

Dear Sir:

*Many people in the Protestant Unionist population who had kinsmen as pioneers and explorers in North America or others who travelled the world in the work and service of empire, now find themselves in a cul-de-sac, confused, uncertain, feeling misunderstood and fearful. With different leadership, they might instead have been standing tall as the founding fathers of a New Ireland, at peace with itself, the sort of Ireland which Britain, in the turmoil of its post imperial years, might well be glad to have as a good neighbour in special relationship with it.*

*The world in which we are operating today is changed out of all recognition since 1971. The power and influence of Britain has waned while the self-confidence and self-esteem of the Irish people has grown to a degree unimaginable not so many years ago. Focus on Europe has replaced that which was once reserved for empire and later commonwealth. The Unionist world in which many of us were reared has gone forever. We are also far removed from the world of those who stood on the steps of the GPO in Dublin in 1916.*

*The challenge of a New Ireland is of the greatest relevance to that section of the population that remains most unconvinced by it and most opposed to it.*

*At a time when others have become ambivalent to it the Protestant Unionist community have most to gain by putting their stamp of commitment on it and by giving leadership for it. By taking the wind out of everyone's sails such would pass on to their children, a destiny that would endure in the annals of Ulster and Ireland in the generations to come.*

*Here then is the challenge, the building of a new all-inclusive Irish State. Will the Northern Protestant/Unionist people continue to remain in the laager of Irish history, or will they now come out to give and share in leadership as the founding fathers of something exciting, fresh and new?*

*The greatest tribute which we could pay to those who have fallen and to those others who have been so miserably disabled, would be the building of a truly new social order in a truly New Ireland based on tolerance, conservation, sharing and accountability. If we were able to hand on to future generations the legacy of an island community at peace with itself, then those who have suffered most might be able to feel that they had not suffered in vain.*

Signed: Dr. John Robb.