simple majority vote you are looking for. That would not be the best option. One would have to accept it but I would do so with considerable concern about the outcome. I would really be looking for a willingness to make the various institutional bodies that we set up, economic, political, social and otherwise, work. I would be looking perhaps — I offer this purely as one possible alternative — for some form of devolved Government, perhaps involving power-sharing and perhaps not, and if people began to vote within that, as representatives, for links with the South that would slowly erode the relevance of that Border, then I think you would be winning your consent. That is the sort of measure you look for, a willingness to co-operate and operate in a particular political and social system.

Deputy Manning: Would you accept that there is any realisation in Britain at the present time that the situation is so serious and so dramatic at this stage that there is need for action from the British Government in the very near future, that the vacuum cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely?

Mr. Soley: I am sorry to say that I do not think there is that level of awareness in Britain. I think it is felt that there will always be problems in Northern Ireland and that we just have to get on with it. I find that very sad and it is a reflection, I think, on the way we have approached the problem in Britain. It is a fact of life with which I have to live as a British politician with a British constituency, that most people are not interested in what I am doing or saying about Ireland. I find that intensely sad and a rather serious comment against ourselves. But it is true. Very few people ask me about it or write to me about it in my own constituency, let alone anywhere else.

Chairman: Thank you Deputy Manning. We now come to Mr. Logue on behalf of the SDLP.

Mr. Logue: I wish to welcome you also. I think we can in fact welcome you back to Ireland, because you have been here many times before. I welcome you particularly to the Forum and thank you for giving us your views here this afternoon. Earlier in answer to one of the other speakers you outlined the ambiguity that exists in the British Government's approach to Ireland. Over the last 15 years the British Government's policy towards Ireland has had a high

degree of bipartisanship. What would you say British Government policy is in Ireland?

Mr. Soley: The present British Government's policy, what it is now — I think like that of successive British Governments, it is really about crisis management.

Mr. Logue: No more?

Mr. Soley: No, frankly, and I think that is the failure of British policy. It has always been about crisis management. There have been occasions when there have been attempts, very genuine and good attempts, to leap above that. I think the attempt at the power-sharing Executive was one example. I think Mr. Prior's attempt with the Assembly was an attempt at that but I have yet to be convinced that the British have sat down and said, "What is our policy towards Northern Ireland?". The reason I say that with some confidence, the reason that we have always addressed it as a crisis management situation and not had a policy on it is that we know that the various options open very broadly are three: either you have a united Ireland, or you integrate Northern Ireland into the UK, or you have some in-between position, joint sovereignty or whatever. In none of those cases have the British Government spelt out what they would like. They have not said we would like A, B or C or some variation of A, B or C. They have always said, "If they can get things together in Northern Ireland, if they can agree on what they want and come to us we will help". Then they have responded when it has blown up in their faces by putting in troops or by trying to deal with what has become a major security problem.

Mr. Logue: You would accept that your own party had the same policy over the years when it was in Government?

Mr. Soley: Yes, I would emphasise what I said earlier, that it is very easy to kick previous Tory and Labour Governments for what they did or did not do. If we are not here simply to apportion blame perhaps it is important to put that in the context of the British assumption about the Irish problem. It is very difficult for me at times to get over to my colleagues, not only in the House of Commons but outside the House of Commons as well, that the Irish problem is a British problem too. If I could get that message over to a majority of my fellow citizens my job would be very much easier. As it is, I often have to start with an explanation as to why it is that the Irish are always fighting each other. That is grossly unfair, to my mind. It stereotypes the Irish in a totally unfair way, Unionist and

Republican alike. I am here to state what I find the reality. When I came to the House of Commons in 1979 and started to talk about the problems of Ireland that was one of the things I discovered quite early on, particularly when I talked outside about it. Everybody saw it as an Irish problem and very largely they still do.

Mr. Logue: I do not think it is our wish to kick previous Tory and Labour administrations, but on the other hand we must be aware that your performance over the 15 years — Labour was in office for seven of those and the Tories for eight — has eroded confidence in the various plans that have been brought forward. Can we go on now to look at your own plan? You have a six point proposal here and you see the movement towards Irish unity very much as a process. Could you spell out to us in more detail how you see that process operating, the different stages?

Mr. Soley: I think a very useful thing the Forum could ask the British to consider is whether they should have a long-term policy on Ireland. If you could get that message over it would certainly help us to have that debate. How do I see it? I would see as one of the first and major steps the one I have already referred to — that Britain must say what its policy is. We really are in a very bizarre position of a Government saying: "We do not mind where our Border is. If you want it there you can have it and if you do not want it do not have it". There is no other part of the United Kingdom where we say that. If Caithness suddenly said: "We want to go back to Norway" there is no way we would sit back and say: "Yes, off you go. No problem". We really have not got a policy on this. We would need to make that policy clear and, therefore, the first step would be a united Ireland by consent. I would hope that that would be reciprocated from Dublin and that would be the aim. I would then see a series of things being done, including the inter-departmental committees that were set up being made much more public and given much more effect and their conclusions being debated in the various debating assemblies North and South and in London. I would certainly see a major effort being made at the economic harmonisation which is necessary in its own right as well. I would certainly want to give a very early priority to joint citizenship and things of that nature, things which would be designed to demonstrate by action to the Unionists that they were not being abandoned in a Catholic State where they would not have any rights or their culture would be at risk in some way. I would also want to look at things like an all-Ireland court, an all-Ireland police force. I would want to consider some form of British/Irish Council. I am not saying this is absolutely necessary but the sort of thing I have in

my mind again is a Forum, not a legislative one, where elected Members of Parliament and here in Dublin and perhaps from the Assembly could meet to discuss areas of common problems.

Mr. Logue: How would Northern Ireland be governed while all these processes were continuing?

Mr. Soley: I think for the moment I would see it continuing with direct rule. It would be very nice and it is part of our programme to say we would want to achieve some form of devolved power-sharing in a way that was acceptable to both communities there and which recognised the needs of both communities and did not end up with one group in the community being alienated by the absence of the other. If we could achieve that, that would be a very real and positive step forward. If we could not achieve that then I think we would have to continue with direct rule.

Mr. Logue: You would presume, I think to have all-party agreement for this. You will be aware that all previous attempts to achieve political movement in the North of Ireland have collapsed in the face of Unionist intransigence. I would ask you then how you would suggest that the British Government, given that you had all-party agreement in Britain to it, should deal with threats to any new initiative like the one you have outlined?

Mr. Soley: I used the phrase in this paper and elsewhere that our policy requires a great deal of determination, courage and political skill. The trouble is there is no adequate answer to your question in a sense. I cannot give you a hard and fast guarantee that the sort of policy initiatives I am suggesting cannot be blown off course. That is always possible in politics. I would hope that we would have the skill to do it in such a way that we did not get into that trench in the first instance. If we did then I would hope that we would have the determination to keep going and not to back off again and just retreat across the water, throw up our hands and say: "It is up to them to sort it out and we will just hold the ring meanwhile". We would have to try to keep going but I know that if the Labour Party came to power or the Tory Party came to power on a policy of the type that I am describing the first Secretary of State to set foot in Belfast outlining that policy would run into major opposition from the Unionists. I have no doubt about that. It would depend on their skill and their determination as to whether they could deal with that.

Mr. Logue: Given the effort that is being made by all the parties in this Forum, are we not entitled to more from the British — who have

responsibility for Northern Ireland — than their present policy stance? I mean, basically the answer you have just given me is that you do not know how Britain would deal with Unionist intransigence or Unionist resistance to new proposals. Is it not time you did know?

Mr. Soley: I am not trying to say to you I do not know how I would deal with them. Obviously, if you are putting the question to me as to what I would do in certain circumstances you would need at least to give me some outline of those circumstances. It would not surprise me, for example, if there were massive demonstrations in the streets. That is one thing to deal with. It would be another thing if it became an all-out strike. That could possibly still be dealt with. If it became a lot of killings of, say, Catholics by Protestants that would be extremely difficult to deal with, but possible. If it became a major civil war situation, where do you stop? At the end of the day I can say to you if we are prepared to put in enough troops we have got the power to deal with any situation if we have got the determination to do that; but the point is that to get into that sort of discussion leads you into a very dangerous area and it is not one that you can pre-judge.

Mr. Logue: You say in your paper — you go back to the 1976 Labour Party document — that you would not expel the people of Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom. What happens if the people of Britain, by a plebiscite of whatever form, opt to support the integration of Ireland?

Mr. Soley: There is no doubt in my mind that it would be fairly easy to sell a "Bring our Boys Home" policy in Britain. I take the view that it would be irresponsible to do it that way because the word "consent" is irrelevant. The fact is you are dealing with one million people and it is the population ratio that in a way makes Northern Ireland so different from most other world problems of this nature. Even if we brought the troops home and suddenly pulled out altogether I do not believe for a moment the violence would stop. Indeed, I would expect it to escalate. I would regret it very much. I suppose if you went for referendums, and I personally do not think referendums are a good idea in any form — I never have been in favour of them and I do not think I ever will be — then, yes, it is quite possible you could get the British public to say: "Pull out of Northern Ireland". That would not make it happen. That is the point. I see my task as trying to reunite a divided Ireland. I do not see it as just washing my hands of a difficult problem.

Mr. Logue: You are clearly aware of the chronically weak state of the Northern Ireland economy and its abject dependence on the transfers from the UK Government at present. Moreover, that is a state which has been induced by a UK Government over a period of 50 or 60 years. Do you accept that in the move towards the integration of Ireland the British would therefore have a great deal of responsibility for continuing to provide transfers to that new state?

Mr. Soley: Yes, without any doubt. In a curious and very sad way unemployment has probably done more to make this possible than anything before. Some of the more solidly Unionist areas will now consider much more involvement with the South if it means jobs. I would be quite happy to consider such innovations as if a ship is needed to be built by the Irish Government it can be built in Harland and Woolfe and if there is a significant difference between, say, a Korean yard and the Harland and Woolfe yard I think Britain ought to be prepared to pick up the tab for that because that is part of what I mean by regenerating the economy. We ought to do that and be prepared to do so for some considerable time. There is no cheap solution to this problem. There is no cheap way out for Britain or Ireland at the end of the day. We have really got to regenerate the economy of the island of Ireland; and one of the areas on which I would like to put particular emphasis is agriculture and its link with the new technology, particularly food processing, packaging, biotechnology and so on. That also links the universities and colleges of further education so you could make considerable progress with agriculture, North and South, and begin to erode the relevance of the Border in that way.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Logue. Finally I call on Deputy Frank Prendergast of the Labour Party.

Deputy Prendergast: I, too, extend a very warm welcome to you and thank you for coming to give us the benefit of your views. May I begin by saying to you that you state the Labour Party have a view that Ireland should be united by consent. Could I ask you to expand on that?

Mr. Soley: There have been long arguments both in the Labour movement and elsewhere about whether it is possible to unite it by consent. One part of the argument is: "That means the Unionists have a veto, does it not?" The other part of the argument, and the one I have been putting, is that I do not care whether the word "consent" is there or not. You can take it out if you like. The point is

that I cannot envisage a Dublin Government wanting to cope with a situation where they had one million dissenting citizens. That is the harsh point we have to deal with. Whether the word "consent" is there or not is irrelevant. I have always taken the view that if any group on the island of Ireland has got a veto on our policy it is the Dublin Government because if the Dublin Government do not cooperate very fully, in a very detailed way, with the sort of policy I am outlining then frankly it will not work.

Deputy Prendergast: There was a criticism in a recently published book on Ireland called *The Uncivil Wars* about your own party's position. That criticism was that once the right of veto with respect to the constitutional position is explicitly conceded the majority in Northern Ireland acquire an implicit veto over internal arrangements since their refusal to participate cannot result in any threat to their external status. Would you reply to that?

Mr. Soley: Yes, you are referring to Padraic O'Malley's book. The thing that came over to me from that chapter was the indecisiveness of British policy. I am not sure whether he is making any great point there over and above what I have dealt with. Tomorrow morning we could wipe out that part of the Act which says that no change will be made in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland without their consent. Let us assume that we did. Let us assume that was taken off the Statute Book. It certainly would not worry me if it were, but I am not sure that it would change the actual situation on the ground. I am not sure it would change the situation which you in Southern Ireland and we in Britain have to consider in order to solve the problem and bring about the re-unification of Ireland. It is in danger of just being words and the very fact that those words are on the Statute Book is an indication of the Unionist insecurity. They would not be there if they did not fear it might happen.

Deputy Prendergast: But dealing with the point you make that it is a form of words, it has very real implications we think in this regard. Listening to several speakers from the Unionist tradition, with the exception of your colleagues who have spoken just before you, the implications seem to be that they are prepared to accept the majority decision so long as it is a Unionist position. Given the present demographic trends where the population differential is eroding, somebody said, at the rate of one half per cent per year, and that in another 16 years or so — and this has been recognised by Unionist spokesmen — you may very well be moving into a situation where you could emerge with a Nationalist/Catholic majority, do you really believe that the Unionists would accept that position?

Mr. Soley: I think it would depend on how we did it. I am aware of the demographic argument, although demographic arguments are always very dicey. It would not be enough simply to say that 51 per cent say it can happen. You would still have to deal with the 49 per cent, some of whom might be prepared to fight — would be prepared to fight, in my view — unless you did other things. What I would not want us to have either here or anywhere else is an argument about the meaning of words that are written down in Statutes or whatever. If we are clear about our policy aim then we have to think out how to achieve that policy aim. I can take out the word “veto”. I say “I” as a representative, say, of a British Government that was supporting the taking out of that word. But if you took it out it would not change things on the ground one iota. You referred to Padraic O’Malley’s book. The other very useful quote he has got in there is from the UDA man, John MacMichael, who said that Unionists were like children who put their hands over their eyes and hoped nobody saw they were there. He went on to say that they are clinging on to the coat-tails of the British in desperation. I think that is central to the Unionist insecurity. If we say we are going for a united Ireland by consent we offer something to the Unionists. We are really saying we recognise that there cannot be a united Ireland without a degree of consent from them but we are not prepared to have a veto on political developments towards that end, which is the part that is in our policy statement. You actually then open up hopes. What the Unionists are doing at the moment, it seems to me, in many cases, is fearing that they are being pushed into a united Ireland without their consent by all sorts of back door methods and that is incredibly damaging because if you are being rejected by the British, one the one hand, and shot by the IRA, on the other, whatever else it encourages it does not encourage flexibility and confidence and willingness to shift.

Deputy Prendergast: Is there not an inherent contradiction in this where the right of veto is trumped up so long as it is a Unionist one but some other consideration has to be looked at if it happened to be a Nationalist one and does that not enjoin on all of us the need to come up with some structures such as we are working towards now before we come to that situation?

Mr. Soley: If you push me I would say I would have preferred the words “no veto on political development by any group” on this. I have already said that if anybody has got a veto in all of this it is the Dublin Government. If the Dublin Government and the British Government were not able to agree on the right policy steps then frankly this would not be a realistic policy. The problem for both

communities in the North is that they have both got that negative power, the power to dig in and stop things happening. If London and Dublin can act together then there is hope of a way forward, but it has got to be acting together. I do not think we could do it separately but I also think if we do it together then no group can actually veto it at the end of the day.

Deputy Prendergast: Do you think now that a forum of the parties in Britain would be opportune in order to arrive at some overall consensus as to how to deal with the Irish problem?

Mr. Soley: I did wonder about whether to say that we could well do with copying your initiative here. I am not sure that it would work out the same simply because Northern Ireland does not figure all that largely in the British political debate. In a sense I suspect it may be better if the parties just thrash it out on the floor of the House of Commons recognising that there is a bi-partisan approach in our rejection of violence but there is not a bi-partisan approach to the problem as a whole.

Deputy Prendergast: I do not mean this in any cynical way to a brother Labour Party member or a fraternal party delegate, shall we say, but it is a constantly levelled criticism at all parties that it is easier to provide a solution when you are in Opposition and that the record of all parties, including your own, might not be the most scintillating while in Government. If Labour were in Government now what kind of proposals would you want from this Forum to induce Britain to do something positive about the present difficulty?

Mr. Soley: I do not take that as cynical or unreasonable. Perhaps we are more open in our discussions, which is always a very healthy sign. Yes, many criticisms can be made of British Labour and Conservative Governments. I have indicated that already but I hope I have also indicated some of the reasons for that which need to be understood. I think what I would be looking for and what a British Labour Prime Minister would be looking for is a willingness by a Dublin Government to say: “This is a joint problem. We have to sit down and work it out together. Yes, our aim is a united Ireland by consent, but there are many steps on that road; there are many possible variations within that.” If we work together on it and get an agreed policy along those lines there will not be a solution in some short-term space of time but we will at least be finding a road to a solution. I would look for no more than that at the present time.

Deputy Prendergast: Would you, as a means to positively finding a

solution, envisage the setting up of a tripartite forum of the Unionists, the British Government and the representatives of this Forum as a means to achieving that solution?

Mr. Soley: I certainly would not reject that possibility. I am not sure whether the Unionists would be prepared to come along to that in the first instance and then you have to ask yourselves what use would that be if they chose to be non-participants. Certainly if that was an option we would look at it sympathetically.

Chairman: Thank you, Deputy Prendergast and thank you, Mr. Soley, for sharing your views with us. Members of the Forum, the next presentation is by Mr. Anthony Orr who represents a group of Unionists from Belfast. Their submission, which you will have had, is conveyed to the Forum through the Glencree Reconciliation Centre. Mr. Orr was born in Dublin and was resident here in his youth. He is a regular and frequent visitor ever since. He is now living in Belfast for many years. He is a retired surveyor and is engaged in many aspects of educational and social work in East Belfast. You are very welcome, Mr. Orr. To start the questioning I call on Deputy Yates on behalf of Fine Gael.

Deputy Yates: You are very welcome, Mr. Orr. Recurring through all the written submissions from Unionist viewpoints and specifically through your five papers from your Belfast group of community workers is this theme of Britishness which you seek to protect and guard. Could you define it? Is it merely an identity, an association with the Crown and Commonwealth or is it something deeper?

Mr. Orr: Yes, I would like to answer this question, which is fair enough, in a somewhat roundabout way by explaining my position. As the chairman has said I was born in Dublin and lived there for many years. I was in Trinity up to the beginning of the war. I am working in the social sphere in Belfast and that is how I came to be included in the group of predominantly — in fact entirely — Unionist people who came down to Glencree. I do not belong to any organisation with these people but I work very closely with them in various aspects of social work. I know them well. I know the people they deal with. They feel this situation of Britishness far more deeply than somebody like myself who was born down here but they invited me to come down with them because they knew my background and they thought that I might have some unbiased way of getting across what they feel. Their Britishness certainly is an awareness of an — I nearly used the word “ancient”; I think this is not right — a very long-standing connection with Britain as a whole. Anybody with

even a slight knowledge of history knows that in a large number of cases that background is Scottish or Scots and not English but it is a British background. It is as long-standing as say the white people in America who have been there for probably less than 300 years.

This is a connection with mainland Britain going back 350 years. They resent the suggestion that they have no right to be in Ireland. One hears this often. They say if we have no right to be in Ireland, no white man has a right to be in America or Australia or New Zealand. We have a right to be here but we recognise that many centuries back our root was in Britain. We are aware of this. We have never lost that connection. We are British in that sense. Our roots are historical roots and they were in a British connection. When our forebears came over to Ireland it was all one United Kingdom, and that we wish to retain. We see no reason for breaking that connection that is there. We wish it to remain. That is their feeling of Britishness.

One of the other witnesses at the Forum today mentioned this connection and said that the question of “Brits out” was not a question of “troops out”. “Troops out” is a different matter; “Brits out” means the majority as at present constituted of people in the North of Ireland. They are the Brits. Those who want Brits out must bear in mind that the Brits are the ordinary people and not the transient troops. This to a lot of Northern people is the meaning behind “Brits out” and they do not want to go. They do not see why they should go. Whether one likes it or not, this is their attitude and it must be taken into account in any recommendations which this Forum may make. Like it or not you must make up your minds how to deal with this attitude.

Deputy Yates: For the Forum, from a Nationalist perspective, to recognise and accommodate that Britishness, would you state in your opinion that discussion in relation to passports and citizenship would be insufficient? Do you think there would have to be a political institutional reflection of that Britishness?

Mr. Orr: Yes, most certainly I feel there must be some form of political recognition of that Britishness. The standard Unionist attitude is this: what is wrong with the present position? The present Constitution of Northern Ireland suits us, the majority, quite well. Here I am speaking not personally but I am trying to get across to this Forum what I sense to be the heartfelt and strong Unionist feeling among people with whom I work fairly closely. They say: “What is wrong with the present position? Why cannot people leave us alone as it is? It suits us well enough. We want it to remain that way if only people would leave us alone”. This expression “why can it not be left alone?” recurs regularly and it is heartfelt in many conversations.

Deputy Yates: Throughout the five papers in your submission there is articulated a dogmatic Unionist viewpoint. No account is given to the surely equally legitimate Nationalist minority viewpoint. Would you have any comment to make on that?

Mr. Orr: I accept that is so. It is a dogmatic expression of a Unionist opinion. I would say one thing from a personal point of view. If you are looking for a dogmatic and bigoted Unionist view I could have got it for you much more strongly expressed than it is expressed in those opinions. These people, with whom I came down, and I would not have come down otherwise, feel themselves to be moderate people. You may have your own view on that. They feel they are moderate people. I could have produced a far more hardline Unionist view than the one expressed in these papers.

I would appeal to the Forum that whatever decision and whatever recommendations you make please bear in mind that there is a stronger Unionist view than was expressed either by the McGimpsey brothers, who I respect very much, or the people who wrote these papers. You may not like it. I do not like a lot of it but it has got to be taken into account and you must answer the question — this being so and it is an undoubted fact — how do you recommend that this be dealt with? You must make up your minds on this. You will have, in any circumstances, a very hardline Unionist position to deal with. All right, if it comes to the crunch and there is what will amount to a civil war position, you must make up your minds what recommendation you will make for dealing with that position. Are you prepared to recommend that this be dealt with as a military problem? You must make up your minds whether you are prepared to go ahead with the consequences of that decision. I beseech you to bear in mind the dangers inherent in dealing with a position which will not go away because we want it to go away.

Deputy Yates: Another aspect of the submission talks of the oppressed Northern Loyalists and their fears of Southern politicians. To what extent are their fears real or imaginary?

Mr. Orr: That I suggest is an impossible question to answer. How real are anybody's deeply held feelings? The deeply held Republican view is and always has been that the Republic of Ireland would be far better as an independent nation preferably of thirty two counties. People would have argued with them before 1922 that their fears were irrational, that they would have been far better within a British commonwealth. You cannot dismiss people's deeply felt views by logic. I have some ideas as to how they might be dispelled but logic is not one of the ways of doing it.

Deputy Yates: There is repeated reference throughout the papers to dissatisfaction with the extreme type of public representatives that are elected on the Loyalist side. How do you reconcile that viewpoint with the fact that we have seen a more moderate type of Unionist like O'Neill and Faulkner being rejected?

Mr. Orr: Yes, because there is this possibly irrational but deep-seated antipathy to overtures from the Southern Government and that takes expression in extreme action such as the rejection of O'Neill largely because he invited the then Prime Minister, Mr. Lemass, to meet him in Stormont. If he had not done that he might have been Prime Minister for longer. This may be irrational. It probably is. Why should the two men not speak together? But this is the way things operate and these fears, whether you regard them as irrational or not, will throw up politicians who express these views. O'Neill was rejected and replaced by more hardline men. If Mr. Paisley were to die tomorrow that would not be the end of Paisleyism. Somebody else would be elected in his place to be a spokesman for that form of Unionism. These fears will throw up a leader to represent them.

Deputy Yates: How do you think we in the Forum can break down this blank wall of resistance and distrust of Southern politicians?

Mr. Orr: I have given much thought to this question. What I would make a plea for is something along the line that there must be, after all these years of violence and polarisation, a moratorium for a longish period — I would say until the end of this century — on provocative, perhaps that is not a fair word, but expressions of opinion which would sound provocative. We must have a moratorium on all expressions of strong political views. For God's sake let us stop shouting from our corners and try to create a situation in which discussions like this can take place between everybody. As we have heard the staunch Unionists will not attend this Forum. Perhaps its sessions like this are too public. There must be more meetings like the one we were able to have at Glencree out of the glare of these TV lights and so on in which the concessions which are possible can be discussed and made. I feel most strongly that no politician in the North or South can get up and say he is prepared to make concessions unilaterally. This is political suicide and achieves nothing. The only way concessions can be made is by presenting a package. The Southern politician, for example, could say: "Right, we will soft pedal. We will put on one side for ten or 15 years any notice of a Thirty-two County Republic". This is one concession. On the other hand, try to talk some of the people in the North into

a genuine power-sharing structure in the North. This would be a big concession for many of the Unionists. This cannot be done either unilaterally or too publicly. A package has got to be built up slowly and carefully, and concessions must be seen to be coming from both sides. Only when that is done could something be put on the table. I would beg of the Forum to make haste slowly in this matter. Try to avoid anything that will inflame opinion because in this way lies disaster.

Chairman: Thank you Deputy Yates. Now, on behalf of Fianna Fáil, Deputy David Andrews will ask some questions.

Deputy D. Andrews: You are a fellow villager of my own, Dundrum, County Dublin. In that regard, arising out of part of a submission made by the McGimpsey brothers, one of them said you can be Irish and British at the same time while I think another said you cannot be a citizen of both the Irish Republic and the United Kingdom at the same time. Can you, as a Dublin man going to Belfast, be Irish and British at the same time? How do you feel?

Mr. Orr: Yes, this is a problem. I have two answers for this. One is personal. I could quite happily as an individual hold two passports or two nationalities. Virtually, I feel a citizen of Dublin as much as I do of Belfast. But on the other hand if you are talking about dual citizenship you have to be careful how this will appear to even moderate Unionists, let alone the hardline ones. They will immediately say, "What do you mean by dual citizenship? What are my obligations as a citizen of the Republic? What are my duties? How much control over my life will there be if I am a citizen of the South?" If you answer, "It will make very little difference to you to have a dual nationality", you will be asked then, "What is the point?" If you say, "You have a citizenship in the Republic and it will involve some obligation to a Southern Government," as things stand at the moment you will alienate them straightaway. They do not want it. That may seem illogical but that is the position. I would ask you once again to bear that in mind. As soon as you suggest any form of control from or obligation to a Dublin Government they will immediately say, "We do not want it." That is why a moment ago I advised the Forum to proceed slowly. Do not try to rush the thing or you will get one million Unionists saying "no". Try to phrase it, word it, more slowly. Give those of us who are willing more time yet to try to get some form of compromise, some form of package which will bring this desirable end of co-operation and closeness closer. I know you will say there has been plenty of time; the time is now for action. You have the prerogative of doing that if

you want to but please bear in mind the danger inherent in that position. This is why I think even a recommendation for dual citizenship is fraught with danger.

Deputy D. Andrews: One of the McGimpsey brothers also made the point that if the British Government pushed Northern Ireland out of the United Kingdom they — I presume the Unionists — would resist. Who would they resist? Would they resist the British Government who do not want them anyway? Would they resist the Nationalist population in the North? Or would they resist extreme units in the Unionist organisation? Who would they fight if the British decided in the morning that the North should join in some federation or some such arrangement with the Republic?

Mr. Orr: This would depend obviously on the nature of the administration which was set up. If the British decided tonight that by tomorrow or the next day there would be no British troops, there is no doubt that the paramilitaries on the Unionist side would immediately arm — if they are not armed already — and have a forceful setting up along the present Border to resist any intrusion by the forces, military or police forces of the Republic. They would resist that. They would try to establish an independent Ulster State. Such a thing has even been suggested already. They would resist any intrusion from the South and would resist any effort by what is at present a minority population in the North to take over forcefully and integrate with the South. We have talked a lot about this mythical time when there is a 49 per cent Unionist population; they will not lie down and accept that meekly. They would be resistant physically to this. We may deplore this but we have to accept it. This is the position and this is what I have come here mainly to emphasise to the Forum: do not underestimate the strength of feeling in the North. I think there is a danger in the North of underestimating the genuine Nationalistic feeling in the South. I do not subscribe to that because I have lived down here; I know the feeling. On the other hand, I ask Southerners for the good of all: do not underestimate the feeling among the Unionists because disaster lies in such a policy.

Deputy D. Andrews: The problem of Irish unity or otherwise — do you see it as a British or an Irish problem? Can you explain why the British do not allow the Irish to solve the problem between themselves, North and South? That really might be a question for the British Member of Parliament?

Mr. Orr: Realistically I think we must recognise that Britain has an important role in this because a sizeable portion of the people

resident in Ireland as a whole claim this element of Britishness and therefore whether they like it or not the British have a role to play. In fact, because of the historical situation that exists, even more so they have a role to play. I do not defend or attempt to defend British action in Ireland over the centuries — nobody could do that — but it is a fact of the situation and must be recognised that the British have a role to play. There is also a moral role to play because I feel that if the British either militarily or politically pulled out the results would be pretty catastrophic. They have some moral obligation to try to avoid that.

Deputy D. Andrews: I know that Mr. Orr does not want to make the choice I am going to put to him but if he did have to choose would he choose between a number of options relating to the unity of the country? Would he choose between a unitary state, a confederation, or a federal state, or a joint sovereignty solution to the Irish unity problem? I know that he does not have to choose but if he did?

Mr. Orr: This is a difficult question. I have given a lot of thought to it. If I had any influence in the matter I would like to see some form of federalism where the feeling of separateness among Unionists in the north-east corner of Ireland could be given some play and some position. I have written a paper in the past on the possibility of having a federal government under some authority like the European Community or the North Atlantic Treaty or something of that nature or the United Nations. That would be my idea — a federation of some sort which would allow a wide movement of people between the two components of the federation. Given the moratorium I appealed for a minute ago whether, during a period like that, it would be possible to sell this I do not know, but I certainly would be willing to take part in any aims towards that end. Whether we would achieve anything over a long period God only knows.

Chairman: Thank you, Deputy Andrews. I now call on Deputy Frank Prendergast of the Labour Party.

Deputy Prendergast: May I join in welcoming you to the Forum, Mr. Orr. As somebody who was born and reared in the South of Ireland, would you accept that the fears of the Northern Protestants and Unionists about the South are very much exaggerated?

Mr. Orr: No, I think this is a danger. I would have said that when I lived down here. Having lived among people in the North I think it is a danger to say that their views are exaggerated. Their views are very

real and very deep. When the other members of my group were not anxious to come down on this occasion I felt that I should definitely come down to put across the opinion I have already expressed that there is a great danger in underestimating this feeling. I want to make no moral judgment on this. I simply want to state it as my view of the facts of the situation. These feelings are very real. They are very strong. They are prepared violently to uphold their views as, for example, extreme Republicans are, in some cases, prepared violently to put forward their views. That feeling exists on the other side. I think there is a great danger in underestimating this view.

Deputy Prendergast: Do you believe, from your own experience, that their fears are justified?

Mr. Orr: I would not like to express an opinion on that. This is far too wide a thing to go into in a brief period like this. Justified or not, they are there and the Forum in their recommendations and anybody who has to make political decisions must decide how they are going to deal with this. Whether they are justified or not, whether they are moral or not, I am not concerned with. It would take many, many years of discussion to decide whether they are justified, to decide what ways they can be overcome. That again is why I ask for this period of peace and quiet to get over the trauma of the last 12 years. I cannot make any comment on the justification or the morality of these views.

Deputy Prendergast: You emphasise the Britishness of the people in the North and you ask rhetorically where do you go. Do you accept that both communities in the North are British and, if not, how should the Irish community there be accommodated?

Mr. Orr: This is a fair question. This is a problem. The Nationalist minority, a large minority, in the North obviously do not feel British in any way at all. I know that. I know numbers of them very well. This division, while it is real to some extent, of identifying Nationalism with Catholicism goes only so far. One of the party with whom I came down to Glenree was, in fact, a Northern Catholic who feels the link with Britain very strongly. That is exceptional. We must face that. They do not feel British. We must recognise that too. It is a factor which possibly is not taken into account by the Unionist majority in the North sufficiently. I personally feel that one way of dealing with this situation is to have some genuine and honest power-sharing in the North but we will have a problem selling this one. It will take time. I mentioned one of the concessions that would have to be made if it can be made, in the

North in answer to a concession from the South to drop the idea of a Thirty-two County Republic for a time. The concession on the part of the North must be an acceptance of genuine power-sharing in the North. This is one way in which the fears of the Nationalist minority in the North must be dealt with.

Deputy Prendergast: You say that you appeal for realism on our side. I think I heard you say that you worked at Trinity College up to the war. A distinguished graduate of Trinity College, Edmund Burke, said on one occasion that that nation is not governed which has constantly to be subdued. Does the lesson of history not teach us that everywhere you have the Herrenvolk theory in practice such as in Germany, South Africa, the Ku Klux Klan, the North of Ireland Unionist discrimination, inevitably and ultimately that system will be done away with? I believe that in their heart of hearts the Unionists basically recognise that, which has developed the siege mentality. Is it not incumbent on people like yourselves and others — and I commend you for what you have done so far — to bring them to the reality of that situation, that so long as the present position continues — and you did not answer my last question fully — you said: “Yes, I suppose it is the situation that the Nationalist/Catholic position was not recognised”. I suggest that that is the very basis of the problem there and that until such time as something is done to accommodate that you will never have an answer to violence there. Some of the contributors here have pointed out that in every decade since the Northern Ireland State was established you have had an outbreak of violence on one side or the other. Does it not commend itself to both sides that they should look at the reality of the situation?

Mr. Orr: Yes, I quite agree with that. I do accept what you say. I personally feel that some account must be taken of the Nationalist feeling and some way of incorporating that feeling within the existing State, but to say that I think so will not make that acceptable to a Unionist majority in the North. I and others like me cannot necessarily talk them into this overnight. Again I come back to the moratorium on provocative opinions. Time must be given to those of us who are willing to work for reconciliation. Time may not be on our side but time is essential. Many of us recognise what needs to be done but we must bring everybody with us. We cannot expect them to change their views overnight. We cannot expect their fears to disappear overnight. We cannot expect their definite addiction to violence to disappear overnight. We have got to be realistic on both sides. I hope that Unionists in the North will be realistic but it will not happen overnight.

Chairman: Thank you Deputy Prendergast. Finally, I call on Dr. Hendron on behalf of the SDLP.

Dr. Hendron: I have studied your document very carefully, Mr. Orr. Obviously, it has a very strong Unionist viewpoint. In terms of this Forum, indeed in every document, the language is very strong to say the least, in terms of being anti this gathering here. The second thing that struck me about it is that nowhere in that document is there any reference to the Nationalist people in the North. You refer to Catholics continually. There is no reference to the minority who are in fact part of the large majority of the people of this island. That does disappoint me. Unfortunately there are no names of the people who have written these papers. I think I do know one of them but that does disappoint me and I must say that. There are strong Unionist opinions expressed. We have nothing but respect for them. In terms of this Forum, one of the comments in the document talks of this Forum, the politicians from the South along with — and I quote — “a few misguided Ulster politicians”. My question is: why are the “few misguided Ulster politicians” wrong in trying to achieve peace and reconciliation in Ireland by participation in this Forum? I should also say here that the people around this Forum represent four out of every five people in the island of Ireland and all of us are totally and absolutely opposed to violence in any shape or form. Sorry, I must let you answer the question.

Mr. Orr: I accept what you say about violence most certainly. What I am trying to get across in this case is not a personal view but my interpretation of the Unionist view. That comes over to me expressed on many occasions as that they feel they are a separate nation, a separate grouping from the South. They feel very definitely their separateness. Although they feel partly Irish they feel a separate brand of Irish and they do not feel that people sitting in Dublin have anything to say — you may not like this but this is one of the situations we have to cope with — particularly in Dublin Castle I would say, have not got any place in the disposal of affairs in the North of Ireland. Again you may feel that this is wrong but I ask you to believe — I am sure you know — that it is very real and very deep and will take a long time to eradicate. We must make up our minds: are we going to be ruthless and eradicate it probably violently in the very near future or are we going to try to do it peacefully over a long time? Both sides have every right to express their views forcibly as long as they do it without violence.

Dr. Hendron: I am not sure regarding yourself. I know you are spokesman for these people. I understand they are community workers in East Belfast — is that correct?

Mr. Orr: Yes, that is correct.

Dr. Hendron: I have a fair experience of community work in Belfast also, having spent 20 years in West Belfast, and my question to you here in terms of your knowledge of East Belfast or through the five people who have written this document is: do you see any differences really or what do you see as the difference in fact between the people in East Belfast and West Belfast? What difference do you think the people who wrote this document would see between East and West Belfast?

Mr. Orr: I have worked in East Belfast for a number of years and I am very actively engaged. As you will know, as well as the strongly Unionist areas of East Belfast there is a sizeable grouping around the Short Strand and Seaford Street of Nationalist people. I work over the border between the two communities and I have crossed, so far very happily, the border between communities. I speak to and know people on both sides of those groupings. I speak honestly with them and I hope they speak honestly with me. I think I know the feeling that people in East Belfast —

Dr. Hendron: Sorry, my question is what difference do you see between the people living in Protestant, Loyalist, Unionist East Belfast and the people of West Belfast? I am aware of the Short Strand. I am speaking of those two areas. The reason I ask that is because the feelings in East Belfast can be mirrored in any other part of the North. Equally so in the case of West Belfast. So, there are community workers there and I am asking specifically on that question.

Mr. Orr: Sorry, I did not quite get the question. To answer, my own personal feeling is — and this is the sad thing — that, scratch the surface between the people in East Belfast and the people in West Belfast and there is very little difference. They are people with the same problems, people with unemployment problems, people with all sorts of social and family problems. They are people on both sides who take very strong views largely by virtue of the area in which they happen to be born.

Dr. Hendron: If you do not mind me stopping you at that point — what I am really saying here in the difference between the two is that if East Belfast is strongly Protestant and Unionist, with their heritage and so on, we have nothing but respect for them. West Belfast is also working class, unemployed people and the vast majority of them are Nationalist. It is a fact of life that they are so as

it is a fact that East Belfast people feel that they are Unionist. If you meet them together they seem to have very much in common — of that there is no doubt — except that some years ago there was massive unemployment, as there still is, in West Belfast whereas in East Belfast with the shipyards and all that, unemployment was not a problem. But in West Belfast, the point I make is that the people there are Nationalist; they have been Nationalist all along the line. There is nothing new about it. I am disappointed that this document makes no reference to the Nationalist community in the North. I will move on from that but I am sure you will accept and you believe in democracy and I am sure the people who wrote this document would agree with it also. I notice that in the document they define reconciliation as “to make oneself no longer opposed. . . .” Then they interpret that as of one community only. Obviously, reconciliation as “to make oneself no longer opposed. . . .” Then therefore on the question of democracy I will define that and if it is government by the people — throughout this document there is talk of majority rule: democracy of course is to do with consensus — I am putting it to you that there never has been consensus from the time the state of Northern Ireland was set up. The reason there has not been consensus is because the Nationalist minority in the Six counties never gave that consent. I am not talking about the Provisional IRA whom we all abhor here and all other paramilitaries, include the UVF and UDA. You do not have consensus. I am asking do you accept that point?

Mr. Orr: I accept your point entirely, yes. I would make just this point in answer, that those documents were written with this background, that this group of people who received their invitation to come down here before I joined them, as I understand it were asked to come down to express a Unionist view, which they did. I would agree with you entirely that it is a more than somewhat biased view. It stresses a Unionist point of view but this is to some extent due to the conditions under which they were asked to come down. I cannot remember all the documents but there is, I think, a recognition in some, if not, certainly an opinion was expressed in my hearing, that this particular group themselves would be willing and happy to see a form of power-sharing in the government of Northern Ireland.

Dr. Hendron: Mr. Orr, I take your point and I do not mean to be rude but the Chairman is already waving at me. There is a profound statement in your document that the terrorist does not support the Southern Ireland Government but the Southern Ireland Government supports the terrorist. Do you believe that?

Mr. Orr: I personally can only go by the public announcements of Governments down here in the South when they say that they are not supporters of the terrorists. I certainly accept that as the word of honest men. Quite honestly, the only way you could discover whether that is the view of the Northern Ireland Unionists is to get hold of them all and ask them individually.

Dr. Hendron: It is the view of some people in these documents.

Mr. Orr: It certainly is a view, quite a widely held view. I am not making any moral judgment on that except to say that I accept that that is a strong Unionist view, right or wrong.

Dr. Hendron: Do you accept that in Northern Ireland, with the terrible death and destruction we have had there, there cannot be a military solution? I was born and reared in Belfast. The RUC have always carried guns, with the exception of a few months I think in early 1970. In other words, the state of Northern Ireland from its very inception has been maintained by force. Do you accept that point?

Mr. Orr: Not entirely. In the ultimate end any State is held together by the suggestion of force. In extreme circumstances police in any country have got to be armed if the threat is serious enough. To that extent any State is supported by force or founded on force because if the threat is strong enough and violent enough it has got to be met with violence.

Dr. Hendron: I would have liked to have asked you whether you would agree that extreme Unionism, and I would include many aspects of the DUP in that and indeed some aspects of the Official Unionist Party, and Sinn Féin have a lot in common in that they are both Fascist. For example, all my life I have been used to the Orange Order on the 12th of July coming out with statements such as: "We are the people" and Sinn Féin means "Ourselves Alone". Can you see anything wrong with the representatives of the people in Ireland, North and South, coming together, along with the British Government and the Irish Government, and trying to get some sort of political structures which could lead to peace and reconciliation not just "to make oneself no longer opposed" but to take in all groups to work for peace? I respect the tradition of those people but from reading that document I do not see that they have any respect for my tradition. Can you not visualise some day a new Ireland where we can have political structures where all of us can live in peace?

Mr. Orr: "Visualise" is a difficult word. I would dearly love it. I would be prepared to work to any extent for this. I personally would have no objection to the involvement of a British Government. The danger, as I see it, is that as soon as you talk about the Westminster and Dublin Governments coming together you immediately must be prepared to face the hackles rising in Belfast. I do not know whether we should worry about that too much but it will happen and we must have our minds clear as to how we will deal with that. If we could get this period of peace, say to the turn of the century, in which to work for this I would be foremost among those trying to work for it and I would talk with anybody. I doubt whether I would talk too much to people with blood on their hands. I have seen too much of the problems created by them. I have seen people who have been maimed in bomb attacks by both sides. I do not know whether I would sit down very happily with people with blood on their hands but, that being said, I would talk with anybody — Westminster, Dublin or Belfast — and I offer myself here and now to anybody who wants to start something.

Chairman: Thank you, Dr. Hendron and on behalf of the members of the Forum I want to thank you very much Mr. Orr for coming along this afternoon. That concludes the public session of the Forum. The Forum will meet in private session tomorrow morning at 11.30.

5.10 p.m. Session concluded.

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