

**NEW IRELAND:  
SELL OUT OR OPPORTUNITY?**

**30 YEARS ON**

**New Challenge for the South!  
New Horizons for the North!**

**HOPE FOR ALL**



**NEW IRELAND:**  
**SELL OUT OR OPPORTUNITY?**

**30 YEARS ON**

**New Challenge for the South!**  
**New Horizons for the North!**  
**HOPE FOR ALL**

**JOHN ROBB**  
*New Ireland Group*

# INDEX.

An ‘Act of Historic Completion’ .....	page 1.
The New Ireland Group .....	page 6.
Introduction to PLAN ‘B’ .....	page 9.
NEW IRELAND .....	page 11.
Self-determination with Consensus: out of the Cul-de-Sac .....	page 14-17.
Principles and history: background to Proposals .....	page 14.
Consensus .....	page 14.
Democracy .....	page 16.
Self-Determination .....	page 17.
Lord Carson .....	page 18.
The Preferendum .....	page 25.
Challenge of the Future .....	page 28.
Landmarks of History .....	page 30.
Westminster disengagement .....	page 34.
Bunreacht na hÉireánn; Article 15 .....	page 36.
Where we are: where we might go! .....	page 37.
Proposals by N.I.G. to Forum for Peace And Reconciliation (1995) .....	page 38-44.
The ‘ROAD MAP’: PHASE I .....	page 38.
<b>People of Northern Ireland</b>	
British/Irish endorsing referenda .....	pages 38-39.
Peoples’ Fora .....	pages 40.
N.I. Consensus-seeking Conference .....	page 40.
Post Conference referendum/ preferendum .....	page 41.
The guarantors .....	page 41.
Failure! .....	page 42.
The ‘ROAD MAP’: PHASE II .....	page 43.
<b>The People of Ireland</b> .....	page 43.
Considerations for a New Ireland Consensus .....	pages 44-52.
Transition Period .....	page 44.
Appropriate degree of Autonomy .....	page 44.
British-Irish relationships .....	page 44.
Bill of Rights .....	page 45.
COMMUNITARIAN MANIFESTO	
(containing, Community Charter) .....	page 45.
-The micro-political dimension .....	pages 54-58.
Transitional Economy .....	page 45.
Explicit separation of Church and State .....	page 45.
Cross-cultural initiatives .....	pages 45-46.

Dissolution of the present Republic and Constitution, to create space for a new Ireland .....	page 46 No. 11.
Release of Prisoners .....	page 46.
Care of Victims .....	page 47.
Violence and Consequences .....	page 47.
Commonwealth Connundrum .....	page 48.
Comment from Cyprus .....	page 54.
<b>APPENDIX I:</b>	
<b>The Belfast Agreement</b>	
<b>The ‘Good Friday Agreement’ (G.F.A.)</b> .....	pages 59-86.
<b>A Synopsis:</b>	
Declaration of Support .....	page 60.
Constitutional Issues .....	page 60.
Strand I .....	page 64.
Strand II .....	page 68.
Strand III .....	page 70.
Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity: Human Rights.....	page 73.
Reconciliation and Victims of Violence .....	page 74.
Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity: Economic, Social and Culture .....	page 76.
Decommissioning .....	page 76.
<b>SECURITY:</b> .....	page 77.
Policing and Justice .....	pages 78-83.
Review of Criminal Justice System .....	page 84.
Prisoners .....	page 85.
<b>Validation, Implementation and Review</b> .....	page 86.
<b>Forward to the Future:</b>	
The National or Macro-political dimension .....	page 87-89.
<b>APPENDIX II:</b>	
Comment: Opening Session Revived Forum for Peace and Reconciliation Dublin (22-11-2002) .....	page 88-90.
Fall of Executive and Assembly?.....	page 88.
Sinn Féin’s position and Republican Movement .....	pages 88-90.
British Prime Minister’s Role in ‘decommissioning’ .....	page 89.
The yes noers! .....	page 89.
Synopsis for Movement into New Ireland .....	page 91.
Annex II: Looking in the mirror .....	page 92-93.
Compromise: The Federal Convention, Philadelphia (1787) .....	page 94.
‘Awake, before it is too late’ poem: W.R. Rodgers (1941) .....	page 95.
The late John O’Donnell (Balnamore) .....	page 96.

## FORWARD MOVEMENT: SUMMARY

Should the parties agree to re-establish the Assembly and re-convene the Executive then, for the time-being, matters should by and large continue as they have been. Even so, the day will come when constitutional change involving sovereignty for a new Ireland seems increasingly inevitable. When that happens, the proposals which we worked at through 1985 (for a festival at Eamhain Macha)<sup>41</sup> and 1989<sup>42</sup> to 1995<sup>43</sup> may achieve fresh relevance especially if the Assembly and Executive cannot, in their present context, be re-established. **Would it not be better, however, to seize the historic opportunity of NEW IRELAND now rather than to wait until it is thrust upon us? <sup>1</sup>**

### **Summary of proposals which could be applied to the current situation: and at the time of writing - September, 2003**

1. We would urge all of our elected representatives to continue to make a sustained effort to engage in inter-party political talks in order to determine whether or not it is possible to revive the provisions for government under the Good Friday Agreement (G.F.A.)
2. (a) If the G.F.A. cannot be re-established then the talks should, in our view, lead to the setting up of a Northern Ireland Constitutional Conference.
2. (b) The setting up of a process of satellite county and local community fora. The objective should be to encourage debate in open local forum in order to widen the range of approaches on how best to proceed to the future. Such an exercise should create more debating space for the elected participants attending the main inter-party talks and any succeeding Constitutional Conference.
2. (c) Provisions for the setting up and financing of satellite county and local community fora must ensure that significant historic minorities in each location are represented at the meetings by persons prepared and able to articulate the local minority's viewpoint.
3. The New Ireland Group's proposals for a Consensus Seeking Conclusion have been outlined already in reference to our submission to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. (see pages 38-42)

The London and Dublin Governments to affirm jointly that they would promote and would act as joint guarantors of a consensus-seeking process whereby the people of Northern Ireland, on a level playing field, could determine their future internal and external relationships;

That such be initiated by inviting the people of Britain to vote in a referendum indicating their endorsement or rejection of the proposition outlined on page 39, (Phase I)

<sup>1</sup> see 'Enough Religion to make us hate': Dean Victor Griffin: Columba Press (2002) page 109

## **A Northern Ireland Consensus - seeking Conference**

As far as possible election to the Conference should embrace a system such as the List System which seeks to ensure that the process is as inclusive as possible.

Such a Conference should hold its deliberation in four stages: (see pages 40-41) The appointment of a Consensor for the purpose of noting and listening to all options put forward by participants which seem worthy of serious consideration for the vote at the conclusion of the period of debate/discussion.

At the conclusion of the Conference's deliberations, all options proposed and amendments of such to be listed for **preferendum** (see page 25) voting by the representatives in order to determine which of these may claim the greatest degree of consensus

### **Post Conference Referendum in Northern Ireland.**

After the conclusion of the Conference the option determined by preferendum of the representatives to have the greatest degree of consensus to be put to the people of Northern Ireland for ratification by weighted majority voting in a referendum. (see page 41)

### **Consensus; the Pre-Condition of the Guarantors:**

A consensual outcome which is clearly not in conflict with the fundamental human rights of the citizen should be the only pre-condition for obtaining and retaining the endorsement of the British and Irish governments as guarantors.

### **Failure:**

Failure to obtain a consensual outcome would suggest that the process should be put on hold until such time as it can be re-activated.

Pending such re-engagement, Joint Authority or European Protectorate Status could be invoked as an **interim** measure to promote ongoing, secure, day-to-day government.

Such a development should not preclude the possibility that the people, given time, will be able to determine their own inter-and intra relationships democratically.

### **News sheet:**

That a news sheet summarising succinctly the ideas put forward during the dialogue process be published regularly either separately or by arrangement in the daily and weekly Irish newspapers.

### **Conclusion:**

On first reading, the process outlined could be interpreted as pointing in the direction of Negotiated Independence for Northern Ireland. Although Negotiated Independence is indeed one option, it is only one of many; federation and confederation with various qualifications and in various combinations come to mind as do other proposals which have been mooted over these violent years.

**Whatever the outcome the process should ensure democratic accountability and; wait for it!- transparency**

**Novel relationships** never yet considered or conceived, are not precluded by these proposals for progress based on the principle of consensus.

“It should be possible to find solutions, even solutions without precedent in international relations, for problems of this kind which arise from the complex and often irrational relationship that history has imposed on these two islands”<sup>2</sup>

**WE, in the New Ireland Group remain convinced that the New Ireland option which we endorse, remains the one which is most likely to heal the wounds of history and, in so doing, give to the people, who are most apprehensive about it, a renewed sense of purpose should they choose to give the leadership for it. The New Ireland should not be the Old Ireland in disguise.**

### **NEW IRELAND OPTION:**

Should the representatives indicate at the conclusion of the Northern Ireland Constitutional Conference that the New Ireland option is the most favoured one, then an all-Ireland Constitutional Convention would be called to consider its implications in the manner outlined below:

## **An All Ireland Constitutional Convention**

At the Northern Consensus-seeking Conference (see pages 40 and 43) the New Ireland option should have been advocated by those who believe that **as long as partition continues we will not have the genesis of *enduring*** peace and reconciliation in Ireland. In urging that the people - South as well as North - should be obliged to address the issues, an All-Ireland Constitutional Convention would have to be convened in order to determine, through their representatives, whether the people of the present Irish Republic were prepared to meet the Northern challenge in their affairs.

If such a Convention achieved its objective, the participants would then be obliged to promote the drafting of a provisional constitution that would describe arrangements for which consensus might be reasonably expected; this should then be put before the people for ratification by weighted majority vote, cast simultaneously throughout Ireland in both the North of Ireland and in the Irish Republic.

In the event of failure to achieve ratification in either part of Ireland, the draft proposals to be referred back to the all-Ireland Convention for further consideration and amendment and then put again to the people for a second trial for ratification and this process to continue unless and until it becomes apparent that such a conclusion cannot be reached in the prevailing political climate. In this situation the Northern people would be compelled to re-activate the Northern Consensus-seeking Conference (see page 40) in order to consider the other options which had been previously discussed at it.

<sup>2</sup>Towards a New Ireland: Garrett Fitzgerald (1972) pub: Charles Knight & Co. Ltd, P159

First edition March 2004  
Revised edition May 2004

**NEW IRELAND:  
SELL OUT OR OPPORTUNITY?**

**30 YEARS ON:**

**THE CHALLENGE RENEWED,  
PLAN B??**

To break out and to break into;- a new and increasingly peaceful future for all.

**THAT IS OUR OBJECTIVE  
THE OLD IRELAND HAS HAD ITS DAY  
LET US BUILD A NEW ONE TOGETHER.**

Anglo-Irish Irish Sectarian Conflict: a Legacy of Cyclical Violence.

***NOW!***

**BREAK LOOSE FROM THE CHAINS OF HISTORY**

**By John Robb Founder and former Chairperson: New Ireland Group.**

**Awake, before it is too late**<sup>113</sup>  
(see page 95)

<sup>113</sup> Collected poems; W. R. Rodgers: Oxford University Press: (1971) p. 51-52

# I.

## AN 'ACT OF COMPLETION'

When a violent conflict ends in stalemate, as ours seems to have, neither side is in a strong position to dictate terms yet this is what the Westminster government and the Republican Movement and Unionists seemed to be doing in relation to their various demands since the Good Friday Agreement was ratified. Should any one of the warring parties become arrogant enough to persist with significant demands, especially if the resolution of such is outside of the explicit remit of the Agreement (see page 59), then they run the risk of provoking others to resort to violence as the means of producing change.

In light of the lessons of Irish history, should we not be careful, therefore, about current demands being demanded of the Republican Movement to achieve objectives, which however desirable, are not *explicitly* demanded by the Agreement and, should Republicans not be exercising more sensitivity in their response to the hopes generated in the rest of us regarding what we felt was *implicit* through the drafting and ratification of the Agreement? (see para. 4, page 89)

### **Good Friday Agreement (G.F.A.):**

**We supported the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement (G.F.A.). We still support it yet we do so believing that, against the back-drop of our history, *enduring peace and reconciliation will not develop successfully throughout Ireland as long as the island is partitioned.*** This pamphlet is written to give encouragement to Irish people who would share our view and who yearn for the realisation of such a laudable objective - the anticipation of living as an island people at peace with ourselves and at peace with our neighbours. **Many of us feel that our hope in this regard seems to have been ignored in the current frenzy to create peace by placing our age-old sectarian conflict in cold storage within Northern Ireland's six counties.**

At the time of writing, the results of the Assembly elections of December 2003 have not been declared.

As indicated above, no-one 'won' a victory in what most of us must hope has been the last battle in a recurring cycle of '*interacting double conflict*' in these islands - one within Ireland and the other between Ireland and England. It seems strange that an 'Agreement', which went as far as it could<sup>3</sup> on the arms issue in order to achieve consensus, should now

---

<sup>3</sup> G.F.A: strand I :section 25: p.7: Annex A, P.10: section (b): Declaration of Support, para. 4: p.1: Decommissioning, para. 3, 4,p.20

be held to ransom by parties supporting it who are demanding that further progress is dependent on conceding to conditions which were not in it. Had these conditions, in reference to the issue of decommissioning and prisoner release, been more vigorously pursued back in 1998, as many unionists may now wish they had been, there might never have been an agreement at all! The recent vote within the U.U.P. in support of David Trimble may lead to realisation that progress towards enduring peace and reconciliation is only likely to occur by support for a courageous leadership which acknowledges the need for compromise (see annex III page 94).

### **‘Pro-Agreement’ Unionists: Voted Yes or No?**

Democrats are unlikely to deny that pro-Agreement Unionists are entitled to argue that they will not sit in an Executive with representatives of parties having associations with paramilitary organisations; yet they cannot, *as pro Agreement people*, argue that this is so because there was an explicit stipulation in the Good Friday Agreement to oblige all the fighting parties to hand over their weapons. Such an obligation may have been *implied* but it was not stipulated.

### **Pro-Agreement Republicans:**

If republicans wish to embrace a new generation of Irish people and at the same time give a lead in promoting communitarian and work-place democracy <sup>4</sup>, they could hardly do better than persuade their armed wing to announce that “the war is over” **in keeping with what so many of us understood to be *implicit* in the Good Friday Agreement.**

Both ‘sides’ conceded much to obtain the Agreement and the people of Ireland, both South and North, indicated their appreciation of what had been achieved by ratifying it overwhelmingly in 1998.

As a result, it might, by this time, have been possible for our politicians to have been standing on the threshold, giving leadership for the potential of the people to develop a truly New Ireland. Had they chosen to take such an opportunity they might by now have had their names etched, as founding Fathers in the memory of Irish people for generations to come. Through such achievement their children could have been assured of a destiny which would endure in the annals of Ulster and Ireland. Perhaps Unionists might now begin to think of more positive *attitudes* while Republicans consider *relevant actions* by way of response and encouragement.

Republicans have fought for a long time to obtain Irish independence. According to British generals, the British Army was at war with the Republican Movement just as the Republican Movement claims to have been at war with the British Army. No armed group won and so the most recent conflict concluded in stalemate. Neither ‘side’ would seem to be in a position to dictate to the other. Through dialogue leading to consensual outcome the people of Ireland could yet give a much needed lead to a world yearning for the resolution of its many problems without recourse to escalating violence. Should we choose to do so, we would be indicating a road map for the settling of recurring conflict, especially where its roots are buried deep in history.

---

<sup>4</sup> See our recently published pamphlet, ‘Out of the Past, A Divisive Democracy : Into the Future, A Citizen’s Alternative: New Ireland Group: (Sept,2003). Obtainable on request to John Robb, Ballymoney, Co. Antrim BT53 6AZ.

## ‘THE ACT OF HISTORIC COMPLETION’ ??

During the most recent crisis to befall the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly it became our view that the process of a final ‘Westminster Withdrawal’ from Northern Ireland should be much more seriously considered as the option which we should be addressing if we are to face the future with optimism for **enduring** peace and reconciliation and if we are to ensure that the obscenity of killing, maiming, mayhem and destruction ceases. To say the least, it would seem a worthy objective to build an island home at peace with itself and with its neighbours. The purpose of this pamphlet is to indicate how this might be achieved.

We believe that such a far-reaching ‘**Act of Historic Completion**’ could be achieved through the type of process which was outlined by the New Ireland Group many times throughout the 1980s and 1990s in published articles, letters and lectures <sup>5</sup>. In short, provided the political means were clearly seen to be consistent with transparent democratic process and result in a determination, based on consensus for it, then, in our view, validity would underpin what we were proposing as published in our submission to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation back in 1995 <sup>6</sup>

(see pages 37-52).

This pamphlet outlines the process which we believe could bring about a permanent resolution to the historic conflict in Ireland and at the same time give birth to an entirely new, democratic and all-inclusive society in which former unionists and nationalists could together build a state in which future generations should have justifiable pride. The pamphlet outlines the process as it was proposed in our submission to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation (1995) and also as we see it in the context of to-day. In brief, the process contained within this pamphlet may be summarised as follows:-

### **The pamphlet is divided into 4 main sections.**

With principles laid down on which a process involving self determination, democracy and consensus may be realised, we hold out a challenge to the descendants of the pioneering tradition of the Northern Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist population; in doing so, we also hold out a challenge to those Irish people living in the Republic to respond positively to what is being proposed. - To deal with this evolution towards a New Ireland will also require the vision, faith and courage of sound and determined leadership.

### **The background to each section is as set out below:**

- I. **The principles** on which the argument for the political/constitutional process is made. There is brief synopsis of *significant historical events* which would seem to justify a need to resolve this cycle of recurring political violence once and for all. (see pages 14-27 and 30-33)

<sup>5</sup> All of these have been lodged in chronological date order, with a date embargo on their viewing, in the Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

<sup>6</sup> ‘The De-partitioning of Ulster: Re-formation in Ireland’ Submission to Forum for Peace & Reconciliation: New Ireland Group: presented to and defended at Dublin Castle, Feb. 1995, PP 140 (Approx. 20,000 words) Also held in archives of N.I.G.

- II. **Our proposals for a process** are laid out firstly as they were when we submitted them to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin Castle in 1995 (prior to the G.F.A.) (see page 38) and subsequently in the context of today (see page 87)
- III. **We have included a synopsis of the G.F.A.** with comment on some of the difficulties inherent in it. (see pages 59-86)
- IV. **We revisit the process already mentioned** with regard to its relevance to the current climate of stalemate.(see page 38;87)

**There has been much talk recently about “acts of completion”. This pamphlet is published as a catalyst for an ‘act of historic completion.’**

**For this ‘ACT OF HISTORIC COMPLETION’, the process would involve:**

- 1. **A further political forum in which our political representatives, in parallel with facilities for on-going citizen input into the debate through public meetings combined with press and media opportunity, would consider the salient issues (see page 39-40).**
- 2. **A Northern Ireland Consensus - Seeking Conference (N.I.C.C.)** convened for our elected representatives to consider the constitutional options (see page 41)
- 3. **At the conclusion of the N.I.C.C.,assessment by our political representatives, through the use of the preferendum, of the constitutional option commanding the greatest degree of consensus.** (see pages 40-41)
- 4. **Referendum of the people using weighted majority vote** to decide whether or not they are prepared to ratify the option claiming the greatest degree of consensus as a result of the preferendum vote by our representatives at the conclusion of the N.I.C.C. (see No. 4, page 41)
- 5. **Referenda to be held in Britain and in the Irish Republic to determine whether these two countries are willing to Act as joint guarantors of the outcome of the consensus-seeking process to which the people of Northern Ireland had committed themselves.** (see pages 39)
- 6. **Should the people of Northern Ireland be persuaded to respond positively to the New Ireland option (see pages 43-52) it would be necessary to activate arrangements for an All-Ireland Constitutional Convention.**(See page 43, 86, 90) **followed by a means whereby the proposal for the constitution of the New**

**Ireland option could be ratified or rejected by the people of Ireland both in the South and in the North simultaneously.** (see page 53).

7. **Breakdown!** In the event of the process breaking down, a means for its further engagement at an appropriate time in the future. (see page 53)

### **\*A New Ireland in a New World**

\* Statement by Mahatma Gandhi, as found and transcribed in the museum at his tomb place during a visit to it on 14 December 1963.

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.”

## II

### FOREWORD:

#### THE NEW IRELAND GROUP

On more occasions than our older members may care to remember, people have asked at our open meetings that they be told what the New Ireland Group stands for!!

Put in a nutshell, such could be summarised as follows:-

- **CONSENSUS DEMOCRACY**, (*as distinct from majoritarianism*)
- **INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT**,\*  
*\*(effective empowerment (ie economically supported) exercised with democratic accountability at all levels of decision-making in particular in the local community and in the work place)†*
- **REDEMPTIVE POLITICS** (*acknowledgement of what we, as Irish people in our different traditions, have done to each other through attitude as well as by action over many generations and to seek atonement for this, and to do so in the hope that the response may promote a catharsis which dissolves the destructive tension in our difference.) In spite of the strides which have already been made by the churches, perhaps they need to give a much more imaginative and courageous lead in this respect?*

Furthermore, a small green card which outlines the Role and Aims of the New Ireland Group (N.I.G.) may be obtained on request from our very diligent secretary.

#### ROLE AND AIMS of NEW IRELAND GROUP

##### (I).....AIMS:

The attainment of a New Ireland by,

**1.1....creating, through dialogue and persuasion,  
a just, caring, non-sectarian and multi-cultural society\***

† Communitarian manifesto; Out of the Past: a Divisive Democracy; Into the Future, a Citizen's Alternative: Published by New Ireland Group: Coleraine Printing Company: Setp, 2003.

Reviews in 'RESURGENCE': No. 221: Nov-Dec, 2003: P. 65. Irish News: Roy Garland: 10-11-2003

\*See note on page 5

**1.2....requiring legislation so as to establish the framework for a pluralist society that embraces the whole of Ireland in keeping with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the provision for Human Rights in Ireland consistent with any local Bill of Rights ratified as a result of the Good Friday Agreement; such legislation must place particular emphasis on acceptable safeguards for minorities**

**1.3....achieving through consensus, equitable, progressive and participatory forms of government at all levels and**

**1.4....recognising and promoting the right of free expression of all cultures and traditions within Ireland and actively encouraging interaction between them.**

**(II)  
ROLE:**

**2.1.1....To provide a forum and support for those who seek political reconciliation in Ireland through the revival of the radical dissenting traditions in Irish Christian allegiances, as well as encouraging radical social engagement among those of all religious persuasions or none**

**2.1.2....challenging all opinions and practices which promote sectarian domination in any part of Ireland**

**2.2.1....To promote awareness and responsibility at local Community level for all matters affecting the health,enterprise and esteem of the people by**

**....encouraging the development of de-centralised forms of government and democracy so that all citizens may become involved in effective decision making wherever they live and wherever they work**

**2.2.2....supporting radical new proposals to overcome poverty, to challenge unfettered capitalism and to alleviate social injustice in Ireland and overseas**

**2.2.3....Considering proposals to meet the economic, political, cultural and ethical challenges of the current technological and scientific revolution**

**2.2.4....promoting a healthy, unpolluted environment throughout urban and rural Ireland with respect for global ecology.**

**2.2.5....To promote and encourage the development of democracy based on consensus as the alternative to majoritarianism and to develop the means by which consensus is to be achieved.**

More expansive coverage of our philosophy and proposals are to be found in the 40,000 word submission which we defended in Dublin Castle at the New Ireland Forum (1983) and the further 20,000 word submission which we defended in 1995 at the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation.

Two pamphlets have just been completed (, 2003), a ‘Communitarian Manifesto’<sup>7</sup> and the current booklet, ‘New Ireland: Sell Out or Opportunity’, which deals with the principles which we have been discussing over many years and, as such, offers a possible and, we trust, a convincing, road-map to be followed on the journey to New Ireland. Each of these publications is intended to be the complement of the other. Both are based on the historical description of ‘democracy’ as “taking the people into partnership.”<sup>8</sup>

The Communitarian Manifesto contains a 10 point Community Charter to point the way, as the 21st century proceeds, to appropriate democratic participation and accountability in institutions *and* in local communities, in particular in those communities in which there is a high level of social marginalisation and alienation.

In spite of our support for the G.F.A. we recognise how frail its workings have become. We therefore offer the proposals in this pamphlet as a possible PLAN B in the event of failure to revive the Agreement or in the event of further failure at some time in the future.

Food for Thought,

John Robb, founder member, former Chairperson and former Consensor of the New Ireland Group.

<sup>7</sup> Communitarian Manifesto: ‘Out of the Past; a Divisive Democracy: Into the Future; a Citizen’s Alternative’ :: Pamphlet by New Ireland Group: Coleraine Printing Co.: Sept,2003 (pp. 25-35)

<sup>8</sup> The Greeks: Anthony Andrewes: Hutchinson (1967) p.61

**III**

**INTRODUCTION**

**TO**

**PLAN ‘B’**

**The New Ireland Group supported the Good Friday Agreement.**

**The New Ireland Group still supports the Good Friday Agreement.**

**Nevertheless, because of flaws contained within the Agreement, the New Ireland Group now urges Nationalists, Republicans and disenchanted Unionists to consider or to re-consider the challenge of building a truly New Ireland in order to achieve the enduring peace and reconciliation which has been denied to our long-suffering people for too long.**

In making our appeal to the people to work with and for each other in building the New Ireland *together*, there can be few invocations more powerfully expressed than the reference to Henry Grattan found in *‘Thomas Davis; Selections from his Prose and Poetry’*<sup>9</sup>

As many readers may recall Henry Grattan was a Protestant member and leader of the 18th century Patriot Party in the old Irish Parliament.

“In describing Grattan’s early and ceaseless advocacy of Catholic liberty, Mr. Madden<sup>10</sup> has a just subject for unmixed eulogy. Let no one imagine that the interest of these Emancipation speeches (by Grattan) has died with the achievement of what they pleaded for; they will ever remain divinist protests against the vice and impolicy of religious ascendancy, of sectarian bitterness, and of bigot separation.

For this admirable beginning of the design of giving Ireland its most glorious achievement -the speeches of its orators- to contemplate, the country should be grateful; there cannot be anything better for it to hear than can be had in Grattan’s speeches.”

**“Reader! If you be an Irish Protestant, and entertain harsh prejudices against your Catholic countrymen, study the works and life of Grattan - learn from him - for none can teach you better how to purify your nature from bigotry. Learn from him to look upon all your countrymen with a loving heart - to be tolerant of infirmities caused by**

<sup>9</sup> ‘Thomas Davis: Selections from his prose and poetry’ with introduction by T.W.Rolleston (1890s): The Gresham Publishing Co., page 130.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Owen Madden:: 18th. cent. Author and sometime critic of Henry Grattan

their unhappy history -and like Grattan, earnestly sympathise with all that is brave and generous in their character.

“Reader! If you be an Irish Catholic, and that you confound the Protestant religion with tyranny, learn from Grattan that it is possible to be a Protestant and have a heart for Ireland and its people. Think that the brightest age for Ireland was when Grattan -a steady Protestant- raised it to proud eminence; think also that in the hour of his triumph he did not forget the state of your oppressed fathers but laboured through his virtuous life that you and your children should enjoy unshackled liberty of conscience.

“But reader! Whether you be Protestant or Catholic, or whatever be your party, you will do well as an Irishman/Irish person to ponder upon the spirit and principles which governed the public and private life of Grattan. Learn from him to regard your countrymen of all denominations. Observe, as he did, how very much that is excellent belongs to both the great parties into which Ireland is divided. IF (as some of you do) you entertain dispiriting views about Ireland, recollect that any country containing such elements as those which roused the genius of Grattan never need despair. *Sursum corda*. Be not disheartened.

“Go-go-my countrymen and, within your social sphere, carry into practice those moral principles which Grattan so eloquently taught, and which he so remarkably enforced by his well-spent life. He will teach you to avoid hating men/people on account of their religious professions or hereditary descent. From him you will learn principles which, if carried out, would generate a new state of society in Ireland.”

## NEW IRELAND

**“There must be new discoveries made of a new Ireland, the old will not serve to satisfy these engagements”<sup>11</sup>**

In the pamphlet **“New Ireland, Sell Out or Opportunity” (1972)<sup>12</sup>** the Northern Protestant Unionist people were urged to seize the initiative by establishing themselves as co-founding fathers of a truly New Ireland. It was argued that this would vest them with an enduring sense of purpose and would earn for them the respect of their fellow Irish men and women<sup>12/13</sup>. *Much has happened in the intervening period to weaken the position from which they might have operated all those years ago.* Even though the Unionist people were so ruthlessly assailed by the Irish Republican Movement over 25 years, it is nevertheless disconcerting to conclude that a woeful lack of vision combined with a lamentable lack of imaginative leadership has kept them so consistently on the political defensive. In the 1972 pamphlet to which reference is made, we identified the dilemma and the challenge:-

‘Rather than waiting to be slowly spurned by the people of a changing Britain, rather than waiting to be out voted into an Ireland with which they had little empathy, rather than waiting to decline without significant purpose for remaining in the land of their birth and that of their forbears, it was suggested, back in 1972, that they might instead have pursued a vision of Ireland for which they could have given courageous leadership, an Ireland in which the obscenity of sectarianism would no longer dominate to undermine both individual and collective well-being’.

At that time we acknowledged that, in the minds of a significant number of Northern people, ‘United Ireland’ implied absorption of the Northern six counties by the Southern twenty six with all that that implied in those now far off days. It was therefore necessary to emphasise, on the contrary, that New Ireland implied sitting down with fellow Irish women and men in order to **draft for ratification a completely new constitution which would reflect, in its articles, the degree of consensus which would be required to underlie any claim to unity.**

<sup>11</sup> Earl of Ormond, 1660:: Although this was a reference to the need for land, the same might be said today in a different context!

<sup>12</sup> *New Ireland ;Sell Out or Opportunity’*:: Pamphlet: J.D.A.Robb: Irish News,p11-13, (1972)

<sup>13</sup> Submission by N.I.G. to New Ireland Forum: The Constitutional Issue,Section II, page19-20 (1983)

## **Challenge:**

In re-stating the obvious, that 'six into twenty six' would not go, that the New Ireland could not be the Old Ireland in disguise, *that implicit in the ending of partition would be the dissolution of the present Irish constitution and twenty six county state*, a challenge was being put not only to leaders of unionism but also to political leaders in the Republic of Ireland as well.

We are well aware that thus far most members of the Unionist community have not been prepared to consider such a possibility and - for a long time - they continued to look across the water for their salvation and this in spite of all the indications since 1922 that Westminster did not wish the Irish dilemma to intrude ever again in the domestic politics of Great Britain. Nevertheless, in more recent years the Unionist community begins to feel less confident in the old kith and kin arguments which gave to it its feeling of security through previous generations. We therefore wait in hopeful anticipation for further indications from the people of the Irish Republic that they are genuinely open to *negotiation on the basis of consensus* for new constitutional arrangements. (As a start they could list their obligations under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement (G.F.A., see pages 73-74). and then indicate the degree of progress achieved on each one of them)

## **Out of the Cul-de-Sac - Self-Determination with Consensus:**

The Right to Self-determination is a fundamental human right enshrined in **Article 1, Clause 1 of the United Nations Covenants on Human Rights** (see page 17). We have argued for years that such right, whether for Unionists or Nationalists - Loyalists or Republicans, must be earned through the achievement of consensus for what is being determined. This has led us to consider what is meant by consensus, how it may be achieved and what are the possible ways of measuring it<sup>13/14</sup>

However, living in Northern Ireland has also convinced us that schemes for consensus, which may appear to be appropriate in National Assemblies and National Parliaments, may seem vaguely eccentric elsewhere whenever it is blatantly obvious that no such consensus exists in estates and neighbourhoods on the ground. **Hence, the New Ireland Group has recently published a Community Charter contained within an update of our Communitarian Manifesto which addresses issues surrounding powerlessness and low self-esteem when trying to struggle with the difficulties imposed by on-going change.**<sup>15</sup>

In the Charter we indicate how people could be empowered to the point where they would be able to respond to change as a challenge rather than as a threat and thus begin to value, rather than back away from, interaction with the input and experience of others from different backgrounds than their own. We would therefore hope that, slowly yet surely, *consensus will be built from the ground up* in addition to having its implications considered by politicians, intellectuals and others living at some distance from those who feel marginalized.

In these respects, we have for some time been considering the work of one of our long-

<sup>13</sup> Submission by N.I.G. to New Ireland Forum: The Constitutional Issue, Section II, page 19-20 (1983)

<sup>14</sup> Submission by N.I.G. to Forum for Peace and Reconciliation: A, Section III, page 35-36 (1995).

<sup>15</sup> Out of the Past: a Divisive Democracy:: Into the Future: a Citizen's alternative. Pages 25-35 (June 2003)

standing members, who calls on us to acknowledge the interdependence of local communities inter-acting with each other both locally and globally: and this would seem particularly relevant in a world less defined than it once was by national boundaries, boundaries which were by and large imposed by violence and thereafter sustained by force.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the world-view of small transcendent, interdependent autonomies may well be suggesting the answer to a global society at logger-heads because of all the artificial boundaries which have been imposed upon it by violence in the past.

Another member, has developed novel methods for the assessment of the degree of consensus that exists for any given topic or candidate seeking election.<sup>17</sup>

In a letter to the press published around the time of publication of ‘New Ireland : Sell Out or Opportunity’(1972), a concluding question was posed:

“Where is the leader with the charisma to take up the challenge?” The person in mind has since and quite sadly led many of his people into a political cul-de-sac.

While acknowledging that considerable change in understanding has taken place on all sides in Northern Ireland in recent years we feel, nevertheless, for those many members of the Protestant, Unionist/Loyalist population, whose former kinsmen were pioneers and explorers in the hey-day of Empire, yet who now seem cornered into a cul-de-sac, confused, uncertain, feeling misunderstood and fearful, ill-equipped to face further challenge of fundamental yet inevitable change in this era of most rapid change. With different leadership they could instead have been standing tall as founding fathers of a New Ireland at peace with itself, the sort of independent Ireland which Britain, in the turmoil of its post-imperial years, might well have been glad to have as a good neighbour in special relationship with it.

### **Momentum of History: A paradox for Unionists, a reminder to Nationalists:**

The world in which we are operating today is changed out of all recognition since 1972. 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. In the Anglicised world, focus on Europe has replaced that which was once reserved for Empire and Commonwealth.

*The Unionist world in which so many of us were reared has gone for ever. We are also far removed from the world of those who stood on the steps of the G.P.O. in Dublin on Easter Monday, 1916.*<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> ref. N.I.G.Submission to Forum for Peace & Reconciliation (1995) page, 119-120.

<sup>17</sup> Lecture delivered to Open Meeting in Senior Staff Common Room, Q.U.B. (2002) by Peter Emerson as result of his long standing involvement in the Balkans

<sup>17</sup> ‘The Politics of Consensus for the resolution of conflict and reform of Majority Rule’: P.J.Emerson:: Noel Murphy (Printing): Belfast : pp 140

<sup>18</sup> Self-Determination,(see page 17), Consensus, (see above & p14-16), Democracy, (see page 16), Preferendum, (see pages 25-27), Footnote on violence, see N.I.G. submission on Violence, Law and Order - Police: [Submission to Forum for Peace and Reconciliation - 1995](#) (pages 118-123.), All-Ireland views of Lord Carson, (see this pamphlet pages 21-25)

## IV

### PRINCIPLES & BACKGROUND ON WHICH THE PROPOSALS ARE BASED

#### (i). CONSENSUS

What do we mean by consensus?

What are the means of achieving consensus?

What are the means of assessing consensus?

#### **Meaning of Consensus:**

Any community which can agree on how to govern itself, which can demonstrate compliance with the fundamental human rights of the individuals composing it and which recognises its fundamental obligations with regard to such rights for others who do not belong to it, has earned the right to self-determination. Human Rights are indivisible. Global liberty and Local liberty are interdependent.<sup>19</sup>

The right to BE tempered by the need to BELONG with the obligation to SHARE today and CONSERVE for tomorrow is an ideal basis of consensus.

#### **Means of achieving consensus:**

Both the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland inherited the British system of Parliamentary democracy. Because of the historical association with this system, both North and South of Ireland have been slow to grasp that straightforward parliamentary majority rule, acceptable in Britain -where, until comparatively recently, consensus could by and large be taken for granted - seems inappropriate in a divided Ireland -where, thus far, consensus has eluded us. It is to European and other models that we should be looking if we are to capture imaginatively the means of achieving consensus.

The challenge of consensus poses fundamental questions concerning the distribution of power and the right of the citizen to participate *effectively* at local community and district levels as well as in local, regional and national elections. Consensus must be felt where we live and work, not just in Council chambers, Regional assemblies and National parliaments and it should be felt right down to locally elected Community Associations.

Thus, the Principle of Subsidiarity<sup>20</sup> should be a central tenet in the promotion of consensus. As a principle, its promotion is held up to ridicule if it cannot embrace devolution of power for effective decision-making far beyond that of a grudging devolution from Brussels to National Parliaments.

If we are to be serious about our challenge to **centralism**, perhaps the day may come when we will encourage the autonomy of the counties and any other small areas in which the boundaries are not in contention, and that such autonomy will be yielded on condition that each enters into a network of interdependent autonomous small places in a Global context.

<sup>19</sup> A Global Challenge: 'The Age of Consent': as distilled from a wide-ranging address by the distinguished journalist and author, George Monbiot, Elmwood Hall, Belfast (9-10-2003)

<sup>20</sup> 'Church and State in Modern Ireland 1923-1979': J.H.Whyte: Gill and Macmillan (1980) p67 and p356

By thus transcending the nation states with a myriad of autonomous small communities in sharing and supportive relationship with each other, traditional animosities might also be transcended by such new and novel associations. Even should this become possible, Human nature being what it is, the 'centres' of regions and national areas embracing these 'new' autonomies would be obliged for some time to come to retain some overall influence to ensure fair play for all, both within and beyond the networks involved.

Regional and Supra-regional guide-lines would remain desirable to ensure that economic power is moved on a sliding scale, "to improve the balance between that of privileged communities/districts and the economic power of the more deprived communities/districts"<sup>21</sup>

### **Decentralisation: Autonomy:**

It is much easier for the centralised systems of the world to control societies which only develop an infinitely small fraction of each individual's resourcefulness than it would be for them to create the conditions which would develop people in order to liberate the talents of their completeness. We should therefore be on our guard against centralist solutions, - e.g. 'the re-direction of labour' - and look instead to *community solutions*, - e.g. 'the relocation of opportunity'. *The centralist may see the solution in terms of 'de-centralisation' whereas the community orientated person sees the solution in terms of 'autonomy'.*

'De-centralisation' may too easily imply the handing back of as little as possible in order to keep control of as much as possible whereas 'autonomy' implies the *taking back* of responsibility with insistence on accountability for all matters affecting the health, enterprise and esteem of the people, in community and in the region.

Among the many matters to be taken into consideration when addressing the means of achieving consensus are the following:-

- a. **The voting system** e.g. proportional representation, unitary list system, (the whole region in which an election is to take place, is treated as a single constituency), proportional voting, straight referenda, the preferendum (multiple choice referendum see page 25) etc.
- b. **The redistribution of power** so that, with appropriate checks and balances and within the constraints of regional and national guidelines, power -which implies economic power- may be moved on a sliding scale away from affluent communities towards marginalized ones for more effective local community *collective* decision-making in the determination of priorities. (see N.I.G's. **Communitarian Manifesto, Community Charter**<sup>21</sup>).
- c. **Structures at regional and national level** such as confederation, federation, consociation, cantonisation, home rule, power sharing arrangements and so on.
- d. **The constitutions of other countries** which have or have had similar problems such as South Tyrol, Spain, India, Canada, Switzerland.
- e. **The lessons to be learnt from constitutional arrangements which have been**

<sup>21</sup> 'Communitarian Manifesto:: Out of the Past; a Divisive Democracy:: Into the future; A Citizen's Alternative':: New Ireland Group: Community Tax System., para. 4, p. 33 (Sept 2003):: Coleraine Printing Co.

**successful**, countries with a vibrant economy which experience a consistent stability e.g. West Germany/Re-united Germany, Norway, Iceland and USA. The Icelandic THYNG is the true ‘Mother of Parliaments’ where, long ago, on a huge open arena *all* the Icelandic people were offered access to democratic participation on matters of concern to them.

- f. **The lessons to be learnt from those countries whose constitution has failed**, such as the previous constitution of Lebanon and the failure of Yugoslavia in the post-Tito era.

### **Means of assessing Consensus:**

While separate electoral registers have been advocated in the past and while the concept of weighted majority voting is now generally understood and acceptable, it is surely time to think more seriously about using the referendum (see page 25.) as the most advanced simple means to date available for the democratic assessment of consensus.

## **(ii) DEMOCRACY**

Herodotus described ‘democracy’ as “taking the people into partnership”.<sup>22</sup> Consensus is a reflection of this feeling of partnership. Where consensus is felt to exist, a straight majority vote may well prove acceptable as means of collective decision-making.

On the other hand, persistent exclusion of a particular minority by straight majority voting will ultimately lead, through frustration, to fragmentation of the consensus that made the straight majority vote acceptable in the first place. *In today’s world it is clear for all to see that the marginalisation of minorities has been responsible for much social and political disaffection.* Powerlessness with comfort -as pertains in many sections of affluent Western society- may merely result in an accommodating apathy; powerlessness with discomfort, especially that associated with social deprivation, leads inexorably beyond frustration to resentment, and then to anger, a likely harbinger of violence.

### **Secession, an expression of failed consensus:**

Where consensus does not exist, majority *vote* comes to be perceived as majority *rule*. **As a result, a significant minority may wish to secede.** In the aftermath of the 1918 General Election result,(see page 32) Irish Republicans - a plurality, if not a majority, in Ireland (see page 33), a minority in the United Kingdom- opted for secession from the United Kingdom. Northern Loyalists followed suit when they, as an Irish minority, opted for exclusion from the Irish Free State in accordance with the provision of Article 12 of the Treaty between Britain and Dáil Éireann in 1921. The logical progression of such failure to achieve consensus might lead (perish the thought) to a desire for repartition.<sup>23</sup>

Short of secession, however, there are numerous political devices available and already alluded to (see above, b,c,d,e, page 15) for the achievement of consensus. Moreover, in today’s global village, secession in itself is a contradiction in terms. It is

<sup>22</sup> ‘The Greeks’: Antony Andrewes; Hutchinson (1967), p.61

<sup>23</sup> Demographic Map - Catholics as a proportion of the total population (1981) on p. 681 of ‘Ireland, Politics & Society’: J.Lee, Cambridge (1991), taken from ‘Ireland: A Positive Proposal’: Kevin Boyle and Tom Hadden, Penguin Special, Harmondsworth, (1985), p.36.

being borne in on us progressively that independence for the person, community, region or nation is not valid outside of a relationship of interdependence with the wider community of which we are but one part. ‘Autonomy’ has overtaken ‘independence’ as the optimal state in self-determination

‘*Ourselves with others*’ rather than ‘*Ourselves alone*’ is the realistic - as well as the idealistic- slogan for creative survival. Back in the 1970s some of us were challenging this translation of ‘Sinn Féin’. We concluded that, better even than ‘*Ourselves with others*’, the New Ireland would be best served by the slogan, ‘*Ourselves for others*’ or, in the words of a famous American President, ‘Think not what your country can do for you but rather what you can do for your country’

Some months ago, on radio, Paul Murphy, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, summed up the challenge most succinctly with the phrase, ‘*Ourselves together*’<sup>24</sup>

### (iii) SELF-DETERMINATION

The United Nations Covenants on Human Rights affirm in Article 1, Clause 1, that:-

“All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural developments”

The implications of this fundamental human right are considerable. If, by adverting to it, Irish Republicans had continued to affirm -as an inalienable right- the right of the people of Ireland to immediate self-determination at the same time as Northern Ireland Loyalists were affirming-as an inalienable right- the right of the people of Northern Ireland to self-determination then this ‘fundamental’ human right, the right to self-determination, would have continued to provide a justification for conflict rather than for its resolution.<sup>24</sup>

In each case, the majority assumes that it has the right to determine for the minority what is right for them. ***It follows, therefore, that the democratic right to self-determination requires qualification.*** The right to BE must ever be qualified by the need to Belong.

Justification of the right to self-determination is deeply rooted in the historical description of *democracy* as “taking the people into partnership.”<sup>25</sup>

The democratic right to self-determination should not therefore be a recipe for majoritarianism; its validity rests on the need to demonstrate consensus in support of it. This then begs the questions which we endeavour to address (see pages 14-16 above); whether or not those who drafted the G.F.A. took into account the N.I.G’s observations in these respects.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, the roles of Dublin and London in relation to their respective claims to

<sup>24</sup> Census figures should not be used as a sectarian weapon: Irish Times, p. 16, Th. Dec. 19 -2002

<sup>25</sup> The Greeks: Antony Andrewes., Hutchinson (1967), p.61

<sup>26</sup> Submission by New Ireland Group to The Forum for Peace and Reconciliation (1995) p.37-38

sovereignty over Northern Ireland, as well as the interest which each inevitably has in the affairs of the other, have been highlighted by the Political Economist, Professor Joe Lee<sup>27</sup> The conclusion that the democratic right to self-determination must indeed be earned through the achievement of consensus is supported by **Article 1, Clause 3 of the U.N. Covenants taken in conjunction with Article 76C of the Charter of the United Nations.**

**Article 1, Clause 3** of both U.N. Covenants affirm:-

“The State’s Parties to the present Covenants, including those having responsibilities for the administration of Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories (? Northern Ireland) shall promote the realisation of self-determination and shall respect the right in conformity with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.”

**Article 76C** of the Charter of the United Nations asserts the need:-

“To encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction and to **encourage recognition of interdependence of the peoples** over the world.”

In other words, the Nation State is no longer in a position to exercise absolute sovereignty over its affairs if indeed this was ever a realistic possibility.

Sovereignty in today’s world is becoming more and more conditional. The old assumption that there is something inherently democratic in action based on the will of the majority is a contradiction unless the minority or minorities, to which the majority relates, have been clearly accommodated in consensus.

Majoritarianism is not democracy; one has only to consider the absurd example of the elected majority, after each election, voting to imprison all members of the minority until it is time to let them out again in order to exercise their vote in the next election!

#### (iv) AN ENIGMA

#### **LORD CARSON: QUINTESSENTIAL IRISHMAN OR DEMAGOGUE?**

In spite of or perhaps because of the consequences of the spoken word when uttered by a leader of Lord Carson’s stature and strength of personality, a mixture of truth and falsehood is almost bound to surround him in the spreading of anecdote regarding his personality and character depending on the point of the political spectrum from which the interested person is coming. Hence, before trying to give a balanced comment on the impact of Lord Carson on our consciousness and the effect his attitudes and actions could have had and then, from that, to determine in which direction he might be leading us today, readers should perhaps, first of all, recall the words of Edward Hoch (1849-1925):-

<sup>27</sup>‘Ireland, 1912-1985.Politics and Society’: Professor J.J. Lee: Cambridge(1989), para2, p. 682.

“There is so much good in the worst of us  
And so much bad in the best of us  
That it hardly becomes any of us  
To talk about the rest of us”

### (a). **Father Hassan and Lord Carson**

While it would seem that Lord Carson was a complex person who, like so many of us, contained contradictions in attitude and action and, while he seems to have had reservations concerning the partition of Ireland, it must also be pointed out that he, like so many people holding extraordinary influence over others, was able, through the provocation and passion of his oratory, to influence his followers in such a way as to have his ‘opponents’ hounded in a most cruel and spiteful manner both out of their homes and out of their work-place. Nevertheless, he had, like so many of us many sides to the make-up of his opinions. He could present as ‘entrenched’ and he could also appear ‘enlightened’.

**The 1922 publication, ‘Facts and Figures of the Belfast Pogroms, 1920-22’** was written by the late Father John Hassan of Ballymoney and St. Mary’s Church, Belfast under the pseudonym of G.B.McKenna. What is re-printed from that publication shows what may happen as a consequence of a strong personality acquiring demagogic influence over the public imagination.

Taken from sections of that book are words and subsequent actions which led to the terrorising of the Catholic workers in Belfast in 1920,

**“INTRODUCTION”** .....” Those who read **Facts and Figures of the Belfast Pogrom** will see what is meant by ‘Pogrom’, the brutal persecution of a minority by an armed and hostile majority”<sup>28</sup>

#### **“OMENS OF PEACE.”**

“Since the Pogrom of 1912, when all Catholics were temporarily driven out of the shipyard of Workman and Clark, Belfast had enjoyed a period of peace remarkable for that city. Relations between the workers of various creeds had become quite friendly. The shipyard strike of 1919 revealed a wonderful thing in the political history of the city. There had been growing up steadily and unobtrusively a feeling of the solidarity of Labour and a tendency to forget the differences of Orange and Green in attempts to achieve objects of common interest to the workers in Belfast, irrespective of creed and politics. The movement culminated in the 44-hour strike, when the shipyard workers, under the chairmanship of a Catholic trade unionist, carried the struggle almost to victory. It was probably the only occasion in the industrial history of Belfast when the reactionary employing classes of the city felt that their hold was slipping and that the old game of setting the Protestant and Catholic workers at each other’s throats was failing” .....

#### **.... “A BOGUS TRADE UNION”**

“The wire-pullers in high places were aghast at the apparent failure of the old slogans to carry disunion into the worker’s camp, and after the collapse of the strike they were not long in setting to work to make sure that never again should such a situation be allowed to develop. The result was the formation of the bogus and sectarian trade union called the Unionist Labour Party, under the

<sup>28</sup> Facts and Figures: **‘THE BELFAST POGROMS:1920-22’**:O’Connell Publishing Co.:Introduction by Tom Donaldson (1997)

direction of Sir Edward Carson, and favoured by the Tory employers. The political activities of this party were completely successful in driving a solid wedge between the Protestant and Catholic workers, and in fostering among the former a spirit, which was soon to show itself in the shipyard pogrom.

One can only guess at the various devices by which the Carsonist leaders stifled the growing spirit of comradeship in the Orange working men. But enough to know that it was done, and that those who in January stood round the same platforms and cheered with their brother Catholics were ready by July, at the call of Carson to attack those same fellow workers with the ferocity of wild beasts.”

### **“THE FIERY CROSS”**

“On the twelfth of July 1920, at Finaghy, a suburb of Belfast, Sir Edward Carson delivered a very bitter speech, outlandish, one would say for any man holding such a responsible position, to the assembled Orange brethren. Of course it was religiously read by all his followers in Ulster. The chief theme of the harangue was that loyalists of Ulster were in imminent peril from Sinn Fein, that he was losing hope of the Government’s defending them, and that they must be up and doing to protect themselves *“And these are not mere words,”* he said, *“I am sick of words without action. He dragged* in the Catholic Hierarchy and the priests. The speech was altogether a good example of the “Raw-head-and-bloody-bones” kind and well calculated to excite the fanatical elements.....”

### **“THE ORANGE PRESS TAKES UP THE CRY”**

...” **Between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup>,** the Orange Press lent itself to the publication in a prominent way of a number of letters. There was no camouflage regarding Sinn Fein here, but call to battle of Protestant against Catholic in Belfast and, we suppose, every other place where they were in sufficient majority.” The publication of “shameless letters” appealing to the lowest instincts of bigotry, in staid newspapers claiming to be “respectable” was surely very significant. Another feature of the time was the continued publication day by day, for a week after the Twelfth, of speeches of extremists all over Ulster delivered on the Twelfth of July platforms urging undying conflict with the Church of Rome, and calling on the Protestants to prepare to protect themselves against an imminent danger.”

### **“COMING EVENTS”**

“For several weeks before the outburst, Catholics in the shipyards and other places had hints that trouble was brewing. Some of their less reticent Protestant mates told them as much, and even mentioned the day fixed upon, the 21st. of July. They preferred, however, to treat such reports as bluster, and when “the day” arrived they went as usual to the yards. Nearly 5,000 of them were employed there, efficient men in every department, many of whom had fought for Britain not in one but in several wars. Probably more than three-fourths of all these workers were at the time followers of Joseph Devlin, and politically opposed to Sinn Fein.”

### **“THE DAY ARRIVES\_21<sup>st</sup> JULY 1920”**

“A meeting of all the Orange elements in the shipyards was called for the dinner hour. Hundreds of chalk marks on the wall had been telling those in the know to “Remember the 21st” The meeting was a huge one, composed mainly of well paid stay-at-homes who had had the time of their lives during the Great War(i.e. had not joined up) our parenthesis and it was addressed by men of the same stamp .Immediately after the meeting a violent onslaught was made upon the Catholic employees as well as on a dozen or two of Protestants who refused to bow the knee to Carson. They were ‘peremptorily’ ordered to clear out. Being in a minority of less than one to six, they could not put up

a fight with any hope of success. Those who could get quietly away accepted the inevitable. Many came in for various kinds of attack. Hundreds were surrounded and kicked. Several were thrown into water, twenty-five feet deep, and pelted with bolts and other missiles as they struggled for life. Even according to the Orange Press which as we shall see, has hardly admitted any Orange delinquencies, men swimming from their pursuers were pelted back from the opposite bank, and one man had to swim for safety to Sydenham, a mile distant. No one was killed outright, but nearly a score of very seriously injured were conveyed to hospital and a large number of others badly hurt were treated at home. Since that day, now over two years ago, no Catholic with the exception, I understand of one or two office hands has been allowed to earn a living in Belfast's chief industrial concerns the shipbuilding yards”

**These terrible events and more that followed are recorded in the book. More significantly, they are confirmed in it by copy of the content of a letter written by Mr. James Baird, a Protestant Town Councillor (our underlining) of Belfast who was also a worker expelled from the shipyard, His letter was sent to the Dublin Evening Telegraph, November 11<sup>th</sup>. 1920:-**

*“Lest any of your readers should be misled by the report referred to, I take the liberty of putting the facts concerning Belfast before them. On the 21st. July and on succeeding dates, every Roman Catholic whether ex-serviceman who had proved his loyalty to England during the Great War, or Sinn Feiner who claims to be loyal to Ireland alone was expelled from the shipyards and other works; a number were flung into the river and while struggling for life were pelted with rivets and washers; others were brutally beaten, but the majority, hearing of the fate of their fellows, escaped injury by beating a hasty retreat, leaving behind costly tools and other personal belongings. Almost 10,000 workers are at present affected, and on several occasions men have attempted to resume work only to find the ‘loyal’ men still determined to keep them out”<sup>29</sup>*

While Lord Carson's 12<sup>th</sup>. July speech may have been the fuse which caused the Protestant/Unionist workforce to act as it did, it would be unfair not to believe that such a complex and strong personality as his did not have positive as well as negative aspects to it.

### (b). QUINTESSENTIAL IRISHMAN??

Many are the myths circulated about Lord Carson. At least some of these were exploded by Kevin Myers in *An Irishman's Diary* in The Irish Times of 25/26 October, 1993<sup>30</sup>. For instance he wrote that Carson was not, as has been alleged, *responsible* for the prosecution of Oscar Wilde, a fellow graduate of Trinity College. Most likely, because of their common affiliation, Carson first refused the brief *to defend* the Marquess of Queensbury in a prosecution for criminal libel brought by Wilde. However “any hesitation about this vanished when he discovered that Wilde had been using rent-boys.”

In his early days Carson had supported land reform and one of his reasons for opposing the later Parnell land campaigns was that they seemed designed to help a farming class at the expense - as he saw it - of the much exploited 19<sup>th</sup>. Century Irish farm labourer. Contrary to stereotypical communication about Carson, Myers claimed that he was not a

<sup>29</sup> *Facts and Figures: The Belfast Pogroms:1920-22*:The O'Connell Publishing Co. (1922): p.22

<sup>30</sup> *An Irishman's Diary*: Kevin Myers, Irish Times p. 17, Mon/Tues. 25/26 October 1993

bully. He supports his view by alluding to Lord Carson's defence of George Archer-Shee, who had been expelled from naval college for the theft of five shillings. Carson's defence of the cadet involved taking on and defeating the "might of the Admiralty and the Attorney General", a success which gave him "the happiest moment of his life."

Kevin Myers also recounts that Carson did not acquire anglicisation of his speech as was then customary among those who sought professional or political preferment within the ruling classes of empire.

He "eagerly supported increased provision of university education for Irish Catholics". People who have studied with interest the life of Sir Edward Carson will recall with surprise, many with satisfaction, that, when a student at Trinity College, he was "a noted hurler".

When we think about Lord Carson's legacy it is difficult not to be struck by the unexpected, sometimes quite extraordinary, statements which he made from time to time, statements highlighting contradictions which seem to have lain deep within him. **In a biography recording Carson's life**<sup>31</sup> the author, H. Montgomery Hyde, demonstrates these with a number of Carson's statements.

1. on page 239, in a speech at Macclesfield, December 8, 1907 following the murder of two of his relatives:-

#### **An Independent Ireland?:**

"I warn the Government and Mr. Birrell that no man ever made a greater mistake than to play with crime in Ireland. I speak vehemently as an Irishman to English people, and say that if you are not prepared to govern Ireland according to the ordinary elementary conditions of civilisation that prevail in every country, *then go out of Ireland and leave us to govern ourselves*" (our italics) **While law in Ireland was very much law which had been made by Englishmen for Ireland and while law for "the ordinary elementary conditions of civilisation" prevailed in fewer countries at that time than it does today, nevertheless Carson was prepared to state with the words in italics (above) what was probably unthinkable to most unionists.**

#### **Confederation?:**

2. Following the U.V.Fs gun-running exercise which had concluded with the successful landing of the imported arms and ammunition on April 24th. 1914, there was a spirited debate in the House of Commons<sup>31</sup>. Mr. Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty, concluded his speech by making a direct appeal to Carson,

"Why cannot the right honourable and learned gentleman say boldly 'Give me the Amendments to this Home Rule Bill which I ask for, to safeguard the dignity and the interests of Protestant Ulster, and I in return will use all my influence and goodwill to make Ireland an integral unit in a federal system'?"

The 'federal system' was reference to a federation of Home Rule parliaments for Wales,

<sup>31</sup>Carson: H. Montgomery Hyde (1974): Constable, page 365

Ireland, Scotland and England; the NIG would probably have added, ‘their regions and satellite island communities’<sup>32</sup>. To-day, with the hard won independence of the Irish Republic in mind, it would seem, when looking to the future, more appropriate to be thinking in terms of confederation rather than of federation.

### **Nine County Ulster; pre-cursor to United Ireland?:**

3. Although Winston Churchill’s appeal to Sir Edward Carson had been made exclusively on his own account, the Prime Minister, Asquith, stated that he was “entirely” in sympathy with it. In retrospect this is of particular interest in the context of what Carson is reported to have said at the Buckingham Palace Conference held in late July 1914.

‘Carson observed that in his view the only statesmanlike solution of the problem, on the assumption that Home Rule was to be granted at all, was that the whole of Ulster(all nine counties) should be excluded.’<sup>33</sup>

“He gave it as his opinion,” noted Bonar Law, “that, if this were done generously, then there would be a likelihood within a reasonable time of Ulster being willing to come into a united Ireland, whereas if any attempt to coerce any part of Ulster were made, a united Ireland within the lifetime of anyone now living would be out of the question.”

Returning now to the debate in the House of Commons which followed the April 1914 gun running into Larne, Carson’s reply to Mr. Churchill’s proposal (see above) was “unexpectedly conciliatory”<sup>34</sup>.

### **Unity of the Irish people:**

“If Home Rule is to pass, much as I detest it, and little as I will take the responsibility for the passing of it, my earnest hope, and indeed I would say my earnest prayer would be that the Government of Ireland for the South and West would prove and might prove such a success in the future, notwithstanding all our anticipations, *that it might be even for the interests of Ulster itself to move toward that Government and come in under it and form one unit in relation to Ireland* (my italics). *May I say something more than that? I would be glad to see such a state of things arising in Ireland in which you would find that mutual confidence and goodwill between all classes in Ireland as would lead to a stronger Ireland as an integral unit in a federal scheme.*”

It was perhaps unfortunate that Churchill’s suggestion did not evoke a generous response from the Irish Nationalist Party nor indeed did Carson’s “unexpectedly conciliatory” statement either. After he had made it, ‘many eyes had turned expectantly towards John Redmond (leader of the Nationalists in the House of Commons). But Redmond made no move to rise from his seat’ He was conscious of a growing challenge from behind by Sinn Féin (see 1918 election results, Page 32)

<sup>32</sup> ‘Westminster Withdrawal’: Pamphlet (1987): JDAR: published by Irish News. See Epilogue to Empire, P15

<sup>33</sup> ‘Carson’: H. Montgomery Hyde (1974): Constable (page, 366) “ “ (page, 371)

<sup>34</sup> ‘Carson’: H. Montgomery Hyde (1974): Constable, (page, 367)

### **Conflict or Accommodation?:**

4. The Federal scheme envisaged is outlined on page 366<sup>35</sup>. The same measure of Home Rule would have been conferred on England, Scotland and Wales as on Ireland outside of the province of Ulster. The latter would have been left exactly as it was unless - or until - it might choose of its own accord to go in with the three other Irish provinces under an all-Ireland Home Rule arrangement. The conditions of secrecy under which Carson agreed to accept the scheme as a basis for discussion were breached by F.E. Smith (the 'Galloper') who was anxious to ingratiate himself with Lord Northcliffe of the Daily Mail. After the content of the discussion had been leaked, there was consternation as it was felt that "This will ruin Carson in Ulster". However, Carson, on learning of such comment remarked:-

**"I don't care a damn. Only a fool would fight if there is a hope of accommodation. And what a great thing it would be if this long-standing controversy could be settled once and for all"**<sup>36</sup>

*To-day we should ask what, in a greatly changed context, might Carson be advocating for us?*

### **Contradictions and Change:**

There would seem to have been three contradictions running through the functioning of Lord Carson's, public life.

Firstly, he never thought of himself as other than an Irishman, yet he was prepared to reject the wishes of the majority of his fellow countrymen for an independent Irish state.

Secondly, he believed passionately in the Union as central to the welfare and development of empire to which he was completely committed yet, at a point, he had been prepared to have Ireland secede from the Union.

Thirdly, he was also a passionate advocate of the rule of law yet he was prepared to commit treason. In fairness it must be added that, although giving his unqualified support to the importation of illegal arms, Carson had nothing to do with the forming of the UVF<sup>37</sup>

These contradictions may be understood if, in the context of the time, he had some deep fear concerning the outreach of the ecclesiastical imperialism of the Roman Catholic Church in the Ireland of his day and of how this might impact on the lives of the Irish minority, namely, the Protestant Unionist population.

Furthermore, and long before it became common to question a majoritarian interpretation of democracy, Carson had come to realise that a significant minority must be accommodated in consensus with a dominant majority if there was to be peace of mind and any sense of convergent purpose. Such an opinion is supported by the comment he made

<sup>35</sup> 'Carson': H.Montgomery Hyde: Constable (1974), page 366

<sup>36</sup> 'Carson': H.Montgomery Hyde: Constable (1974), page 367.

<sup>37</sup> 'An Irishman's Diary': Kevin Myers: Irish Times, p. 17, Mon/Tues 25/26 October 1993

and *Sir Edward Carson* by Alvin Jackson: Historical Association of Ireland: see page 24 in particular.

at the time of partition when he gave a statesmanlike piece of advice to the Ulster Unionists who had become an overwhelming majority within the new six county statelet:-

“From the outset let us see that the Catholic minority have nothing to fear from the Protestant majority. Let us take care to win all that is best among those who have been opposed to us in the past. Whilst maintaining intact our own religion let us give the same rights to the religion of our neighbours”<sup>38</sup>

### **Early 20<sup>th</sup>. Century:**

As an Irishman Carson perceived the secession of Ireland as a whole from the Union as a fundamental break-up at the heart of the British empire. He may also have felt that Protestant Unionists, situated at the remote periphery of Europe, were extremely vulnerable to the oppressive outreach of the early twentieth century ecclesiastical empire centred in Rome. In fact it was Edward Carson who first suggested in 1917 the idea of a Council of Ireland linking the two parts of Ireland in the event of partition. This formed the basis of the (abortive) Council of Ireland in the 1920 Act which established partition. †

### **Early 21<sup>st</sup>. Century:**

To-day the British empire is in the history books, ecclesiastical imperialism is worn out. Attitudes to Laws and Orders depend to a much greater extent than formerly on the degree of consensus out of which they are derived.

Where consensus is lacking, minorities are today more prone to question the authority given to those who have formulated the laws and who give the orders. Where there is little or no consensus the laws and the orders are much more likely to be perceived as ‘theirs’ not ‘ours’ and, as such, may well evoke negative reaction and social instability.

Taken in conjunction with the changes which have occurred during the eighty years since partition, Carson’s love of Ireland and his sadness at its division<sup>39</sup> could lead us to conclude, in the different world of to-day, that Sir Edward, later *Lord Carson, might, at the very least, have been persuaded of the merits of federalism within an All-Ireland state with confederal arrangements between an Independent Ireland, its neighbours and its European partners.*

## **(v) THE REFERENDUM**

In the early 1980s, the New Ireland Group considered how a P. R. system of voting for candidates might be applied to policy decision-making as well as to electoral voting. Around that time we were introduced to the concept of the preferendum<sup>40</sup> and subsequently to the matrix voting system.<sup>41</sup> These novel departures in the evolution of democratic decision-making seem particularly appropriate for the current cybernetic age. The

<sup>38</sup> ‘Carson’: H. Montgomery Hyde: Constable (1974), p.xiv.

<sup>39</sup> ‘A Trilogy of Two’: Ulick O’Connor: a Play first enacted in the Peacock Theatre, Dublin, 1980s

<sup>40</sup> ‘Consensus Voting Systems’: P.J. Emerson: Noel Murphy (Printing): (1991) p. 10, pp.19-20, 30-31, 40, 45.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Consensus Voting Systems’: P.J. Emerson: Noel Murphy (Printing): (1991) pp. 23-26, 59-63.

† Personal Communication; Dr Eamon Phoenix, Stranmillis University College

preferendum has been devised as a means of assessing the degree of consensus which may be claimed for a particular proposal or particular candidate out of a list of proposals or candidates. The preferendum allows us to give a score to each option in a list of options. The Preferendum has been used effectively at four Peoples' Conventions hosted by the New Ireland Group and held in the Nelson Mandela Hall at Queen's University, Belfast; it works as follows,

i **Preferendum voting:**

A consensor, who is acceptable to the meeting, lists all of the options for which s/he concludes that there has been support either through demonstration of commitment or by numerical strength or both yet excepting any option which, in her/his opinion, would be repugnant to generally accepted principles of human rights such as those enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Covenants on Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights or, for that matter, any local Bill of Rights drawn up as result of the provisions included in the G.F.A. (see pages 73-75).

A panel of 'experts', political, historical, economic, social service, etc., is present to prevail on anyone making insulting or inaccurate remarks. They will activate a totem pole containing green, amber, red and clear lights, the latter depicting a question mark and all to be used in accordance with an agreed code. All the participants are seated randomly in concentric circles. Refusal by a speaker to stop whenever the red or clear light is switched on will lead to the imposition of sanctions.

ii. The voting paper is presented to the voters as a photo-copy of the list of options/or list of candidates with boxes in which to place the voting score given to each option. The voter gives each option for which s/he wishes to vote, a score - highest score to the one s/he favours most, the score of 1 (one) to her/his least favoured option.

The highest score on the voting paper will be the same as the total number of options for which the voter votes, the lowest score will always be 1 (one). Numbers between 1 and the highest score must be allocated for a vote to be valid. The voter has the option of not voting for a particular option; nevertheless, in exercising this decision s/he will be reducing the number of options for which s/he does vote and will thereby reduce correspondingly the score s/he may give to her/his most favoured option.

On the other hand, by choosing to vote for all the options the voter ensures the highest score possible for his/her most favoured option.

Simultaneously, the voter is acknowledging the democratic right of others to hold a contrary opinion and is also rewarded - the greater the number of options for which s/he votes, the higher the score for his/her most favoured option.

Thus, in a fully taken-up 10-option voting paper, a first preference would receive 10 points and the tenth preference would receive 1 point.

iii. In an age of desk-top mini-computers, preferendum voting is not only timely but should soon become the very practical means of assessing consensus around the boardroom table, in the Council Chamber and in the Political Assembly.

iv In time to come the polling booth may well be a thing of the past!

By using a computer programme with built-in safeguards it should become possible to vote from home or at any other location deemed appropriate for the purpose. Sophisticated multi-option voting is bound eventually to replace the single X vote. The preferendum will replace the referendum.

v. Like all voting systems the preferendum has flaws too. Even so, it would seem to offer the best opportunity to-date of expressing democratically one's overall preference when confronted by a number of alternatives.

## V.

### CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE

Consideration of the implications of census trends<sup>42</sup> along with what may be much more significant - the decline in the unionist *proportion of the vote* since 1972-, would suggest that unionist people have become much less secure in their unionism; in consequence, should they continue to remain negative to their future in a New Ireland, they are at risk of becoming a diminished people.

**Paradoxically, therefore, the challenge of New Ireland is of greatest relevance to that section of the population which remains most unconvinced by it and who at present seem to be most opposed to it.**

#### NEW IRELAND:

**Will today's Unionist people give a lead for it  
or will they continue to believe in leaders who try to persuade them that they could  
only decline in it?**

**This dilemma also poses a challenge to those who would claim to be the true inheritors of the all-inclusive republican tradition of Wolfe Tone and Thomas Davis,** a tradition which should demonstrate that the hand of friendship, of political and iconographic tolerance, and of a real spirit of brotherhood are a broad reflection of the words in the 1916 Proclamation which urge republicans to 'cherish all the children of the nation equally'. In this regard, the New Ireland Group is greatly indebted to our esteemed member for reminders to republicans of obligations in these respects. This he has done with an extensive series of letters sent to a variety of editors in our national press.<sup>43</sup>

At a time when others - 'luke-warm nationalists' for want of a better description - have become ambivalent to the vision of New Ireland, **the Protestant Unionist community would seem to have much to gain by putting their stamp of commitment on it and, even at this late hour, by giving leadership for it.** By thus taking the wind out of everyone's sails, this could, more than anything else, restore to them dignity before the world at large and, in the process, with respect for their pioneering tradition restored, 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 at peace with itself and at peace with a world in which Ireland, albeit but one small part of that world,

<sup>42</sup> 'Census figures should not be used as a sectarian weapon': Irish Times: p16 Th. Dec 19th. 2002

<sup>42</sup> 'Census shows that change will be rapid': Brian Feeney: Irish News, Jan. 1st. 2003

<sup>43</sup> Letters: James McGeever: Irish News eg. on June 1st 2002; June 15th 2002; July 23rd 2002; Aug 8th 2002; Jan 20th 2003; Feb 10th 2003; Feb 13th 2003; etc.

has nevertheless influence out of all proportion to its size. As we say in the New Ireland Group, **the Right to BE is ever tempered by the NEED to belong, with an obligation to share to-day and conserve for to-morrow.**

The question we pose therefore is three-fold.

- Will the northern Protestant Unionist people continue to remain in the laager (note spelling!) of Irish history or will they now come out to give and to share in leadership as founding fathers of something exciting, fresh and new?
- Secondly, will traditional republicans, especially those honed in the experience of thirty years of sectarian civil war, respond with generosity giving trust the benefit of the doubt??
- And finally, are the people of the present Irish Republic able to find the statesmanship to make the accommodation which would be required of them? In other words has the republican ideal of generous inclusiveness survived consumption by the Celtic Tiger?
- Are the people prepared to dissolve the present 26 county state and to have the present Irish constitution replaced by a new one? (see p.36, 43, 53, 87)

### **Tribute:**

The greatest tribute which we could pay to those who have died in the conflict 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 begin to feel that they had not suffered in vain.

## VI.

### LEGACY OF HISTORY:

#### Resentment or Reconciliation?

#### TOWARDS A NEW AND BETTER IRELAND

##### Freed from the Fetters of the Past : Founding Fathers of the Future?

###### In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century,

Catholic Ireland was overwhelmingly defeated by forces from Britain on three occasions.

1. The battle of Kinsale (1601), followed six years later by 'The Flight of the Earls'.
2. The conquest by Cromwell in 1649
3. And then forty years later, following the battle of the Boyne, King William's forces under General Ginkel were victorious at Athlone, then Aughrim and finally Limerick where, in return for surrender by the Irish forces, a Treaty was drawn up. Because it wasn't fully honoured the Treaty became a further source of historical resentment. It was by this Treaty that approximately 14,000 Irish soldiers, 'The Wild Geese', were afforded safe passage to France and to elsewhere in Europe.

In the middle of the same century the Catholic people had risen up in revolt against what they had already suffered, both to their persons, to their property and to their religion. Thus it was that Protestant Ireland suffered horrendously during the Recusant (Catholic) uprising of 1641†, and again when many lost their lives at the siege of Derry in 1690.

**During the 17<sup>th</sup> Century** the Catholic people's ownership of land was reduced from around 60% to approximately 5-10%<sup>44</sup> and this on top of so much else seems to have set the scene for the centuries that followed. Frustrated aspiration of the Irish majority was then, and has been ever since, been pitted against the insecure social and political dominance of an 'Anglified' and often over-bearing Irish minority, ever uneasy through sustained fear of the consequences of loss of power and the possibility of role-reversal. Serious, intermittent and on-going confrontation has indeed been the expectation of many people and the experience of not a few.

**Memories, both true and distorted, from that terrible century continue to haunt our folk consciousness right up to the present time.**

<sup>44</sup> 'The Course of Irish History': T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin: Mercier Press: (1994) page 220

†The Green Flag: Robert Kee: Weidenfeld & Nicolson: (1972) p 15

## 18<sup>th</sup>. Century:

In addition to *the planters*, the all-powerful holders of huge estates, and *the supplanted* who had been removed from their ancient lands, there was also a class of people who might best be described as *the planted* - in the main, Protestant, who came from the Scottish lowlands, the North of England and elsewhere to work the land for those powerful and all-controlling people who now owned it. Many of the '*planted*' subsequently took part in the waves of emigration which sent around 250,000 of them to North America in search of a better life. This emigration was to reach a peak in the 1770s when around 12,000 Protestants -mainly Presbyterians-were leaving each year for the United States!<sup>45</sup>

## Early 18<sup>th</sup>. Century:

The PENAL LAWS — a body of severely discriminatory legislation enacted against all Catholics in Ireland. These inflicted crippling social handicaps and further land confiscation. Non Anglican Protestants — in the main Presbyterians — were also subject to the consequences of these laws and the social down-grading associated with them\*. The effect is well described by Robert Kee\*.

In 1728 Ireland experienced the first of many famines which occurred over 120 years, (14 of them between 1816 and 1842) and which culminated with the Great Famine<sup>46</sup>. There was also the imposition of the cruel penal code which only served to heighten the resentment felt by so many of the non-anglican Irish people and this included a great number of the Presbyterian community. **The seeds of violence were being sown on fertile ground.**

The temper of the country cannot have been helped by the establishment by Parliament at Westminster of 'Parliamentary independence' for Ireland only to have it dissolved less than 20 years later! Plus ca change, *plus c'est la meme chose!*

In January 1783 an act of the British parliament affirmed in the strongest terms that '*the complete legislative and judicial independence of Ireland*' should be '*established and ascertained for ever, and... at no time hereafter be questioned or questionable*'.<sup>47</sup>

This independence 'for ever' was revoked by the Act of Union at the beginning of 1801!

With justification, many people may claim that, throughout its whole history, the Irish parliament had been little more than the mouthpiece of 'the English in Ireland'. Even so, by 1783, it had achieved independence and in doing so had given expression to an independent spirit among members of Irish society who sought independence from the domination of the English parliament.

Presbyterians in Down and Antrim - themselves far from privileged - were prepared to go much further. They could see, and had felt, the effects of an Anglican class-conscious episcopalian domination; because of that, they sought to liberate all Irish

<sup>45</sup>'The Making of Modern Ireland': J.C.Beckett :page 181

<sup>46</sup> *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*: R.F. Foster: The Penguin Press (1988) page 320

<sup>47</sup>'The Making of Modern Ireland', 1603-1923: J.C.Beckett (1972), page 228:Faber.

\* *The Green Flag*: Robert Kee: Weidenfeld and Nicolson (1972) page 19-20

people from external domination. Their protest, as members of the Society of United Irishmen(1791-1798), was short lived and its climax disastrous. The outcome was the further brutal, often barbaric, suppression of sympathisers by hanging, pitch-capping, transportation, imprisonment, torching of homes and flogging. Instance of flogging is described by Andrew Bryson in a letter written in New York (May 1801) to his sister<sup>48</sup> The original letter resides with the author of this pamphlet.

### **Into the 19<sup>th</sup>. Century: violence and social unrest - Decade after decade:**

**In 1798**, Uprising;

**1801**, Union brought in by “bribery and intimidation” as well as by “argument”<sup>49</sup>;

**1803**, Uprising led by Robert Emmet;

**1829**, the culmination, through Catholic Emancipation, of 29 years of campaigning by Daniel O’Connell, perceived as seriously threatening to their position by many Irish Protestants.

**In the 1830s** came the Tithe Wars and also the beginning of regularly recurring sectarian riots in Belfast which re-erupted each decade with some remission in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Century, in the 1940s with the Blitz and in the 1950s when an IRA campaign was operating elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

**1840s** experienced the horrors of the Great Famine and in 1848 a revolutionary skirmish led by William Smith O’Brien.

**1850s** agitation by tenant farmers who found their collective expression through the formation of the Irish Tenant League which received considerable inspiration from the previously formed Ulster Tenant Right Association†

**1860s**, Fenian uprising;

**1870s** commencement of the Land War;

**1880s**, first Home Rule Bill, serious rioting in Belfast;<sup>50</sup>

**1890s** second Home Rule Bill, more rioting in Belfast;<sup>50</sup>

**1913-14**, third Home Rule Bill enacted on eve of first World War;

**1916**, Easter Rising, Battle of the Somme;

**1918, November:** Armistice concluding the carnage in Europe, ‘the war to end all wars’!

**December:** General Election<sup>51</sup>, the result of which intensified our violent division:

- In the whole of Ireland, 69% of the electorate cast a vote.
- While unionists increased their parliamentary strength from 18 to 26 seats, only four counties polled unionist majorities (Derry, Antrim, Down, Armagh)
- The nationalist parliamentary party was reduced from 68 to 6 seats
- Labour did not stand in the 1918 election.
- Sinn Féin increased its representation from 7 to 73 successful candidates

<sup>48</sup> Andrew Bryson’s *Ordeal: An Epilogue to the 1798 Rebellion*, page 65-66.

<sup>49</sup> *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603 - 1923*: J.C.Beckett: Faber and Faber (1972) p.273.

<sup>50</sup> *Holy War in Belfast* Andrew Boyd

<sup>51</sup> *Ireland since the Famine*: FSL Lyons; Fontana/Collins (1973) p. 398-399

† *A History of Ulster*: Jonathan Bardon; The Blackstaff Press (1992), p.314-315

- 31% of electorate didn't vote; in spite of topping the polls Sinn Féin received less than 50% of votes cast (47.7% to be precise).
- If only 69% of the eligible electorate cast a vote then 47.7% of 69% must have been Sinn Féin's percentage of the total electorate=approx.33%.
- In making deductions from these figures the fact that Sinn Féin candidates were returned unopposed in 25 constituencies begs the question as to whether a further 18% of eligible Irish voters living in these unopposed constituencies would have voted for the Sinn Féin candidate and 'separation' had there been a contest. Only thus could we conclude that more than 50% (33% + 18%) of the Irish vote overall had been cast in favour of separation from the UK. There may of course have been closet separatists in the remnant of those voting for the dissimulated Nationalist Party or among disillusioned Labour Party supporters. Whatever, it can be stated that Sinn Féin received a plurality, if not a majority, of votes in the 1918 General Election.
- there was much fear of intimidation,
- **1919**, Inaugural meeting of First Dáil in the Mansion House, Dublin: democratically elected yet constitutionally illegal!The I.R.A. was the army of government.
- **1919-1921**, Anglo-Irish war (euphemistically dubbed,'The Troubles');
- **7th January 1922**, 'Treaty' between Britain and Provisional Government of Ireland ratified by the Dáil by 64:57 votes. The Treaty had already been ratified in the British parliament on 16 December 1921
- **Early 1920s**, Civil war in South and vicious sectarian killing and damage in the North leaving a legacy which, on top of many years of class conscious Unionist hegemony in Northern Ireland, served to fuel the fires from which we have been suffering during these last thirty years. Between 1920 and 1922, 450 people died violently in Belfast.†
- **33 years on from 1969** it is disgraceful that our hateful situation, out of which we come and in which we remain immersed, has not been resolved.

† Personal Communication: Dr. Eamon Phoenix Phd, Sen Lecturer (hist.) Stranmillis University College.

## VII. There is at least one PLAN B!! 'Westminster dis-engagement'

### Withdrawal:

In the New Ireland Group we believe that we shall continue to be plagued by our condition until the English dominated government of the un-united kingdom does-as the 26 county Irish state has done - withdraw its claim to sovereignty over the six counties of divided Northern Ireland in order to allow the people living in Northern Ireland to debate their future without the impediment of claims from Westminster or Dublin and, at the same time, encourage the people living in the rest of Ireland to respond to our concerns unimpeded in doing so by any rival claims. *This is the legacy which we believe the present generation should be striving to pass on to their successors.*

Following the most recent fall of the Northern Stormont Executive and Assembly it is our view that the process of Westminster dis-engagement should now receive serious consideration as a significant option out of which to forge a secure future for us all. As we have indicated many times in the past, the process would involve a further Party political Forum. We have further urged in the past<sup>52</sup>, and below (see page40) that such a Forum should lead into a **Northern Ireland Consensus-seeking Conference** and that the process should be complemented by on-going input from the citizen through the encouragement of means for well-publicised, open public debate.

Under the heading, 'INITIATING THE PROCESS *towards* CONSENSUS', which is found on pages 16-22 of the pamphlet entitled, 'A Process based on the Principle of Consensus'(1989) <sup>52a</sup>, an earlier N.I.G. suggestion for citizen input was made in a publication six years before the 1995 Forum, for Peace & Reconciliation. This process was developed through a number of New Ireland Group Publications <sup>52 a,b,c,d</sup>

"Because of traditional sensitivities and complexities and because of the (then) widespread limitation imposed through the interpretation of 'democracy' to mean, majoritarianism, a period of preparation in dialogue is highly desirable. Such a dialogue, involving members of the public at large as well as politicians in 'talks', would enable vital ideas, however novel, to achieve a sensible degree of intelligibility as well as credibility. It would also protect the politicians themselves from being prematurely caught up on party-political hooks."

"The mechanism for such unconditional dialogue would be a public forum..... It would have an impartial secretariat and impartial chair of unimpeachable integrity."

After reading the comment by Conor O'Clery in the Irish Times (May, 16, 2003, page 12) under the headline, 'Murphy to energise NI peace process,' it would seem that Northern Ireland has gone full circle yet, this time, with the wheels already in place to start the

<sup>52a</sup>-'A Process based on the Principle of Consensus': New Ireland Group: Ciarán McKeown printing: pages 16-22, (1989)

<sup>52b</sup>-'A Proposal for Consensus':New Ireland Group; printer, Ciarán McKeown: published for N.I.G. festival at Eamhain Macha (Navan Fort):'Reality, WAR;Hope, PEACE'(29-6-'85), pages10-13.

<sup>52c</sup>-'A New North for A New Ireland': New Ireland Group.response to Ophsahl Commission, Coleraine Printers: pages, 12-19

<sup>52d</sup>-'Submission': Forum for Peace and Reconciliation,(1995): pages 47-54.

political machine moving again. Perhaps then our proposal for a fresh look at an all-Ireland solution based on the application of principles relating to democratic consensus building should be more seriously considered as an option *most especially if the G.F.A. cannot be revived or if it should break up again at some future date*. In other words, **there is a PLAN B**. The objective should surely be to create an evolving resolution with built-in capacity for on-going adaptation?

**An evolving solution** should be an on-going challenge to everyone. **A ‘final’ solution** is inevitably a threat to someone. It seems worth recalling that The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which was included in the new constitution of Canada when it was put before the people for vote in a referendum, urged the people to offer ‘amendments’ for consideration after a trial period of one year.<sup>9</sup>

In the New Ireland Group, we would urge that the *priority* for the people of Northern Ireland should be to hold a *leadership role* in the formation of and functioning within a truly New Ireland in which all Irish citizens may have the opportunity of redeeming the past by transcending it.

In an Ireland free from ‘external impediment’ it would then be possible to work out the most appropriate and enduring symbiotic relationship with our neighbours across the water in Wales, Scotland and England - and elsewhere for that matter.

### **Healing across the Historical Fault Line:**

In spite of all the hurt which we have brought upon each other and in spite of the bitter legacy which this has left in its wake, we believe that we should be thinking much more seriously about *the long-term future* and place hope for it in the healing of the historical fault line which has kept us divided for far too long. This demands that the process is very carefully planned and monitored so that those citizens who feel most threatened by the prospect of the creation of a truly New Ireland - the historic minority of Irish people - may feel assured that the process towards it is transparently democratic and that provision will be made to deal with their hopes and fears particularly during the period of transition.

In to-day’s world, movement into an All-Ireland would not be ‘the leap in the dark’ which it might have been not so long ago. The people of the Irish Republic are no longer as inward looking as they were once perceived to be; increasingly they relate with ease and of necessity to the other cultures of our shrinking world. *In any case, Lord Carson indicated that partition might end to the advantage of all of us once the Government of the ‘Southern’ state had had time to prove itself (see page 23).*<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> ‘CARSON’; H. Montgomery Hyde: Constable, 1974 edition: p. 366

<sup>9</sup> Personal Communication: Professor Paul Arthur: Dept. Politics, University of Ulster at Jordanstown

## **Pointing the Way: The Irish Constitution Bunreacht na hÉireann, Alt,15:**

The little mentioned **Article 15** in the present constitution of the Irish Republic already makes provision for a devolved Assembly (Article, 15.2.2<sup>54</sup>, see page 44). Furthermore, even now the ‘National parliament’ is not constrained to sit for ever in Dublin (see Article, 15.1.3<sup>55</sup>, page 44). Under this provision it could oscillate between say, Athlone and Armagh in a manner similar to the experience of government moving between Cape Town and Pretoria in the former Union of South Africa.

An All-Ireland parliament would contain around 50 more members from Northern Ireland (one representative for every 20,000 - 30,000 of population.

50 out of around 220 TDs would be infinitely more influential than 17 out of around 600 MPs in Westminster. Representatives from Northern Ireland could, from time to time, hold the **balance** of power in the Dáil. In coalition with say 60 other TDs **they could form the government.**

As noted above (page 23), Sir Edward Carson once stated that it might be in “the interests of Ulster to move towards the government (“of the South and West”) and come in *under*<sup>56</sup> it and form one unit in relation to Ireland”.

However, we do not subscribe to the use of the word ‘under’ because of the overtones of imperialism associated with it. **We would replace ‘under’ by the word ‘with’ and in so doing would insist that *such a movement must be in the context of the drafting and ratification of an entirely new all-Ireland constitution requiring ratification by the people of Ireland by referendum held simultaneously in the South and in the North (see page 87).***

**Naturally such would draw on what seems best in the present constitution while at the same time forging the new one with relevant amendments, exclusions and additions to meet the challenge of bringing together and keeping together all the different peoples who live in Ireland today.**

### **Northern Ireland: a devolved Assembly with an All-Ireland Parliament:**

Fears concerning loss of a devolved Assembly for Northern Ireland in the context of an all-Ireland accommodation should be seen for what they are, namely ‘groundless’. Provision for such already exists in the Irish Constitution of to-day!(see Article 15.2.2)<sup>57</sup>.

Perhaps this is not so surprising if we recall that in the 1921 Treaty negotiations Sinn Féin proposed that there should be a Devolved Assembly in the North of Ireland in conjunction with an all-Ireland Parliament.\* Later, in 1938, in an interview with the ‘London Standard’ Eamon de Valera made the same proposal.\*

<sup>54</sup>Bunreacht na hÉireann, Article 15.2.2, p. 34 (1996)

<sup>55</sup>Bunreacht na hÉireann, Article 15.1.3, p. 32 (1996)

<sup>56</sup>Carson: H. Montgomery Hyde: Constable (1974), p. 366

<sup>57</sup>(see page 45)

\* Personal communication: Dr. Eamonn Phoenix, Dept. History, Stranmillis University College

## VIII

### FROM HERE AND NOW TO THERE AND THEN

#### APPRECIATION OF WHERE WE ARE

In order to:

MOVE CONSTRUCTIVELY

TO WHERE WE URGE THAT WE SHOULD GO

Prior to the Good Friday Agreement we argued that there were **two interacting conflicts** at play in Northern Ireland and that we were unlikely to obtain a constructive and on-going resolution unless we addressed both.

Between the British government and the Irish people there was a conflict about sovereignty over Northern Ireland, at the same time as there was, within Northern Ireland, a sectarian conflict, itself also entwined in the issue of sovereignty.

For years, the New Ireland Group has maintained that it is unrealistic to expect the people of Northern Ireland to resolve *their* conflict without also addressing what is in effect the last unresolved element of the age-old *Anglo-Irish* conflict<sup>58</sup>.

At this point, it would be churlish not to concede that the two governments have, throughout the 1990s and since, made great strides in ironing out their differences in relation to Northern Ireland.

**To set the scene for our proposals we adverted to the calls for referenda** which had been made from time to time.

- Back in 1980-81, Dr. Paisley called for a referendum in Britain on the position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom.
- It was noted that alteration of the Irish Constitution with regard to the 'claim' to Northern Ireland would require a referendum in the Irish Republic.
- People living in Northern Ireland have, from time to time, called for a referendum within Northern Ireland itself yet had not, prior to the Good Friday Agreement, addressed the context in which such a referendum should take place e.g. - a level playing field.
- However, we now have considerable evidence for the reservations which we currently hold regarding the efficacy of referenda as a tool for peaceful resolution of political and constitutional issues<sup>59</sup>(*see bottom of para 1, page 40*). At that time, 7-8 years ago,

<sup>58</sup>'Ireland, 1912-1985, Politics and Society': J.J. Lee: Cambridge University Press (1989) p. 682, para. 2.

<sup>59</sup>Lecture delivered to Open Meeting of N.I.G. in Senior Staff Common Room, Q.U.B. by Peter Emerson as a result of his long-standing involvement in the Balkans (2002)

however, we still felt, as many others still do, that referenda had a significant role to play in moving us peacefully out of the stalemate in which we are stuck.

## NEW IRELAND GROUP PROPOSALS, 1995

**In our submission to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation (1995) we made proposals which would still seem relevant to the consideration of how we are to break out of the historical laager in which, at times, we seem destined to remain permanently.**

The New Ireland Group's proposals which were put to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation were made in order to suggest the conditions within Northern Ireland in which **both the people and their representatives** would be enabled to find the consensus which has thus far eluded us. The proposals also took into account the signals which were coming from the people of Britain and the Irish Republic, who also have democratic rights with regard to how they in turn would wish to relate to us.

**Should inter-party talks fail or should the Good Friday Agreement flounder again, the proposals which are listed below are offered as a way out of the impasse. these are taken either directly or in amended form from the N.I.G. submission to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation (1995) and are here re-printed as an indication of how our proposals might have been worked out in practice!**

**We believe that these proposals could have renewed relevance, if not immediately, then at some time in the future on account of the uncertainty surrounding the survival and long term viability of the Stormont Executive and Assembly. In any case and regardless of the stability of the GFA, an all-Ireland is very likely to come about at some time in the future. *Would it not be better to prepare to give the leadership for it than to be drawn unwillingly into it?***

We take heart from the number of people who tell us privately that they share with us a desire to leave the historical laager once and for all and for ever.

We therefore trust that publication of the process which we advocate may, at the very least, stimulate some lateral thinking about the solution to our long-standing dilemma.

## THE ROAD MAP

as determined for presentation to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation (1995)

AND

As now amended to take account of what has taken place in the nine following years

### PHASE I; THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND:

#### 1. Affirmation and Declarations by the two sovereign governments as urged in 1995.

The London and Dublin Governments were urged to affirm jointly that they would promote and would act as joint convenors and guarantors of a consensus-seeking process whereby the people of Northern Ireland, *on a level playing field*, could determine their future internal and external relationships;

- That such be initiated by inviting the people of Britain to vote in a referendum **indicating their endorsement or rejection of the following proposition:-**

**that the people of Britain;**

*recognising that the government of the Irish Republic has, as a result of the Good Friday Agreement, withdrawn its constitutional claim to Northern Ireland;*

*having already indicated what was implicit in the 'Brooke' statement and Framework Documents that Britain has no longer 'any selfish, strategic or economic interest' in exercising sovereignty over Northern Ireland;*

*confirming that within the Good Friday Agreement there is a willingness to support Irish unity,*

*would urge the people of the Irish Republic to join with them in a Joint Statement which will affirm that:-,*

*'The two sovereign governments jointly declare their intention to withdraw, in due course and simultaneously, any and all residual claims to sovereignty over Northern Ireland and, in the meantime, - for as long as that may be - to act as joint guarantors of a democratic consensus-seeking process that would enable the people of Northern Ireland, in the pursuit of consensus, to determine their future relationships and which would further also enable the representatives of the people of Ireland as a whole, should it be their wish, to draw up for ratification, a new constitution for an entirely new Ireland'*

- that such a process be brought into being with a fundamental yet balanced change in the context in which the debate about the future would take place, e.g. parity of esteem, equality of opportunity, symmetry in approach to ethnic/sectarian difference and so on.

*Comment: While the Irish Republic has, since 1998, amended Articles 2 & 3 of its constitution, there has not been a symmetrical act of the same significance by the*

*Westminster Government* apart from the statement that it has no longer ‘any selfish, strategic or economic interest’ in retaining sovereignty over Northern Ireland. It has, nevertheless, also agreed to accept and support the creation of a United Ireland should that be the wish of the people of Northern Ireland as expressed through a referendum. There is however no reference to the danger inherent in any closely contested referendum on an issue of such deeply felt constitutional and sectarian concern.

The observations of a New Ireland Group member in relation to his long-standing work in the Balkans emphasise the dangers involved through the promotion of referendas as a means of solving such significant issues. **“All the conflicts in recent times in former Yugoslavia have been preceded by a referendum!” Hence the advocacy of preferenda.**<sup>60</sup>

## 2. An open public forum:

In a sense we had already had opportunity of attending such a forum, courtesy of the Opsahl Commission (1992-93),<sup>61</sup> yet we felt that this should be further expanded by encouraging participation in the 1995 Forum for Peace and Reconciliation convened in Dublin Castle under the chair of Judge Catherine McGuinness.

We further urged that a similar ‘Loyalist’ instituted forum should be held in the North provided it too would be open to any and all to bring their viewpoints to it.

*Comment: Elections to a Forum and to Talks about future arrangements did take place in Northern Ireland as part of the deliberations leading up to the Good Friday Agreement. While we now welcome the re-convening of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin Castle this time under the chair of the Ulsterman, Senator Maurice Hayes, and while we welcome any opportunity in Northern Ireland for further inter-party political talks to enable the Executive and Assembly to get off the ground again, we still believe that a peoples’ input, with adequate means for press and media uptake, is **also** essential so that ideas to meet our changing situation may receive due acknowledgement and attention and, in the process, create the political space in which politicians may move us forward.*

## 3. A Northern Ireland Consensus - seeking Conference:

We had advocated that there should be around 80-100 delegates entirely elected by the ‘list’ system (Northern Ireland as a single constituency) and that this should be the follow-on from any open public fora.

By broadening democratic representation in this manner, no group of significance could claim to be excluded from the debate. We also added that there should be no place for paramilitaries at the table. That is not to suggest that paramilitary viewpoints should not be conveyed in the submissions of others for we recognise, however regretfully, that paramilitaries may hold the rest of us to ransom. In a sense, they reflect, in the most vile manner, elements of the conflict which so many of the rest of us have failed to address, let alone resolve (see p. 92-93).

<sup>60</sup> Talk by Peter Emerson to N.I.G. open meeting in Senior Staff Common Room Q.U.B.: Autumn 2003

<sup>61</sup> *A Citizens’ Inquiry: The Opsahl Report on Northern Ireland*; Ed. Andy Pollak: The Lilliput Press

## **We maintained that such a Conference should hold its deliberations in four stages:**

- i. firstly debate the subject of consensus - its definition, the methods of achieving it and the means of assessing it.
- ii. Debate and discuss the findings of preceding fora.
- iii. Discuss constitutional proposals brought before it by its members requesting the proponents of such to demonstrate how consensus might be achieved for their respective proposals.
- iv. At the conclusion of the Conference's deliberations, all options and qualifications of such options to be listed for **preferendum voting** (see page 25) by the delegates in order to determine which of these may claim the greatest degree of consensus.

*Comment: The Talks process to which representatives were elected in the 1990s by proportional representation alongside a modification of the List System (Northern Ireland as a single constituency) was in many ways a Constitutional Conference of sorts. Nevertheless it would have been constrained by the fact that Britain apparently had no intention of moving as far as the Irish Republic was prepared to do on the issue of sovereignty i.e.. the talks were not taking place on a level constitutional playing field. As far as we know, Constitutional Options, of which there are many, were not debated in sufficient depth to enable a preferendum vote to be taken on them at the end of the deliberations. A compromise was reached within the constraints imposed by the territory of Northern Ireland ruled from Westminster and this became the Good Friday Agreement which was ratified by the overwhelming majority of the people of Ireland overall, as well as by a significant majority of the people of Northern Ireland specifically (71%).*

### **4. Post Conference Referendum in Northern Ireland.**

At the conclusion of the Northern Ireland Constitutional Conference the option determined by preferendum to have the greatest degree of consensus to be put to the people of Northern Ireland for ratification by weighted majority voting in a referendum.

*Comment: Although the preferendum is relatively simple to understand and to execute (see page 26), nevertheless the public at large, not having used it previously, might well feel confused even misled by its application. Therefore, until such time as preferendum voting has been widely accepted and understood, it would seem wise to use the next best thing, namely the weighted, ?heavily weighted, majority vote. Those promoting this approach would hope that an option which had claimed maximum degree of consensus among the elected representatives at the Conference would have its ratification endorsed by the people through the exercise of weighted majority vote thereafter.*

## **5. SOME OBSERVATIONS**

### **i. Consensus; the Pre-Condition of the Guarantors:**

A consensual outcome which is clearly not in conflict with the fundamental human

rights of the citizen should be the only pre-condition for obtaining the endorsement of the government guarantors.

We suggested that agreement for such a consensual outcome would almost certainly involve the release of the remaining paramilitary political prisoners. While active paramilitaries should not be permitted to stand for election, their support for the outcome of the process is essential. It is unrealistic to believe that such support would be forthcoming if former paramilitary members were to remain imprisoned, especially as some of their colleagues are roaming the streets freely in spite of having committed similar if not worse barbarities and, in certain cases, without indictment let alone judgement or sentence.

Paramilitaries will also argue that it has been abject political failure by people living in much more cushioned social circumstance than they do which led to the conflict into which they were drawn.\*

**ii. Failure (and one does not need to be a cynic to face up to such a possibility in Northern Ireland!)**

Failure to obtain a consensual outcome would suggest that the process should be put on hold until such time as it could be re-engaged.

Pending such re-engagement, Joint Authority or European Protectorate Status could be invoked as an *interim* measure to promote ongoing, secure, day-to-day government.

Such a development should not preclude the possibility that the people, given time and under the conditions outlined in (pages 38-41 above), will be able eventually to determine their own inter-relationships democratically.

**iii. Conclusion:**

On first reading, the process outlined could be interpreted as pointing in the direction of Negotiated Independence for Northern Ireland. Although Negotiated Independence is indeed one option, it is only one of many; federation and confederation with various qualifications and in various combinations come to mind as do other proposals which have been mooted over these violent years.

Novel relationships, never yet considered or conceived are not precluded by these proposals for progress based on the principle of consensus:-

*We, in the New Ireland Group, still remain convinced that the New Ireland option, outlined later, and which we endorse, remains the one which is most likely to heal the wounds of history and, in so doing, also to give to the people who are most apprehensive about it, a renewed sense of purpose should they choose to give leadership for it. We firmly believe that enduring peace and reconciliation in Ireland will only begin to take root once geo-political partition has been well and truly removed from the statutes in order to be placed in the history books. Only then will de-partitioning of mind sets have the opportunity to develop to conclusion.*

\* See Annex II p. 92

## ROAD MAP: INTO A NEW IRELAND

### PHASE II; THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND AS A WHOLE

It is gratifying to members of the New Ireland Group that aspects of the Good Friday Agreement seem like echoes of some of the points we were pleased to submit to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation ( Dublin Castle,1995 ).The title of that submission was carefully chosen!

#### **‘THE DE-PARTITIONING OF ULSTER**

#### **RE-FORMATION IN IRELAND’**

**(Submission by N.I.G. to Forum for Peace and Reconciliation - 1995)<sup>61</sup>**

Submitted by our Consensor, the deputation we were privileged to be received at the Forum by the late Senator Gordon Wilson.

In view of what has since evolved through the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 we feel it appropriate to recall what, in 1995, we listed as significant **in our wish to see the prospect of New Ireland become a reality.**

At the **Northern Consensus-seeking Conference** already described (see page 40) the New Ireland option would, we trust have been vigorously promoted by those who believe that, *as long as partition continues, we will not have enduring peace and reconciliation in Ireland.* Were consensus achieved for this option, then it would be necessary to convene an **All-Ireland Constitutional Convention** in order to determine whether the people of the present Irish Republic through their representatives are prepared to meet with the Northern challenge to their affairs. In other words, to encourage them to ‘Speak up or for ever hold their peace!’

**POINTERS FOR A NEW IRELAND CONSENSUS** are listed in our **1995 submission to the Forum for Peace & Reconciliation<sup>61</sup>** (see ahead pages 44-52)

**“At any consensus-seeking conference such as the one already described above (page 40) the New Ireland Option should be strongly presented and an attempt made to show how consensus could be achieved for it. With the need to build consensus in mind and conscious of Loyalist concerns and fears - even of a level playing field with appropriate safeguards and guarantees in place - critical issues would have to be addressed - as they were by us back in 1995 - as an indication of matters which might require special consideration at an All Ireland Constitutional Convention (see over, next page).**

<sup>61</sup>Submission by N.I.G. to Forum for Peace & Reconciliation, Dublin Castle, (1995):: p. 52-54

## ALL - IRELAND CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION<sup>62</sup>

### 1. Acceptance of the concept of a Transition Period meeting special requirements for its governance.

“This period would terminate once arrangements being put in place were clearly felt to be acceptable to the overwhelming majority of the people. *The onus would therefore be on those of us who believe in the potential of a New Ireland to ensure that those most fearful of it could grow in confidence as participants in its development.*”

### 2. The degree of Autonomy for a six-county Northern Ireland or nine-county Ulster

that would be required during the transition period in relation to matters which could not be resolved overnight and also, subsequently, in relation to requirements for regional and communitarian decentralisation of power to increasingly autonomous communities.

It is worth noting, as we have already (see above) that Bunreacht na hÉireann (The Irish Constitution), even as it stands, contains two significant Articles which point in the direction of regional autonomy:-

Article 15.1.3 states, “The Houses of the Oireachtas shall sit in or near the city of Dublin *or in such other place* (our italics) as they may from time to time determine”  
Article 15.2.2 states “Provision may be made by law for the creation or recognition of *Subordinate legislatures* and for the powers and functions of these legislatures”

### 3. The Anglo-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body to be expanded and re-located:

“This expansion to be achieved (and has now been so) by incorporating a specifically Welsh and specifically Scottish input and re-located with permanent institution and secretariat on neutral territory such as the Isle of Man. This has now been incorporated, though in modified form, into the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement.<sup>62</sup>

Whether we like it or not, few of us do not have brothers, sisters, cousins or close friends living across the water and it might be timely to consider how, in the context of an evolving European Community, a New autonomous All-Ireland should express its unique relationship with Wales and Scotland as well as with England.”\*†

**Relationship with the archipelago as a whole is addressed in Strand III of the Good Friday Agreement by the establishment of the British-Irish Council;, Clause 2, Page 14 of the G.F.A.:**

**“Membership of the British-Irish Council comprises representatives of the British and Irish Governments, devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, in Scotland and in Wales and, when established and if appropriate, elsewhere in the United Kingdom, together with representatives of the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.”**

<sup>62</sup> G.F.A.: Strand III: page 14: para 2

\* See Letter to the Nation: William Smith O'Brien: ‘The Nation’ 30th Dec, 1843 as reprinted in the Foreword to the Green Flag by Robert Kee (1972)

† Westminster Withdrawal: pamphlet: J.D.A. Robb as expressed in the conclusion: ‘Epilogue to Empire’ (1976)

#### **4. A Bill of Rights:**

The incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into the Constitution of any new All-Ireland state; such would be a token of intent and indication of the bona fides of those striving to promote a truly New Ireland. To this should be added any provision on Human Rights which has been advocated and ratified as a result of the outworking of the Good Friday Agreement

#### **5. A Community Charter to promote devolution of economic and political power**

in order to ensure, within the operation of regional and national guidelines, that participation by the people becomes sufficiently *effective* to produce action appropriate to their need defined wherever they live and wherever they work. The value of Community Fora, Community Guilds, Neighbourhood and Townland Associations, Co-operative Councils, Citizens' Advice Bureaux, and a system of locally accountable taxation aimed at closing the gap of disadvantage and of increasing democratic accountability and responsibility should be incorporated into such a charter.<sup>63</sup> (see again, **Decentralisation: Autonomy**, p.15), distinction to be drawn between 'de-centralisation' and 'autonomy'

#### **6. Underpinning the Economy:**

Consideration of ways and means whereby the economy, during any transitional period, could be underpinned by European and American interests sympathetic to political reconciliation and stability in Ireland under monitoring powers given by statute to a trusted organization such as the Trade Union Movement. Otherwise stability could be compromised by an unacceptable fall in the standard of living at a time when the economy would be vulnerable to the vagaries of uncertainty in the political climate. Because of the current pressure to ensure sustainability, urgent consideration should be given as a priority to the provision of opportunity for the accelerated development in local communities of practical, administrative and managerial skills

#### **7. Without compromise to the obligation and to the need to affirm and give leadership for the moral law as the ethical base for a sound and healthy society, an explicit separation of Church and State should be written into any new all-Ireland constitution.**

#### **8. Commitment to the encouragement of integrating ecclesiastical, cultural and social initiatives**

to enable the children of Ireland to grow in unity while acknowledging their right to be different. In particular, to address the sectarian and class basis of separation and

<sup>63</sup> See 10 Point Community Charter: Communitarian Manifesto: New Ireland Group (Sept,2003)p. 25-35

the issues of disability, of race and of gender and, in so doing, to accelerate changes required in traditional attitudes which have promoted concepts of second-class partners and second-class citizens. *Denominational Education is not the cause of our conflict; even so, Integrated Education has most certainly an important role to play in its resolution.*

**9. Cultural Initiatives:**

Nothing would be more likely to advance hopes for growth in unity than an even more pro-active approach than already exists towards the traditional dance, song, music, stories, languages and sports of Ireland and Scotland as part of a programme for personal development and the promotion of self-confidence. Accredited Dance masters and mistresses should be appointed to each District Council along with appropriate sports' coaches, music teachers etc. All of the children of Ireland should know, in order to enjoy, the experience of traditional dance, song and sport and also be exposed to that of their Celtic cousins and neighbours in Scotland. Opportunity in these areas should encourage social integration as well as collective pride in being who and what we are.

**10. Locally rooted; Globally aware:**

Local dialects should not be discouraged ('looked down upon with scorn') and awareness of locality should be encouraged. To know ourselves first of all is to enhance our communication with others later on.

The Celtic languages and, in the North, the Ulster Scots dialect are part of our heritage and should be acknowledged as such.

Encouragement of integrated education should be a sine qua non.

**11. The dissolution of the present state and constitution of the Irish Republic.**

"It is axiomatic that the new Ireland cannot be an extension of the old Ireland in disguise."

**12. "Release of the paramilitary prisoners"**

**On page 25 of the G.F.A. under the section dealing with prisoners it is stated in Clause 3 that,**

**"Both Governments will complete a review process within a fixed time frame and set prospective release dates for all qualifying prisoners. ....In addition, the intention would be, should the circumstances allow it, that any qualifying prisoners who remained in custody two years after the commencement of the scheme would be released at that point"**

*Comment: As democrats we acknowledge the right of anyone to hold a viewpoint contrary to ours. In spite of being firmly in favour of ratification of the Good Friday Agreement in its entirety we had also to respect the right of others to vote ‘NO’ to it. However, we find it very strange that, on very significant issues such as ‘prisoners’ and after so many years of local suffering and bereavement, persons who voted for the agreement now indicate that they are prepared to bring it down. On the issue of prisoners for example, the above extract from Clause 3, page 25 of the G.F.A. is what was published in the document of the G.F.A. which everyone had opportunity to study before exercising their vote!*

*It simply doesn’t wash to say now, ‘I wouldn’t have voted for it if I’d known that that piece about the prisoners was included’* It is unlikely that anyone did not have ample opportunity to study what was on offer before they voted.

### **13. “The setting up of a special institution”: Acknowledgement of Victims and their need**

‘to provide an appropriate resource for all people hurt, wounded, bereaved or otherwise handicapped (physically or mentally) by the conflict since 1969. Priority of availability of its facilities should be reserved for young people whose parents or other close relatives were maimed or killed or who, themselves, have been otherwise traumatised. It is vital that all of those unfortunate people who were caught up in our 30 years of violence- whether as violators or as persons violated - should have access, should they request it, to professional counselling in a peaceful atmosphere and in complete confidence. If we wish to exorcise the effects of what we have done to each other as a result of generations of conflict we should take cognisance of what has been achieved in South Africa in this respect. It is too easy to dismiss, as some people like to do, the healing effect of initiatives such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was so championed by the Nobel Laureate and Archbishop of Capetown, Desmond Tutu.

We proposed that our ‘special’ institution should be located in attractive and extensive surroundings and that it should be an institution to which everyone eligible to access it, regardless of their background, could relate. In such an institution (? college) situated in an attractive estate-like campus, victims seeking support or violators seeking atonement might more easily identify their individual and collective needs, so that these may be addressed.

### **VIOLENCE AND CONSEQUENCES**

In the New Ireland Group we have, from time to time, defined violence as the physical, sexual or psychological penetration against his or her will of any human being by another. Force may be defined as the threat to use violence. The wearing of a uniform or violent action when not so dressed cannot change the definition even though claims of ‘legitimacy’ on behalf of the state or on behalf of ‘the cause’ may help those who feel eligible to claim it to diffuse the psychological effects which follow.

Even so, ‘legitimacy’ may become an embarrassing justification in a society in which absence of political consensus is compounded by social and collective community alienation of one form or another.

We have argued in the N.I.G. that all men and women are different, yet each is unique and that

all are part of the same humanity. Whether we believe that men and women derive from God (the beginning) - “In the beginning, God...”<sup>64</sup> or whether we simply acknowledge a humanitarian principle that, however different we seem to be, we are all part of the same humanity and thus also part of the same spiritual reality; an act of violence is inevitably an act against such humanity. Perhaps it is this which gives rise to the feelings of remorse and guilt which follow an act of violence unless, as is so often the case, we try to sublimate the effect by resort to falsehood<sup>65</sup>

We may do the latter in many ways as we seek to exorcise the effect of an act that would otherwise haunt us with guilt. Many people who have committed acts of violence will confirm that they have lived to be haunted by what they have done and to be continuously aware of the KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK of conscience to which Solzhenitsyn refers in ‘THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO’<sup>66</sup>. From that point, descent into insanity and worse or ascent through a process of redemption become stark alternatives. What is true for the individual is almost certainly true also by association for the collective of which the individual would claim to be a member.

On the other hand, many many people live out their lives apparently unaffected by the violence they have done to others. Those who watched Robert Kee’s ‘Ireland Series’ in 1980-81, may remember, should they have remembered nothing else, the way in which an old man, with no expression of remorse or regret, told how he had put two British soldiers up against the wall on ‘Bloody Sunday’, 1920,<sup>67</sup> and, with a salutary, “May the Lord have mercy on your souls” he had “plugged the pair of them”.

From that statement made more than 50 years after the act of killing, the question arises as to whether or not we may conclude that violation can be perpetrated without any negative psycho-psychological consequence. In response to the question it seems reasonable to conclude that the old man may have been able to live with himself without ruminating upon what he had done because he had been able to concoct, regarding the men whose lives he had terminated, an image, however false, about their humanity, creating a link, however distorted, about what they represented, and then to convince himself of this as justification for his action. However, to reinforce such justification, it would have been necessary to convince those near and dear to him too. ***Justification by recourse to falsehood is unlikely to be sustained if it cannot be transferred convincingly to those around us, the immediate family and other members of any collectivity to which we may belong, and so our falsehoods may well provide the pollen which will fertilise the violence in a succeeding generation and oblige it to enter in its turn the cycle of suffering in conscience for ‘our’ sakes.*** In other words, if the violator can live with what s/he has done, those nearest and dearest to him/her are unlikely to escape consequences - ‘the sins of the fathers etc’<sup>68-68b</sup>

## 14. COMMONWEALTH CONUNDRUM

Emergence of a Commonwealth: Following trouble in Canada in 1839, Lord Durham’s ‘Report on Canada’ concluded that the only way to keep the colonies was to let them govern themselves.<sup>68c</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Genesis, Chapt.1 : Verse1

<sup>65</sup> Nobel Lecture’: Alexander Solzhenitsyn: AQUARIUS-formerly, ‘EVERYMAN’ (1973) :p. 25.

<sup>66</sup> THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO: Alexander Solzhenitsyn; Collins & Harvill: (1975): Part III, p. 353-375

<sup>67</sup> The Green Flag: Robert Kee: Weidenfeld & Nicholson: (1972) : Part 5 : ‘Murder by the throat’ : p.693.

<sup>68</sup> Book of Exodus: Chapt:20, v.5,

<sup>68b</sup> Book of Numbers: Chapt:14, v.18,

<sup>68c</sup> The Rise and Fall of the British Empire: Lawrence James: Little Brown and Company (1994): page311

In 1897, at the time of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee there was a conference of Prime Ministers.

Those who attended politely declined Mr. Chamberlain's plans for a 'Great Council of Empire'. Around the time of Edward VII's coronation there was further setback for Chamberlain's intentions. Thus he became convinced that co-operation rather than centralisation must be the way ahead.

Although none of the dominions were obliged to support Britain at the outbreak of the First World War (1914), they all did so and this seemed to indicate that the Empire might be held together by ties other than those of legal obligation.

### **During the First World War, the South African, General Smuts, was to say of the Dominions:-**

*"We are not an empire. We are a commonwealth of nations"\**

That was probably the first recorded use of the expression, 'Commonwealth of Nations'

At the Treaty of Versailles, each dominion signed separately and each became a separate member of the League of Nations over which the late Irish President, Éamonn de Valera was to preside.

In 1921 General Smuts urged a constitution for the then British Commonwealth in order to define 'Dominion Status' more clearly and also to ensure that it was capable of continually amending so that it would be ahead of those who might otherwise seek separation and independence from it. In the early 1920s there was a great debate arising from the tension between those who were pushing for equality and those who were pushing for the right to secede.

At subsequent Imperial Conferences, Irish Free State delegates did much to enlarge the freedom implied by dominion status. The term 'Empire' was less and less used and the British Commonwealth of Nations made its first official appearance in Article 4 of the Treaty.

By 1926, at the Imperial Conference, the Irish and South African delegates were pursuing freedom of equality for the dominions and it was then being suggested that Governors - General should be no more than representatives of the crown and not agents of the British Government.

As a result of this debate, Great Britain and the dominions emerged as "autonomous communities within the British Empire equal in status..... though united in common allegiance to the Crown".

### **By the Statute of Westminster (1931) more freedom was given to the dominions:-**

*-they would no longer be subject to U.K. parliamentary legislation.*

*-they would have full authority for extra-territorial decisions.*

As a result of this loosening of the traditional bonds with the Mother country, Winston Churchill was extremely uneasy, most especially because he felt that such new found freedom

\*The Rise and Fall of the British Empire: Lawrence James: Little, Brown and Co.: page 385.

would enable the recently created Irish Free State to repudiate the Treaty of 1921. He was therefore adamantly opposed to what had been yielded up.

As far as Ireland was concerned there was an ironic change of thrust following the 1932 entry of Fianna Fail to the Dail where it formed the government. At the very time that Ireland's influence was greatest in affecting democratic change within the Commonwealth - some of this change brokered by Canada, some of it in alliance with South Africa - the new Irish government started to take Ireland in a different direction.

De Valera argued that the proximity of the Irish Free State to the head of the most powerful empire the world had known was mitigating against the kind of independence enjoyed by others such as the Dominion of Canada and the Commonwealth of Australia.

He also argued that Ireland was a 'motherland' as distinct from a British settlement and that this distinguished it from Canada and Australia.

He further pointed out that Ireland had reached Dominion status not by evolution, but by revolution. Thus he argued that *Ireland's* Dominion status represented not growth but arrested development.

In May 1933 the Removal of the Oath of Allegiance Bill became law. The status of the Governor-General was diminished, after first being held up to ridicule.

#### *WATERSHED: 'External Association; Withdrawal.*

A watershed came in 1935 when the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council decided that the Irish Free State, in the aftermath of the Statute of Westminster (1931), was competent and had the necessary power to abrogate the provisions of the Treaty. By 1936, Mr. DeValera was able to carry through legislation defining '**External Association**' of the Irish Free State with the British Commonwealth.

In September 1947, a memorable dinner party took place in Ottawa when John A. Costello, as Taoiseach, was entertained by the Governor-General of Canada, General Earl Alexander of Tunis. Many are the stories which have been told about what happened and why it happened. In the aftermath, however, the External Relations Act was repealed and the newly declared Irish Republic left the Commonwealth. Yet another irony had occurred! Just as Ireland was pulling out of the Commonwealth, India, which had derived some of its constitutional thinking from Ireland became a republic within the commonwealth!

#### **Re-association; Impact; Crown and Commonwealth — A Belated Gesture?**

For a number of years people in Ireland have toyed with the notion that re-association with the Commonwealth of Nations might be helpful in promoting reconciliation between the Loyalist community and the rest of the people of Ireland, apart altogether from any distinctive merit of its own.

In many ways the moment for a significant statement in this respect would seem to have passed - which is not to imply that any serious harm might come from such re-association.

Loyalists who, in recent times, have felt betrayed, isolated and misunderstood could well feel patronised so late in the day by such a gesture on behalf of the Republic. In many ways the

gesture has passed its sell-by date. Others may argue, 'better late than never!'

There are, of course, points in favour for re-association with the Commonwealth; there is need to explore what in reality it would mean and how the relationship to the Crown might be perceived.

In the latter respect, there would now seem much less to worry about in view of the re-defining of the monarchy as envisaged by the heir to the throne – "monarch of all the faiths" – and by the reforms being proposed by the Labour Government prior to the last general election.

It seems likely that at some stage Church and State in England will become separated. It was always an irony that the English, so critical of the special position of the Catholic Church in the Irish Constitution – as expressed before it was repealed – should now, 32 years on, be just beginning to examine their own church-state relationship! Unlike Anglican bishops in the House of Lords, the appointment of Catholic bishops to Seanad Eireann is inconceivable.

## **A Positive Opportunity**

For a number of years it seemed right to argue in favour of Ireland's re-association, perhaps again by external relationship, with the Commonwealth of Nations. Today, the 'Commonwealth' is no longer the *British* Commonwealth. It includes a number of republics and many of its members, in common with Ireland, have had their share of post-colonial problems. The Commonwealth could provide Ireland, as a neutral and small nation, with further scope to exert global influence for peace-making purposes; it would also provide Ireland with further means of bringing pressure to bear on its more powerful neighbour. Furthermore, application by Ireland for appropriate association with the Commonwealth of Nations might even yet be accepted as a significant gesture within Loyalist consciousness; whatever else, it would signify further that there is an Irish Republican willingness to compromise in order to accommodate.

## **Commonwealth Games: Opening Ceremony – First Peoples and Imperial Conquest – 1994**

The observations expressed above notwithstanding, account should be taken of the full implications of this event (the Commonwealth Games, Canada 1994) before making a final decision about the relevance and value of re-association. At the Opening Ceremony of the Commonwealth Games on Vancouver Island, summer 1994, there was stark contrast between the expression of eternal verities by representatives of the Canadian First Peoples – the Indians – and that other expression – of power reflected in the Empire culture of conquest and control.

The culture of the first peoples was demonstrated by a display of concern for relationships, relationships between peoples and between people and the natural world, bonded to it through trust handed down to them in honour as trustees to be passed on in trust to those who are yet to come. In search of harmony, in welcoming the stranger, in embracing old enemies, the 'first' peoples, communicated, cosmic resonance in that stadium to which those who would preserve balance for a living world could not have been deaf ----- and then! Suddenly the Royal car arrived in the arena – *perhaps*, symbolic of the whole? *Perhaps*, humbly acknowledging the sense of loss – the tragedy which the first peoples had suffered? *Perhaps*, responding to the first peoples desire for reconciliation, for atonement, for unity?

*Perhaps*, some new symbolism? Some metaphysical gesture of our common-wealth? – but **no**; it was then that realisation dawned, that the Commonwealth was not a network of equals absorbing into itself the abstraction of a metaphysical crown celebrating liberation from the imperialism of the past through symbolic sharing in the anthem/s of the host nation/s in the present.

Instead, the National Anthem of the one who had conquered, resounded through the stadium. As if that was not enough to shatter the illusion of host status by the first peoples, the armed forces of the modern Canadian Nation – and thank God we saw no first peoples among them – crashed into the arena, rifles at the ready, officers bawling out orders – one could only surmise what the Indian peoples were thinking – or worse, feeling.

Until the Act of Succession is repealed so that no ethnic or religious group is especially favoured or specifically excluded by its symbolism, the Crown cannot symbolise the whole no matter how hard it strives to reflect a hope of doing so. In the context of the Commonwealth, the Crown places Britain – more particularly England, - at the apex of an imperial pyramid which, however flattened it may have become, is not the same as being source of a metaphysical resonance that embraces all people within its compass, equally. It seems, therefore, a great pity that just when Prince Charles was expressing a similar viewpoint – ‘monarch of all the faiths’ – his credibility was being undermined by unhappy revelations about his life around the same time in the mid 1990’s.

## **Re-Association in a New Context**

It is in this context, and in relation to the bitter legacy of imperialism in Ireland, that there is such psychological and emotional difficulty for Republican people in Ireland to engage in a re-association which involves the Crown of England. The desperate plight of the Irish people over too many centuries - in particular as a result of cruel attitudes emanating from white Anglo-Saxon, protestant and public school élites, which sought to diminish all who did not belong to them - has resulted in a conditioning in Irish consciousness where lack of trust is equated with concern about the possibility of neo-imperialism.

Even so, it is increasingly acknowledged that Britain has, for some time, ceased to be a threat to Ireland, particularly within the context of the New Europe to which both belong. The gesture of re-association needs to be considered in the context of whether or not Northern Loyalists would welcome it as a means of acknowledging their ‘Britishness’ as well as being an indication of a new spirit of accommodation by the rest of Ireland in relation to Ireland’s Loyalist minority.

- 15.** Where sport, leisure or other activities are at present organised separately in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, consideration should be made to bring such together on an all-Ireland basis with appropriate compensation being paid to officials and others who may suffer loss as a result of such amalgamation.
- 16. Any other concerns to be nominated and considered by the delegates**

**ULSTER: DE-PARTITIONED; IRELAND RE-FORMED**  
(reference to p 43)

**‘If the All-Ireland Constitutional Convention achieved its objective it would then be obliged to promote the drafting of a provisional constitution that would describe arrangements for which consensus might be reasonably expected; this could then be put before the people of Ireland for ratification by weighted majority vote cast simultaneously in the North of Ireland and in the Irish Republic.**

**In the event of failure to achieve ratification in either part of Ireland, the draft proposals to be referred back to the all-Ireland Convention for further consideration and amendment and then put again to the people for a second trial for ratification and this process to continue unless and until it becomes apparent that such conclusion could not be reached in the prevailing climate. In that situation the Northern people would be compelled to re-activate the Northern Consensus-seeking Conference (Phase I of the process) in order to consider the other options which had previously been offered at it’ (see page 40)**

**Should this process be criticised for being too attenuated it ought to be recalled that we are dealing with a legacy of conflict which has stretched through generations over some hundreds of years.**

**IX**  
**LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

**VIEW**

**From**

**A SHAKY PLATFORM**

On Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2003 on the early morning (5.30am) TV news there was an interview with a Cypriot who had lost his family in the civil war of almost 30 years ago and, as a result, he had become a refugee on two occasions.

With talk of the re-union of Cyprus in the air he was asked what he would think about such a proposal as it would involve him and his current family in a further re-location.

He replied that, in spite of all that he had suffered, he would support the two parts of the island coming together and this in spite of the probability that he would once again be a refugee.

He indicated that it was silly for Cyprus, an island, to be divided as it is and that such a coming together would seem to be the best chance for his children that they would not suffer how he had when he was their age.

**NORTHERN IRELAND :**

**COMING FROM A BITTER PAST : SEEKING A MORE HOPEFUL  
FUTURE.**

**THE COMMUNITARIAN OR MICRO-POLITICAL DIMENSION:**

Aware of where we have come from, aware of the bitter legacy of imperialism of one kind or another and of the divisive sectarianism which we have inherited we should perhaps, each one, start by admitting *our* particular role in limiting the vision of what we might be, had we broken out from the fetters of our past. Cramped vision combined with lack of adequate leadership has had the effect of causing us to react as a diminished people.

If this is to change we need to create a vision of the future and, with renewed faith in ourselves, find the courage to go forward in order to proceed as a people of historic significance with sense of renewed purpose wherever we live or work.<sup>69</sup>

Aware of the increasing social dislocation associated with urbanisation in which traditional skills have become redundant and where so many people appear to live more stunted lives than they should, where so many are denied the stimulus, the opportunity and the social space to enjoy the challenge of a free and expanding imagination, we should all be asking where do we go from here.

*The mission fields of Africa are an escape when there is so much for us to do at home..*

### **Coal-face Sectarianism:**

At present there are districts in Belfast which are holding the rest of Northern Ireland's civic society to ransom. There is no easy solution, no quick fix for the social state in so-called interface areas. They are part of the fabric which the rest of us have allowed to develop among us. They exist because of the highly complex interaction of religious and other traditional forces which have created the fault lines between various religious traditions, working skills, social classes and other divisive effects which go back generations and which neither we nor our forbears had the courage nor the tenacity to face down successfully.

Until comparatively recently we allowed our history of wicked division to fester in the hope, and for some in the belief, that the ruling lid could always be relied upon to clamp down on intermittent eruptions so that they would be contained, preferably crushed, and without question, prevented from spreading.

Well, the media and sophisticated reporting have changed all that and changed it for ever. The people corralled in the ghetto (a terrible description-and what a terrible reflection on those of us living outside of it) now know about life elsewhere and the rest of us have become all too aware of the unacceptable state of affairs which so many of our less advantaged brothers and sisters have to endure just to survive.

Yet, we must ask in our despair how many of those who feel trapped 'inside' ever make a determined and sustained effort to move beyond the historic boundaries in order to experience other dimensions of life and living. How many move beyond peer-group boundaries, how many explore outside of the city to learn from the experience of other people and from other communities how other people may have been able to ameliorate the destructiveness which could so easily have taken over their lives too? How many of us are prepared to give leadership even to encourage others to jump over barricades in order to see what is on the other side let alone empower them to do so? For example, in North Antrim how many people have read the account of the **Duncrun Cultural Initiative**, undertaken by "the working class

<sup>69</sup> See Pamphlet describing 'the Duncrun Cultural Initiative': (April 2,003), page 8.

loyalist group, established in October 2,001 and located in the Northwest<sup>70</sup> and now writing to suggest how young people might gain confidence so that they may in time, empower themselves creatively. Are you, the reader, even aware of P.U.L. (Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist) networking and its writings eg the pamphlet 'Border Protestants: *MinorityVoices*'\*.

***Whatever direction the future takes, it is vital to support and encourage leadership for individual and collective community development, most especially in those estates, neighbourhoods and local communities where marginalisation, alienation and disadvantage are most acutely felt. That is why the New Ireland Group has also published a Communitarian Manifesto<sup>71</sup> which will, we hope, indicate how we might deal with the micro-political dimension of our tortured state just as this pamphlet is an attempt to deal with the macro-political dimension of it.***

*Much encouragement should therefore be taken from those Loyalist communities which, very late in the day, are now striving hard and successfully to emulate what has been taking place in Nationalist and Republican communities for years. We should also strive to ensure that comfortable middle class people re-connect with those citizens who live in less fortunate circumstance in order to provide, without patronising overtones, a resource of expertise to be available once present external funding dries up and to be ready and available to help to service projects which have been started so that they may remain sustainable (see pages 92-93).*

Negative social attitudes are fuelled by low self-esteem and this breeds loss of self-confidence. Inevitably then, 'Change' will be perceived as threatening whereas, with creative leadership, change could become a challenge. We need to find, develop and liberate the talents which are the unique inheritance of each one of us. Then we become a force for the good, a resource for social creativity.

In his book, 'The History of Ulster', Jonathan Bardon gives us a glimpse of how deep the sense of social deprivation and political neglect runs in parts of Belfast. The experience for rural dwellers of coming into contact with children and others from urban slums evacuated as a result of the blitz was perhaps the only time that people outside of the city became aware of the appalling conditions in which so many working people were living back in the 1940s, only a generation or less ago for some of us.<sup>72</sup>

### **Community Development : Social Accountability:**

In the drive to emphasise the need to give priority to personal and collective local community development, structures are required whereby those who at present feel alienated may begin, instead, to feel equipped to take responsibility for, and ownership of the better management of social reality wherever they live and wherever,

<sup>70</sup>'Duncrun Cultural Initiative' in conjunction with Trademark and The International Voluntary Service: (2003): page. 4.

<sup>71</sup>See Review, Marian Van Eyk McCain '*Resurgence*', No. 221, Nov - Dec 2003: page 65.

<sup>72</sup>'*A History of Ulster*'; Jonathan Bardon: Blackstaff Press (1992) page 57.

\* Publication of a focus group organised by Charley McAdam of Newbliss, Co. Monaghan with Reverend Charlie Leeke as Co-Chairman of P.U.L. see p4-5 of pamphlet - [www.pulnetwork.org.uk](http://www.pulnetwork.org.uk). Email: [contact@pulnetwork.org.uk](mailto:contact@pulnetwork.org.uk)

if they are fortunate, they are employed. For some time to come we must continue to ask, what *access* do people have to the decision-makers who hand down actions based on decisions relating to the health, education, environment, and skills etc of those to whom they are as directly unaccountable as they are inaccessible. **We should therefore continue to pose questions in public around the subject of accountability whenever and wherever we can!**

To achieve the desirable sea-change in our most troubled locations, be they in Northern Ireland or in Ireland as a whole will require a serious attempt at re-connection between those citizens who live in more comfortable circumstance and those who strive against the odds in unstable communities. This re-connection should be encouraged as a resource, as long as it is not exercised by any patronising overtones. Such a resource should be there to provide significant skills which are no longer *domiciled within* many of our local estates and neighbourhoods - e.g. health professionals, accountants, lawyers, cultural development officers, local entrepreneurs, horticulturists, outdoor activists, fund raisers and so on.

***We would urge that each Community Association is assisted to draw up a straight forward constitution with a built-in capacity for regular re-evaluation and amendment and that this be duly ratified by the members of the community at an open community meeting. The constitutional document should give a sense of purpose and direction to the respective community's *raison d'être*. Imaginative incentives by local councils for local citizens to attend the AGMs of their respective Community Associations could help to generate pride and involvement by citizens in their communities.***

While continuity of leadership is important in sustaining continuity of purpose it is also vital that the committees of the respective Community Associations should not be allowed to stagnate because of lack of change of thrust and change-over of its members yet it requires subtlety to ensure that such necessary change is not obtained at the cost of good will in those who, after much good work, may then be obliged to stand down to make room for fresh contributors.

'Re-election-en-bloc' should be challenged by all citizens who wish to promote social progress in their community.

Whatever the constitutional framework in which the people of Ireland operate in the future far greater attention should be paid to the operation of locally accountable democratic decision-making than was customary in the past. It is for that reason that the New Ireland Group has published separately the pamphlet, 'Out of the Past; A Divisive Democracy:: Into the Future; A Citizen's Alternative'. That pamphlet was published to highlight issues which Community Associations and Neighbourhood groups might address regarding the need to empower the citizen to the point where each has more confidence in accessing the decision-making process and in demanding accountability from it.

**In addition to the proposals made in the Community Charter - pages 25-35 of our recently published Communitarian Manifesto we would urge that there should be statutory obligation placed on all planners and developers of Housing estates and Neighbourhood Communities to ensure that their plans include easily accessible green space for team games, and a Community Centre incorporating such as a Community Workshop managed by a skilled craftsman, a large quiet area for study and an indoor area combining as an arts studio, indoor games area and a stage for drama etc. Youth must be provided with adequate and appropriate outlet for its talent and its energy.**



<sup>73</sup>The Belfast Agreement (G.F.A.): April 1998: page 1

<sup>74</sup>The Belfast Agreement (G.F.A.): April 1998: page 2

<sup>75</sup>The Belfast Agreement (G.F.A.): April 1998: page 3.

<sup>79</sup>Personal Communication: MacDermott Lecture by late Supreme Court Judge Kenny. (Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly, Vol. 3, p.206)

<sup>80</sup>Relevant comment included in submission by N.I.G. to New Ireland Forum (1983), p.50.

<sup>76</sup>Modern Ireland 1600-1972; R.F. Foster (1988): The Penguin Press page 507

<sup>77</sup>Ireland since the Famine: Fontana/Collins: Sthimp: (1978): page 438

<sup>78</sup>Ireland in the Twentieth Century: John A. Murphy: Gill & MacMillan (1975): page 35

<sup>79</sup>The Gill History of Ireland No. 11 Society: J.J. Lee: Cambridge University Press: page 50

<sup>80</sup>Ireland, 1912-1985, Politics and Society: J.J. Lee: Cambridge University Press: page 50

<sup>81</sup>Quote from G.F.A. page 5, para. 5

<sup>78</sup> The Belfast Agreement, page 5

<sup>79</sup> The Belfast Agreement: page 5 para 5d

<sup>80</sup> The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.): April 1998: Safeguards: (d): top of page 6.

<sup>81</sup> The Belfast Agreement: page 6 para 6.

<sup>82</sup> The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.): April 1998: page 6, para 10.

<sup>83</sup> The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.): April 1998: page 8.

\* d'Hondt clearly explained in pamphlet, 'Common Sense': ed. by the late John McMichael et al. (1986)

<sup>7</sup>The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.): April 1998: page 8-9, para 26(a).

<sup>84</sup>The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.): April 1998: page 8.

<sup>85</sup>The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.): April 1998: page 9, para 33.



<sup>86</sup>The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.): April 1998: page 11.

<sup>87</sup>The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.): April 1998: para 3. page 11.

<sup>88</sup> The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.): April 1998: see Annex.; page 13.

<sup>89</sup> The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.): April 1998: page 14

<sup>90</sup> Epilogue to Empire: (NEW FRONTIERS FOR THE W.I.S.E.): New Ireland Movement : Pamphlet, 'Westminster Withdrawal': page, 15 (1976)

<sup>93</sup>The Belfast Agreement:: page 14, para No.3

<sup>94</sup>The Belfast Agreement:: page 15

<sup>95</sup>The Belfast Agreement:: page 15, para 2

<sup>96</sup>The Belfast Agreement:: page 15, para No.3

<sup>97</sup>The Belfast Agreement:: page 19

<sup>98</sup>Out of the Past , A Divisive Democracy: Into the Future, A Citizen's alternative: N.I.G.: Coleraine Printing Co. (Sept 2003):

<sup>99</sup>The Belfast Agreement:: page 16, paras. 2&3

<sup>100</sup>The Belfast Agreement:: page 17, paras 5-8

<sup>101</sup> The Belfast Agreement:: page 17, para 9

<sup>102</sup>The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.): April 1998: page 18, paras 11-13

<sup>103</sup> The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.): April 1998: page 19.

<sup>104</sup> The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.): April 1998: page 20.

<sup>105</sup> Prisoners, Arms, Victims: Peace: (Pamphlet): N.I.G. : Coleraine Printing Co.: (1985): pp.4-6

<sup>106</sup> The Belfast Agreement:: page 21.

<sup>107</sup>The Belfast Agreement:: pages 22-23.

<sup>108</sup>The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.): April 1998: pages 23-24.







<sup>108</sup> Nobel Lecture: Alexander Solzhenitsyn: AQUARIUS -formerly, 'EVERYMAN' (1973) p. 17-25 wrpt page 25  
\* "Fiat justitia et pereat mundus" Emperor Ferdinand I (1503-1564)

<sup>109</sup> The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.) April 1998: page 24

† See Just News: C.A.J. (Committee on the Administration of Justice): Dec. 2003; pages 4-5 [www.caj.org.uk](http://www.caj.org.uk)

<sup>110</sup>The Belfast Agreement: (G.F.A.) April 1998: page 25

<sup>111</sup>The Pamphlet : Prisoners,Arms,Victims, Peace: N.I.G. Col. Print. Co. : pp. 7-10 :(1995)











## SYNOPSIS FOR MOVEMENT INTO NEW IRELAND

Persistent emphasis on individual and collective local community development,

A further period of dialogue: a Talks process to precede the re-establishment of the G.F.A. should that become necessary, or alternatively to precede the inauguration of a Northern Constitutional Conference (N.I.C.C.)

Assessment by **preferendum** (see page 25) among the delegates to the N.I.C.C. to determine the degree of consensus demonstrated for each option deemed by a trusted consensor to be appropriate for the list of options.

The most favoured option to be put to the people for ratification by weighted majority vote. (we would hope, however, that the day may come when people will feel comfortable enough with preferendum voting to vote by preferendum themselves).

That the most favoured option, if ratified by the people of Northern Ireland, be then put before the people of the Republic and the parliament of the United Kingdom to assess the acceptability of the decision as far as they, as neighbours, are concerned. That the result as expressed by Ireland as a whole be also made known.

Should the New Ireland Option be the one for which the greatest degree of consensus has been demonstrated at the Northern Constitutional Conference, then an All-Ireland Constitutional Convention would be called to draft a constitution and to seek ratification for it in both parts of Ireland simultaneously.





## ANNEX III : COMPROMISE<sup>112</sup>

### **The Role of Compromise in the Constitutional Convention of 1787 out of which the Constitution of the USA emerged**

In the long hot summer of 1787 representatives of very different interests came together in Philadelphia to draw up a constitution for the United States of America. There was no shortage of violence around at that time; even so - and regardless of diverse backgrounds - they stuck at it and eventually the constitution of the United States of America was published and ratified.

Some years ago, the New Ireland Group held a conference in Belfast in the Staff Common Room of Queens University. **Its theme was ‘Compromise’**. Even though time has since passed, it seems worth recalling Catherine Bowen’s description of the role of compromise in the Constitutional Convention of 1787.<sup>112</sup>

The Federal Convention, viewed from the records, is startlingly fresh and “new.” The spirit behind it was the spirit of compromise, seemingly no very noble flag to rally round. Compromise can be an ugly word, signifying a pact with the devil, a chipping off of the best to suit the worst. Yet in the Constitutional Convention the spirit of compromise reigned in grace and glory; as Washington presided, it sat on his shoulder like the dove. Men rise to speak and one sees them struggle with the bias of birthright, locality, statehood - South against North, East against West, merchant against planter. One sees them change their minds, fight against pride, and when the moment comes, admit their error. If the story is old, the feelings behind it are new as Monday morning.

If all the tales are told, retell them, Brother.  
If few attend, let those who listen feel.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Taken from ‘Miracle of Philadelphia’ by Catherine Drinker Bowen; Little Brown and Co. in Association with the Atlantic Monthly Press (1966): preface, p.xi

## ANNEX IV

### **Awake ('before it is too late')**

The conclusion of the poem written by the late W.R. Rodgers, first published in 1941,  
printed by Oxford University Press (1971) p 51-52

“So spare your protests.  
There are no interlopers in our fate.  
Be sure of this, that in peace or war, we  
Are where we are because of what we are:  
No censor can excerpt, or scissor-snip  
Excise this salient sentence from our lives.  
O easy and peaceful were those days when  
Our hopes bowled on before us like hoops,  
And our biddable purposes pedalled  
Slowly on rolling gradients of reason  
And reform. Fools! in our stinking ditches  
War was born, and grew gigantic legs that  
Suddenly kicked the ground away like a frog  
From under us all. For that is how  
The world moves, not with meant and maintained pace  
Toward some hill-horizon or held mood,  
But in great jags and jerks, probed and prodded  
From point to point of anger, exploded  
By each new and opposed touch. So War came,  
The late and urgent agent of Change, not  
Of Chance. So will it always come to wake  
The deep sleepers. See how its sudden hands  
Now garter and grow round us like quicksands  
Here in these islands. O awake! awake!  
And let us like the trapped intrepid man  
Who on prairie hears the holocaust roar  
And sees his horizons running to meet him  
In mutinous flames, while the still grasses fill  
With rills of refugees, let us calmly  
Stand now to windward, and here at our feet  
Stooping, light fires of foresight that will clean  
And clear the careless ground before us  
Of all the dry and tindery increment  
Of privilege. So will that other Fate  
Arriving find no hold within our state,  
And we on our ringedground its roar will wait  
Freely. Awake! before it is too late.”

**“There will be no permanent peace in Ireland as long as it is divided”**

*The late John O'Donnell of Balnamore, North Antrim,  
Ex-British Army serviceman, ex-Orangeman, former member of the Unionist Party of  
Northern Ireland, former member of the New Ireland Group,*

**If Plan A (The Belfast Agreement) fails to be revived or should its restored institutions crumble again at some time in the future then a Plan B will have to emerge. The New Ireland Group urges a fresh consideration of the New Ireland option as our studied conclusion for a Plan B. We further believe that the development of *enduring* peace and reconciliation among the people of Ireland will only become significant once the partition of Ireland has ceased.**



## **Emblem of the New Ireland Group.**

**Strings of the Harp: the different people and different traditions of Ireland in harmony**

**Incomplete circle of stars: the interdependent nations of the world, aspiring to a consensus yet to be achieved.**

**The Blue background: the cosmic dimension: affirmation of life: the basis of civilisation.**

**On the ground: A New Ireland: on an ecologically friendly Green Ireland?**