

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library
Digital Library Collections

This is a PDF of a folder from our textual collections.

WHORM Subject File Code: CO073

(Countries: Ireland)

Case file Number(s): 206442 (4 of 11)

Box Number: 95

To see more digitized collections visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/digitized-textual-material>

To see all Ronald Reagan Presidential Library inventories visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/white-house-inventories>

Contact a reference archivist at: **reagan.library@nara.gov**

Citation Guidelines: <https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/research-support/citation-guide>

National Archives Catalogue: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

Last Updated: 11/24/2023

NEW IRELAND FORUM

Public Session

Tuesday, 11 October, 1983

Dublin Castle

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

	Page
Dr. Roy Johnston	1
Labhrás Ó Murchú	13
Mr. Frank Curran	25
Coirnéal Eoghan Ó Néill	36
Mícheál Ó Loingsigh	47

NEW IRELAND FORUM

Public Session

Tuesday, 11 October, 1983

Dublin Castle

11.40 a.m.

Chairman: Dr. Colm Ó hEocha.

FIANNA FáIL

FINE GAEL

MEMBERS

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

ALTERNATES

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

LABOUR

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY

MEMBERS

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

ALTERNATES

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

Chairman (Dr. Colm Ó hEocha): The first presentation for this public session is that submitted by Dr. Roy Johnston. Dr. Johnston is a scientist, mathematician and physicist. He has been very interested in politics since his student days and he has worked in various capacities in Paris, London and Dublin. I now call on Deputy MacSharry to put questions to Dr. Johnston.

Deputy MacSharry: Would you agree that the guarantee by the British Government to the Unionists must be removed as a prelude to seeking their consent to Irish unity?

Dr. Johnston: Yes. I think the idea that the British stand over the veto is the root cause of all the trouble.

Deputy MacSharry: Do you consider that the campaign of violence in Northern Ireland has helped the British Government to evade the political demands of the majority of Irish people, North and South?

Dr. Johnston: On the whole it has had the effect of drawing the problem to the attention of people in England to a greater extent than if the people in the North had just remained quiet, but I imagine there are other ways by which this would have been done. Perhaps the mode of operation as it was developing in the sixties by the agitation of the NICRA would have been more effective.

Deputy MacSharry. You say that the civil rights movement was destroyed by Orange violence. To what extent do you think the abolition of Stormont was the delayed achievement of the civil rights movement?

Dr. Johnston: The objective of the civil rights movement was not the abolition of, but the reform of Stormont.

Deputy MacSharry: But you would consider that their movement at the time did have an impact on the eventual abolition of Stormont.

Dr. Johnston: The abolition of Stormont was regarded as a victory by some of the ultra-left people who were on the left of the civil rights movement. I recall that the People's Democracy were very pleased when Stormont fell, but to those of us who were in touch with the thinking and the objectives of the NICRA it seemed that the objective was to have Westminster impose reforms on Stormont in such a way as to enable the national dimension to be opened up. Any assembly of Irishmen with powers to legislate has to be an improvement on nothing.

Deputy MacSharry: Would you conclude from the Loyalist response both to the civil rights movement and to the Sunningdale Agreement that any similar attempt at internal change is likely to run into the same sort of Loyalist resistance and that any attempt to achieve an internal settlement is doomed to failure?

Dr. Johnston: I would say that any attempt to achieve an internal settlement within the framework of Northern Ireland is doomed to failure. There must be an imposition from Westminster of new rules of the game.

Deputy MacSharry: In your submission are you not totally unfair to Irish Governments up to 1969 in alleging callous neglect of the problems of the people of Northern Ireland? Is it not true that in the thirties, the forties and the fifties, De Valera and others made enormous efforts to highlight discrimination and injustice in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Johnston: There was the anti-partition league during that period but on the whole this was more of a ritual for internal consumption. It did not address the real problem. The Governments of those times could have done more. I do not think that De Valera understood the nature of the problem but it is outside my experience to go into that.

Deputy MacSharry: Would you not accept that it was much later when public opinion in any country — the US, Britain or any other — took any notice of these matters?

Dr. Johnston: The problem only began to be noticed by world public opinion in the aftermath of the rumpus that started in the sixties. That was the time when we were starting to look at the problem, but there was then no interest shown by any of the State agencies or by any of the political parties. Certain attempts were made, but perhaps they were not enough. In any case, the atmosphere here did not lend itself to the problem being listened to.

Deputy MacSharry: Would you not agree that it takes two sides to bring about an agreement and that the British were not interested in any such arrangement?

Dr. Johnston: In order to arouse the interest of the British it is necessary to demonstrate the existence of a problem in the North.

Deputy MacSharry: Would you accept that, in advance of a settlement, the adoption of social or constitutional measures with the specific purpose of appeasing Unionist opinion, rather than on their own merits, would be fruitless?

Dr. Johnston: I would accept that.

Deputy MacSharry: Would you favour a unitary State as opposed to a federal or other type system?

Dr. Johnston: If we were to talk of a federal state, we would need to look at the island as a whole. There is a lot to be said for Mr. MacBride's statement on the Swiss model. We might be able to have a federation of a number of regions of Ireland, of which the north-east might be one. That sort of system would probably be preferable to an over-centralised system ruled from Dublin.

Deputy MacSharry: Would you accept that for a transitional period following unity, Britain would have a moral obligation to support financially a peaceful settlement in Ireland?

Dr. Johnston: Absolutely.

Chairmen: I call now on Deputy Harte.

Deputy Harte: Your knowledge of the Northern Ireland conflict is to be recognised as long standing and interesting. I have admired your statements from a distance for some years. Do you think that if the Unionists were in a doomsday situation they would fight?

Dr. Johnston: It is time their bluff was called. It is important that there be a strong lead from Westminster by somebody with standing in Westminster to interact with the Unionists in the same way as they were able to resolve the Rhodesian question.

Deputy Harte: You say in your article that we should not accommodate Unionist aspirations. As a person involved in the Civil Rights movement in Northern Ireland in the sixties, is this in conflict with your thinking then and have you changed your mind? If the civil rights programme or campaign had been conducted without the interruption of violence on the part of the Nationalist side, do you think things would have been different today?

Dr. Johnston: I do not like to deal with two questions at once. Would you remind me of the key word in the first question?

Deputy Harte: First, you said you would not accommodate the Unionist aspiration and was this in conflict with your views on Civil Rights; secondly, if the Civil Rights movement had been allowed to continue would things have been different?

Dr. Johnston: First a word on Unionist aspirations. In no way are Unionist aspirations compatible with Irish national democracy. The objective of this exercise is to win the Protestants from the acceptance of unionism. The essence of unionism, as I wrote in my supplementary submission, is to ensure that the island is ruled from Britain and that ruling elements are the Protestants. This is an anachronistic situation. By analogy the position of the Rhodesian settlers in that situation was untenable and the Rhodesian settlers were informed that they were no longer to stand in the way of the development of the Zimbabwe nation. Many of them have accepted that. We ought to be able to work on the British in their own interests to establish a solution along those lines.

Deputy Harte: And my second question?

Dr. Johnston: Remind me again of the second question.

Deputy Harte: As someone involved in the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland do you think things would have been different in Ireland as a whole today if there had not been violence on the part of the Provisionals?

Dr. Johnston: Yes, long ago.

Deputy Harte: Could you elaborate on that?

Dr. Johnston: This is an off-the-cuff remark. If the campaign had been allowed to develop peacefully it would have meant that the people introducing the violence, namely the Orangemen, would in time have been suppressed by the British. I think it would have been necessary for the Army to be used to take the arms from the Orangemen and we would then have been able to proceed in a reasonably peaceful manner.

Deputy Harte: All four leaders of the parties involved in the Forum have said at one time or another, some of them very often, that the Unionists have to be accommodated in any new agreement embracing the 32 counties and all its people. Would you disagree with that, or would you explain the difference between your position and the position of the party leaders?

Dr. Johnston: We are talking about the Irish who are Protestants. Some of them are misguided enough to adopt a Unionist position. We will have to persuade them to do otherwise.

Deputy Harte: If that is the case, as a follower of Tone, which I understand you claim to be and take pride in the fact that you so

describe yourself, you talk about civil and religious liberties and the equality of citizens and people being entitled to express themselves religiously and in their civil beliefs and, therefore, their Protestant ethos. Are you contradicting or finding fault with what Tone preached?

Dr. Johnston: Anybody who is a Protestant who wants to remain a citizen of the UK should have the right to remain so, but many of them would on the whole prefer to take out passports and identify with the Irish. It would be interesting to see what a large proportion would do so in fact if given an opportunity.

Deputy Harte: That may be looking at it from the British point of view. Our challenge is to try to create an island of one nation, one people. Tone said: "To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of denominations of Protestant, Catholic and dissenter". Surely the challenge here is to form one future for one people. If you dismiss the legitimate right of one million people, or whatever the correct figure is, to express themselves politically even though you and I disagree with them, is that not a contradiction of what you make me believe you stand for in public life?

Dr. Johnston: I do not think Wolfe Tone would have supported the right of the Protestants he spoke for to remain as Unionists. He would have regarded Unionists as being the agents of the British Government.

Deputy Harte: That is your interpretation. I am taking the words that history has put before me which relate absolutely to what Tone spoke about. I am talking about a guarantee as part of one nation and you say the guarantee must be withdrawn from the Unionists and the people in the North of Ireland. Would you give me your full meaning of what your guarantee to the Unionist people is?

Dr. Johnston: The essence of the present situation is that Westminster guarantees that those of the Northern population who prefer to be Unionists have the right to do so, irrespective of what the other people of Northern Ireland want. That is a guarantee to the Unionist components that their writ will always run.

Deputy Harte: Do you not see this as economic support for the North of Ireland as well — in other words, you ask the British to withdraw the guarantee from people whom they consider to be British subjects? The same argument could apply to the Scots and the Welsh and parts of England.

Dr. Johnston: Yes.

Deputy Harte: Would you also agree that they withdraw the finances as well?

Dr. Johnston: If the Scots or the Welsh wish to establish independent republics that is OK by us. We do not have the same internal problem in Britain.

Deputy Harte: With leaders in the Republic and most of the people here, you have the task of persuading, that is, that we do not want to coerce the people of Northern Ireland into a united Ireland. What is the difference between people saying that we do not want to force people into a united Ireland and the British Government saying that if the Northern people want to join the Republic they will not stand in their way? Could you explain the difference between those two statements?

Dr. Johnston: To remove privileges from people is not the same as to coerce people. It will just mean that they will be like everybody else for a change, that they will not have the first place in the queue. I do not regard that as coercion. It is simply the removal of unwarranted privileges.

Deputy Harte: My question is straightforward. The British Government have said that when the majority of people in Northern Ireland want to join in an all-Ireland settlement they will not stand in the way. Would you explain what is the difference between the British Government saying that and a Dublin Government saying: "We will not make it an issue of it until the people of Northern Ireland want it"?

Dr. Johnston: This is getting a bit subtle. It is important that the London Government should be persuaded that it is in their interests to make an all-Ireland settlement, and that it would not involve any coercion if the settlement is made by agreement between the Governments of London and Dublin. A structure might be established in which a large number of Protestants would be prepared to accept involvement in Irish national democracy and would stop being Unionists. That is a real possibility if Dublin and London were to get together and work it out.

Deputy Harte: When you say that Southern politicians have been defeatist in their attitudes over the years, would you go further and say that when Irish politicians make a stand on neutrality and non-membership of NATO they are in effect partitionists? Can you explain the difference between Northern Ireland being not neutral

and being in NATO and the Republic of Ireland being neutral and not a member of NATO? Can you as an authority on North-South relations see this as a major issue?

Dr. Johnston: In asserting our rights not to join a major military alliance we are asserting the original rights of the republican tradition in the best way we can in any Anglo-Irish agreement that would lead to a united Ireland. It is important that the whole island would be neutral. This could mean the removal of another area in eastern Europe, perhaps, from the Warsaw Pact. I am thinking about the Geneva Conference.

Deputy Harte: You have not explained the difference between the non-neutral position of the people of Northern Ireland and the people in the Republic living in a neutral state. Neither have you dealt with the NATO question. Would you make these an issue?

Dr. Johnston: I am saying that the whole island should be neutral and should not be a member of NATO.

Chairman: Thank you Mr. Harte. Now Mr. McGrady of the SDLP.

Mr. E. McGrady: I should like to deal exclusively with the third part of your paper. You state your opinions about entertaining Unionist aspirations. How would you gain the consent of a large proportion of the Unionist population for a settlement?

Dr. Johnston: That is where you need the consent of the London Government, looking benignly in our direction. As I have said, in the case of Rhodesia they were able to put in a strong man who was able to talk to the settlers and tell them they had had their day and that they would have to come to an accommodation with the people among whom they lived.

Mr. McGrady: I will not pursue it further. You have referred quite rightly to a differentiation between Northern Unionists and Northern Protestants. Do you believe that the Northern Protestants, if by some legislative process the Catholic ethos could be completely removed from the Irish legislative process, could be converted to Irish national democracy, to such basic things, for instance, as the Irish language, which is totally anathema to them?

Dr. Johnston: I do not believe that, but if they were made aware of the opportunities for development of their own identity in the context of Ireland many of them would rise to it. They are not all bad.

Mr. McGrady: You have put your futuristic eggs in the basket of British public opinion as expressed through the media. Is that realistic? In the last few years the British media have been anti-Irish totally and it is reasonable to assume that the media reflect the views of the English establishment and of the British reading public. How can you see the media being converted?

Dr. Johnston: We need to be more aggressive against them. We need to find means to break through in spite of them.

Mr. McGrady: Do you think this aggression will bring us their support and friendship?

Dr. Johnston: The media are not the same as the people.

Mr. McGrady: You put many of your eggs into the basket of the British Labour Party, yet in the past decade particularly it has been illustrated strongly that the fall of the Executive, the Mason era, additional seats for Unionists, all things that militated against Irish unity, were done under the auspices of the British Labour Party. How, therefore, can you say the Labour Party there were supportive of Irish unity?

Dr. Johnston: You have to keep working on them. The fact that wrong things were introduced by the Labour Party is a reflection of the influence of the establishment in Britain. If one could get through to the rank and file of the working people in Britain you would find there is more sympathy for our cause. When I was living in London I spent some time on this. I spoke to meetings of trade unionists on the Irish question, on the Special Powers Act and such things, and I found them very sympathetic.

Mr. McGrady: Would you accept that the Provisional IRA campaign and its philosophical and genocidal aspects on behalf of "Irish nationalism" had the effect of driving Protestants and Unionists away from any kind of accommodation?

Dr. Johnston: I would rather it had not happened in that way. I would have preferred if the movement had developed on the lines of Ghandi and company in India. That achieved the independence of India without a shot having been fired. That would have been feasible here if we had learned how to use non-violent methods. Of course the trouble was that the people concerned saw only the violence of the other side. They were forced to move into that position by lack of appropriate leadership.

Mr. McGrady: In answer to a question by Deputy MacSharry you said new rules for the game would be required — in fact I believe you said they must be imposed — by Westminster?

Dr. Johnston: Yes.

Mr. McGrady: What are the new rules you would envisage?

Dr. Johnston: If there were an agreement between Dublin and London to transfer the resources to all-Ireland institutions and the existing support that is, the expense of maintaining an untenable situation in Northern Ireland, were to be invested instead into the development of all-Ireland institutions as a result of a new Treaty, it would mean that in the new framework the politics of Northern Ireland would start to look in the direction of where the money was. The money would be put into all-Ireland institutions with the support of the British, and Unionists would have to respect that and would have to start thinking nationally.

Mr. McGrady: So the new rules presuppose an agreement for some form of new institutions?

Dr. Johnston: A Dublin-London agreement.

Mr. McGrady: What would you envisage the format of these new institutions should be to accommodate what you consider the areas to be accommodated?

Dr. Johnston: I do not have a recipe for that. As I explained in my answer to Deputy MacSharry, I have a feeling that if one was to have some sort of a devolved system with a number of strong regional units — maybe on the Australian model — it would be a lot easier to develop the appropriate politics.

Mr. McGrady: It was very noticeable from your paper that you did not dwell upon future structures at all for a new institutional arrangement. Dealing with Northern Ireland, or that part which you call the North-East, or whatever name you wish to call it, what structure do you see there? Do you envisage a power-sharing, joint government, community government or any such format in that institution in that part?

Dr. Johnston: If we are to think of regional structures I would imagine that the existing area known as Northern Ireland would not necessarily be the ideal one for a local unit. It may that one would have a number of smaller units. I have not thought that one through.

Mr. McGrady: What is puzzling me is that a lot of your paper for the outline approach to a solution suggests that the Irish Government carries out an educational campaign through the British media and the British Labour Party and so on and to get Westminster to agree to transfer resources for new institutions. You do not comment at all on what format the new institutions would take. For instance, let us say we are talking about unity, I should like to know if you accept the concept of unity by consent because that does not seem to be tenor of your paper?

Dr. Johnston: There will always be a certain number of people who will not consent to unity, who will want to remain as UK citizens and who may decide to emigrate, but it is important that we should not mentally label all the Protestants in that category. I believe that only a small proportion of them would be so uncomfortable in a new structure that they would feel the need to leave. In my view it would be possible for us to make the case to them to join with us in a new enterprise and if the opportunity was well sold I believe a substantial proportion of them would join us.

Mr. McGrady: It is an established fact that slightly under two-thirds of the electorate of Northern Ireland have voted Unionist, which means anti-Irish unity presumably, and I should like to know if you think there is a necessity to accommodate that opinion?

Dr. Johnston: I believe that is because they are imprisoned; this is their prison. We need to liberate them from that prison and give them an opportunity to become Irish people.

Mr. McGrady: What is the first step towards liberating them?

Dr. Johnston: An agreement between Dublin and London and a declaration from London.

Chairman: Deputy Frank Prendergast of the Labour Party.

Deputy Prendergast: I should like to know your attitude to violence as a former member of Sinn Féin?

Dr. Johnston: I was opposed to it then and I am opposed to it now.

Deputy Prendergast: I should like to ask you to expand on the passage in your submission where you refer to the assumption by the Dublin Government of the false role of policemen acting on behalf of the occupying power.

Dr. Johnston: That has been developed at length by Kevin Boland. The essence of what I am on about is that we ought to be looking to our own interests and not simply jumping to attention when the British say so.

Deputy Prendergast: How do you propose enlisting the active participants of Northern Protestants in the building of a new concept of Irish nationality when the most important thing for them seems to be their British nationality?

Dr. Johnston: I am not convinced that that is the most important thing for all of them. The opportunity to involve themselves in the development of Irish nationality has been denied to them and they have not had an opportunity to consider it except the distorted version of it that they see in the Orange mythology.

Deputy Prendergast: Is it not true to say that that aspect of their emotion seems to be the one that is coming forward, and if you are saying that that is not a representative opinion of Protestant Unionism in the North surely we have not heard very much from the more moderate Protestant in the North disclaiming that it is the most important aspect of their position?

Dr. Johnston: There are not that many of them who are able to stand up and voice this view. John Robb is one of the people who has stood up and been counted, but the opportunities for Protestants in the North to take up that position are few and far between. In fact, as one makes the attempt to take up that position one is inclined to be intimidated. The machinery for coercion of individuals who stand out of line is extremely well developed on the Unionist side.

Deputy Prendergast: Do you believe that Unionists will be affected in their belief that Irish national democracy is Catholic hegemonist merely by changing provisions in our laws and Constitution?

Dr. Johnston: It would certainly help. The Article of the Constitution which is most extremely representative of the standpoint of one Church is the one prohibiting divorce. That should be removed.

Deputy Prendergast: I know you would have a personal involvement in this, but surely we are dealing with the Realpolitik of the situation. The people of this part of the island took an Article out of the Constitution which gave a specific acknowledgement to the majority Church. The majority of the people who voted to remove the special position of the Catholic Church were Catholic. This

does not seem to have affected in any way the thinking of the Unionists. I am reminded of the time they harped constantly on the better social welfare system they had in the North. It is true to say we have removed that disparity almost completely. Our social welfare system and our treatment of older people are better, I would argue; but even that seems to have made no impression on them. Do you seriously believe that anything people in this part of the island did over the past 60 years would have changed their attitudes?

Dr. Johnston: Anything we do is not enough. We have to have the active support of Britain. We need to persuade the British Government that it is in their interest to negotiate with us a peaceful solution on the basis of all-Ireland unity. We need to market this concept in Britain as strongly as we can.

Deputy Prendergast: Finally, Dr. Johnston, in view of current Westminster defence policy, how do you think they would react — I am speaking about the Unionists — to a proposal from this Forum involving the withdrawal of Northern Ireland from the NATO system?

Dr. Johnston: Many supporters of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the North who are Protestants — and that organisation has been able to cross the barriers — would be only too delighted if the nuclear threat were to be removed from the soil of Northern Ireland.

Deputy Prendergast: How do you think Britain would react to that proposal?

Dr. Johnston: It would be necessary to ensure that it was on the table in the global negotiations in such a way that in Eastern Europe there would be a corresponding reduction in the threat — in other words, a step in the direction of an all-Europe nuclear free zone. An all-Ireland nuclear free zone would be one step in the direction of an all-Europe nuclear free zone. This would not be easily acceptable to the existing British Government but there are ways in which their minds might be changed. If the anti-nuclear movement in Britain starts to be more influential on the policy of the Government in Britain they might be only too pleased to withdraw.

Deputy Prendergast: Would you not agree that recent events in Britain — I mean the general election — will cause the Labour Party there to review their defence policy very seriously in view of the rejection of that policy by the British people? They were

largely the people arguing for a nuclear-free Europe. Do you see that as a realistic possibility pending the declaration of all of Europe as a nuclear-free zone however welcome that would be — and I would welcome it?

Dr. Johnston: I do not think it was their defence policy which was rejected. I think it was the lack of leadership and the general disunity in the Labour Party which were rejected. Under the new leadership you may see new things developing. There is reason to expect that we may see the Labour Party up-turning again.

Chairman: Thank you very much, Deputy Prendergast. The next presentation is by Labhrás Ó Murchú from Cashel, County Tipperary. He is a public representative and he is active in many youth organisations. He is full-time Director General of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. I am sorry. My apologies to Dr. Johnston. I give my usual words of thanks to him on behalf of members of the Forum. To resume, the next presentation is by Labhrás Ó Murchú and the first questioner is Deputy Eileen Desmond on behalf of the Labour Party.

Deputy E. Desmond: I should like to welcome this presentation not least for its brevity. The first assertion you make is that the native music of Ireland helps to bridge the community divide and promote harmony. While we would all agree with that, we might not find it easy to prove. Could you help me to prove it?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: Perhaps the best way to prove anything is through experience. Perhaps it is possible to prove some of the points in our submission in a more definite way than it is to prove some of the political assertions which are sometimes made. The first point we made was that in 1979 we decided by a vote of our Central Executive Council to hold the all-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil in Buncrana, which is within a short distance of the Border. We got strong advice from a number of quarters not to hold it there because sectarian violence was quite acute at that time. From our knowledge over the previous quarter of a century we felt we knew exactly what the situation would be when the people of both divides came together at a festival of this kind. Over 70,000 people were in Buncrana, not for two or three hours as for a hurling or football or soccer match, but for three days. This is very important. This was at a time when bomb scares and actual explosions were very much part of the scene. To the best of our knowledge there was not one single disruption that weekend by a bomb scare, or political acrimony of any kind. Some might say we were lucky, but we returned the following year and the situation was the same. Our contention is that because traditional music and that aspect of

native culture are so dominant in both communities, it would not be going against the grain on either side of the community.

Deputy E. Desmond: You instance the large number of your branches in Ulster, Britain and North America. You also make the assertion about promoting peace and harmony. One gets the impression that your membership crosses the religious divide.

Labhrás Ó Murchú: For quite a number of years we have made the assertion that membership of Comhaltas and the following of traditional music generally involve both communities in Northern Ireland. In recent times RTE were involved in a programme in the North of Ireland with a very genuine intention. Not in a negative fashion but in a constructive manner they set out to debunk the notion that it crossed the political divide. They selected a Catholic lady from Dunloy and a lady from the Protestant community in Belfast and made a very genuine effort on that occasion to break down the notion that traditional music did create cohesion and unity. Traditional music did so, but they got exactly the same reply from both sides of the political divide, that this was the case. In recent times we held an event in Ballycastle, County Antrim. We were invited and met there by 12 of the 16 members of the local council, including the Official Unionists who turned out 100 per cent to meet us on that occasion. The interesting thing was that Ballycastle would possibly be a 50-50 divided situation and our committee was divided 50-50. When we arrived in Ballycastle we found banners crossing the streets in the Irish language saying "Fáilte go Baile an Chaisleán", "Céad Míle Fáilte", "Fleadh Amhráin agus Rinne". Nobody interfered in the course of the weekend and on a public platform in the square all shades of political opinion stood together on that occasion. To give a percentage breakdown would be difficult but I have no doubt that in every branch of Comhaltas in Northern Ireland you will find a good percentage from the Protestant or Unionist side.

Deputy E. Desmond: You also say that other organisations have common or similar structures to Comhaltas and given the conditions could also provide the same unifying role as Comhaltas. Could you specify what organisations you have in mind?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: Yes. If we take the Tidy Towns Association as an example, there is no doubt that there is equal concern on a point of that kind, that our country would be looking at its very best. We are well aware that people on holidays generally tend, and particularly in recent years, to disregard the Border and can just as easily cross from the North to the South or into the North if they are in the South. In that context it is in both interests that the

Tidy Towns would be very much part of everyday life. If we take farming communities, very much the same problems will exist for farmers in the North of Ireland as in the South. I am talking about voluntary bodies as against State bodies here. There is no doubt that farming organisations can identify with each other's problems and aspirations also. This is certainly true in the context of sports bodies where there is definitely a common interest, particularly if you are going into the field of international athletics or international sport. If we take bodies like the Countrywomen's Association which has its counterpart in the North of Ireland, on a recent television programme in the South we found representatives from the North of Ireland and the South sitting together on "Trom agus Eadrom" discussing their problems. I do not think anybody was aware that there was any Partition or Border existing. There are numerous examples of this. This is the real situation, not an aspiration. It is like that at the moment.

Deputy E. Desmond: In your submission you request that this Forum should consider an initiative to strengthen and co-ordinate the community organisations and you suggest that these organisations could then create a climate of opinion which would be conducive to the promotion of genuine initiatives. I presume you mean genuine political initiatives. Will you be able to expand on that?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: First, there is hardly a single person, North or South, in or out of political organisations, who would approach any new political initiative with any great confidence or optimism. People feel to some extent that they are marking time in the hope that Providence will intervene and that some act, whether a tragic or positive act, will occur which will create an atmosphere in which that initiative can succeed. I think we all agree that that is looking away into the future. It is our belief in Comhaltas that by all means you must create political initiatives; you have to develop political structures, but at the end of the day it is among the people that these structures and initiatives will be accepted or rejected. Therefore, the right atmosphere, one conducive to political settlement and initiative must be created. To the best of our knowledge the major harmony and rapport and contact which takes place between the two divided sections of Ireland at present is through organisations on a much bigger scale than is ever recognised. There is much potential there going a-begging, not being developed and recognised for what it is. Our suggestion would be, not a forum or talking shop, but an actual co-ordinating body with very definite teeth involved in it. It is vital for that reason that you are not only talking about one being set up by the Government of the Republic but about a body that would have the backing of the British Gov-

ernment, and Northern Ireland administration. It would take a completely new approach on the part of the Government. It would be a second tier of Government. The Government would have to be prepared to look on this proposal in a very radical manner. If you take a body like Bord Fáilte, it has its aims and goals for the year and you have voluntary bodies which have tourist orientation in them. They should have a say in this forum or in this coming together, this co-ordinating body, in the policies of that semi-State body. One might say that is difficult and that it would be resisted and so on, but if it is not possible to bring about a solution at that level it is virtually impossible to talk about territorial unity or any unity of that kind in this country.

Chairman: A final question, please.

Deputy E. Desmond: He has just answered my last question. Thank you very much.

Chairman: We will then pass on to Deputy G. Collins on behalf of Fianna Fáil.

Deputy G. Collins: Is dóigh liom go mb'fhearr leat go mbainfimis úsáid as Gaeilge ach toisc an sórt Fóraim atá againn agus os rud é nach bhfuil Gaeilge ag gach éinne anseo caithfimid na ceistanna a chur as Béarla. To what extent do the Unionist community in Northern Ireland show an interest in or participate in Irish music and dancing and how could they be further encouraged?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: In the first instance I think that when people join a cultural movement they agree in advance to leave their political tags outside the door. You will know them but they will not be there as Nationalists or Unionists. I think the general belief is that you should reduce the cultural movement to the lowest common denomination. We would oppose this; we do not think it is honest or frank or productive to say that you leave your politics outside the door but you develop an accommodation between the politics and develop tolerance between them. We have discovered that it is possible for those of the Unionist persuasion and of the Nationalist persuasion to hold and discuss their views, not obliterate them in a revisionist approach. We are aware that a very large percentage of people support the Unionist ties but at the same time feel comfortable in a cultural movement, the main reason being that they realise it is not conciliatory, that you are not hiding something from them. They realise that at times passions may come to the fore even within the movement but there is no doubt that you can accommodate different persuasions and affiliations in a frank and honest manner.

Deputy G. Collins: How can a fuller acceptance of the Irish cultural heritage be encouraged especially among the Unionist community in Northern Ireland?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: First, by recognising that it is there. I can give two small examples. For instance, eight or 10 years ago nobody would have suggested that UTV should run a regular series of Irish traditional music programmes. Today it is true that there is more traditional music on UTV than on RTE. Secondly, two years ago I was invited by UTV chiefs in Ulster to luncheon with them and I was presented with a very valuable trophy on that occasion because of the community work which they recognised that we had done in Northern Ireland. Last year the Northern Ireland Tourist Board in association with British Airways also made an award to Comhaltas Ceolteoirí Éireann for their work. At official level in the North there is a very definite recognition of traditional music. In the educational structure it is much easier to get grants in Northern Ireland to promote classes or courses in traditional music than it is in the South. Without being facetious and taking the question in a very constructive manner I would say that we have something to learn from the North of Ireland even in official circles as to how to support things traditional on certain occasions, which I think is a very strong point in favour of the bonding feature of native culture.

Deputy G. Collins: Do you believe that a cultural balance can be achieved in a new Ireland in place of the British cultural imperialism to which Nationalists have been subjected?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: There are two ways of looking at native cultures: one which is with a natural ethos which develops on its own and the other is when there is an attempt to give it political significance. Undoubtedly, when there is given to any culture an overt political significance, barriers are created with the result that it is much more difficult then to arrive at a balance. That is not to take from the legitimacy of those who wish to give culture a political significance. To take native culture in its own right, it is a manifestation of a heritage which is older than the divisions in our country. The past 300 or 400 years, for instance, are very recent compared with a heritage which is thousands of years old. There was a comment earlier as to the Irish language being in some way divisive. How can one take a place name like Cullybackey and say it is not Irish? One must translate such place names back into Irish, place names that are centuries old. I have no doubt but that it is possible to create a cultural balance provided it is done in a very constructive manner and with a certain degree of tolerance, and above all that we are determined to succeed in promoting that cultural balance.

Deputy G. Collins: Do you think it may be that the Unionists consider culture as a safe way of expressing their Irishness without political compromise on their part?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: There is a certain degree of truth in that but so far as native culture is concerned, I would say in fairness that once they are exposed to that culture, part of the bigotry must disappear. Largely, the bigotry was a political expedient. It was promoted by people in the interest of sustaining a contrived State. To that end, the bigotry was necessary but we must accept that, like Nationalists, Unionists are highly intelligent people, that they have good insight and are able to use discretion in their approach to developments. Therefore, I have no doubt that any Unionist who is exposed to the tobar an dúchais will come up with a much more legitimate status for himself than the status that was contrived.

Deputy G. Collins: There is an unfounded fear of the Gaelic ethos and this plays a prominent part in Unionist propaganda. How best do you think that problem can be overcome?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: Though at times we may speak against ourselves, it is much easier to promote native culture if the promotion has a political significance. Throughout revolutionary periods in the past many organisations did that. Comhaltas Ceolteoirí Éireann grew out of a non-revolutionary period. They grew in the midst of the materialistic period of the fifties and sixties and, consequently, they did not have the same problems. We would have to be courageous and to compromise to some degree in terms of the political significance of our culture. Political significance is not vital to the promotion of that culture. It is only a vehicle in a given context and our job would be to promote different types of vehicles for the promotion of that culture and which would not involve political significance. This Forum must consider compromise. We will have to compromise, too, and promote native culture for what it is and not for what we would like it to be.

Deputy G. Collins: As Director-General of CCE, would you accept that in a new Ireland where Irish would continue to be the first official language, outside of the Gaeltacht, special provision would have to be made for those whose tradition in the recent past has not included the Irish language?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: Again, much of the protectionism which has attached to the language in the past grew out of revolutionary periods. It grew in a situation in which people were idealistic and were anxious to achieve results, perhaps quickly, but at present we all realise that there is a very serious situation in this country and

that culture is but one element of that serious situation. At the end of the day we must recognise each tradition within the country. As we have put on record in the past, it will be a happy day for CCE when the Orange bands of the North march at our fleadhanna ceoil and when the bands of the South march at Orange parades because we can see that there is no reason for the pageantry of those events, devoid of their political significance, not being harnessed to bond both sections of the community.

Chairman: Thank you, Deputy Collins. We now come to Senator Dooge for Fine Gael.

Senator Dooge: Tá brainsí den Chomhaltas sa Tuaisceart. An bhfuil sé ar chumas na mbrainsí sin an scoilt atá idir an dá chuid de phobal an Tuaiscirt a shárú?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: Is feidir é a shárú más rud é nach bhfuil iomarca béime curtha air. Má tharlaíonn sé go nádúrtha agus nach bhfuil ag teastáil ó dhaoine ach ceol, rince, comhluadar agus mar sin de, tá daoine lán sásta dul isteach agus bheith ag obair as lámh a chéile. Is mar sin a bhí an scéal go dtí seo.

Senator Dooge: An bhfuil suim go fóill ag Protastúnaigh óga na linne seo sa sean-chultúr seachas duine fánach anseo is ansiúd?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: Ní fhéachann siad air dáiríre mar shean-chultúr. Tá sampla de seo le feiceáil sa Deisceart. Deineadh suirbhé le déanaí ag an gComhairle Ealaíon maidir leis an saghas siamsaíochta a bhí ag teastáil ó dhaoine, daoine óga agus daoine nach raibh chomh hóg sin. Do tharla sé san suirbhé sin le gach aicme agus gach aois-ghrúpa go raibh an ceol traidisiúnta ar barr i ngach uile chuid den suirbhé. Bhí sé níos láidre ná pop cheol, ná aon rud eile. Tá an scéal díreach amhlaidh sa Tuaisceart. Os rud é anois go bhfuil daoine óga sásta an cheol traidisiúnta a chleachtadh agus go bhfuil siad sásta spéis a chur ann, is cuma cónaí ar dhaoine sa Tuaisceart nó sa Deisceart, tá siad lán sásta go fóill agus sin mar atá an scéal, in ár dtuairim, sa Tuaisceart anois.

Senator Dooge: In regard to that survey and to other evidence that is available, are there differences to be found in relation to the results in different parts of Northern Ireland? Perhaps we should concentrate on the young age groups in this context.

Labhrás Ó Murchú: A survey that was done in the South was on the basis of geographical locations. Dublin was taken as an entity and there were also provincial entities. The same situation applied virtually throughout the South of Ireland, urban and rural. The

survey showed that traditional music got the highest rating in terms of all the living arts. Undoubtedly, the same situation would apply in the North. At least 25 per cent of the places in tours that we send abroad each year are taken up by people from Ulster. It does not follow that they came from any particular affiliation or religious persuasion. They are selected on merit. Generally speaking, young people in the North have come to realise that it does not matter which foot you dig with, that you are still accepted in so far as the practice of traditional music and native culture, too, are concerned.

Senator Dooge: Do you think this may be due partly to the fact that the ballad and country music traditions have become popular in the culture of all youth and that you have a situation here which is different from that which occurred over the first 50 years of separation of the two parts of the country?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: There is no doubt that world developments will always have a bearing on national development, cultural and otherwise; but the important thing to remember about Irish traditional music is that it has a large following among non-Irish throughout the world. You would not have the same situation with ballads and folklore of other parts of the world. For some reason there is something intrinsic in Irish music which attracts attention from virtually all parts of the world.

Senator Dooge: If you follow that line you can come to the conclusion that Unionist Protestants in Northern Ireland would be attracted to music intrinsically and not because it is Irish and therefore music does not contribute to a sense of unity in anything beyond this element.

Leabhrás Ó Murchú: In using the term "Irish" you must define what you mean by Irish music. They are practising what is Irish, whether they are fully conscious of it or not. They are Irish, and it is far more important that they be now purely Irish people rather than people who verbalise the fact that they are Irish. Part of our difficulty is that we are expounding too much on something that is natural instead of recognising it for what it is. The only reason we are expounding it here is that it can be used as a vehicle of another element which they think false. I would like to give one small experience that I had in 1970 or 1971. I addressed a dinner in Belfast on that occasion and the Belfast branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann was divided on a fifty-fifty basis. About 400 people were at that dinner and I felt that I would be cowardly if I did not make the statements that I would have made in the relative safety of the South regarding the fact of our heritage being the heritage of all

the people irrespective of political divisions. I was pleased with the response I got but more pleased with the after-dinner discussion I had with one gentleman who approached me and said he would like to discuss two points that I would not have to agree with. We had a long discussion. He told me he was a sergeant in the RUC and he played the accordion. This exists and it is not pie in the sky. I suggest to the Forum that the strength which exists in this for creating friendship and reconciliation should be taken seriously. It is a potent element towards a solution. We can give details of numerous experiences where this has been borne out.

Senator Dooge: Another side touched on by Deputy Collins is the tourist strand in Irish culture today which comes from the Protestant community. Are there any signs of greater appreciation? I see signs only of falling appreciation of traditions such as the Lambeg drum etc. or any part of the Orange tradition.

Labhrás Ó Murchú: Again I will quote an experience. I will not mention the name. The Protestant singer from Cullybackey, whom I have mentioned previously, is a well-known traditional singer, and he met a singer from the South who also would sing rebel songs as well as what we consider genuine traditional songs. They met in the North of Ireland, quite a number of singers from both sides of the divide, in Cullybackey, and he said to the singer from the South "You will be very welcome to come to Cullybackey and sing your songs. There may be a few you will have to leave at home, but generally they will be as acceptable as mine." That is not an isolated situation. The singing tradition, as apart from the ordinary ballad tradition, in the North of Ireland could compare in the English language with the singing tradition in any part of this country. Many in the South would say it is superior both in quantity and in quality.

Senator Dooge: My last question — I have time for only one — relates to your proposal for the all-Ireland Council of community organisations. Do you think that by formalising this, giving it a political umbrella, even a tri-partite umbrella, would change the nature of the community movement and tend to act against the community movement operating without being part of the establishment?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: I come from a small town, Cashel, Co. Tipperary, which has a population of 3,000 and 37 community organisations operate in that town. That covers everything from meals on wheels and advisory centres to cultural and sporting bodies. Without any statistics to prove it, I would say that if those 37 organisations stood to one side you would have a very impover-

ished community under all headings, but there is a growing disenchantment among people operating on a voluntary basis in community organisations at the lack of input that they have into policies which they will have to operate or to fill the vacuum subsequently. It is unfair to think that a person in a community organisation has in some way been rendered not as effective and, if you like, has been made immune to the consequences, in the first instance, of Partition, the consequences of a recession, the consequences of a cultural recession. They are not; they are still part of the political structure and they should be seen for what they are: courageous and dedicated bodies. I do not think that any single member of a community body, because of maturity and experience, would fight shy of any insinuation that perhaps they were losing their autonomy or independence. We cannot afford that kind of luxury in this day and age.

Chairman: Thank you, Senator Dooge. Mr. Seán Farren for the SDLP.

Mr. Farren: An féidir a rá go bhfuil tionchar polaitiúil ag an gComhaltas lena lucht leanúna sa tslí gur gá meon níos Gaelaí a bheith ina measc ná mar a bheadh acu munar baill den Chomhaltas iad? Agus an féidir leat a rá gurb í aidhm an Chomhaltais an meon sin a chothú, thar aidhmeanna faoi leith eile, mar an ceol.

Labhrás Ó Murchú: Aon rud a tharlaíonn sa tír bíonn tionchar de shaghas polaitiúil éigin ag baint leis ar dhaoine eile, go mór mhór i ngluaiseachtaí den tsaghas seo agus an bun-aidhm atá againn. Má thagann daoine isteach sa ghluaiseacht, gan trácht chor ar bith ar an Tuaisceart, cibé iad lucht Fhianna Fáil, lucht Fhine Gael, an Lucht Oibre, Sinn Féin nó an SDLP, iad go léir istigh le chéile, níl aon amhras ná go bhfuil meascár de shaghas ag tarlú, ach ní faoi scáth na gluaiseachta a tharlaíonn sé: tarlaíonn an rud céanna amuigh i measc an phobail má chuireann tú béim ar an Ghaeilge agus ar an oidhreacht a bhaineann leis, nó ar an gceol agus an oidhreacht a bhaineann leis sin. Is í féiniúlacht atá i gceist níos mó ná polaitíocht, ach is cinnte gur náisiún Gaelach a bheidh ag teastáil ón gComhaltas.

Mr. Farren: Deir Dilseoirí sa Tuaisceart go gcuirfeadh a lán dá sórt suim sa chultúr Gaelach ach an fíor-bhrú polaitiúil atá orthu agus ar mhuintir an Tuaiscirt go léir. De réir dealraimh is fíor é sin ón méid atá ráite agat cheana. Más fíor cén chomhairle atá agat don bhFóram?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: Glacaimid go léir, sílim, agus an Fóram san áireamh, go bhfuil foclaíocht, sean-fhoclaíocht, ag baint leis an

gcultúr. Bíonn foclaíocht freisin ag baint leis an pholaitíocht agus b'fhéidir go mbeadh sé i bhfad níos fearr dá mbeadh tearmaíocht nua in úsáid. Is cuma cén bhrí atá agat anois, má dhéantar úsáid de focail áirithe, glacann dream amháin go bhfuil brí amháin leis agus dream eile go bhfuil brí eile leis. Ba cheart, sílimse, dearmad a dhéanamh ar an tearmaíocht a d'fhás as an tréimhse réabhlóideach agus úsáid a bhaint as tearmaíocht a bhaineann leis an lá atá inniu ann. Ceapaim nach bhfuil sé níos doimhine ná sin. Ní ar na daoine féin atá eagla — mo thuairim phearsanta é seo — ach bíonn an eagla seo-cothaithe ag na polaiticeoirí, agus gan cur isteach ó na polaiticeoirí ar na ghnáth-dhaoine déarfainn nach mbeadh an eagla seo ar na daoine.

Mr. Farren: Labhair tú faoi chomh flaitiúil is atá na daoine i mBaile an Chaisleáin i gContae Aontroma, ach tá taobh eile den scéal ann chomh maith. Mar shampla, dhiúltaigh Comhairle Ard Mhacha cúnaimh ar bith a thabhairt don Chomhaltas le fleadh a reachtáil. Rinne cúpla comhairlí eile an rud céanna. Dá bhrí sin, níl cúnaimh chomh flaitiúil ar fud na Sé Contae ar fad agus a thug tú le tuiscint dúinn.

Labhrás Ó Murchú: Sílim go mbrathann sé ar an dea-shampla a thugann gach ceantar. D'fhéadfá a rá go bhfuil an scéal amhlaidh sa Deisceart. Bheadh sé mí-cheart don Fhóram, nó d'aon dream eile sa tír a rá go bhfuil gach éinne sa Deisceart taobh thiar den cheol traidisiúnta. I mo bhaile féin, mar shampla, tá an scéal díreach amhlaidh. Ní dóigh liom go mbaineann sé sin le polaitíocht amháin: baineann sé leis an timpeallacht agus leis an gcúlra a bhaineann leis na daoine. Mar sin ní rud é seo a bhaineann leis an dTuaisceart amháin. Tá sé fíor go bhfuil an flaitiúlacht céanna le fáil sa Tuaisceart. Más rud é go bhfuil daoine macánta lena chéile ó thaobh an cheoil traidisiúnta agus an cultúr i gcoitinne, tá an fhlaithiúlacht céanna le fáil sa Tuaisceart agus atá sa Deisceart.

Mr. Farren: I will ask you a naive question. Your definition of native music, how exclusive or inclusive is it? I ask this because of something Senator Dooge said when he referred to Lambeg drumming. In the North one is aware of the tradition of Scottish piping, particularly among the Unionist community. To what extent would your definition of native music include that tradition?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: One could take an example which would define our situation. There is no doubt there is a Scottish influence in Donegal fiddling. That is accepted. The same thing is true of Sligo, where there is an individual style of playing music. This all comes back to the federal suggestion that is being discussed politically. Already a federal situation exists as far as music is concerned. This

is accepted, people can live comfortably with it and therefore it must be appreciated that the beauty of native culture is not uniform, not something you could put your *imprimatur* on and say it is the right colour. There have been different colours in different periods. These different aspects of tradition exist in Northern Ireland and in the South. It is also happening in Britain. Our proposal not only concerns Ireland but it concerns Britain as well, because the Irish community there are in the front line of the Northern problem. I have been at meetings of Irish representative groups in Britain and they all make the same point: when a bomb goes off in Northern Ireland they see its repercussions in Britain and therefore they must have a say in the solution. They could make a contribution to the council we have suggested based on their direct knowledge of the British people. The same applies to North America, which has created a priority for itself in regard to the Northern problem. Any of us who are familiar with North America would say that we are not endeavouring to make the people there a part of any solution. We have made that point in our submission. This problem does not just include the people of the North and South but Irish people wherever they can influence a solution. Therefore, there should be some coming together of all those strands in a formal or statutory manner.

Mr. Farren: What kind of genuine initiative do you think might otherwise flounder if there was not such a community organisation?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: The Forum is one example. For instance, we have empty seats here for Unionists who do not want to participate. It has become obvious in the last decade that any politicians who wanted to break the ranks and endeavoured to create an atmosphere of moderation have been isolated not by their own people but by their political colleagues. One can think of the period of Terence O'Neill, Bill Craig or any of those people who tried to create a new mould. In the first instance they were not isolated by their people but by their colleagues. We know very well there are Unionists in the North who would become part of this Forum if they thought they would not be isolated. Seven years ago we were invited by Libya to send a group of performers to a trade fair. At the same time a group of people from Northern Ireland were there, including a very prominent Unionist politician. At a subsequent event, a sing-song, he said: "I am quite willing to sing 'The Bold Fenian Men' if you will sing 'The Sash' but I am asking a special favour of you: Do not say it when you go back to Ireland?" That is typical of the problem that faces people who would compromise or wish to moderate their views. I maintain that any political initiative has that in-built inherent danger. It is

obvious that you, a politician, as a legislator have to create the atmosphere to cultivate political initiative.

Mr. Farren: Perhaps it is not fair to ask, but do you have realistic hopes that your proposal would receive widespread response both in the North and in the South?

Labhrás Ó Murchú: First, the presentation would be important. I do not think it could be put forward in any way as a case for a United Ireland. Its premise should be to consolidate and co-ordinate the potential that exists. The rest will grow in a natural manner. We do not regard our proposal as a solution to the Northern problem: we regard it as one tiny element leading towards a solution.

Sitting suspended at 1.10 p.m. and resumed at 2.25 p.m.

Chairman: Members of the Forum, ladies and gentlemen, we resume our session now in public and the first presentation this afternoon is by Mr. Frank Curran, a Derryman who has been associated with the *Derry Journal* for 40 years, until his recent retirement. He is also the author of a very generally respected book on political structures in Derry for the 40 years between 1896 and 1936. The first person to address questions to him is Mr. Austin Currie of the SDLP.

Mr. Currie : Welcome to the Forum, Mr. Curran. You say in your initial submission:

My submission offers no solutions. It is restricted to making a single point.

I recognise that from reading your submission, but the major point you make leads to certain political conclusions and they are inevitable. You say that old conceptions about a static society in the North based on the out-dated one million Protestants and half-a-million Catholics are now irrelevant. At an earlier stage you refer to recent statistics not surprising people who had been monitoring population changes over the past ten years. My assumption is that you are one of those people and it may be that the figures upon which you base your conclusion are not entirely from official sources. Would you care to elaborate on that?

Mr. Curran: It depends on what you mean by official sources. The statistics on the Catholic population in the North of Ireland, which I say now is between 620,000 and 640,000, come from what I would describe as impeccable sources. The census, as we all know, was 75,000 people out, as the DOE in Northern Ireland has admitted. In Derry the figures were 9,000 out. The Catholic Church

in Derry every year puts out a very detailed diocesan census in which it details the population in every parish in the Derry diocese. That census has been proved to be absolutely correct and the official one wrong.

Mr. Currie: So you are satisfied that your sources are pretty impeccable? Could we have a look at the reasons why this might be the case? Clearly there is a higher Catholic birth rate. There is less Catholic emigration because of limited opportunities elsewhere. There is higher Protestant emigration than in previous years and the Protestant emigration embraces people in higher skilled categories. There is also, of course, the campaign of violence which in this context I would put last. Are those all of the reasons or are there additional reasons why there has been this change in population?

Mr. Curran: Those are basically the reasons and those reasons seem certain to continue because one cannot visualise a reactivation of the massive Catholic emigration that we had from the twenties until the late sixties. I reckon that the Catholic-Protestant population in Northern Ireland is now changing at about a half per cent a year. We had prognostications from experts that the Catholics would not become a majority for another 50 or 60 years. If the present trend continues they will certainly be level in about 30 years and they are already level in the age group up to 25 years.

Mr. Currie: I will leave that for the moment because obviously it has political implications. On page 2 of your submission you say:

The British writ has largely ceased to be recognised by the majority of the people in a large portion of the disputed area.

Is that not an exaggeration?

Mr. Curran: I do not think so. What I mean is that the British writ only operates by force. If you take the west bank of the city of Derry where 57,000 people live — there you get the Irish dimension in the North — there are 51,000 Catholics and only 6,000 Protestants on the west bank of the city of Derry. In that entire area there is not one single policeman living for the simple reason that it is no longer safe for policemen to live there. If they do not live there they can never get to know the people. Lord Scarman made the point after his inquiry in Liverpool that one of the difficulties there was that the police could not and did not live among the black people and, therefore, could not get to know them. There is exactly the same problem in the west bank of Derry. The police have no hope of getting to know the feelings or thoughts of the vast majority of the people there. Even in 1969 when the police

identified themselves with the Unionist political establishment the difficulty was that they were identifying with the minority of the population and did not know what the majority were thinking and, therefore, made the colossal blunder of banning the October 5 march.

Mr. Currie: I accept what you are saying in relation to Derry which is the area you know best but you have made the statement in relation to the whole area west of the Bann and also probably south of the Bann. Do you have any evidence that the situation you have described in Derry is the situation elsewhere, leaving aside part of south Armagh and parts of Tyrone?

Mr. Curran: It depends on how you look at it. It is a matter of degree. I say that within the Nationalist community the forces of law and order are suspect and that the people are suspect by the forces of law and order. We hear about acceptability of the police. Acceptability is a two-way thing. There is also the non-acceptability of the Catholic population by the police. The Catholic population are all suspect by the authorities.

Mr. Currie: Obviously there are major political implications in what you have said. I notice on page 2 you say in bold type:

The strong message coming out is that that area west of the Bann must be treated as a special area.

Presumably, around Newry, south of the Bann must also be treated as a special area. You do not want it and I do not want it, but surely you are suggesting repartition here?

Mr. Curran: I am not saying that at all. Repartition would not be accepted by the Nationalists west of the Bann because that would mean a much smaller Catholic minority in an Orange State. There is no question of any betrayal of that sort. You have mentioned Newry and the reason I did not refer to it is that it is not west of the Bann. West of the Bann is an area comprising of three counties roughly which has a two to one Catholic majority and in that area the British and the Northern Ireland Office can only rule by means which have alienated that population.

Mr. Currie: I accept that point.

Mr. Curran: If the British and the Irish Government will agree that the Six Counties as a political unit will not work in present circumstances they have to look at west of the Bann as a special area in need of a special solution.

Mr. Currie: Have you any idea of what that solution should be?

Mr. Curran: The British were thinking ten years ago on the lines of community policing for different areas and had discussions at that level with public representatives. West of the Bann would have to be looked at in relation to the feasibility of a new police force and a new judiciary for that area controlled by the Catholic majority.

Mr. Currie: What you are suggesting is some form of a local option thing where you would have a Catholic police force for Catholic areas and so on. What about the more basic security forces?

Mr. Curran: It is not for me to suggest how they could be phased out but once the general thesis had been accepted, west of the Bann must be looked at as a special case and then it would be up to the politicians to iron out what role if any the British Army would play.

Mr. Currie: You have made it clear that you would be utterly opposed to repartition.

Mr. Curran: It would be a traitorous act, it would make the situation far worse.

Mr. Currie: It would be a traitorous act?

Mr. Curran: Yes.

Mr. Currie: Would it not also be very illogical in so far as if you try to draw a new border it would have to embrace Belfast? Even if one thought in the closest geographical terms it would have to embrace places like the Glens of Antrim, Lurgan and Downpatrick and you would have a situation then where the Unionist community inside the repartition would be in the same position they were in in 1920 anyway. It would be not only traitorous but illogical. Obviously the question of security and policing is a possible Achilles heel in a settlement. You say that you do not see any solution to this problem west of the Bann whether in a United Kingdom or an Irish context.

Mr. Curran: I did not say that exactly. What I said was that the problem remains as difficult whether you are talking in a United Kingdom or an Irish context.

Mr. Currie: In your submissions you said:

To elaborate my theory already presented to the Forum, the Six Counties of Northern Ireland is not and will not in future be a workable political unit whether in or outside the United Kingdom.

Can you not envisage any circumstances where it might be workable outside the United Kingdom under, say, a federal system or a confederal system or whatever?

Mr. Curran: That is looking far into the future. I am looking at the situation as it is and it is obvious that there must be some interim solution for the Six Counties before we go on to federalisation in an all-Ireland context. We have had unionist — with a small 'u' — speakers at this Forum already who have made the point that you cannot have a united Ireland because one million Protestants — of course there are not that many — say no. What anyone working for a solution must face up to is the harsh fact that a united Northern Ireland is less feasible than a united Ireland given the present circumstances.

Mr. Currie: The Chairman indicated to me a final question but you have already given me my answer. Thank you.

Chairman: We will pass on to Senator Stephen McGonagle of the Labour Party.

Senator McGonagle: There has been quite a lot of talk from time to time by loyalist spokesmen about the possibility of an independent Six Counties. That appears to be dropped because we all know that it is not a viable unit. But the danger that arises from that is that if that is true and the loyalist people are sheering away from this question of an independent Six Counties, would it not drive them into the integrationist camp of the Unionist politicians who want the Six Counties to be integrated with Britain?

Mr. Curran: I do not know what the Unionist politicians will do but the Protestant people, through a combination of apprehension about living in Catholic areas and a belief that job prospects will be better in the east than in the west, are moving over to the east. I understand their apprehension. They believe that when Catholics move in and an area becomes more Catholic than Protestant the area will eventually be controlled by the IRA. They are moving for those two reasons to the east.

Senator McGonagle: You mean that things will be better in the east financially, physically, workwise and every way?

Mr. Curran: Yes.

Senator McGonagle: I will pursue this question of integration because that possibility is there whether we like it or not. If the British give way to integrationists in Northern Ireland, what do

you think people west of the Bann should do? Do you think that the people west of the Bann would request recession from a Six County area and integration with the Republic?

Mr. Curran: That would create an entirely new situation.

Senator McGonagle: You talk about stabilisation and de-stabilisation and the question of this artificially created statelet never going to have the kind of peace necessary in a normal State? Stabilisation is not possible without a unity of minds, a harmony; are you suggesting — I think you have suggested it in your paper — that harmony will never be obtained?

Mr. Curran: I am simply suggesting that at the moment there is no sign of it and I underline that by saying that all the arguments against a united Ireland can be repeated with greater weight and emphasis against the possibility of a united Northern Ireland. That is the hard fact. All the evidence is that the Northern Ireland people are polarising further, not coming together.

Senator McGonagle: Suppose I do devil's advocate and suppose by some miracle we get democratic rule. I am not talking about power-sharing. That is a deviation from democratic rule. My opinion about power sharing is that it is a British device to preserve the life of the artificially created State. It is an artificial device. Suppose we got a democratic system in the North of Ireland and justice — is that not the basis for unity and stabilisation?

Mr. Curran: If you got it. That is hypothetical and all the evidence is against it. People glibly talk about power sharing as if that would solve everything but they never ask themselves how long would power sharing last even if it were created. The last one did not last very long. If you look again at the hard evidence there is no suggestion at the moment in the circumstances pertaining in the North that a power-sharing experiment would last any longer in the future than it lasted in the past.

Senator McGonagle: In your second paragraph you make the point that it has been grasped far quicker by the Protestant people than by their political leaders or the British — would you develop that please?

Mr. Curran: I think the Protestant people in the North have quietly gone about repartitioning themselves and they are moving to the east. They do so for two reasons, one, natural apprehension and two, because they think prospects in the east are better. If there is any upsurge in jobs in Northern Ireland quite obviously

the area around Belfast being much better industrialised than west of the Bann will get those jobs first. Therefore when the jobs come they will come first to the east.

Senator McGonagle: On the questioning of population movement, east to west and west to east I can see that the Protestant people are motivated mainly by fear, and the second reason you have given I accept. Have you seen any evidence that the Catholic people are moving to the west?

Mr. Curran: No, not really, but the Catholic population in the west is increasing steadily. But one must keep this in perspective: there is only about a quarter of the population of Northern Ireland west of the Bann. I am saying that west of the Bann is a special area because it is a coherent area of three counties in which there is roughly a two-to-one Catholic majority. You have the other situation east of the Bann where the Protestants have more than a two-to-one majority. We are now creating yet another minority in Ireland; you have a national minority, that is, the Protestants; you have a Northern Ireland minority i.e. the Catholics and you are now creating a third significant minority, that is the Protestant minority west of the Bann. All this makes the problem far more intractable. Even if the Catholics become the majority in Northern Ireland as a whole it will solve nothing because the Protestant population will still be a coherent solid block in an area of 30 miles around Belfast. Even if the Catholics became a majority in Northern Ireland as a whole it would not solve anything.

Senator McGonagle: How do you and people like you conclude that it is right and proper to equate republicanism or nationalism with Catholicism?

Mr. Curran: I am not equating that at all. I can answer by a very simple example. If a Catholic cardinal or a Protestant archbishop or a Fine Gael or a Fianna Fáil Deputy talks about the majority and the minority in Northern Ireland everybody knows who he is talking about. He is talking about Protestants and Catholics. You do not need to equate them. It is a simple fundamental provision and everybody knows what you mean when you use the phrases "the minority" and "the majority" in Northern Ireland.

Senator McGonagle: Would you say that the charge made against this Forum from time to time, privately not so much publicly, that this is a nationalist Forum is made because the Unionist parties have not the belly to come here?

Mr. Curran: The Unionist politicians may not have the belly to come here but we must realise that it was predictable that they would not come and also realise what we are asking them. For the Nationalists to accept the Northern State they were being asked to become if you like British and Unionist. When we talk of the type of united Ireland that has been talked of up to now, we are in fact asking the Unionists to become Irish and they in their hearts can no more feel that they can become Irish than the Nationalists in the North feel they could become British.

Senator McGonagle: Suppose we got a federal arrangement in the context of viability or not being able to support oneself in the Six Counties, could Dublin actually support it by way of subvention financially in this new federal arrangement?

Mr. Curran: I think you will have to ask the Government here that question.

Senator McGonagle: You have answered my last question, thank you.

Chairman: We now turn to Deputy Lenihan on behalf of Fianna Fáil.

Deputy Lenihan: Do you accept, without reflection of course on the people of the area, that Northern Ireland in fact is a failed political entity? If you would agree with that would you elaborate on your reasons for doing so?

Mr. Curran: It is a failed political entity because it has never been able to meet the challenges of ordinary democracy. The civil rights movement did not challenge the existence of the Northern State at first but it asked the Northern State this question: "Can you grant equality and democracy to every citizen and still survive as a State?" The answer to that question was "No". Events proved that the answer to the question is no.

Deputy Lenihan: Is it your view that the vast majority of the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland will never reconcile themselves to British government and authority?

Mr. Curran: No, they never will, even in varying degrees. As I say, it is a question of identity. The Northern Catholic regards himself as Irish and cannot see himself becoming British and therefore cannot reconcile himself to a State the ethos of which is British.

Deputy Lenihan: Would you accept, as a follow on to that, that any solutions within the present Six County area for indigenous

problems in the area whether power-sharing or special measures to deal with the west of the Bann aspect you referred to, are not really possible or practicable except in an all-Ireland context?

Mr. Curran: That again is something the politicians would have to answer. I say that a radical interim solution to the Six Counties problem must be tackled. At the moment it is a stand-off situation. The west of the Bann area is ruled more or less only by security policies which in general have alienated the population. That cannot be basically changed. Unfortunately, when you have a police force which cannot recruit Catholics, you cannot get back to normality in that sphere.

Deputy Lenihan: You refer in your paper to the rise in the Catholic population west of the Bann and the acceleration of the exodus of Unionists from west of the Bann to east of the Bann. Could you give us some idea of the proportions of the two communities?

Mr. Curran: Very roughly — I have not gone into this in detail — the Catholic population west of the Bann would be two to one and the Protestant population east of the Bann would be two and a half to one and much larger. As I said before, you must keep this in perspective. There are 350,000 or perhaps 400,000 Catholics east of the Bann, many more than there are west of the Bann.

Deputy Lenihan: I note what you said in reply to Mr. Austin Currie, that you would regard any question of repartition as traitorous. Would you also agree that it would be highly disruptive of the whole situation to have any suggestion of that kind mooted in any way?

Mr. Curran: Absolutely. To talk about repartition, even as an interim settlement, would lead to far greater violence than there has been up to the moment. Repartition is not an option that any sensible person should seriously consider.

Deputy Lenihan: Would you accept as dangerous and containing the seeds of disruption also the proposal that a joint police force should be created from the RUC and the Garda to police Nationalist areas of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Curran: I think it would put the Garda in an extremely difficult position. They would become identified with the RUC and their position would become untenable. I do not think such a joint force is a starter at all.

Chairman: We now proceed to Mr. Maurice Manning, Fine Gael.

Deputy Manning: Your presentation is very succinct and many of the questions have been asked already. What is the basis of your evidence on the whole question of Catholic and Protestant emigration?

Mr. Curran: The Northern Government was so wrong in the census that it was unbelievable. That mistake makes their suggestion of what emigration from Northern Ireland was ridiculous. They were suggesting that about 150,000 people had emigrated in the years 1971 to 1981. That was based on the figures that were at first given as true census figures which were successfully challenged. You must cut the emigration figures by 75,000. Emigration from Northern Ireland as a whole in the years 1971 to 1981 was the lowest for any decade for 40 years, averaging only about 7,000 people a year. Austin Currie mentioned what is happening. For the first time there is a certain amount of Protestant emigration. It is the people whom they would like to retain who are going. When people go to university in Britain they do not come back. The new university in Coleraine, against which there was such a campaign in Derry, would have succeeded if the Protestant population had given it the same support as the Catholic population gave it. There is now a Catholic student majority at the NUU. If the Protestant population had given it the same support it would have flourished. We know what the Catholic population is from certain sources and you simply get the Protestant population by a simple subtraction. I am saying that the Catholic population is 42 per cent of the population in Northern Ireland and that the old phrase about a million Protestants and half a million Catholics is so outdated that it is unbelievable.

Deputy Manning: If there has been this drop in Catholic emigration in these bad times is this not an indication that Catholics are more content with the situation and see more hope in it than they did in the past?

Mr. Curran: No, they are not more content at all. They have simply nowhere to go. You cannot go to America, Australia, Canada or anywhere else as you used to do in the thirties and forties and you cannot even go to Britain because there are no jobs there. There is also the fact that with the fall of Stormont houses were built in greater numbers than ever before. Not only that, but they were allocated on a points system which meant that many more Catholics got houses. In Derry, there are hundreds of young couples in the new estates who, if Stormont had not fallen, would be over in England long before emigration to that country ceased. The Catholic population is not moving because they have houses. It is a social axiom that even if a man has not got a job and he has a

house he is more likely to stay in a place than a man who has a job and no house.

Deputy Manning: The changes you describe are fairly dramatic. Are the people who are most affected by them aware that they are living in a very changing situation and what is the effect on them of all of this?

Mr. Curran: Anybody who keeps his eyes open should know. I do not know the reasons for Unionist politicians keeping so quiet about this. They obviously have decided not to say anything much about it although they obviously are aware of it because about three years ago Harry West gave an interview to *The Irish Times* in which he agreed even then that the Catholics would become a majority in Northern Ireland but he said that of course it would not be in his time. I do not know whether the Unionist politicians are pursuing a policy of "I am all right, Jack", and let the next generation take care of itself.

Deputy Manning: Would you accept that there are many Catholics who are also Unionists? This point was made here a number of times last week by people who are themselves Unionists.

Mr. Curran: Unionists in the sense that they wish the Six County State to remain in preference to a united Ireland? I would not accept that at all. There are Catholics with different views. There are Catholics who are very anti-IRA but who are still strongly Nationalist and I think this should not be confused. If you had a referendum say on the west bank of the Foyle where we have a lot of unemployment and where the British social services keep many people living and if the question was asked: "Do you want to join the Republic of Ireland? Yes or No?" I have no doubt there would be a whopping majority in favour of leaving the Northern State. That is a different thing from repartition. The Catholics cannot be Unionists and they are not Unionists.

Deputy Manning: But you have no doubt that if there were more Catholics than Protestants and if the chance was there, there would be an overwhelming vote to break the union?

Mr. Curran: Yes, emotionalism is usually worth more in Irish politics than hard facts. I can imagine, if there was a referendum and if the result was going to decide their fate, that politicians would have to come out and say to people: "Do you want the RUC or the British Army on the streets?" At least for the day of the referendum they would forget about social services.

Deputy Manning: You mentioned security. You talked about a radical interim solution. Is security the key to this type of solution and what would you propose to do about it?

Mr. Curran: Security is the key because while you have the present security situation in Catholic areas you cannot make any real political progress. This is one of the difficulties of the SDLP. People say the SDLP cannot deliver anything. No party in the SDLP's position could deliver anything because there is no political movement. As long as Catholic areas can be patrolled only in the way they are now you cannot make any great political progress. If you were charged with reckless driving a garda would simply go to your house and hand in a summons. That requires a couple of jeeps of armed policemen and soldiers in any of the Catholic areas in places like Derry.

Deputy Manning: What is your feeling about the events of the last 12 years on the relationship between Protestants and Catholics in your own Derry area and in the Border areas generally?

Mr. Curran: In our area it had not worsened relations. In Derry, in spite of the bitterness of political fighting, personal relationships remained good. That has changed in the last few years. There is a very definite polarisation even in Derry. I imagine that it is probably the same in most places.

Deputy Manning: Thank you Mr. Curran.

Chairman: Thank you Mr. Manning. Mr. Curran, on behalf of the members of the Forum, I thank you sincerely for coming and sharing your knowledge and experience with us.

The next presentation is by Coirnéal Eoghan Ó Néill. Colonel Ó Néill, after a distinguished service in the Army became director of Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge and he hardly needs any introduction here. The questioning will be commenced by Deputy Enda Kenny on behalf of Fine Gael.

Deputy Kenny: Ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghlacadh leat as ucht an pháipéir a chuir tú isteach chugainn anseo. Tá sé an-fhada, an-suimiúil, tá neart le léamh ann agus ní bheadh am agamsa anseo inniu na ceisteanna go léir a chur ort.

You defined culture as speaking of language itself. Would you consider that the culture on this island is a divergence of one culture or is it two cultures?

Colonel Ó Néill: It is not two separate cultures. It is a culture in which there is a number of separate streams and in certain areas or even in certain age groups facets of the culture will dominate.

Deputy Kenny: In speaking of the Churches and their role in relation to the language you quote, on page 12 of your submission, of the Church of Ireland:

We are Irishmen and ... we must be prepared to accept along with the honour conferred by the title, the duties which it involves. One of those duties is the preservation of the historic Irish language.

In relation to the Presbyterian Church you quote

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is a national church and knows no borders in its work ... because it is Irish it is proud of its native background.

Then, you go on to say on page 30 in relation to the deterioration and decline in the teaching of Irish that:

Irish has been eliminated from the curriculum of many Catholic schools;

Does this mean that the Churches you have mentioned have been hypocritical in their attitude towards the restoration of the language?

Colonel Ó Néill: No. Many forces have militated against them. The elimination of Irish from the curriculum of many students is forced upon them. A student in the North of Ireland may wish to pursue Irish but might wish to become a doctor and if he is faced with an option to take either biology or Irish he will automatically choose biology. As regards the Protestant Churches, the Irish language movement from the beginning owes a great deal to the members of Protestant Churches and particularly to ministers of Protestant Churches. There is no hypocrisy in it but there are certain forces which prevent them from taking a bigger part.

Deputy Kenny: Do you agree that the Department of Education in this country should have made access to various opportunities for students from the North who could follow the Irish courses even though there might be other forces ranged against them?

Colonel Ó Néill: Of course. I and most Irish people would like to see access to job opportunities for people of the whole of Ireland and it is a pity that they do not have access. The removal of Irish as an essential element to describe an educated Irishman as Hyde described him did not increase in any way the enticement of people from the North to seek jobs in the South.

Deputy Kenny: In relation to the quality of Irish being taught in the Republic you say it has deteriorated over the past number of years. Would you lay this blame on successive Governments, the teaching organisations or the lack of will of the parents to see that their children learned Irish?

Colonel Ó Néill: No, it lies in that there is a spiral effect. As teachers are drawn from the products of the schools and where teaching of Irish in the schools is bad as compared to what it had been, the teachers themselves have not a sufficient grasp of Irish. This has been noted by many people both teaching and non-teaching.

Deputy Kenny: Would you agree that the decline in the number of preparatory schools for teacher training colleges has been an inherent cause of it?

Colonel Ó Néill: That is a major factor, that and the number of teachers who are drawn from schools where the teachers of other subjects would be the last in the world to allow anybody to be in a position to criticise their teaching of science of something else, but are happy to allow the teaching of Irish to be at a low level. The teaching of Irish in the preparatory schools was at a very high level, consequently people arrived into the teaching profession, whether they were native speakers or not, with the ability of Gaeltacht speakers.

Deputy Kenny: You have a detailed submission on minority languages one of which is the Welsh language where you say one in five people in Wales speaks Welsh. You say that that is what makes Wales a separate nation from England and what makes a Welshman different from an Englishman. If you take language as being the culture, and the one culture across the island, what would be the difference between a *fíor-ghaeilgeoir* from Blacksod and an Irish-speaking Unionist from Belfast?

Colonel Ó Néill: I would think them both Irish and would use the term *fíor-ghael* for each.

Deputy Kenny: You mentioned the influence of television and explored the fact that only 2.5 per cent of all television programmes on both national channels in the Republic are done in Irish. Have you any recommendations to improve that situation?

Colonel Ó Néill: The situation is worse than I thought it was when I wrote that submission. On my last visit to RTE to complain about that I looked up the *RTE Guide*. A visit had been arranged for the week ending 29th July. I looked up the *RTE Guide* and on that week there was one programme in Irish for the whole week out of 100 hours of television broadcasting. It lasted 35 minutes. The same week out of 300 hours of radio broadcasting there were five hours of Irish. However, when I actually got to RTE it was not until the week ending 15 September. On that week there was no

programme in Irish out of 100 hours on television even though by the law of the land they are bound to have regard to the Irish language. There were still five out of 300 hours on radio.

Deputy Kenny: Is this not the fault of RTE?

Colonel Ó Néill: I would think so.

Deputy Kenny: Would you consider that the pressure placed on them and the representations made by the various organisations had not been sufficiently strong?

Colonel Ó Néill: Obviously.

Deputy Kenny: What do you consider to be the extent of the influence of Radio na Gaeltachta in terms of development of the language and do you think it should be beamed into Northern Ireland?

Colonel Ó Néill: I would like Radio na Gaeltachta to be beamed everywhere. It has been a great force for the language. People speaking of community or local broadcasting are missing a great opportunity of studying the effect of Radio na Gaeltachta. Radio na Gaeltachta has been a great experiment in any language. The fact that it is in Irish and the only such experiment in any language has been a great thing for the Irish language.

Deputy Kenny: The Clar Report of 1973 indicated that 53 per cent of people were strongly in favour of the restoration of Irish and the MRBI poll of 1983 indicated that 53 per cent would like to see Irish more widely used. How important do you consider the Irish language to be in the minds of people who are trying to bring about a solution to the problems that we face both North and South?

Colonel Ó Néill: I would be worried about the result of their efforts if they did not put the cultural aspect as a very important part of their programme. Napoleon was a very practical man and his favourite axiom was that "the moral is to the physical as three is to one."

Deputy Kenny: If you look at the language restoration programmes of other countries what would you say has been the principal inhibiting factor in this country in that its people who have inherently a language that they can speak do not use it on a daily basis?

Colonel Ó Néill: I did not quite get that.

Deputy Kenny: I might not have made myself clear. What would be the principal factors that have deterred Irish people particularly since the turn of the century from speaking a language that they inherently have themselves?

Colonel Ó Néill: An béal bocht. There was a certain inferiority complex bred into our people and they just thought — why do people hang their heads if they are overheard speaking Irish.

Deputy Kenny: You also said: “Gentlemen, you have a country”. What would be your words to this Forum in terms of language development that we could help make a country out of what we have got?

Colonel Ó Néill: These words were originally used by Thomas Davis in addressing the Historical Society of Trinity College. Whatever future Ireland has, it will be built from a number of components. One of these is culture. If that component is absent, just as if a component is absent from a motor car, it will not work.

Deputy Kenny: Go raibh maith agat.

Chairman: Now we shall have Mr. Farren of the SDLP.

Mr. Farren: In ainneoin an freagra a thug tú ar an gcéad cheist ó Enda Kenny, deir tú i do pháipéar gur sa teanga Ghaelach amháin atá féiniúlacht chultúr na hÉireann le haithint. An ionann sin is a rá nach cuid de chultúr na hÉireann tradisiún ar bith nach nglacann an Ghaeilge?

Colonel Ó Néill: Ní hea. Ní bheadh sé sin fíor dá mba rud é go ndúirt mé é sin. Is cuid de chultúr na hÉireann ins an chiall lena nglactar le cultúr an lae atá inniú ann an pop-cultúr ach ní hé cultúr féiniúlachta na hÉireann é. Is é an cultúr a roinneann muintir na hÉireann, agus óige na hÉireann go háirithe, le daoine ó gach tír in iarthar agus fiú amháin in oirthear an domhain i láthair na huaire.

Mr. Farren: Cén fáth a gcuireann tú an oiread sin béime ar líon na bProtastúnach a ghlacann nó a ghlac páirt i ngluaiseacht na teangan?

Colonel Ó Néill: Mar go gceapann daoine uaireanta, idir Chaitlicigh agus Phrotastúnaigh, idir náisiúnaigh agus aondachtóirí agus go háirithe b’fhéidir na náisiúnaigh ó dheas, gur bac é athbheochaint na Gaeilge nó cur chun chinn an chultúir náisiúnta ar ath-aontas na tíre. Tá mise ag iarraidh cruthú nach ea, agus an

t-am ba mhó a bhí athbheochaint na Gaeilge ag dul chun chinn bhí Protastúnaigh sásta pairt an-mhór agus fiú an páirt ba mhó a ghlacadh ann. Go minic i dtuaisceart Éireann deirtear go bhfuil ceangal docht idir suim sa Ghaeilge agus polataíocht phob-lachtánach nó náisiúnach.

Mr. Farren: I do thuairim, cén fáth an docht-cheangal seo agus, sa dara áit, cén fáth an droch aigne atá go fairsing i measc aondacht-óirí don chultúr Gaelach fiú gur ritheadh dlí Stormont a chuir cosc ar an nGaeilge a úsáid in ainmneacha sráide.

Colonel Ó Néill: Is fíor é sin; An Public Health and Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1949, cuireann se sin stop leis. Is dóigh liom go bhfuil sé sin léirithe agam. Is léiriú an-mhaith, rud atá ráite agam i mo pháipéar, is é sin, aon rud a mhaslaíonn cuid de mhuintir na hÉireann cabhraíonn sé le míshocracht na tíre agus is masla do chuid mhaith de mhuintir na h-Éireann a leithéid de rud a bheith sa dlí. B’fhearr liom bheith ag siúl i sráideacha Steornabháigh ar Eilean Leódhaise in Albain, áit a bhfuil Sráid Chromail ach é i nGáidhlig ná bheith ag siúl agus ag breathnú suas agus a thuiscint go raibh sé i gcoinne an dlí an rud céanna a dhéanamh i dtuaisceart Éireann.

Mr. Farren: Despite all that and perhaps in some people’s view because of the recent troubles, Irish has increased in popularity, particularly in Catholic primary schools in the North. Some 250 to 300 such schools now teach Irish, apparently an increase of over 200 per cent over the past five years. Can we in your view anticipate any further growth and what might contribute to such growth?

Colonel Ó Néill: Yes, the growth has been an increased awareness perhaps among Catholics, with perhaps a concomitant decreased awareness among Protestants, of Irishness and the essentiality of Irishness, the essence of the fact that the language is the most Irish thing that exists. There is nothing more Irish than the Irish language except the Irishman himself. Also in the past few years there have been better programmes in the primary schools. I have spoken about the difficulty of taking Irish in many schools, Catholic schools, and the fact that it is not available in Protestant schools generally, but certainly one of the main functions, even before the teaching of the Irish language, is to do what was done at the beginning of the State. There is no use in handing out the Irish language saying: “Here it is.” You have to explain to people why it is important and what that importance is. Give them the reasons for it. I cannot see a great advance without a great advance in planning to explain to people the necessity for the Irish language.

Mr. Farren: In your paper you also emphasised strongly that Irish could be a bridge between our different traditions particularly in the North. Have you any ideas in addition to what you have just said which might be practical in realising this objective?

Colonel Ó Néill: I think I can say that I have written a GP's paper, not a specialist's paper. I would recommend to the Forum that a study be undertaken by people who are specialists in various areas and sub-areas of this in order to see how Irish could be a bridge. Irish has been a bridge in the past. You mentioned the growth in Irish in Catholic schools and this is true but it is relative. There was a great fall off and this was really the refilling of the tide. The growth is now counted in hundreds perhaps rather than thousands, for instance, there are 13,000 people who take O levels in English and only 300 take A levels in Irish in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Farren: Could you comment on the implications of John Hume's resolution in the European Parliament to which you pay tribute and quote in full in your submission? Do you think that can have any practical effect in supporting Irish in the North and in the South also.

Colonel Ó Néill: Yes, I think it is highly relevant. Perhaps I gave the impression that I was avoiding an explicit answer to your previous question. In a way, I was, because I believe it would be wrong for me to propose any ideal solutions to a specific aspect of a major problem which still requires a solution. So there may be many options. The proposal of John Hume was taken up by the European Parliament. It was examined in full and expanded by the Arfe Report. It was adopted by the European Parliament by 80 votes to 18 and in fact all the members of the parties that are here present voted for it. My paper explains how the Arfe resolution might be applied in our context. I explained that at the end of the paper.

Mr. Farren: Do you think then that the Forum, by endorsing this resolution, might be making a particular contribution to the same objective?

Colonel Ó Néill: I think that that would be an excellent idea. It would be in line with the thinking in the European Parliament accepted by all the major parties.

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

Deputy Prendergast: Sa chéad dul síos ba mhaith liom tréaslú duit as ucht an pháipéir iontach a chuir tú os ár gcomhair. Creidim féin go bhfuil sé ar cheann de na ráitis is tábhachtaí a chualamar le fada ó thaobh stadas na Gaeilge i láthair na huaire agus ba chóir do gach éinne go bhfuil suim aige san ábhar seo é a léamh.

May I refer you to a reference in 13(b) of your presentation? You are referring to the decline in the use of Irish in education. I quote:

A sound proposal which would have avoided these problems was made by Comhairle na Gaeilge a dozen years ago. Based upon the French example, it was proposed that Irish, English and Mathematics be considered an essential "core" for the Leaving Certificate and for entry to the Public Service and as an indication of a broad education.

How would you find that proposition being acceptable to the Unionists in the North of Ireland in a new political arrangement?

Colonel Ó Néill: I do not know how it would be acceptable and obviously it could not be forced upon them straight away. However, it would have been acceptable within the Republic at that particular time, I think, and those who were working on it with me represented various views. It would require an amount of education and a period of time to get Unionists thinking in that way. However, there are certain things to remember about the thinking of Unionists on that. Not merely in the past were Protestants in the North interested in the Irish language but in the North at the moment there is a great upsurge of interest in local history, folklore, art, crafts and things like that. There are local historical societies. It is one of the areas in which people of different backgrounds meet. It is a step further to interest them in the Irish language. It is a part of their culture, far more than their architectural or any other heritage is part of their culture. I have met Unionists coming down here who were cultural nationalists and there are far more of them than people might think there are.

Deputy Prendergast: You state that the removal of Irish as an essential subject for the award of the leaving certificate has led to a decline in status and support for the language. Could you expand on that?

Colonel Ó Néill: Yes, but there is, of course, a change in what the leaving certificate represents. At one time you had to have so many subjects for it which gave you a broad spectrum of education and then you were considered to be a man or woman of a particular standard of education. Irish was the only necessary subject and I think that was a pity because a person who has merely Irish and any collection of other minor subjects provided they reach five or

six cannot be considered to be a man or woman of broad education. It was a pity that Irish, English and Mathematics were not a "core" to which people could then add two or three other subjects as proof that they had achieved a certain standard, in depth and in breadth, of education and that this would be the condition on which they would be regarded for entry to the Public Service and other positions.

Deputy Prendergast: In view of the extensive examples you have given of favourable treatment for minority languages in other countries, would you propose that the Gaeltacht should be an autonomous region in a new Ireland arrangement?

Colonel Ó Néill: I would not like to be the one to propose still another repartition that nobody else had thought of. I think the Irish language is not just the culture of the Gaeltacht, it is the heritage of the whole Irish people, North and South, Protestant and Catholic, Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht.

Deputy Prendergast: Conas a léireofa mar seo d'Aondachtóirí an Tuaiscirt nach bhfuil aon bhaol dóibh i gcultúr agus teanga na Gaeilge?

Colonel Ó Néill: Ní thuigim cén baol a bheadh ann dóibh. Bheadh baol ann dóibh díreach mura raibh post ar bith le fáil dóibh i láthair na huairé ach ní hamhlaidh atá. Cuid den rud a dúirt mé mar fhreagra ar an cheist deiridh is uisce faoi dhroichead é i láthair na huairé mar ní hé sin an riail atá ann. Níl aon chosc orthu teacht isteach anois agus ní dóigh liom go mbeadh aon duine ag iarraidh cosc a chur ar Aondachtóirí de bharr teanga na Gaeilge. Bheadh fáilte rompu. Ba ghá é a oibriú amach de réir a chéile.

Deputy Prendergast: In your submissions you referred to the understanding by persons of power, responsibility and authority and you say:

Above all the measure of understanding of the importance of language and culture by persons of power, responsibility and authority, of their conviction of that importance, of their knowledge of the matter and their lack of personal effort in that regard, can only have frustrated the hopes and work of many, including their predecessors.

Would you, therefore, support the proposal that the question of the language and its survival through restoration would be best dealt with by an all-party committee of the Oireachtas which would make suitable proposals to the Government of the day on an on-going basis?

Colonel Ó Néill: "Persons of power and responsibility" was obviously a euphemism for politicians, among others. They are not the only ones. It is not the only solution but I would have great hope of such a thing. Whether they are likely to come up with the best solution I do not know.

Deputy Prendergast: I do pháipéar cruthaíonn tú dúinn gur chuir dúnghaois tionsclaíochta bac ar leathnú na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht. Más fíor sin cad a chuirfeá in a ionad?

Colonel Ó Néill: Cuirim mar seo é: tá 80,000 duine sa Ghaeltacht ach ní cainteoirí dúchais iad go léir. Deirtear nach bhfuil ach 30,000 díobh siúd ina gcainteoirí dúchais. Ag obair i monarchana agus na comhlachtaí atá bunaithe sa Ghaeltacht níl ach 4,200 as an 80,000 sin. Díobh siúd níl ach 2,500 in a gcainteoirí dúchais. An chuid eile, beagnach a leath de na daoine atá ag obair, ní cainteoirí líofa iad agus tá 600 gan Gaeilge ar bith. Mar sin is caitheamh amú ama agus airgid má cheapaimid go bhfuil cuid de na monarchana sin ag cur na Gaeilge chun cinn sa Ghaeltacht. Níl. Tá cuid acu atá. Tá cuid acu nach bhfuil, ach is cinnte gur gá go bhféadfadh duine sa Ghaeltacht a bheatha a shaothrú i gceart agus ar leibhéal a thabharfadh dignité dó. Faoi mar a oibríonn sé amach ní dóigh liom go gcruthaíonn na figiúirí sin go bhfuil sé sin á dhéanamh.

Chairman: Thank you. On behalf of Fianna Fáil I now call on Deputy Wilson.

Deputy Wilson: Fearaim fíor-chaoine fáilte romhat. Ag éirí as an cheist dheireannach sin, muna mbeadh na monarchana sin ann, nach mbeadh ar 2,000 sin sa Bhreatain nó in áit éigin eile?

Colonel Ó Néill: Aontaím go hiomlán. Ní ceart a cheapadh go bhfuil mé i gcoinne a leithéid. Tá mé ag rá go mba cheart go mbeadh, comh-threormhar leis na socrúithe sin, socrú chun a chinntiú gur ar mhaithe leis an Ghaeilge agus na daoine a labhraíonn an Ghaeilge a bheadh sé ag obair.

Deputy Wilson: Tháinig mé ar an bhfíric sin cheana féin. Is é buntéama an pháipéir, is é sin páipéar Chomhdáil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge, ná gur cóir go mbeadh an teanga in a ceist aontachta sa tír seo; idir Chaitlicigh agus Phrotastúnaigh, idir an Tuaisceart agus an Deisceart, nach bhfuil an scéal sin amhlaidh ar chúiseanna stairiúla iomadúla. Caidé, dar leat, is féidir a dhéanamh, go bail-each, chun an scéal d'fheabhsú?

Colonel Ó Néill: Uimhir a haon, ba cheart dom a rá nach páipéar Chomhdáil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge é seo. Thug An Chomhdáil cead

dom. Ní heol dom go bhfuil aon rud i gcoinne polasaí na Comhdála ann, ach níor mhaith liom go mbeadh aon duine eile ceangailte leis ach mé féin. Ach aontáim leat gur gá, faoi mar a dúirt mé cheana, go mbeadh programme mór oiliúna chun Aondachtóirí agus Náisiúntóirí a aontú taobh thiar den tuiscint a bhí ag de hÍde agus againn go léir agus ár muintir go léir roimhe seo, agus b'fhéidir go bhfuil sé sin ag teastáil anois níos mó i measc Náisiúntóirí an Deiscirt ná mar atá sé, cinnte, i measc Náisiúntóirí an Tuaiscirt.

Deputy Wilson: Tá cuid mhaith de mo cheisteanna curtha cheana féin. You state in your submission how the political situation has affected the language as Protestants do not like to be publicly identified with it. As Stiúrthóir of Comhdáil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge how do you believe a change in such attitudes is attainable?

Colonel Ó Néill: I should mention that not alone do Protestants not wish to be identified publicly with it, but in present circumstances many Nationalist Catholics do not want to participate in language occasions lest they be labelled and lest their children and they become endangered through association with the language due to a misconception which exists about the language.

Deputy Wilson: Dr. Hyde in 1892 referred to Europe's debt to Ireland. Ninety-one years later do you consider that there is any European debt to Ireland?

Colonel Ó Néill: It is the same debt, but the interesting thing is that he compared Europe's debt to Ireland when Irish was our language and the poverty of the Ireland of 1891 when the Irish language was in decline. Ireland by 1910 had put Europe in its literary and cultural debt once more both in the Irish and in the English language, but arising from the Irish language. If Europe is in our debt today it is as a result of our literary or political ideas some of which are of benefit to Europe. I suggest that they sprang from the self-reliance which Dr. Hyde inspired. Where we do not have this sense of self-reliance, where the poor mouth is still at work today, it is because there is not a sufficient sense of pride in national identity.

Deputy Wilson: Do you think the term "Ulster Scottish" is misleading when applied to one community in Northern Ireland? Is it not true that in the nine counties of Ulster there would be many people from both communities who could lay claim to Scottish roots?

Colonel Ó Néill: I make it very clear in the paper that the vast majority of the people, taking both communities, are not just that but are in fact Gaelic. It includes most Unionist members of the British House of Commons. The vast majority are of Gaelic origin except perhaps people with names like Powell and Molyneaux. It is also true that many of the Catholics such as the MacSweeneys, McGlades and people like that — which are accepted as "Catholic" names — are of Scottish origin. Unfortunately Gaelic has virtually disappeared from the Scottish mainland except in Glasgow where there are about 7,000 people of third generation Gaelic speakers living in the city and in the valley of Glenfinnan which is the only parish on the mainland which has kept it. In the Western Islands it is the vernacular among about 90,000 people which is far more than there are in our Gaeltachtaí here. Furthermore, they have a regional council which has far greater autonomy than our county councils, which has an official bilingual policy in education, jobs, in administration, even in the Chamber itself.

Deputy Wilson: You mentioned the Arfe Report. Is it not significant that the only Irishman who voted against it was John Taylor? Does this not indicate that he understood the significance of it and does it not get us back to the same problem which was inherent in my first question?

Colonel Ó Néill: He understood half of the significance of it. The problem is how to convince John Taylor or his like of the other thing. There are certain people one will never convince. I do not know Mr. Taylor or whether he is open to conviction. I would say that about 54 per cent of people here are in favour of the restoration of the Irish language and if you eliminate the "don't knows" it gives a 73 per cent majority in favour of the Irish language. Any party here would be glad to have 73 per cent in their favour. There is a hard core of perhaps 25 per cent who feel antagonistic. We should examine why, and what we have done to make them feel antagonistic. It is a fact of life but they might see reason if it was explained reasonably. There is a problem which must be overcome and I would recommend that there should be a programme of education and explanation.

Deputy Wilson: Go raibh maith agat.

Chairman: Go raibh maith agat féin agus ar son baill Fóram Nua Éireann, glacamid buíochas leat as ucht na fianaise a thug tú dúinn tráthnóna.

The final presentation today is on the basis of a submission made by Mícheál Ó Loingsigh, a Tralee man who is a printer by profession, an office holder in the Irish Master Printers Association.

He is a founder member of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and latterly he has been associated in various capacities with the Irish Sovereignty Movement. To start the discussion I call on Deputy Rory O'Hanlon of Fianna Fáil.

Deputy O'Hanlon: You say on page 2 of your submission that a clear distinction should be made between the alleged right of Northern Unionists to union with Britain and their valid right to be consulted and have their assert sought in the shaping of the constitutional and political means to Irish reunification. Do you believe the failure to make this distinction is responsible for much of the confusion surrounding the notion of unity by consent.

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Yes, I do. A question was posed last week by some of those who represent what one might call the Loyalist view. They spoke of the right of the Unionists to self-determination. One must define it clearly — self-determination in what context? The Unionists have obviously no right to self-determination when it comes to ensuring that they remain as part of the United Kingdom because it is up to any Government in the United Kingdom within the foreseeable future to decide that they shall not remain as part of the United Kingdom, so they have no right to self-determination there. Neither have they a right to self-determination if it comes to deciding that they wish to remain in control of the area that was given to them by the Ireland Act of 1920 because to do so they will have to flout the sovereignty of the majority of the Irish people. There is, I think, confusion when it comes to unity by consent. What I mean by unity by consent is that as a very significant part of the Irish people they have every right to have a say and in some areas perhaps a decisive say as to what kind of political institutions should obtain on this island once British sovereignty has been removed, but they do not have the right either to maintain British sovereignty on this island against the wishes of the majority of the British people as represented by the Parliament at Westminster or the majority of the Irish people as represented by the Parliament in Dublin.

Deputy O'Hanlon: Do you consider the Northern Ireland problem to be primarily one of sovereignty?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Yes, it is and I think any avoidance of that problem will lead us nowhere. The history of our country shows that up to the time of the Norman invasion we had as much a nation as any comparable country in Western Europe and certainly as much as obtained, say, in England, Scotland or Wales. Our development, however, was interrupted by the Norman invasion, interrupted mainly because the Normans were not successful. If they

had been successful in their invasion as they were in England, say, you would then have had a completely different development. There is no doubt, looking at what happened to other countries in Western Europe, that you would have had a Norman state or a Gaelic-Norman state achieving independence from Britain far more quickly than happened. If you go to Elizabethan times the problem was somewhat analogous to what we have now. This is certainly not because we have the second Queen Elizabeth. At that stage what happened was that the British Crown was only incidentally concerned with Ireland and only became very concerned with Ireland when it seemed that Ireland might be used by foreign powers against Britain. Also there were people in the Court of Elizabeth the First who realised that if they had the opportunity of settling the Irish question — in other words, providing the invasion force and putting down the Anglo-Norman and Gaelic lords who were seeking independence in their own areas — there would be a great deal of booty and wealth to be won by doing this. As a consequence there was a move within the British Court to ensure that the Irish situation should be solved by sending British expeditionary forces that would make sure that central rule from London and from the Crown obtained in Ireland. The problem was that Ireland never interested the British Crown enough to ensure that proper Government was provided in Ireland. This has been the great problem with Irish history: we have a near neighbour much stronger than we are who could influence us in so many ways and yet we are not important enough to her to make her pay proper attention to what is happening on this island and its people. I put it to you that if the British Parliament had been really concerned with what was happening here we would certainly have had much less of, shall I say, the murder and destruction that has obtained particularly in the past 13 or 14 years but which has been incipient in Northern Ireland particularly since the setting up of the Northern Ireland State. You can contrast that with what has happened here. In the South, no matter what difficulties we had — and we have had great difficulties; we had a civil war in our State in the initial stages — nonetheless we have developed a form of democracy and of Government which, whatever its weaknesses, is comparable to any that exists in any emergent nation that has achieved sovereignty in this century.

Deputy O'Hanlon: What would your attitude be to the removal of Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution? Would you regard that as equivalent to abandonment of the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: If we were to abandon these Articles, I certainly think one aspect of it would be the abandonment of the Nation-

alist community in Northern Ireland. I think it would also be the abandonment of the Unionist community in Northern Ireland because the fact that there is a minority within the Six County area wishing for Irish sovereignty for this island does not mean that the Unionists' majority in the area would be best catered for by our saying: "We will shut down the shop; you can do what you like up there" or as some people were inclined to say over the last five years — "I wish the place could be cut off and hauled out into the Atlantic three thousand miles away; perhaps we would then be better off". We cannot do that. It is not a solution. We must provide for a situation where first we get the co-operation of the British by them saying: "We do not wish any longer to exercise sovereignty in the island of Ireland. Further, we are prepared to work with the Irish Government over a long period if necessary to bring about a situation in which we can provide political institutions in Ireland which will reflect all the traditions and all the characteristics of the Irish people as a whole." May I say that I was very glad that Colonel Eoghan Ó Néill made a very fine presentation here concerning the Irish language. That is another important part and concerns another important minority on this island.

Deputy O'Hanlon: What would your attitude be to the removal of Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution? Would you be opposed to any action by the Irish Government which would recognise *de jure* British sovereignty over any part of Ireland?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Yes, sovereignty is such an important thing that the Irish Government as representative of the Irish people are not entitled in any generation in my opinion to cede sovereignty to an outside power. They are entitled as a sovereign Government to make arrangements with an outside power, interim arrangements if you wish, which will allow us to create confidence between the two traditions on the island. Yes, there can be arrangements of that nature but these arrangements can never be such as to dilute the concept of the Irish people as a whole being the sovereign power on this island.

Deputy O'Hanlon: Would you regard any failure by the Forum to give less than full support to the aim of Irish unity as potentially disastrous and dangerous?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: I would. I think that last week Hugh Munro in his submission to you made the point that we must be very careful that in our anxiety — and we should be anxious — to find a place for the Unionist population on this island we do not do something which would destroy the confidence in democracy and sovereignty that has been built up here since the Irish State came into being in 1922.

Chairman: Thank you. We now go to Deputy Manning of Fine Gael.

Deputy Manning: I shall take up where Deputy O'Hanlon left off. Why should the Forum give priority to reunification over anything else? Why should it take precedence over achieving peace and reconciliation on the island? Why should it take precedence over finding some sort of institutions which could work in the country at present?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Because Irish history teaches us that whenever we tried to patch up the situation we failed utterly. In my opinion all we would be doing would be taking the burden perhaps for a little while from this generation and passing it on to the next. We have a problem which comes from our colonialist history and we need to solve that problem. If we do not solve it we will not get to a situation in which we will have peace and prosperity. I put it to you that the situation in Northern Ireland, particularly over the last 14 years, has had a very important effect on our efforts here to achieve a better standard of living for the people in the Republic. I suggest also that unless we find a solution which opens out minds rather than closes them we shall not succeed. To my mind the time scale is not that important. If we come up with solutions leading towards final resolution of the problem even on an extended time scale we shall be providing a proper solution.

Deputy Manning: You say that the lead must come from the British Government. You are also very strong on the point that we must not put forward any new ideas which would give away our hand before we all sit down for the ultimate negotiations. Have you any evidence whatever that the British Government have any interest in giving a lead in this matter? Why should we not be concerned with new approaches when the old ones have manifestly failed over the last 60 years?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: If we could solve the problem on our own, if we could disregard the attitude of the British Government, then I would be in complete agreement with you but unfortunately we cannot solve the problem without the co-operation of the British Government. Therefore, we need to have a policy that ensures that we get the best possible support for the Irish Government's viewpoint in Britain. I refer you back to 1920 and 1921. We had a partial solution and we had a truce in 1921 mainly because there were sufficient people in Britain who realised that British policy in Ireland was unacceptable to them. We must try to get that situation again in Britain as soon as we can.

Deputy Manning: My question was: "Is there any evidence that we can get the British Government to give this lead?" Why should they do it?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: The reason why the British Government should do it is because the record in Northern Ireland — and they are a responsible sovereign power and have been since 1920 and long before that — is so abysmal and the suffering and deprivation have been so great during that period that I believe any Irish Government which endeavours to educate and sets itself a policy of educating British public opinion will achieve success over a period of time.

Deputy Manning: On this question of educating and persuading the British public and the people of Northern Ireland, how can you talk of persuading and educating the Unionists when the whole thrust of your submission threatens their identity and their very way of life?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: I do not draw that conclusion from our submission at all. We are making a clear distinction between two things. The first thing is that the Unionists do not have the right to self-determination in the sense that they can choose of their own accord to remain part of the United Kingdom. They simply cannot because at any time it is open to the United Kingdom Parliament to dissolve that union. Where they have the right and where they have the strength is as being part of the people on this island. No Government in Dublin can disregard what the Unionist people think or what policies they, as a Government, might pursue if they affected the Unionist people of the North simply because there are so many of them there. The British Government have shown that they can disregard Unionist opinion as much as they like and the Unionists are helpless to do anything about it.

Deputy Manning: In your scheme of things have the Unionists the right to be Unionists? Have they a right to their aspirations, to their symbols? Would they have any real place in your framework?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Yes, certainly. They have a right to be Unionists in that they have a right to their own traditions and a right to their culture and to their religious beliefs but they do not have a right to keep the sovereignty of a foreign power on this island.

Deputy Manning: So when you talk about unity by consent, they have the right only to consent, they do not have the right to withhold consent?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: No, they have not. If you are asking me straight do they have the right to say: "We wish to remain a part of the United Kingdom on this island" in my opinion they do not and they are not even serving their own cause by so doing.

Deputy Manning: They might have different views on that. Would you regard the Unionists as being as Irish as you are?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Certainly, yes.

Deputy Manning: What would you see as the valid parts of their identity, of their tradition?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Politically they are very reactionary and insular. Culturally and in a religious way and from a civil liberties point of view there are aspects of their beliefs which are not allowed to flourish in the context in which they find themselves at the moment, but there are areas in which they are more enlightened than perhaps is the attitude of the majority of the people in the rest of the island.

Deputy Manning: You make the point strongly that the Forum has no right to talk about joint sovereignty and no right to put forward a confederal solution. Is that not a very arrogant claim on the part of the Irish Sovereignty Movement?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: It may be an arrogant claim but what one is endeavouring to do is to do an analysis, in the light of history and in the light of experience, as to what circumstances and conditions are likely to provide a solution. We may come up with a solution in this generation and if that solution does not stick the problem will still exist.

Deputy Manning: Would it be the view of the Irish Sovereignty Movement that the only real solution to the problem is within the framework of a unitary state?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: No, once the British have declared their intention to give up sovereignty in this island then it is up to the Irish people and to the various sections of the Irish people to come up with a solution that will guarantee the best possible expression of their ideals and aspirations within the national community, and the political institutions that would be provided at that stage should be such as to reflect the diversity that exists on this island.

Chairman: We now proceed to questions by Mr. Frank Feely of the SDLP.

Mr. Feely: In your aims and objects your emphasis is on neutrality and a veiled opposition to the EEC. That would seem to portray a very narrow and isolationist view of sovereignty that would be more appropriate to the 18th and 19th centuries rather than to the 20th century.

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Are you suggesting opposition to the EEC or to neutrality as being the main components of your judgment?

Mr. Feely: Both, because towards the end of your submission you suggest that neutrality of the State is an inherent principle which must be kept.

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Not so much an inherent principle as an inherent position that should be maintained in the world that exists today. The whole thrust of the struggle for Irish freedom was that we should take our place among the nations of the world. If we are to do that in the world that exists today it is very important that a country with our traditions, with our experience and with our past history should remain a neutral nation so that we can be a voice for peace and for disarmament. If we were to join one side or the other of the major blocs it would be impossible for us to have the free independent voice that we would have as a neutral nation. With regard to opposition to the EEC the reason why we are opposed to it has nothing to do with the EEC itself. What it has to do with is the obligations that membership of the EEC imposes upon this island. Our position was, and still is, that we would have been much better off not to have entered the EEC but like Norway and Austria and other countries to have had a long-term trade agreement with the EEC which would have allowed us to develop in the light of our existing state of economic development and would have meant that we could have a slower perhaps but better economic development than is open to us within membership of the EEC and which forces us to carry all the obligations of the Treaty of Rome.

Mr. Feely: Yes, Mr. Ó Loingsigh. We will leave that for a minute. What was annoying me there was the emphasis you placed on sovereignty. While I would accept most of what you say in relation to what should happen to this island, at the same time the EEC elections proved that the Irish people really had decided that we should join the EEC and accept the conditions of entry. If that meant a diminution of sovereignty so be it.

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: I accept that, but that does not stop me from trying to persuade you and Dr. FitzGerald that we may have made a mistake at that time. I would also like to persuade the Unionists

of the validity of the propositions I am making. That does not mean that I want to force them to my way of thinking.

Mr. Feely: In paragraph 2(c) of section 3 on page 1, you argue that Britain should withdraw their support from the Unionists. I agree with that, but in your opinion do the Unionists in the North have any right to their sense of Britishness and should that be protected?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: This is a very difficult question because emotionally they have every right. But if you say that because they feel British, they are then *per se* entitled to maintain British sovereignty on the island of Ireland against the wishes of the majority of the Irish people, I would say no.

Mr. Feely: I agree with you there. Would they then have the right to keep their British nationality under an Irish system?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: No, not their British nationality if you mean that British sovereignty would continue on the island. That does not exclude some kind of arrangement whereby their Britishness would be emphasised in other ways. You either have one sovereign power or another. If you try to confuse the issue you satisfy nobody. I was very interested in Mr. Curran's submission to the Forum because he enlightened me about the distinctions between west of the Bann and east of the Bann.

Mr. Feely: Maybe that is our problem at the moment, that our identity is denied to us whereas the British one is not. If we in turn do the same to the Unionists have we not got a similar situation?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: You go back then to the question of sovereignty.

Mr. Feely: That is not the problem with me.

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: I am afraid that this is the problem which exists in the island. My whole effort here this afternoon is to point out that the question of sovereignty is the basic issue at stake and we cannot concede on it. Either sovereignty lies with the Irish people as a whole or with the Parliament of Westminster. If you give the Parliament at Westminster the right to divide the Irish people and then the right to maintain its sovereignty on part of the island you are then saying that the Irish people as a whole do not have sovereignty.

Mr. Feely: I have to disagree there because I do not equate sovereignty with nationality.

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Neither do I. We are talking about the right of the Irish people as a whole to the sovereignty of Ireland or the right of the British Parliament to curtail that sovereignty and maintain its sovereignty in part of the island.

Mr. Feely: In the first paragraph of section 4 you warned against showing our hand. How else do you think we could sell a solution to the British or to anyone else? Surely today nobody will buy a pig in a poke?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Obviously there must be broad indications as to what we would like to happen in the new situation. If we go along and say we are willing to have new political formations in the island, that we are willing for the Unionists to have every say in the construction of these political formations, that is a broad indication of how open-minded we are prepared to be. But if we start going into the nitty-gritty the Unionists will have a sort of a cockshy at which to throw things.

Mr. Feely: On the top of page 2 towards the end of section 3 you say their assent should be sought but you do not say what happens if their assent is not granted.

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: If there is a solution between the sovereign powers in Westminster and Dublin and if the British declare their intention of withdrawing their sovereignty from the island of Ireland that would be a new situation and what will be required is the greatest consideration and generosity by the majority of the people to ensure that the Unionists will not be afraid. Possibly their greatest fear springs from the guilt Mr. John Robb said they might feel because of their actions as a beleaguered minority who were previously part of a minority which was ruling this country on behalf of England. The history of the twenty-six counties gives a reasonable indication that we are not a people looking for retribution but that we are looking for an opportunity to live in peace and harmony. We must convince them of that.

Mr. Feely: As an Irishman who has lived there for 25 years I can tell you that Senator John Robb is an exceptional type of Protestant individual. In relation to the next part of your paper, sections 4 and 5 appear to argue that unity is a long-term process. You use such language as "over a period of time" and "future Irish governments" and so on. If that is the case what do you see as the interim solution?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: I do not know whether you can find a proper interim solution or not. What we have tried to do on this island for

the last 14 or 15 years is to try to see if the British would find a solution to the problem. The British have proved themselves incapable of finding a solution. We must now see if the British and Irish Governments together can find a solution. We cannot expect an early solution. We need to win minds, to educate people and to win hearts.

Mr. Feely: I accept that but would you accept that an interim solution might be necessary?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Yes, but that interim solution would have to be judged on the basis of whether it made progress towards the ultimate goal of Irish sovereignty and whether it was opening minds rather than closing them.

Mr. Feely: I would accept that, otherwise I would not agree to the solution. In section 6 you said that:

It would be totally impermissible for the parties in the Forum to give countenance to any idea that this State would be willing to abandon or dilute its legal and political sovereignty.

I would like to know what is so sacred? I know you explained it earlier but that was more or less a long lecture on history. What is sacred about the legal and political sovereignty of the Twenty-six Counties? Would you not be prepared to dilute it to accept a federal system of Government?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: A federal system of government would not dilute the sovereignty of the Irish people. Maybe I am not making myself clear. So long as the British agreed to stop exercising sovereignty on this island we could build political institutions of different natures and maybe in that solution it might be that the political institution that we have down here will find the greatest pressure on itself in order to accommodate itself to the new situation.

Mr. Feely: I am in agreement there. I would accept a federal state.

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: I am not saying that a federal state is the only solution. There could be several solutions.

Mr. Feely: You seem to place a lot of emphasis on neutrality. Are you saying that neutrality as a principle is more important to the Irish people than unification?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: I am not. The two things are not mutually exclusive. A policy of intelligent, vibrant neutrality is the best way in

which Irish people can take their place among the nations of the world in this day and age.

Mr. Feely: That is not really my question. If the price of unification was giving up Irish neutrality would that be acceptable to you?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Not to me and I do not think that question should arise because —

Mr. Feely: The Irish people would accept that, certainly the Northern Irish.

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: If the Irish people would accept it I would have to go along because I am a democrat.

Mr. Feely: I cannot see how it is regarded as such a sacred cow.

Mr. Ó Loingsigh. For the reason that I have given.

Mr. Feely: Thank you, Mr. Ó Loingsigh.

Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Feely. Now we pass to Mr. Mervyn Taylor of the Labour Party.

Deputy Taylor: If, as you say, the Irish people are sovereign, is it not within their right to concede our neutrality if they were minded to do so?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Certainly.

Deputy Taylor: The tenor of your presentation seems to be directed, as you summarised it in paragraph 7, to inducing the British Government to making Irish unification the end of its policy whereas you give little or no thrust in your presentation to winning the hearts and minds of the Unionist population in Northern Ireland. Can you explain why that would be so?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Possibly it would be a reaction to the belief in many quarters that all one has to do is to win the hearts and minds of the Unionist people. I do not believe that you can win the hearts and minds of the Unionist people in the present set-up. The Six County state was established in order to give the Unionists ascendancy in a particular part of this island. So long as they have that ascendancy there is no way you can win their hearts and minds. It is an inbuilt situation. It is the old situation like putting the two rats into the cage; they will keep on fighting each other. Until you

break down that situation in which Unionists find themselves you will not be able to win their hearts and minds. The first step towards that is Britain declaring that she no longer has any interest in exercising sovereignty on this island. That does not mean pulling out the troops overnight; it means a responsible political position following from that.

Deputy Taylor: Would you agree that the history of the past 60 years indicates that at present, and for the foreseeable future at any rate, there is not the slightest indication that any British Government is going to alter or vary the guarantee that it gave?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: I would not say that. I think there are tendencies in Britain to come to grips with the Irish question; but, first, they have been inhibited I think by the fact that some British politicians believe — I have been told this myself by some of them — that they do not see the will here in the Twenty-six Counties to grasp the nettle of solving the Northern problem. I remember friends of mine and myself talking to British politicians during the time of the last Labour Government. Several times when one made a point the attitude of the Government in Dublin was quoted against one. With the Governments in Dublin and London working together there would certainly be a great possibility of the British realising their responsibility — because again we come back to the essential point, the Northern Ireland situation is not even number 500 on the agenda of any British Government. It is only when something happens there that causes, say, world interest that the British Government is reluctantly making it a priority issue while for the Government in Dublin or for the people on this island the Northern Ireland question is life and death, bread and butter day by day.

Deputy Taylor: If the Unionist community in Northern Ireland were to look at your presentation would they not see it as ignoring their position, going over their heads to the British Government, trying to induce them to have unification as their policy while making no concession to having discussions with them, our fellow Irishmen?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: They probably would at the moment; but, if they did, it would be a misunderstanding. I have tried to explain my whole position is that the key to open the door is the British declaration that they no longer wish to have sovereignty on this island. Once that key is supplied to you, it is up to the Irish people as a whole to come to any solution that does not disregard the opinions, traditions and weight of numbers. The weight of numbers alone is enough protection for Unionists on this island if they had no other. Not only that but I would say the Nationalist posi-

tion is a progressive one, judged by any standard, and the Nationalist tradition is not to look for revenge but to look for a coming together of the people so long as democracy and civil rights are respected.

Deputy Taylor: Can you explain why the weight of numbers would be any better for the Protestant community in the North in a united Ireland than it was for the Catholic community in the North in the minority situation there?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Because in the North the State was set up in order to ensure a Protestant-Unionist hegemony so as to continue British sovereignty on the island. In the Irish situation, where sovereignty was returned to the Irish people as a whole, our interest then would be in developing the characteristics and well-being of all our people purely from the point of view of self-interest if nothing else. We would have no big brother to look over our shoulders then.

Deputy Taylor: What are they to rely on in a united Ireland situation? Is it our generosity or something beyond that?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: No, they are to rely upon their own strength of numbers, their strength of enterprise, their culture and their religious belief.

Deputy Taylor: Would they not be entitled to look at our constitutional position and see what that would do for them?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Certainly. They are entitled to look for political formations that allow them to play a significant part in the running of affairs on this island, as they are entitled to do as a very substantial proportion of the people living on the island. The political institutions would have to reflect that and any political institutions that would not reflect that in my opinion would not stand.

Deputy Taylor: But your presentation indicates that nothing should be done about the political institutions, about constitutional positions at this stage, that that hand should be hidden as a negotiating weapon.

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: No, everything should be done in order to make improvements in the Twenty-six Counties, but we are inhibited from making great advances because of the existence of Partition. I say that anything you do without getting British agreement to surrender sovereignty on this island will be just tinkering with the problem and that you will not arrive at a solution.

Deputy Taylor: Is there any reason why, concomitant with trying to induce the British to do just that, we should not have a hearts-and-minds relationship with our fellow Irishmen in the North?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Absolutely. I want to make it quite clear that there should be far more intercourse. We should encourage our people to go up there and encourage the Northern Ireland people to come down here. That is one of the reasons we in the Irish Sovereignty Movement say that you are not likely to get a final solution except over a period of time and this time must be spent in winning the hearts and minds of the Unionist people and other people on the island who seem disaffected from what is happening at present.

Deputy Taylor: Is it not regrettable, then, that you did not put that factor into your presentation?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: We could have put it in the presentation but we felt that we should introduce the sovereignty aspect as being the crucial one in our opinion. We felt we should give that primary weight in our submission to the Forum. Other people have, as I learned in the past week — and we were sure this would happen — given other aspects priority in their submissions.

Deputy Taylor: A final question — do you think it is admissible that the Unionists in the North should be coerced into a united Ireland?

Mr. Ó Loingsigh: Not coerced, if you mean that they should be forced by military force or anything like that into a united Ireland; but political — shall I say — decisions should be taken which will bring the reality of their situation to bear upon them and they should then be encouraged if you like to take decisions which would be in their own interest in the light of those new political situations.

Chairman: Thank you very much. Tá mé buíoch díot. Before closing may I express my thanks to all those who made presentations here today and to the members of the Forum for enabling me to stay within the time scale.

The session is now at an end and the New Ireland Forum will resume on Thursday, 20 October 1983.

4.30 p.m. Session concluded.

DUBLIN:
PUBLISHED BY THE STATIONERY OFFICE.

To be purchased through any Bookseller, or directly from the
GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS SALE OFFICE,
SUN ALLIANCE HOUSE, MOLESWORTH STREET, DUBLIN 2.

£1.80

Wt. 143477. 2,400. 1/84. Cahill. (2589). G.Spl.