

# Peace and Then What?

# Alternatives

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**Political and Economic Viewpoints**

The *Irish Reporter* was founded four years ago by a group of journalists, academics and community and political activists who felt that a central element was being censored from public discussion of social and political life in Ireland - the national question. We felt that Ireland's colonial past, and its continuation in the form of the prolonged crisis in the North, permeated every aspect of life on the island as a whole and blighted all hope for social and democratic progress while they remained unresolved. Yet there seemed to have emerged a new orthodoxy in the mainstream media and academic life that this issue - and those people most directly affected by it - were to be ignored, or demonised and marginalised.

Of course, they are not the only people and issues marginalised in public debate, and we have sought to give voice also to those normally excluded when such issues as the family, the economy, emigration and the arts, are discussed: women, gays, the unemployed and working class, the rural poor, travellers, emigrants and dissident intellectual voices.

This issue of the *Irish Reporter* was drawn together at an important turning point - just as the national question reached political centre stage, and the Southern government threw its weight behind the efforts of John Hume and Gerry Adams to bring about an end to the military campaign in the North. We have the view of Mitchel McLaughlin, directly involved in that process, and Bill Rolston, directly affected by it. Importantly, we carry an analysis by Ruairi Og O'Bradaigh, a Republican opposed to the politics of Adams and Hume. We have endeavoured to do more than carry comment on these current events, offering contributions to the discussion on the future of aspects of Irish society as a whole, from Green thinkers and women community campaigners. Some of the most important, but less audible, voices, are those, not of politicians, but of people all too often excluded from decision-making, like women, Protestant and Catholic, North and South, and people who oppose the economic consensus and political orthodoxy being promulgated by the major parties.

Although some things have changed since we founded the *Irish Reporter*, the need to advance an agenda of non-exclusive debate among radicals, activists from the oppressed and forward looking intellectuals has not. Nor has the need for the openness in political life fought for by Let In The Light. The democratic agenda has never been more urgent.

Cover Picture: Kate Horgan

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# An End to Vitriol

## Eventually Getting the Message Across

Ronan Brady argues that the IRA ceasefire could have happened years ago, saving many lives

**N**ATIONALIST IRELAND may be celebrating the sighting of the first real dove in 25 years. John Taylor may have accepted that the ceasefire is here to stay. Michael Noonan may even have called for the release of IRA prisoners. But the war of words against republicanism led by Conor Cruise O'Brien, Michael McDowell and Professor John A Murphy goes on unabated.

Ten days before the IRA announcement, McDowell announced that "no open-ended truce or ceasefire is worth a damn" while O'Brien predicted that the IRA would become a sort of Southern *cosa nostra*. After the ceasefire, on RTE's *Questions and Answers*, Murphy spattered acid comments towards Mitchel McLoughlin in a tone which could not have been more bitter than if the IRA had just declared unconditional war.

Their total failure to grasp the fact that the ceasefire proves a republican commitment to peace, their continued vehemence, in spite of the evidence, exposes their entire strategy of isolating and excoriating republicanism. Now that they have been proved so spectacularly wrong, is it too much to hope that their past audience will begin to see that turning republicans into pariahs probably helped to delay the peace process?

No-one can doubt that people like O'Brien, McDowell and Murphy want peace, nor can anyone question their right to be sceptical about IRA intentions. But there is evidence to suggest that the current peace process could have begun years ago, were it not for the anti-republican witch-hunt to which these three writers contributed.

Of course, the ultimate responsibility for the acts of the IRA lies with the IRA itself and I don't wish to mitigate that. But others have responsibilities as well. IRA members believed



Conor Cruise continues with doom and gloom

Picture: Courtesy Irish Times

there was no other course of action open to them than armed conflict. Those who helped close off other avenues of struggle for the nationalist community in the North bear a certain responsibility for the outcome as well.

Revisionists who drove the republicans into a corner, who denied any vestige whatever of justification to the nationalist case, who helped deafen Southern soci-

ety to the grievances of Northern nationalists, only weakened those within the Republican Movement who argued for a ceasefire. Those, such as Mary Holland who disagreed with armed struggle but listened to the republicans and exposed genuine grievances, eventually helped to bring about that ceasefire. But, at the time, they had to put up with McCarthyite allegations of being Provo stooges.

Helped  
deafen  
Southern  
society

## The Republican movement was very different to the revisionist caricature

The widespread revulsion against IRA killings in Southern society was utterly natural. But the failure of Dublin politicians to provide leadership, to offer the republican communities a political alternative to the gun, merely doubled the tragedy and ensured it would continue. What makes this even more poignant is the fact that, had either Garret FitzGerald or Charles Haughey listened, they would have found out that the Republican Movement was very different to the revisionist caricature.

**B**etween 1986 and 1988, the movement began to discuss alternatives to armed struggle. In *The Politics of Irish Freedom and Pathways to Peace*, Gerry Adams recognised that republicans alone could not force the British to withdraw. In 1988, during talks with John Hume, Sinn Fein proposed a broad agreement on national self-determination among the nationalist parties on both sides of the border. The purpose was to get the Irish government to campaign around its stated objective of a united Ireland.

In 1991-92, the party debated and finally agreed on the document *Towards a Lasting Peace* which contained the broadest hint yet of the internal discussions:

...there is an onus on those who proclaim that the armed struggle is counter-productive to advance a credible alternative. Such an alternative would be welcome across the island but nowhere more than in the oppressed national areas of the Six Counties which have borne the brunt of British rule since partition and particularly for over 20 years past. The development of such an alternative would be welcomed by Sinn Fein.

These suggestions went largely unnoticed except by a small number of serious journalists who often found it hard to get their views across to their editors. There were a number of reasons for this. Some were due to the IRA itself. The horrific, if accidental, atrocity of Enniskillen isolated republicans more effectively and more totally in one act than the most vociferous critic could ever have done. It was understandably difficult to persuade people that such an organisation could ever consider peace.

Then there was the IRA's own memory of previous ceasefires when its members were targeted by loyalists with the probable collusion of British military intelligence. That experience resulted in repeated oaths that there would never again be a ceasefire, short of a British commitment to withdraw and made it harder still to see how the IRA could extricate itself from the conflict.

It was also hard to imagine

the Thatcher government ever sitting down to talk peace with the republicans. A prime minister accused of one of the greatest war crimes in recent history, the sinking of the Belgrano, and who had nearly died at the IRA's hands was very unlikely to consider any form of demilitarisation.

However, the participation of the British government was not essential to start the process. What was crucial was the involvement of, or at the very least positive support from, Dublin. The absence of any such support or of even the suspicion of such support is an appalling dereliction of duty on the part of the Southern political class. This is not to say that peace would definitely have broken out had there been talks. But it now seems certain that many lives would have been saved, had either Charles Haughey or Garret Fitzgerald showed a little courage and some openness of mind.

It will possibly be suggested that this is an entirely hypothetical argument, impossible to prove. But we now know the conditions under which the IRA was willing to declare an unconditional ceasefire. We also know that these conditions have not changed markedly since 1988 when John Hume was also involved in talks with Gerry Adams, save for one important detail: the involvement of the Reynolds government in such talks. It therefore follows with more than a little probability, that what was possible on September 1st 1994 was also possible in 1988.

**P**ublic anger over IRA killings was great at the time. But it was hardly any less antipathetic when John Hume sat down with Gerry Adams in 1988 and in 1993. The crucial difference was that, during the latter talks, the Dublin government chose to face down the revisionist propagandists and to engage in the Hume/Adams process.

In fact, Garret FitzGerald erected every barrier he could to contact with the republicans and bears a hefty responsibility for their



Picture: Derek Speirs

isolation. His ministers even refused to meet county council delegations if one of the councillors was a Sinn Fein representative.

More seriously, he chose to portray Haughey as a closet republican of dubious political parentage. During all his premierships, Haughey retained this republican tag, derived from accusations at the Arms Trial. The fact that, as Taoiseach, he did absolutely nothing to deserve it, mattered not a jot to his critics.

Charles Haughey did not rule himself out of the peace process in the way FitzGerald did. Always conscious of the grand gesture, Haughey would, by all accounts, have relished the role of midwife which fell to his successor. The two factors which precluded Haughey's involvement were the slenderness of his grasp on parliamentary power and the constant pressure of the anti-republican crusade in the South.

**T**hroughout his administrations after 1987, Haughey never succeeded in the holy grail of the overall majority for Fianna Fail. He was sustained in power by either Fine Gael's Tallaght Strategy or by the Progressive Democrats.

Outside parliament, the political atmosphere had been inoculated against any move to reduce the isolation of the republicans by a number of 'peace' groups who saw their role as primarily one of condemning the IRA. Sinn Fein, of course, had no means of answering back on the airwaves.

This logjam could have endured for years, had it not been for the formation of the Reynolds/Spring government with the largest majority in the history of the state and the opposition in disarray. The ending of Section 31 undoubtedly played a key role in persuading republicans that they had at last reached a listening ear and the government's cooperation in the clarification process of the Downing Street Declaration consolidated their confidence. For the first time in the history of the current conflict, a Dublin government was dealing with them in a conspicuously even-handed manner.

Given hindsight, it's obviously easier to see both how the process happened and how it could have happened earlier. But the whole purpose of magazines like the *Irish Reporter* is to exercise that hindsight as soon as possible so as to expose tragic mistakes and make sure they don't happen again. We are now entering a new phase of Irish history. It is vitally important that the vitriol which accompanied much discussion of the North in past years is eliminated from our political system. Maybe even Conor Cruise O'Brien, Michael McDowell and John A Murphy will eventually get the message.

Bill Rolston

considers the background to the IRA ceasefire and its implications for the future of republican politics

**A**T THE END OF AUGUST I was on a Greek island. I phoned home from a restaurant one evening and was told about the imminent IRA ceasefire. I rushed back to my friends at their table to announce: "The IRA has declared a ceasefire!"

I had forgotten that most of the tourists on the island were English but was quickly reminded of this by the way the backs of 50 people in the restaurant stiffened like a whiplash as I mentioned the IRA. The last thing they expected to hear on a Greek island were those three fateful letters.

Yet to many people in the North even six months before, it was the word 'ceasefire' that was incongruous. I remember heated discussions about the time the Hume-Adams talks became public - with republicans arguing that the armed struggle was the trump card, and you don't deal it hastily. They insisted, with some historical plausibility, that Britain has never accepted the force of argument in its colonies, only the argument of force.

So what happened between then and the end of August? Did the leopard change its spots? Did republicans have a conversion? Or, as some of the slogans on the Shankill Road currently proclaim, did they decide that they were getting nowhere and surrender unconditionally?

None of these, I would argue. In fact, paradoxical as it may seem, there is a logical connection between the old maxim of the argument of force and the decision to call off the the armed struggle. Not to put too fine a point on it, it was violence which brought the republicans to the point they are at today.

The IRA's ability, not merely to survive, but to carry on a military campaign in the face of major odds, convinced a number of British generals to decide a decade or more ago that they could not be beaten militarily. Moreover, the IRA's ability to 'carry the war to England', as they put it, rattled the British establishment to its very foundations. The bombs in London were the final proof that 'the Irish problem' was not going to disappear.

# CEASEFIRE!

## The IRA Cashes In Its Chips

In their wake, financiers rushed in where politicians usually feared to tread and imagined the unthinkable: negotiation with the IRA. So, like an astute gambler, the IRA cashed in its chips while it was on a winning streak. This was at the same time a risky move: you can only cash in your chips once. If the payback is not what you expected, you have no more cards to play.

But the risk in the strategy was lessened by another development in the Republican Movement: the growth of a sophisticated and able political element, most publicly represented by Gerry Adams. Along with John Hume, Adams seized the opportunity of a political hiatus in the North to push forward a peace process.

While Major made deals with the Official Unionists in return for support on Maastricht, Hume and Adams sought their common nationalist ground.

Why John Hume should have joined forces with Gerry Adams is less of an enigma than might first appear. Though he took a gamble, Hume had little to lose. Twenty-five years of constitutional nationalist politics had taken him almost nowhere within the North.

**B**ut Adams took the greater risk. True, republicans knew they had to become involved in political discussions if they were to progress their cause. And they knew that could not happen easily in a situation where no-one wanted



John Hume and Gerry Adams, seizing the opportunity

The opportunity was presented to them by the abject failure of British policy in the North. The Brooke talks, the latest in a long line of attempted solutions, had floundered on the intransigence of the Unionists, convincing Hume that an internal solution was impossible.

For his part, Adams pursued the logic of an earlier republican admission (not unlike that of the British generals mentioned above) that the IRA could not remove the British by military means alone.

to negotiate with them: when they were banned off the airwaves in these islands; when they were beaten back into the ghetto if they tried to move out; when even to suggest that they should be brought to the conference table was enough to earn the accusation of being a fellow-traveller of terrorists.

Forging common ground with the SDLP made sense, but there was always the risk that it could backfire. The annals of Irish history are filled with stories of revolutionary republicans who

The Irish problem was not going to disappear

Sold out again: 25 years for this?

The old borders between the peoples of Ireland may be crumbling

have cut back on their principles in return for a taste of power and legitimacy.

With the Hume/Adams initiative, for once, the ball was definitely with the nationalist team. The Downing Street Declaration of December 1993 seemed like a clever defensive move. London and Dublin had stolen the momentum created by the initiative.

With London firmly in control of the ball again, the emphasis was once more on marginalising nationalists in general and republicans in particular. It is to the credit of republicans that they kept a cool head. The instinct may have been to reject the Declaration out of hand: "Did we fight for 25 years just for this?" could easily have been the response.

But the republican call for clarification seemed entirely reasonable to many both here and abroad and it was this reasonableness which served to turn the tables once more. Albert Reynolds' commitment to move things forward quickly became apparent. The United States was brought on board. In the end Adams delivered the apparently unthinkable: an IRA ceasefire this side of a British declaration of intent to withdraw.

"Sold out again: 25 years for this?" says a slogan on a wall in North Belfast. And it is true that settlements of much less import have been the undoing of other republican leaders in the past. But the slogan misses the point. It is fine having principles. But what is also needed is the political space in which to exercise them.

Irish republicanism has been dogged too long by isolationism. Admittedly, this has often been forced upon the republicans. But it has also been turned into an article of faith, a belief that what counts is that a few people continue to keep the flame alight, whether or not they ever manage to effect major change.

**T**he lack of enthusiasm of some on the republican side to join in the celebrations is probably dwarfed by the confusion among those who have a vested interest in keeping the war going. This of course includes the police and prison officers, the civil servants whose jobs rest on massive British subsidies, the lawyers, glaziers, contractors building new police stations, etc.

However, beyond these obvious people are all the politicians, Unionist and British, whose sole cry for many years has been the demand for an IRA ceasefire.

In calling a ceasefire now, the IRA has pulled the rug from under these politicians, leading some to say that they do not believe the IRA is genuine, others to say that they will never negotiate with those of such a past and others

to experience such a deep sense of loss and confusion that they have run for cover, saying nothing.

Among the most startled by recent events are those in the British government. Aware that all the running is being made by Irish nationalists, Major is stuck for words. As of the time of writing, the most that the British can come up with in response to the ceasefire is the pathetic gesture of allowing British troops to wear berets instead of helmets. Meanwhile reopened border roads are closed again by the British army with undue haste.

Now that Irish nationalism holds the initiative, it is a tempting prospect to simply ignore a British establishment which has lost face, to move on and to let the rest of the world see the lack of British imagination or generosity. But that would be premature.



For a start, Britain should not get off the hook so easily. Centuries of oppression demand some recompense and, eventually, they will have to come to see that they have a duty to contribute to post-war reconstruction in Ireland.

But more, they are the underwriters of unionism. While the British dither or, worse, block

political progress, the Unionists do not have to begin to answer the difficult question of where their future lies in these transformed political circumstances. With the British backing them, it is sufficient for Unionists to continue talking in negatives, to see the way forward as being back.

Removing the British guarantee to the Union will fragment unionism further and Unionists are bound to feel initially that republican policy all along has been to divide and rule. This would be a narrow assessment. Republicans are being conciliatory towards unionism, urging an inclusive approach to the building of a new Ireland.

It should be stressed that, in the long run, the break-up of unionism must be good for Unionists. For too many years, Paisley or Robinson or Maginnis or McGimpsey have been presented as the voice of unionism, not least by RTE. The nuances have been lost.

**T**here are a thousand unionist voices to be heard and they will not be heard until unionists are forced to say what they want – not what they don't want. At that point it will become apparent that they do not all want the same things. There is great hope for a pluralist future in the shattering of that already fragile monolith.

Nor is the task ahead easy for republicans either. Slogans have now to be turned into policies, general aspirations into programmatic statements that can hold up in the heat of political debate. As negotiations develop, it will no longer be sufficient to presume that people do not accept republican arguments because of censorship or ignorance.

Republicans have acquired great skills of expression and persuasion while in opposition. But they have to go further, to develop a greater ability to win by force of argument and to be graceful when they are defeated.

They will have to hold on to their beliefs and principles and to forge alliances with others North and South, socialist and feminist, Nationalist and Unionist, who agree with them. They will have to take their chances with everyone else in the political arena.

It will be hard work for all of us to spell out what sort of Ireland we want and to find allies. But, daunting as the prospects are, what is exciting is that the logjam may be on the way to being broken, that forums for debate may be about to emerge where they have long been absent, that some of the old borders between the peoples of Ireland may be crumbling and that ultimately, with the British gone and the Irish deciding on their own future, that one overarching border on this island may just fade away.



The Civil Rights Movement on the march in the 1960s.

Picture: Courtesy Pacemaker

# Escaping From Divisions And Dependency

## A New Beginning For the Next Generation

*Mitchel McLaughlin* outlines the Sinn Fein view on the current ceasefire and the struggles that lie ahead

**M**ANY COMPLEX ISSUES lie at the core of the conflict in Ireland and resolving such a longstanding dispute will necessarily be a slow process.

One of the most perplexing dimensions of the conflict has been the division between working class people, especially in the North. This division, which has existed for generations, is unquestionably wider and deeper now as a consequence of the mutual trauma of street warfare.

As a result, aspects of the class struggle in Ireland have never been properly developed during the past 25 years. This is a failing which must be rectified.

Whatever about the historical reasons for those divisions, it is an undeniable fact, from the earliest days of the Civil Rights movement, that the workers' class enemies – those with a vested interest in the social and economic control of Irish society – instinctively and immediately recognise the potential threat from the empowerment of the working class.

This dimension of the Troubles has not been fully analysed. Indeed it has been ignored by the media.

I am describing the self-serving operation that swung into action even as the walls of the Stormont parliament were being assailed by those demanding civil rights: the 'Peace Through Progress' brigade who lamented the absence of tourists and inward investment more than the absence of social

justice or national democracy.

You know: the "this is the best wee country in the world" types. Or those whose anguished voices cried out "if only the men of violence would put away their guns". Those who, for so many years, pretended not to see or acquiesced in a vicious and undemocratic status quo and who were guilty by neglect of creating the conditions which led to the inevitable bloodletting.

The historic decision of the IRA in early September has opened up many options for the people of Ireland. Not only the end of the 'national' struggle, but the opportunity to force a transformation in Irish political life and a realignment of politics to permit a genuine socialist debate to begin.

**P**ace, a real and sustainable peace, is only achievable when it is democratically based and inclusive of all points of view. Only in those circumstances can we expect to achieve the essential

Guilty by neglect

## The captains of industry who profit from security

unity of purpose amongst the working class in Ireland. A self-sustaining peace will flow from the eradication of the causes of division in our society.

Such a concept is today as threatening to the interests of those who control our society as the ideas of Connolly and Larkin were in a different day. Those for whom the status quo actually works: the 'captains of industry', those who profit from the 'security' industry, will all seek to defend the existing arrangements by all means at their disposal. In the meantime, of course, they will enthusiastically endorse any 'peace' initiatives that do not actually demand any radical social or political change.

But I do not wish to give these people too much credit. Despite the foot-dragging and the begrudgery, substantial progress has been made. The concept of peace in Ireland is in the process of being retaken from those who had fashioned it into a counter-insurgency weapon.

Of course, the issue of national self-determination and how it will be exercised, is still a matter of different opinions in Ireland. We should not be frightened by such diversity of views. Indeed we should be stimulated by it. The importance of this developing debate must not be undervalued.

Picture: Derek Speirs



The British government has been obliged to acknowledge that the Irish people have the right to national self-determination and it will yet be forced to remove all remaining impediments to the emergence of agreement on political structures.

The Dublin government, despite the historical failure of 'constitutional' politics, now pronounces that this objective has been its position all along! However, acknowledgement of the right to national self-determination is not to be confused with supporting or indeed legislating to give effect to that right. So there is more work to be done.



**T**he reaching of agreement on political structures that will enjoy the authority and the allegiance of the people of Ireland will only be achieved by inclusive dialogue. To refuse or to impede such dialogue is to delay the inevitable and to prolong the agony.

The present British government has the opportunity to play a constructive and rational role in the eradication of conflict and the emergence of peace. It fully understands what it must do. The British state, after all, has had ample experience by now of dismantling the trappings of empire. That is the legacy of its history and it must define its remaining function in Ireland.

A British government which accepts that it should negotiate with the representatives of the people of Ireland on the mechanics of its disengagement will be hailed as a peacemaker.

Many within the unionist community and the loyalist organisations have been predictably hostile to the recent political developments. That reaction can, as we know from bitter experience, be very violent. The challenge to Sinn Fein and to all shades of political opinion in Ireland will be to maintain a forward momentum to a process that will eventually create the opportunity for unionists, nationalists and republicans to find common cause.

The search for agreement between the unionist community and those of the other political

traditions will necessarily be a tortuous process. Yet the embryonic peace process will never develop into a tangible reality unless the unionist tradition is present at a conference table on an equal footing with the rest of us who live on this island.

The constitutional mechanisms which inhibit working class unity and progress towards agreed democratic structures have been vested uniquely in the unionist community, raised above all other political and cultural traditions in Ireland.

**O**n this small island we are all victims of a joint history of dislocation, insecurity, domination and alienation. Peace in Ireland will only come when we have asserted our confidence in our combined strength, intelligence and ability to order society to meet our needs. That will be the exercise, by agreement and by consent, of self-determination.

The diversity of our political traditions is a national resource which ultimately will be the guarantee that agreed political structures will emerge as a product of democratic discourse and compromise.

In the current Irish peace process, many interesting and potentially important shifts in opinion have been recorded, affecting the traditional responses of all the main political forces in this country. International developments too have been keenly observed and have had a generally positive effect. More and more people are seeking to learn about the benefits of democratic co-operation and accommodation.

What of the future? Peace, eventually, I am certain. But before that, the slow and difficult task of escaping from the burdens of division and dependency. The status quo has failed us all. The failure of partition is an irresistible argument for dismantling it. History is urgently telling us that the process should have already begun.

Radicalising Irish society and the coming together of Irish working people so as to maximise their strength and political influence is a longer-term project. This option will probably become available only after the 'constitutional' issue has been resolved. That is not to argue that "Labour must wait". It is simply to ensure that such a project is based on reality.

However its realisation is as inevitable as it is desirable. In the meantime, there is an overreaching urgency for the discussions to begin so that those of us who have lived through the horror of endemic conflict can pass on to the next generation a new beginning, a different reality of agreed and democratic structures in our country.

# Submitting to the Loyalist Veto

## A New Ireland Cannot Be the Old Ireland In Disguise

*Ruairí Óg Ó Brádaigh*

argues that although the Provisionals have surrendered the struggle has only been postponed.

**J**UST WHAT KIND OF future can we hope for in the aftermath of the Provisionals' announcement of a "complete cessation of military operations" on August 31? What alternative is there for Irish people – Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter – to the path down which Fianna Fáil/SDLP/Provisional Movement are now heading?

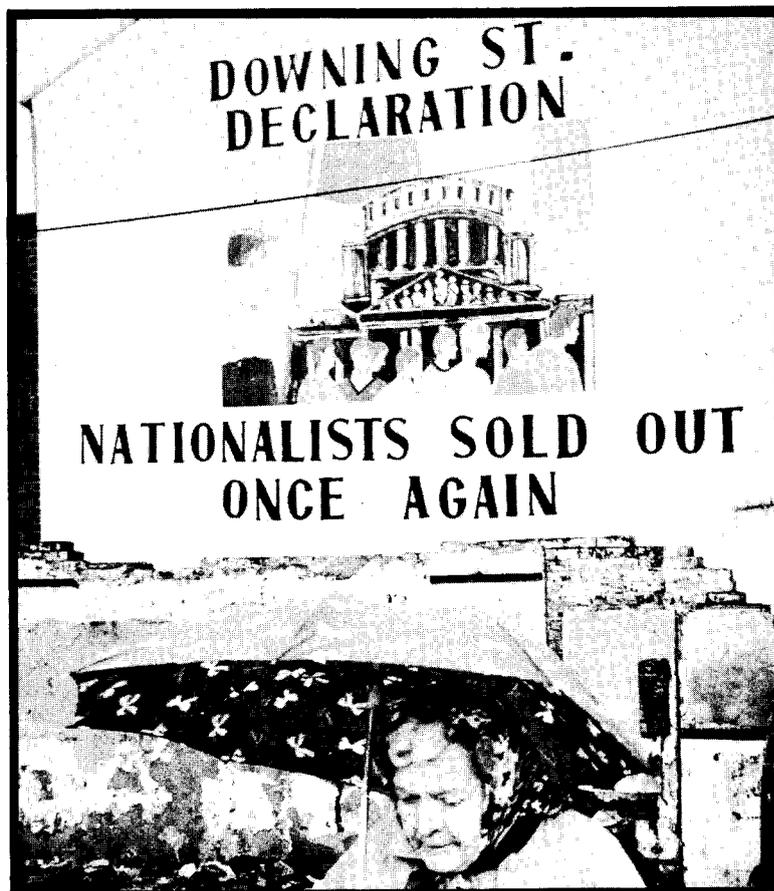
At present there may be more questions to be framed than ready answers available, but certain facts can and should be identified from the outset.

British disengagement from Ireland will not come about as a result of the halt to the Provisionals' military campaign, as that decision rests on the Hume-Adams proposals which emerged a year ago.

Paragraph five of the Hume-Adams document reads as follows:

The democratic right to self-determination by the people of the island as a whole must be achieved and exercised with the agreement and consent of the people of Northern Ireland.

This is an acceptance of the unionist veto which guarantees the British presence in the north-east of Ireland while 18 per cent of the population of the 32 Counties, the contrived and artificial majority in the Six Counties, will it so.



Picture: Frankie Quinn

On September 25, 1993 the Hume-Adams document was agreed by the SDLP and Provisional Sinn Féin; eight days later it was endorsed by the Provisional military organisation.

After endorsing the unionist veto in Hume-Adams, the Provisionals were presented two-and-a-half months later with the Downing Street Declaration in which the veto was repeated five times. Having made the 'fatal mistake' (British civil servant John Chilcott's words) in Hume-Adams, they could not then reject the Joint Declaration.

**T**he Provisionals have therefore ended their campaign for a place at a negotiating table where all the participants agree that a British withdrawal is not on the

agenda. A peace based on the oppressed making concessions to the oppressor cannot be just or lasting and comparisons with the South African situation are very wide of the mark.

The ANC called off its armed campaign in 1991 when the process of ending apartheid was 'irreversible', as Robert McBride affirmed on RTE radio on August 12. In other words when the oppressor had capitulated to the oppressed's struggle for one person, one vote in one referendum, and not before.

Neither was it conceded in South Africa that separate referenda in areas dominated by minorities could constitute 'self-termination' and lead to the

An acceptance of the Unionist veto

establishment of separate states. "We don't want another Ulster" was Nelson Mandela's response and the development of a democratic and pluralist South Africa has proceeded apace without the threatened 'civil war'.

In Ireland, however, separate referenda in the Six and 26 Counties are proposed under the Downing Street Declaration and the 'framework' document, which can ultimately only lead to another Stormont assembly and innocuous cross-Border boards dealing with such as the Foyle Fisheries, railways, tourism and agricultural diseases. Such boards, far from constituting a 'breakthrough', were in operation already for over 40 years of the span of partition since 1920.

Talk of proposed 'new policing arrangements' in the Six Counties indicates that a closer parallel can be drawn with the position of Arafat's Gaza mini-state. Palestinians there are now policing their own people at the instigation of Israel. Are we to have a similar force made up of released prisoners and Republican-minded people in the nationalist areas of the Six Counties? The British government or the new Stormont will employ and pay such a force and will certainly 'call the tune'. It will be amalgamated over time into the RUC just as the 'Broy Harriers', made up of former IRA men and established by the new Fianna Fail regime in the 1930s, became part of the Gardai.

This is a recipe for the postponement for another ten years or to another generation of the struggle for a peaceful, democratic Ireland built by all the communities on this island.

Having given up their objectives, the Provisionals stand accused of surrender. Also, by entering an alliance with the constitutional nationalists of the SDLP and Dublin (and here we turn to the question of alternative strategies), they have joined the ranks of those who wish to impose the confessional 26-County State on the people of the Six Counties, nationalist and unionist. This would amount to a 32-County Free State.

What possible appeal is there for the people of the North in such a vision of Ireland? As John Robb of Ballymoney, Co Antrim, wrote in the *Irish News* on August 15 last: "A new Ireland cannot be the old Ireland in disguise".

**R**epublican Sinn Fein agrees with John Robb when he says that a new Ireland "would imply of necessity the dissolution of the Irish Republic as at present constituted".

A credible alternative cannot be based on a united Ireland of Six and 26 Counties but rather on a peaceful, democratic Ireland of self-governing communities which

would replace both the northern and southern states.

Rather than seeing itself under threat from the Dublin establishment the independent Irish Protestant tradition can be guaranteed in a nine-county Ulster as part of a four-province federation with separation of church and state, a pluralist society and maximum local power. The position of each province in a New Federal Ireland would be entrenched in a written constitution and a charter of rights.

Equally, the *Eire Nua* plan would give the Protestant communities in a nine-county Ulster the means of defence of their own situation in 28 District Councils which would control local policing. By giving all citizens the right to exercise control over their own lives in a participatory democracy with strong local government, the prospect of inter-communal strife can be avoided.

Ruairi O Bradaigh, President of Republican Sinn Fein, said in his Ard-Fheis address of 1993:

If the unionists feel abandoned by England and threatened by Dublin; if they perceive that nothing is left to them only their own Ulster identity, then we have something to say to them.

In the context of an English public undertaking to withdraw, the Ulster identity is a legitimate identity, as is the Munster, Leinster and Connacht identity in each case. This Ulster identity can find expression through democratic structures in a free Ireland and would include Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter. In a nine-county Ulster with strong regional and local government those who are now unionists could control their own lives.

**A**n echo of this was found in a recent interview with the novelist Maurice Leitch from Muckamore, Co Antrim (*Irish Times*, September 8) who describes himself as 'strongly Protestant'. Asked if he saw himself as Irish or as an Ulsterman he replied that

## A new Ireland cannot be the old Ireland in disguise



Daithi O'Connell and Ruairi O Bradaigh

he was an Ulsterman. "I believe the only solution to the problem in the North is to have a federal situation inside an Irish context. The British link is gone. Deep down, everybody knows that", he said.

There remains the struggle against those forces in Britain and Ireland who want the *status quo* to continue - the two failed states born of the partition system in 1920. There is no future in a continuation of British rule for nationalists or unionists. They will only remain equally powerless and equally the pawns in a colonial game controlled by the British establishment which still gets a psychological 'kick' out of the rag end of empire.

There is a world of difference between 'constitutional' nationalist politics in Ireland, which is committed to upholding the partition system, and democratic politics. The latter can be organised around the right of all the Irish people to vote as a single unit on any settlement concerning the future of the 32 Counties with the British publicly committed to leave. It is not about us all being Irish nationalists, but rather about us all being democrats in an Irish context.

**S**uch a campaign was launched at the end of August and sponsors include Bernadette McAliskey, Des Wilson, Ruairi O Bradaigh and relatives of the ten hunger strikers who died on hunger strike in 1981. It can be built on and expanded. The example of South Africa which achieved self-determination as a single unit is there in front of us.

A many-sided approach is needed to counter the system of colonial capitalism which still operates in Ireland, north and south. **Saol Nua**, Republican Sinn Fein's social and economic programme, calls for the promotion of small indigenous enterprises, worker/producer-owned co-operatives and the achievement of economic democracy and self-reliance. This is as relevant to the people of the West of Ireland as it is to the people of South Armagh and the Shankill Road.

The first step along the road to a new Ireland is to identify a vision of the future for ourselves that is inclusive and free from the political and economic dependency of the present.

The second step is to have the courage to push past the politicians and the state class who have a vested interest in maintaining the present system and build it.

As Carlos Fuentes, the Latin American writer, put it: "We must go forward, because the present is unjust and insufferable, but we cannot kill the past in doing so, for the past is part of our identity, and without our identity we are nothing."



ULSTER  
AWAKE  
NOW

ULSTER  
SAYS  
NO

ULSTER  
SAYS  
NO

ULSTER

FURDY

AVENUE

# Let Us Be True Each To The Other

## A Covenant For a New Ireland

*Annie Campbell* says that Protestant women in the North are neither invisible nor silent. It just seems that way. She nails her theses to the doors of quite a few churches and listens to some of her protesting sisters

**I** AM A PROTESTANT woman. Born and bred in Belfast. The white horse of King Billy gallops through my sweetest, summer-filled childhood memories, drumming out the rhythm of freedom for me, the one childhood longing that took human form each Twelfth of July.

How can it be that my people are anything but splendid? Isn't the Truth Revealed on these fluttering banners, the pawing of the white horse's hooves on the sun-baked summer ground, these stirring scenes of Hope clinging to the Rock of the Protestant faith?

The very walls in this place tell a different story now: *Any Taig will do*, scrawled in the midst of the loyalist slaughtering season. Now when I hear *We are the people*, that I first heard on my father's knee, my gut wrenches. I want to spit out: "Not my fucking people."

Hell roast the lot of you! I am not a Protestant. My family did not come to this island centuries ago around Plantation time from Scotland. I don't come from a long line of dour, sour-faced Presbyterians who'd tear the joy out of the very fabric of Paradise itself. I have not been left with a legacy of individual responsibility for every damned thing that happens in this country.

Worship your God in your own way and good luck to you. But



A UDR march with young girl

Picture: Ed Kashi

keep your bloody priests out or my business, keep your meddling hands off my body. And if any of the laws of this land are made by them I will protest. I, a Protest/ant. I will become a rebel too. Some of this is still true for me.

Protestant is hierarchical/patriarchal, masculine. Catholic is feminine/communal. So goes one myth. I am a feminist. It's in my interest to cheer on the Goddess principle, but Mary is not my role model. Give me a hard-edged frontierswoman any day. I don't want an imploring word in the ear of the powers that be. I want direct communication. They are answerable to me – as I am, ultimately, to them. Two-way, accountable democracy.

Mother Ireland's son, Cuchulainn, is now a hostage/recruit of the UDA, appearing on 'Freedom Corner' on the Newtownards Road in East Belfast. *Cuchulainn: Ancient Defender of Ulster from Irish Attacks over 2,000 yrs ago*, proclaims the gable suitably framed by the Goliath crane of Harland & Wolff. The shipyards haven't yet faded into legend, but they're heading that way.

**T**he industrial muscle of 20,000 workers (for worker read male, Protestant), reduced to less than 2,000. My grandfather was a fitter there. What Red Hand of Ulster horrors did he witness or collude in?

Hell  
roast  
the lot  
of you!

Given Cuchulainn's superhero macho role in the myths, it seems an appropriate place for him. Not a role model I'd like for my son.

What about the Protestant women? Silence. Public invisibility. Within feminism, a discourse? No. Protestant women have no background, no needs, no views on the current situation, no desires for the future.

Ruth Moore's recent research on Protestant women and equality: *Proper Wives, Orange Maidens or Disloyal Subjects*, makes for riveting reading and begins the necessary process of bringing their lives in from the cold. Herself a Protestant woman, she speaks of a duality in their consciousness whereby they wish to hold on to their relative privilege vis-a-vis Catholic women while feeling their existence to be under siege.

These women face a crisis of identity as Protestants, complicated by the different identities open to them as women. Sexist and sectarian norms are interconnected and Ruth Moore suggests that their Protestant ideology:

keeps a lid on other politics and activities such as women's history, leadership and strength.

There is:

so much that cannot be asked, explored or known, out of fear of letting the side down.

Ironically:

True loyalty equates in some way to silence ... the paradox is that the original meaning of being Protestant – to protest with the authentic voice of the dissenter – is lost.

**H**er research and the Protestant women I interviewed show a confusion of identity, shame, fear, ignorance and longing – lives that do not fall easily into the stereotyped image of the Protestant woman.

(The interviewee's names have been changed for protection.)

Gillian: "The tradition of the Twelfth is there – what can you do when they come up this street? For me, I hate it. I hate it. Noisy drunken brutes. Especially coming home. You have this big two hours in the morning, a real high, then all the day you're on a low and they close the shops so there's nowhere for you to go. I hate it. Definitely less people celebrate it now.

"These T-shirts with Proud to be a Prod – what have you got to be proud of if people belonging to you are going out and murdering innocent men and women and children? You may not be doing it, but you still feel.

"I'm not envious of Catholic women, but I have to take my dead end at them - they know everything! The DHSS, what they can get is fantastic. I wish they'd teach me! I think it's hard for them maybe because of the way they have to go to chapel, do your rosary, stick by the Pope's decisions and have all

them kids. But women don't do that now. They've caught on.

"We're brought up with no Irish history, not much of our own history either. My family could be from Timbucktoo, way back! I'm British. I've never, ever thought of saying to myself I'm Irish. Maybe I'm being stupid, to me Irish is Dublin. I don't live in Dublin. I live here, so I'm British.

"I don't think a united Ireland would work. We'd be less well-off money-wise. But I can't see peace without a united Ireland. I'd be afraid that they'd take over and tell us what to do. Could you picture the Pope coming and telling us not to go on the pill? I'm afraid that there'll never be any peace, that there'll be nothing resolved and the kids will end up growing up in it. They've no future, have they? But I've had them and I have to try to protect them as best I can."

Tracey: "I was brought up a Baptist – you can't get more Protestant. Michael Stone went to my secondary school. At 14, I identified with loyalist working class culture. That was the time of the Ulster Workers' Council strike. It was a teenager's paradise – society was breaking down! I remember thinking 'I hate Fenians'. But I didn't really know what that meant.

"My father was an unskilled man, made redundant in his early 50s. He got a job as a prison officer and worked in what he called the Maze. He was there throughout the dirty protests, the hunger strikes. But he never talked about it. I felt real shame about the fact that he worked there.

"I've travelled in such a completely different direction since then, that it's hard for me to look back and recognise that that was me. Nearly all my friends are from a Catholic background. Any radical scene that you're in, there'd be an assumption that you're a Catholic... Protestants are invisible. If you're a Protestant, well that was something away in your past and, God forgive you, you're all right now!

"I've gone to West Belfast to various seminars but I feel outside the nationalist debate. I silence myself there, I don't speak out. I live in a mixed relationship. Both my kids have Irish names. They have their father's surname. It's easier as the oldest child goes to a Catholic school. There's an embarrassment, still some residual shame around for me about being Protestant.

"I do envy Catholic women sometimes. They can sing their songs. The songs I learnt as a young person I feel are not acceptable and that's a loss. There's a loss in that change of identity. I'm starting to realise the influence my background has on me. I feel that there are important elements in having a Protestant identity that I wouldn't want to see wiped out in a new Ireland."

Jill: "They talk of fair employment, but 80 per cent of the workers in the Yorkgate shopping complex are Catholics. It's not right. On our side, they're knocking the houses down. They're strengthening the ones on their side. It's deliberate to split the Protestants up.

"The hype of the Twelfth, the bonfire and that – everything's starting to dwindle away. I would support the tradition but I'm not supporting the terrorists. My brothers have just totally went the other way. Every one of them is now breeding with a Catholic – after all those years of them being in the Orange Order!

"I would call myself a British Protestant. It's bred into you – to be loyal. There's a fear of a united Ireland. We can't go back to Stormont. It'll have to be something new. The MPs are getting paid for nothing. Bigger them out."

Moira: "I call myself an ex-Protestant. I just have no connection with anything Protestant anymore. But I think part of it is me being ashamed in some way of that identity. Most of my friends come from Catholic homes. In the voluntary sector there's not many Protestants. I have nationalist/republican politics and so would my friends. I think we're going to have a united Ireland again and that we're on the road to that now.



Tiger's Bay Belfast

Picture: Ed Kashi

"I have a sense that I can't be right-on, I can't be PC because I was once a Protestant. That's how I feel. It's about recent history, Civil Rights. I remember the hunger strikes. I was still a Protestant in those days and I was thinking: 'So what? It doesn't matter if they all die.'

"That summer I went to the anti-nuclear festival in Carnsore Point and there were people from all over the world there with placards saying: 'Support the hunger strikers'. That had quite an effect on me. I suppose I feel part of the nationalist culture although at the same time excluded from it because I'm not a Catholic. I do think it's very important for the republican movement to reach

The important elements in having a Protestant identity

out to the Protestant community at large. I think they pay lip-service to the Protestant community, but I think that's all it is.

"My best hopes would be that my son will grow up an Irish citizen and that, when he's an adult, he won't have to worry about being shot because he's in the wrong place at the wrong time. More Protestants are starting to explore their Irish identity and saying: 'That's part of my history, our culture, as well.'"



**T**he summer I read *Price of My Soul* by Bernadette Devlin, I felt sick. My family had a holiday down the Ards peninsula. The wee cottage had a musty old bookcase full of Catholic tracts and Bernadette. After reading her, I felt that, if any of this was true, then everything I'd been taught was a lie. My family was a lie. I was a lie. The foundations of my world started to shift.

Still: a Protestant. And it was in the name of the Protestant people of Ulster that Catholic people were treated, in their own country, worse than you'd treat a dog. Not in my name, never again, not in my name.

This is what I want Protestant women to do – their part in the downfall of the sectarian society that is also choking them:

Sit down, think what you want to keep from The Protestant Tradition that's good for you. What parts just don't make sense anymore – in the light of 20th-century facts? What parts are so wrapped up in your identity that to lose them would mean losing yourself? Act Protestant: object when the truth of a thing is smothered by an outmoded form.

One woman said to me: "I got sick of people acting so amazed when they discovered I was Protestant – as if you couldn't be a Protestant and a decent woman! I had to reclaim that. I now call myself a Protestant woman."

Let us now name ourselves Protestants. Let us reclaim the heritage of the fiery women preachers, outside male control, speaking their own truths. Catholic and Protestant sisters, let's create the vision of a new Ireland together. Let us be true, each to the other and this will be our Covenant.

# Protestants In The South

## Beyond the Stereotyped Views

*Carol Coulter*  
considers the  
experience of  
Protestants in the  
South and the light  
it might cast on the  
future role of  
Northern  
Protestants in  
Ireland

**W**HEN IT COMES TO religious differences in Ireland, myths and stereotypes abound. These range from popular misconceptions - the Northern Protestant view of priest-ridden Southern society, populated by sly politicians running a collapsed agricultural economy; the Southern Catholic view of plain speaking, industrious Northern Protestants - to the more elegantly expressed, but no less stereotyped, views propounded by the cultural warriors of the 'Two Traditions' campaign.

Reality is far more complex. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the different strands of outlook and opinion among Catholics, North and South, but no-one disputes that differences do exist between the denizens of the Malone and the Falls roads, between those living in Dublin's north inner city and the 'strong farmers' of Tipperary.

Equally, the Protestant population of both parts of Ireland is divided and stratified by class, geography and also religious denomination. There is a wide gulf between the deprived and disadvantaged of the Shankill road

and the comfortable residents of the satellite towns of north Down; and a great difference between both and the Protestant farmers of Fermanagh and Tyrone.

However, a similar reality has gone largely ignored or unnoticed in the South. For many Northern Protestants their Southern coreligionists are a besieged and brow-beaten minority, socially homogenous and religiously oppressed by Church and state, tolerated only while silent.

This view has also been promoted by certain ideologues in the South, notably those of former Workers' Party allegiance, who, in films like *That Sheep May Safely Graze* have as a subtext the contention that the oppression of and discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland was essentially a response to the similar treatment of Protestants in the South.

The facts do not bear this out. While it is true that a large number of Protestants left the Free State when it was founded, particularly those associated with the British administration, those with a stake in the economy remained and prospered.

**B**ecause successive Free State governments were determined to avoid any serious social change after independence, the ownership and control of the wealth of the nation remained untouched (despite the fine words of the Proclamation suggesting another outcome).

Therefore for the first 40 years of the existence of the state the Protestant bourgeoisie played an enormous role in the economy, until the whole structure of capital in Ireland was profoundly altered by the influx of foreign capital in the 1960s, and its effects on the financial sector.

Dr Patricia Kelleher carried out a study of the Irish business elite for her PhD thesis in UCD. She defined three strands in the 95 top companies in the 1950s, of which 64 per cent were founded

Divided  
and  
stratified  
by class

before 1922 and almost 20 per cent between 1922 and 1930.

These three were: those of a 'gentry' background, like the Guinnesses, the O'Kellys, the O'Reillys; the urban ex-ascendancy, like the Dockrells, the Odlums and the Dillons; and what she called the 'new Ireland tradition', like the Carrolls, the Hickeys and the Williamses.

The first group were 70 per cent Protestant and 30 per cent Catholic, the second were almost exactly 50-50 and 95 per cent of the third group were Catholic.

Therefore, of the 95 top families she identified in 1950, 46 were Protestant and 49 were Catholic. The Protestants were concentrated in the bigger, older firms and in banking – in other words, in the dominant sectors of the economy.

Given that the proportion of Protestants in the state as a whole was only five per cent, it is extraordinary that their presence among the upper layers of the bourgeoisie was as high as almost 50 per cent. Hardly a parallel situation to that of Catholics in the North!

**T**he wealth and social position of this layer of the Protestant community remained totally untouched by the social and political upheaval which led to the foundation of the state. Not alone that, the state turned a blind eye to the discrimination its member practised in their employment procedures. It is well-known that it is only a generation since it was a rare Catholic who got a job above the rank of tradesman in Guinnesses, and that promotion in the major Protestant-owned banks owed more to religion than ability.

In my own recollection of the town of Sligo advertisements for a shop assistant in one of the several large Protestant-owned drapery stores specified that the candidate be Protestant.

Of course similar discrimination existed on the Catholic side. Certainly there were instances of campaigns against Protestants in sensitive positions in the public service. But none of this affected the dominant position of a tiny Protestant elite in the economy. Small wonder, therefore, that these potential leaders of their community kept quiet about the Catholic nature of the southern state. They could buy immunity from it abroad, if needs be, and silence was a small price to pay for the undisturbed enjoyment of their wealth and privilege.

For sure, these 46 families and their associates only made up a small proportion of the some 175,000 Protestants in the south in the 1950s. While it was true that Protestants were disproportionately represented in the professions and middle class occupations generally, and among



Alan Gillis, last leader of the Irish Farmers Association

Picture: Courtesy Irish Times

the ranks of big farmers, there were, and still are, Protestant workers and small farmers scattered throughout the country. The attitudes of southern Protestants to politics, religion, their neighbours and the state, therefore, vary widely according to geography, class, age and sex.

A few examples and anecdotes illustrate this: no-one has thought it necessary to comment on the fact that the current president of the GAA, John Boothman, is a member of the Church of Ireland. When one looks at his background – from Wicklow small farming stock, a long practice as a vet, and therefore a lifetime of sharing in the recreation of country people throughout Ireland, it is hardly surprising that he became involved in the GAA.

**T**he most recent president of the Irish Farmers Association is also a member of the Church of Ireland. In this he also represents the interests of the group to which he belongs – the big farmers of the rich central and southern parts of the country. He has more in com-

mon with his Catholic fellow big farmers than he would ever have with Protestant small farmers in the west of the country.

Such harmony is not universal, of course. I learned of two incidents recently which illustrate that sectarian feeling still exists in certain circumstances in the South. They both relate to north Co Sligo, in proximity to the Border, and both concern the ownership of land.

In one, a Protestant big farmer bought a holding of about 40 acres, thereby increasing his farm to about 300 acres. Shortly afterwards he found the words 'Protestants out' painted on the road outside the new holding.

In an unrelated incident, a few years earlier and some 20 miles away, a Protestant farmer had decided to sell his farm. He put it on the market, but before any bid was made he was visited by a delegation of local Protestants who offered to buy it in order to keep the land 'in Protestant hands.'

Clearly, memories of conquest and dispossession have a long life, and in parts of the country where Protestants tend to have

Clearly memories have a long life

larger farms and better land, this will rankle for a long time.

Equally, where the Protestant farmers come from tenant origins, and shared with their neighbours the experiences of eviction and displacement, few such tensions are to be found. And it must also be said that the tensions between farmers and landless labourers in the parts of the country where there was a large farm labouring class are at least as deep and as bitter as these sectarian tensions, despite a shared religious affiliation.

But – sadly – a decreasing proportion of the population of the country as a whole makes a living from the land, and the issues which were linked to the land will fade from memory.

It is the experience of town and city dwellers, and especially of the youth of the cities and towns, which will be the determining factor in the evolution of Irish society. And here the experience of a whole generation which grew up in the 1960s has served to complete the process of integration of Protestants into southern society.

It has often been remarked that the 1960s brought many changes to Ireland, North and South, creating the conditions for the emergence of the Civil Rights movement in the North. In the South the changes had slower and immediately less dramatic consequences, but were no less profound.

The expansion of the economy and the linked expansion of the education system broke the stranglehold of the old elites, commercial, religious, professional, paving the way for a more varied elite. There was a new confidence abroad, reflected in the upsurge of interest in Irish music and culture, and a growth in radical thought, deliberately echoing that which was hitting the headlines internationally. This was combined with a growing anticlericalism, especially among the newly-educated youth.

In this environment, how did young Protestants differ from their Catholic neighbours? They were facing the one job market, in which the new multi-nationals did not care what religious affiliation, if any, their workers had, and where parental influence did not operate. In their objections to the interference of the Catholic church in matters of private morality and the State provision of health and education they were joined by a growing number of people from a Catholic background. Indeed, the situation has now arisen where the Protestant churches are fearing the loss of their identity, not to a Catholic hegemony, but to a kind of ill-defined secularism. The same fear attends the Catholic church in regard to many of its urban adherents.

So now, when Protestants from the North ask what it is like to be a Protestant in the

South, it is impossible to give them the answers they expect. Most Protestants in the South don't feel consciously separate as Protestants most of the time. There is no profound sense of difference from the rest of the population. There are criticisms of society and the state – but these are shared by friends from Catholic backgrounds.

What has given rise to this state of affairs is nothing wonderful about the southern state. It is just that the material basis for sectarian divisions – which were always intercut with geographical and social divisions anyway – has been changed to the point where it no longer intrudes into daily life for most people. That is the way it should be.

SO THE VIEWS OF  
THE UPPER CLASS  
DON'T REFLECT  
THOSE OF ALL  
PROTESTANTS?



IS THE POPE  
AN ANGLICAN?



JOHN BYRNE

# Sisterhoods are Powerful

## Acknowledging the Different Identities of Women

*Claire Hackett and Maire Quiry argue that recognizing differences makes feminists stronger*

**T**HE REPUBLICAN/FEMINIST agenda is a thorn in the flesh of both the republican and feminist movements and has a long and developing history. Women in Ireland have always been faced with the dilemma of where to place their formidable energies.

Do we organise around our own agenda to protect our rights and achieve true equality in society? Or do we throw our shoulders to the wheel of the struggle for national self-determination?

This problem has faced women in colonial societies down the ages and is no easier in 1994 than it was in the early years of this century when women were striving for full suffrage.

We believe that republican feminism presents a tangible and powerful vision of a future Ireland which brings equality to all of its citizens. However we still have to fight for the legitimacy of our priorities within the women's movement and the broad republican movement.

The notion of the lowest common denominator, the politics of reconciliation, is an insidious doctrine within the women's movement in



Ireland, and particularly in the North.

The attempt to reach an area where we all can agree and unite is understandable as an effort to

find a strong voice in an oppressive society. But it is ultimately destructive because it leads to the suppression of difference.

It is certainly true that there are areas where women can find a united front – for example, single issue campaigns on health and domestic violence. There is also the instance of the support of the Shankill Women's Centre in Belfast for the Falls Women's Centre in the latter's fight against grant cuts from Belfast City Council.

However, the politics of the lowest common denominator, the politics of avoidance, are an attempt to maintain unity even at the cost of covering up injustice and inequalities.

In March, Clar na mBan organised a conference, the *Women's Agenda for Peace*, for women who saw the future of Ireland lying within the context of national unity. The conference aimed to enable women to contribute to the current debate around a lasting settlement and an end to the war.

Clar na mBan faced some criticism that the declared context of Irish national unity made the conference exclusive and divisive, making it difficult for women who did not share that objective to attend.

**T**his is a perplexing notion to us. Women with shared political objectives need to meet together to discuss their aims and clarify their ideas. It is this very process which enables them to name their own experience and identities. In such settings, black women, lesbian women and disabled women have grown in strength and articulated their goals. This, in turn, has allowed the women's movement to become more representative of all women.

There is still much to be done to make feminism truly inclusive. But it seems to us that we can only create the basis for strong alliances by acknowledging the different identities of women rather than by striving for a common ground that may only be an illusion.

The pressure to conform also exists within the republican movement. Feminists challenging the republican movement from within are seen to be disloyal, to be breaking ranks which need to be solid in order to be strong. It is easy to see why this is so. The British and Irish establishments seize on evidence of disunity to try and discredit the republican movement.

The Clar na mBan conference also faced criticism from some men within Sinn Féin who felt that it was at best unnecessary and at worst letting the side down. But a movement that cannot face criticism from its supporters is already weak. Sinn Féin and the broad republican movement is stronger today because of challenges in the past. The feminist challenge to the

whole republican movement must continue if we are to make real and radical changes to Irish society.

In general, the voice of republican and feminist women has been censored and ignored in the current debate. One of the major themes to emerge from the Clar na mBan conference was the exclusion of women from male-dominated political structures, republican/nationalist or more mainstream ones.



Dodie McGuinness at Clar na mBan

We are concerned that women's voices will not be heard or will be ignored in the current debate about the future of Ireland. Equally, if women of all shades of opinion are excluded from the deliberations on a new constitution for Ireland then it will be no more representative of Irish society than the 1937 constitution which shaped the narrow and repressive society from which we are now emerging.

**W**omen both North and South have emerged as leaders at a community level. The growth of women's groups and single-issue campaigns in the past decade has demonstrated the ability of women to organise, not only in their own interests, but in those of the general community.

This level of activity is not reflected in mainstream political and social life. The existing structures effectively prevent women from contributing to the larger political debate and have denied us access to power.

Alternative structures and processes need to be established to bring this politic to the centre stage. This can and has been done! The ANC consulted extensively with women's groups and community organisations while conducting peace negotiations and deciding the future agenda of South Africa.

The end of the war will not mean the end of conflict. Conflict can be the positive expression of difference and is essential to the healthy development of any

society. We need new structures in Irish society which will reflect the diversity of all the people on this island. In representing this diversity, we need to consider a whole series of inequalities such as racism, patriarchy, homophobia and class.

In doing so we move forward acknowledging our differences rather than suppressing them. It is often assumed that there are only two communities in the North: the nationalist and the unionist. This inaccurate notion misrepresents unionist as much as nationalist people and lessens the opportunity for the expression of our differences. What we need now are the politics of negotiation not of reconciliation.

A future Ireland must find ways of drawing on and supporting a truly diverse society which guarantees the rights of all. The 'women's agenda' is not some minor issue but can form the basis of Ireland's future as a progressive and outward-looking country.

A report of the Clar na mBan conference *Women's Agenda for Peace*, which was attended by over 150 women from all over Ireland, is available from Bookworm Community Bookshop, 18 Bishop Street, Derry City (Tel: 261616).

Still  
much  
to be  
done to  
make  
feminism  
truly  
inclusive

Picture: Derek Speirs



# Poems

by Paul Laughlin

## Hearts Engraved

A cleric at the graveside  
Spills words in the damp air  
And sanctifying pity  
Cleanses us again.  
Minds closed as the coffin  
We cultivate this grief  
That it might feed new malice  
And falsify our memories  
Until none remain  
Which are not lies.

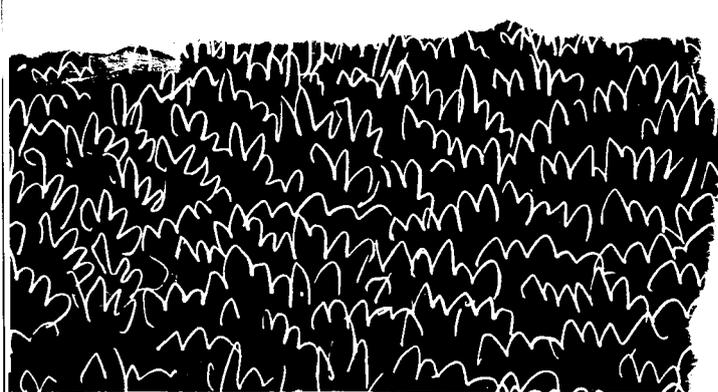
## Question Authority

Between the promise  
And the desolation  
Deceit parades as hope,  
Words become treacherous  
And collective lies  
Assume the force of truth.

## Promenade

Bewildered by the contours  
Of an unforgiving landscape  
Crudely defined on a stranger's map  
They stumble for cover  
Through townlands they misname  
Or slouch exhausted  
Along dissident streets  
To garrison the past  
And watch through gun-sights  
While time sweeps by.

Picture: Derek Speirs





BRITTS  
OUT  
OF  
IRELAND

# What Price Northern Ireland?

## The Costs of the Conflict and the Dividends of Peace

*Mike Tomlinson* believes the peace dividend could be around £20 billion more than Paddy Mayhew suggests

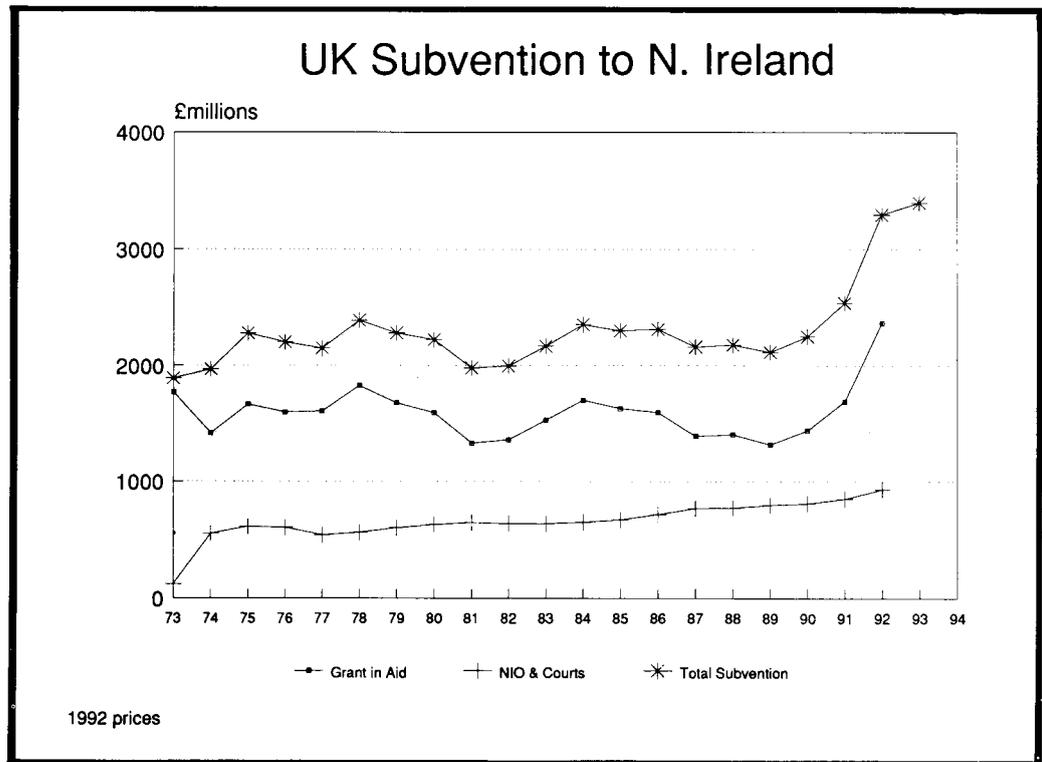
**I**N OCTOBER 1993, TONY Benn stated "the cost of the war has been £14.5 billion". Sir Patrick Mayhew also mentioned costs when he told *Die Zeit* magazine "Three billion pounds for one and a half million people – we have no strategic interest. We have no economic interest in staying there."

Mayhew was referring only to the cost of the *subvention* which keeps Six County services and benefits at British levels while Benn cast his net more widely. But neither figure captures the full financial costs of the conflict and they therefore conceal the dividends which could flow from peace.

Three factors have put Six County costs under increasing scrutiny. Firstly, the security service, the army, the RUC and the prisons are all experiencing serious financial pressures. MI5 now devotes nearly half of its 2,235 staff to combating the IRA. Infantry cuts envisaged in the latest defence review clash with the continuing high level of military commitment in the North and the changing level of UN operations, creating severe 'overstretch' problems.

As for the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), the RUC and the prison services; policy changes suggest that the days of the blank cheque for the NIO are numbered. The squeeze involves legal services as well, including criminal injuries compensation.

Secondly, in recent years the IRA had increased its 'economic warfare' in England. Between the



Brighton bombing of 1984 and the beginning of 1989, only two incidents involving injury or loss of life were recorded. From 1989 the number of incidents grew rapidly so that, by 1992 and 1993, there was on average almost one bombing per week.

**L**oyalists have also increased their activities, killing 94 people from 1990 to 1992 – and attempting to kill a further 90 in the same period. They recently declared 'open season' for killing Catholics, a distinct shift from the late 1980s when they clearly wanted to justify their operations in terms of targeting active republicans.

Loyalist groups are now responsible for a third of bombing incidents in the North, even though their devices remain small-scale, and they are extending their operations across the border.

A third factor is that the subvention itself has risen since the early 1970s, and alarmingly so

during the recession of the early 1990s. The diagram shows its components and how the total has varied over time (in real terms). The total has risen more steeply in the past five years than at any other time and has now reached £3.4 billion, currently increasing at a rate of 8 per cent per annum.

While the grant-in-aid component fluctuates according to demands on the social services, the NIO budget (ie; costs of prisons and the RUC) and that of the court service have risen gradually but relentlessly. This figure has doubled over the last 20 years. It now costs £80,000 per annum to keep one prisoner in the H-Blocks.

**T**ony Benn's figure for war costs only takes account of the part of the NIO budget which is related to the conflict, the cost of the army in the Six Counties and cash compensation for criminal injuries and damage. There



Picture: Ed Kashi

are several problems with this approach. Firstly, it ignores the effects of the conflict on services such as the NHS and housing. My estimate for these is a minimum of £1 billion since 1969.

Secondly, the Benn figure attributes two-thirds of the costs of prisons and the RUC to the conflict, whereas a more realistic proportion is three-quarters, taking account of the number of political prisoners and the number of police needed for the North in peace-time. It also takes the army costs, currently said to be at £477m per annum, at face value.

The British Ministry of Defence does not publish a breakdown of expenses for the Six Counties, but it appears the spend is closer to £500m. About £450m goes on pay while a further £43m annually is spent on construction, surveillance equipment and computers.

Thirdly, substantial resources are devoted to intelligence. We do not know how many GCHQ staff are employed monitoring Irish telecommunications, or the numbers in military intelligence. But the North is now costing the secret service £80m per annum. Intelligence costs must add up to at least £600m for the last 25 years.

Fourthly, no allowance was made for the broader economic costs of lost investment and output or damage to the tourist industry. These are open to much debate. But a conservative estimate for tourist revenue loss would be £80m every year.

Finally, the costs of the conflict do not simply fall in Six County territory. Maire Geoghegan-Quinn, the Minister for Justice, says that it costs £250m per annum to police the border from the South. The conflict has cost the Southern state £2.5 billion in policing costs alone over the last 25 years.

My estimate for the readily identifiable costs of the NI conflict since 1969 is £23.5 billion, roughly equivalent to the total British defence budget for one year. Most of these costs (82 per cent) have arisen within the Six Counties, while 10.5 per cent arose in the South and 7.5 per cent in Britain. But there has been a significant change in this territorial pattern in recent years. Last financial year, just under a third of the costs fell in Britain and 12 per cent in the Republic.

These figures are particularly important in the current peace process which contains the possibility that an IRA ceasefire might be accompanied by an end to loyalist killings. They mean that the sums spent on institutionalising the conflict can instead become resources for economic and social development. Assuming the published data are broadly correct, we can project the financial implications of peace.

**A**n immediate consequence would be savings on compensation, security measures, policing, prisons and commuter disruption to the tune of £500m within Britain itself. Peace would presumably mean that there would be no additional army costs, saving another £500m. NIO conflict-related expenditure accounts for a further £700m. These factors alone, plus the resources saved in this state, would allow the British subvention to be more than halved, reducing it to £1.5 billion.

There would also be savings for health and other services in the North. The tax take in the North could rise through changes in fiscal policies and through economic growth. American investment would undoubtedly rise.

They  
must be  
persuaded  
that  
the  
fight  
is not  
worth it

Of course transition is not as simple as this. The bulk of the NIO conflict-related expenditure is on salaries. Under the most optimistic of scenarios, the RUC (or whatever might replace it) is unlikely to be reduced to 25 per cent of its existing size overnight. Yet the standing down of the Royal Irish Regiment (or its non-deployment in the North), the reduction of the RUC and that of the prison service are key changes to be expected from a peace settlement.

The British government must go beyond thinking of peace simply in terms of an IRA ceasefire. If British neutrality and last December's declaration of self-determination for the people living in Ireland are to have any meaning Britain will need to withdraw its support for agencies and institutions which prop up the Union and which primarily benefit only Protestants.

Britain can play a vital role in reconstituting policing and in persuading Unionists of the benefits of new relationships within the Six Counties and between the two parts of Ireland.

**I**t is frequently argued that if the Union with Britain ended, a Bosnian-style conflict would ensue. Proponents of this view rarely explain their assumptions, but among them is the idea of massively increased loyalist actions against Six County Catholics and targets south of the border, fuelled by defections from the RIR and RUC.

This does not say very much for the neutrality of the current upholders of law and order in the North and it misrepresents a substantial element of Protestant opinion. But it does pose an urgent issue.

Protestants are likely to respond to any weakening of the Union in ways that are already evident. At the moment, they are responding to the political situation by either leaving the Six Counties, staying and moving forward with the peace process or fighting against change. They must be persuaded that the fight is not worth it, not coerced into acceptance.

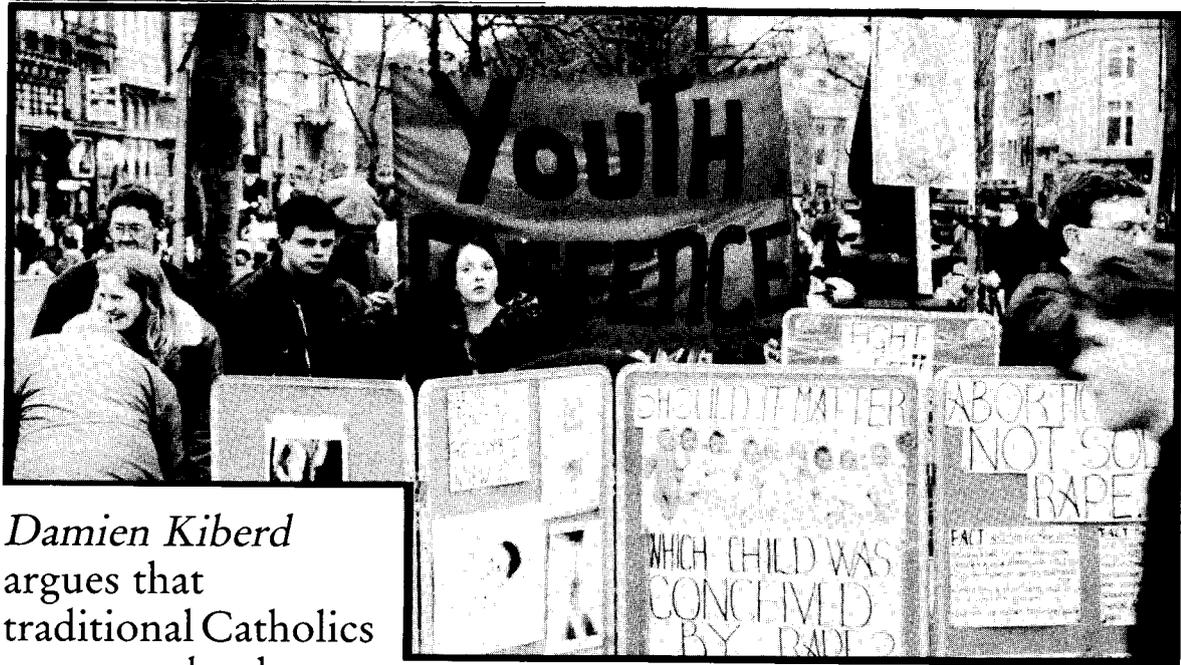
However, a Goldstone-type commission, as advocated by Amnesty International, should be set up to scrutinise the relationship between loyalist groups and the official forces and to sever any that exist.

In conclusion, there are substantial economic gains for Britain and Ireland from negotiating peace and an end to the Union. These can be realised without intensifying loyalist reaction, providing this or any other British government is prepared to go beyond the crude majority-rule logic of the declaration and embrace a vision of a new Ireland based on principled support for self-determination, liberty and equality.

The above is an edited form of a recent article in *Parliamentary Brief*.

# Countering the Liberal Newspeak

## Confronted By Crass Comment and Baseless Abuse



Picture: Harry Vince

*Damien Kiberd* argues that traditional Catholics may now be the victims of the Irish media

**S**OME YEARS AGO I HAD a conversation with a Vincentian priest about developments in Irish journalism. The priest, whom I knew well, could not be described as illiberal, but he expressed disquiet at what he was reading. He told me that, in the previous issue of *The Sunday Independent*, he had found 14 separate articles which, in his view, either insulted his religious beliefs directly or else sought to undermine the popular strength of those beliefs.

I explained to him that every newspaper publishing house has its own policies on such matters and, indeed, within a publishing house, the policy might vary from paper to paper. At the *Irish Press*, where I had trained as a junior reporter, the staff were expected to report

the facts and not to editorialise within a news story. They were to report their contact's views and statements accurately and fairly. Comment was confined to small sections of the paper, clearly marked as 'commentary'. Other newspapers, some very successful, devoted huge chunks of space to what was often very strident comment, which was sometimes either poorly researched or not researched at all.

**T**he priest said that he felt *The Sunday Independent* was pushing a specific anti-Catholic agenda. I replied that this was possible but that it was a free country and highly-politicised campaigning by newspapers was common in certain parts of continental Europe. I added that the most powerful executive at *Independent Newspapers* was a prominent Knight of Columbanus and that the company's chairman, Dr. O'Reilly, was so well-connected with the upper echelons of the Catholic Church that he had his own private chapel at his home in Kildare.

The priest's remarks made me realise that many, many thoughtful Catholics now perceive themselves as part of a media victim group. Perhaps, like members of the homosexual community in the Fifties and Sixties, they were encountering deep antipathy in many quarters, lacking a way to speak out and frequently confronted by crass comment and baseless abuse.

Or perhaps they felt the mounting despair of the woman who opts to work as a homemaker for her family but who is every day confronted by a popular culture which glorifies career women, conferring a real identity only on those who work. Meanwhile, advertising depicts the housewife as brainless, experiencing life through her husband and lacking the intelligence to distinguish between various types of washing-up liquid.

The priest was right. My growing suspicions were confirmed by what was to follow. A huge uniformity was developing within the mass media with a *peleton* of journalists and commentators seeking to push

a social agenda centred on issues such as divorce and abortion. The media convinced itself that the electorate wanted both. Every day, almost without seeking any balancing comment, reporters and commentators used loaded language to describe the issues. In media terms an individual's views might be termed 'progressive' or 'more positive' when they conformed to those of this lobby.

The circus reached a mind-boggling zenith when *The Sunday Independent* published an article which said that researchers had found that it was better to abort unborn foetuses conceived under conditions of war (as, for example, in the 1939/45 period), because the stresses felt by the mother were conveyed to the baby in the womb and were likely to cause psychiatric problems for the (born) individual in later life. In other words, by snuffing out the life of the foetus, you were doing the foetus a favour by saving it from nervous disorders in middle age.



**N**o-one knows for certain why the public responded to the barrage of campaigning as it did. But the voters overwhelmingly rejected both divorce and abortion when last they were consulted. Perhaps many voted against change because of the biased piffle they were forced to read in the media.

Unlike the English, the Irish do not appear capable of dealing with religion in a balanced way. We have gone from the fire and brimstone rhetoric of the Redemptorists and 'great hatred, little room' which characterised the state in earlier decades, all the way to intemperate secular fundamentalism. There has been no intervening period of open thinking, no period when a balanced debate on important topics was possible.

When the people of Ireland tried to grapple with the moral questions surrounding the abortion issue, as Germans and US citizens were doing at the same time, *The Irish Times* published a series of editorials depicting the Catholic position as Iranian-style fundamentalism. Citizens of

Dublin, with its very tolerant atmosphere, were expected to believe they were living under some neo-fascist theocratic state.

Those who wished to replicate the conveyor-belt abortion clinics of Britain and Holland were, by contrast, described as 'liberal'. How on earth the act of destroying human life can be seen as in an sense 'liberal' baffles this writer.

When Pope John Paul II issued his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, it was analysed very carefully and objectively in newspapers such as *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*. In Ireland, hack reporters scanned a hugely-important document for references to sex extrapolated from tiny fragments of the encyclical in order to portray the Pope as anti-woman, neanderthal and fascistic.

The Pope's overwhelming emphasis on the need for social justice, with all its potentially radical implications, were ignored. The constant search for ways to respect human dignity got lost between the newsdesk and the paste-up room. Even the remarkably thoughtful and poetic language failed to make any impression on Irish journalists.

All the public got to hear about was that the Pope was 'at it again' on the subject of artificial contraception and that he was still as 'backward' as ever. The commentators rushed in to condemn, presumably without reading the document at all.

**A**gain, when the new edition of the Catechism was published, very detailed and thoughtful analyses appeared in *The Times*, *The Independent* and *The Daily Telegraph*. This equally important document was more or less ignored in the Irish media, despite the fact that 95 per cent of those living in the South are nominally Catholic. Will the Pope ever get as fair a hearing in Dublin as he does in the land where no Catholic can be king?

Similarly, during the recent Cairo conference on world population and development, the Vatican's views were properly reported in the British media, winning praise for the Pope's emphasis on the importance of the family, but the same views were largely caricatured in Irish newspapers as being part of a conspiracy between Rome and Islam to treat the women of the Third World as child-bearing machines.

Recently *The Sunday Business Post* had the temerity to point out that it was easier to get artificial contraceptives in parts of sub-Saharan Africa than it was to get rather basic antibiotics. In an age of plenty, the poor could get drugs which prevented the conception of human life but could not get drugs which might preserve life.

We pointed out that whereas everyone has a right to control

their own fertility, the West might be engaging in a new form of imperialism by seeking to impose western fertility patterns and family planning methods on Third World countries, regardless of their cultures and traditions. One reader, Senator David Norris, was deeply upset by what he read. He told Seanad Eireann that the editor was 'criminally irresponsible'.

The *Sunday Independent* describes itself as 'the great paper of middle Ireland'. Certainly it is very successful. Yet, if Ireland is overwhelmingly Catholic, then how for example can 'the great paper of middle Ireland' take exception to the publication of a verbatim interview with Dr Desmond Connell, the Archbishop of Dublin? When *The Sunday Business Post* published such an interview recently, the *Sunday Independent* employed a professor of journalism, Dr Colum Kenny, to rubbish it.

The *Post* had put no top-spin on any of Connell's comments. It merely quoted him accurately and verbatim on a number of important topics. It seems the mere idea that the second most important Catholic churchman in the country should be afforded an opportunity to express his views without distortion now causes offence to the media-people who define the moral climate.

While the Irish media seem to be dominated by intellectually flatulent forty-somethings, forever trying to escape some real or imagined brutal past in the shadow of unforgiving Catholic triumphalism, there are growing signs of hope.

Recently, *The Irish Times*, in an effort to ensure a reasonable balance of opinion within its pages, commissioned a series of articles from people who might be seen as holding traditional or conservative views (in fact some were real liberals).

Conor Brady, the paper's editor, made a very significant speech in which he expressed regret that there was no newspaper group in this country which sought to defend such values. Quite fairly, Brady pointed out that it was unreasonable to expect *The Irish Times* to discharge such a role, given its historic commitment to what he saw as liberal values. The paper could seek to reflect all types of opinion but it still had its own long-standing vision of society.

Brady's contribution is valuable and he clearly recognised that there is a significant constituency out there that is not being served at present. My experience at the *Post* supports this view. Numerous readers have written to us to say that they will now buy only British daily broadsheet newspapers because only in these papers will traditional Catholic values get a fair hearing.

The constant search for ways to respect human dignity got lost between the newsdesk and the paste-up room

# Waste Not War Not

## The Nonviolent Transformation of Social Structures

*Patricia McKenna*  
asks why EU states  
feel the need for a  
joint military force,  
and warns against  
Ireland's future  
involvement in it

**G**REEN IS A MUCH-  
(ab)used word. it has  
become the politically  
and commercially correct label  
of the decade. The plastic  
packaging industry, for example,  
feels that by simply slapping  
a recycling symbol on its  
products, it is doing its part for  
the environment.

Yet, when really asked to put  
its money where its advertising  
is, industry shows its true colours.  
Take the EU's proposed packaging  
directive. This aims to increase  
recycling rates. When it was being  
drafted, there was intense  
lobbying from the plastics industry  
which ensured that incineration  
was deemed acceptable.

Plastic forms 32 per cent of all  
packaging waste. The EU has not  
explained how burning so much  
plastic can be seen as recycling,  
nor what the highly-toxic dioxins  
formed by the incineration can  
be recycled into. What is clear  
is that the mainstream politicians  
will claim this as some sort of green  
progress.

This should not surprise us. It  
is the logic of the current economic  
system which holds that  
unlimited growth on a planet of  
limited resources is both possible  
and desirable. With the exception  
of the Greens, all political groupings,  
whether left or right, buy into  
this myth.

Elsewhere, Richard Douthwaite  
explains green economics in greater  
detail. Here I want to look at the  
political implications of the growth  
myth and how they affect the green  
agenda.

"Waste not want not" may have  
been our parents' advice to us,  
but the present economic system  
could not survive without waste.



Picture: Courtesy Irish Times

The  
system  
simply  
doesn't  
work  
on its  
own  
terms

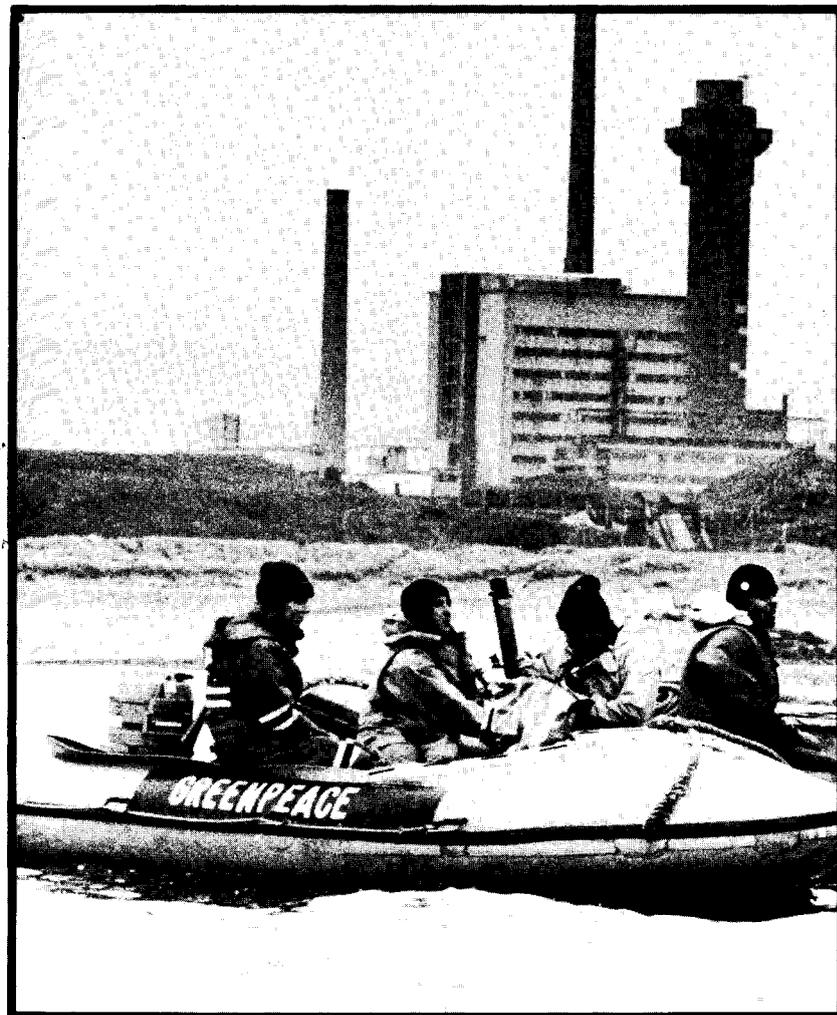
There would be a dramatic jump  
in unemployment and bankruptcy  
if unnecessary production was  
abandoned or if goods were made  
to be long-lasting. Our economic  
system will not allow us to reduce  
production to sustainable levels.

Even ignoring the world's physical  
limits, the system simply doesn't  
work on its own terms. Enough  
goods can never be produced to  
satisfy our needs. Once something  
is available to everyone, it ceases  
to have much value. The elite  
maintain their position by access

to newer and improved consumer  
goods.

If everyone has a mono-record  
player, then the privileged have  
hi-fis. Once these are made available  
on the mass-market, the CD  
player comes along. Today, it in  
turn is being replaced by the digital  
audio tape and the interactive CD  
player. The poor are never able to  
escape poverty, they can only hope  
to keep pace with an ever-rising  
poverty line.

At the same time, companies  
must constantly grow and expand



so that they are not swallowed up by the competitors. The only way to do this is to become more productive: to reduce costs and increase output by substituting capital for labour. Guinness, once one of Dublin's biggest employers, has slashed its workforce down to a few hundred while raising output. In short, the system neither creates employment nor distributes wealth.

On top of that, it uses up the earth's resources and does it at the expense of the majority of its people. The rich North with 20 per cent of the world's population, uses up 80 per cent of its resources.

**S**uch a system can only be maintained by force. The Third World is kept in check by military assistance to regimes which do not rock the boat. Development takes place, but it is mostly aimed at satisfying the needs of the urban ruling elite or to supply goods to the North. In a starving hemisphere, more than 16 million hectares grow tea, coffee and cocoa for export.

Should a Third World country seek to break free from this system, First World military intervention is readily available.

The current talk about a common defence pact for the European Union is part of this process. As Jacques Delors himself stated, the European Union needs a common

military policy to fight against the Third World in the resource wars of the 21st century. Of course, our politicians will be more coy when selling this to us in two years' time.

1996 (when Ireland, incidentally, will hold the EU presidency) is when the military aspects of the Maastricht Treaty will be decided upon. As with the Single European Act in 1986/87 and the Maastricht Treaty, the only issue will seem to be money. Remember the doubling of the structural funds from Europe, the famous £8 billion?

We will be told that if we are to enjoy the benefits of Europe we must be prepared to defend it. Against, whom though? Switzerland? Will we even be threatened as during the Maastricht campaign, that we will be thrown out of the EU if we vote to maintain our military neutrality? Denmark proved that this is not the case.

We are being eased gradually into becoming part of a military superpower. Already Ireland has accepted observer status in the Western European Union. The WEU is committed to the maintenance and potential use of the nuclear arsenals.

This represents the ultimate big stick to keep the Third World in line, a threat Margaret Thatcher seriously considered using during the Falklands War.

Needless to say the price to be paid for choosing the militarist path will not be borne by the middle-aged politicians in the Republic who advocate it, but by young conscripted school-leavers. Coincidentally, the same politicians who most ardently champion this Euro-militarism also push for such an approach to the Northern Troubles.

Rather than resolve the conflict permanently by communication and compromise, they prefer to deal with it temporarily by militaristic methods, so increasing violence and reducing civil rights.

These are the politicians who vociferously opposed any clarification of the Downing Street Declaration – a far from unambiguous document – and displayed, in their attitude to censorship and the removal of Section 31, an astounding arrogance. Such parties would withhold information from the public, as they did during the Maastricht referendum, for fear that people would reach conclusions that they deem to be unacceptable.

It is clear that they see people as simplistic peasants who have neither the right nor the capacity to exercise judgement. Their actions highlight the undemocratic, authoritarian ethos of the political establishment.

**B**ut there is cause for hope. The media virtually ignored the Greens in the European elections and RTE, which was especially guilty, got a big shock at the outcome. It was a triumph for the people. The enemy we have chosen to fight is powerful – it is, effectively, the New World order. But, like a chain, it is only as strong as its weakest links.

In the short term we must choose these smaller, weaker targets. THORP is a good example. It represents everything we oppose: a technological process which is not amenable to workers' control, which endangers life and the planet and which is intimately linked into militarism.

But THORP is vulnerable to action at a European level, not just through regulation but by the cancellation of orders from other countries, especially Germany, where the Green Party is rapidly regaining support.

In the long term, we hope to fundamentally change the economic and political system that makes poverty, pollution and waste inevitable. As Petra Kelly said:

Simply repairing the existing systems – whether they be capitalistic or socialist – should not be our aim. Our aim is the nonviolent transformation of social structures. Our aim is radical, nonviolent change of a patriarchal society which has been militarised and has become accustomed to the use of force.

The enemy we have chosen to fight is the New World Order

# Malignant Growth and the Green Dream

Looking Forward With Hope

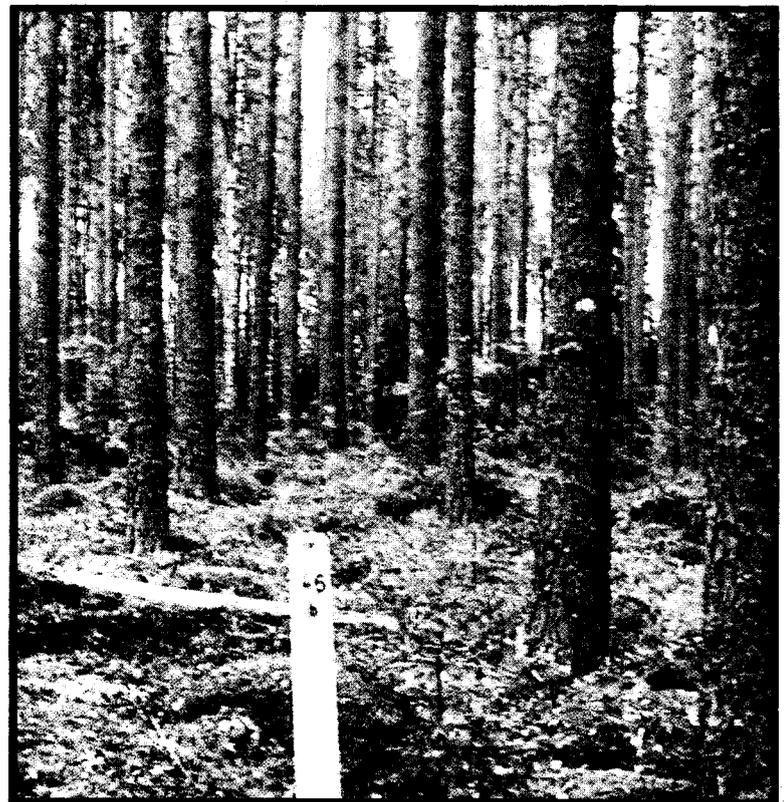
*Richard Douthwaite* argues that the pursuit of economic growth has actually impoverished us. He believes we must escape the shackles of global free trade and build a world of small sustainable communities

**H**OW CAN YOU BE SO cheerful?" my wife frequently asks me after I have been talking about something or other that's gone wrong with the world. "Why doesn't it get you down? It does me," she goes on. "I'd really prefer not to know."

And so would I sometimes. Indeed, there are some books – Catherine Caulfield's account of the destruction of the Amazonian jungles, *In the Rainforest*, is one – which I've been entirely unable to bring myself to read for fear of becoming sickened and depressed.

On the other hand, newspaper accounts of the threat to the world's financial system posed by the property crash in Japan can set me tingling with excitement. The latest figures on the increase in wave heights in the North Sea or the retreat of Alpine glaciers, both worrying evidence of global warming, I file away with quiet satisfaction.

Why should I react in these contradictory ways? I think the



answer is that, like almost everyone else, I like being proved right, but not if it involves people or plant and animal communities being wiped out. After all, any financial system that breaks down can be replaced, potentially with something better, and the damage that industrialisation is doing to the climate can be halted if not reversed.

**H**owever, when living creatures die and natural systems are destroyed, they are gone forever. The thousands of square miles of burned-off rain forest will never grow back again.

So, in terms of what will happen in the natural world, Greens like me can muster no enthusiasm for

the next decade. Although we predict that forests will continue to be clear-felled, the atmosphere to be polluted, species to be lost, rural people's lives to be disrupted, it will give us no satisfaction when they are. Indeed, as far as possible, we will avert our eyes. There is nothing most of us can do.

But in the unnatural world of production and consumption, jobs and investment, while we also expect disaster after disaster, we are fascinated by what is going on and rub our hands with glee whenever problems arise. This is because the final stages of two world-scale, real-life economic experiments are being conducted before our eyes and as we know what the results will be, we want them over and

Never  
grow  
back  
again

done with so more promising experiments can begin.

One of the two on-going experiments, that with economic growth, began in the mid-1950s. The other, on free trade, has a much longer history but has never been tested so intensively or pushed so far.

In our view, the growth experiment was flawed from the start. The simplistic yet attractive idea behind it was that, if countries produced a greater volume of goods and services year after year, their citizens would become steadily better off.

**N**obody stopped to specify what goods and services were to be produced. For the purposes of the experiment, porn sales were as good as those of port or pork. The only criteria were that the goods and services be bought and sold because that showed that someone wanted them. Anything that was produced but not traded, like one's home-grown vegetables was ignored.

Nor did anybody think that it mattered, for the purposes of the experiment, who got the extra goods and services. If the changes induced by growth left some segments of society considerably worse off – too bad. At least the nation's average income had gone up and the state could always step in to correct the disparities if enough people voted that it should do so. Damage done to the environment was considered unimportant too.

The experimenters' belief that raising a nation's average income level – its GDP per capita, to use their terms – would necessarily improve the welfare of its citizens, has proved seriously mistaken. In fact, above a certain level, the link between national income and individual welfare has turned out to be very weak indeed.

The first convincing statistical exposure of this weakness was published in 1989 by a well-respected American economist, Herman Daly (now employed by the World Bank) and John Cobb, a theologian. US national income per citizen more than doubled between 1950 and 1986. But they showed that, if one corrected the statistics to allow for the destruction of natural resources, the effects of pollution, the huge and increasing sums spent on ameliorating growth's social side-effects and on keeping the economy running at ever higher levels, a very different picture emerged.

In fact, their *Index of Economic Welfare*, the name they gave to their corrected GNP figures, rose closely in line with uncorrected national income until 1965 and then remained roughly constant until 1980. After that, despite large increases in production, the economic welfare of Americans began to decline.

Other workers have since made similar corrections to GNP statistics in their countries. In Germany, Hans Diefenbacher, an economist who works for FEST, a research institute sponsored by a Protestant church, published his *Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare* in 1991. This shows that the German people's economic welfare peaked in 1980 and began to decline.

Earlier this year, an equivalent index was published for Britain by the Stockholm Environment Institute and the New Economics Foundation in London. This showed that, after 1950, British economic welfare rose in step with national income per head until 1973. It then fell rapidly and, by 1990, was back to the 1950 level.

Indeed, the index could now be approaching half its level of 40 years ago. This is because its figures for recent years were inflated when the compilers, Tim Jackson and Nic Marks, priced unpaid domestic chores at whatever wage rate was ruling at the time they were carried out. Since wages rose 180 per cent between 1950 and 1990, the contribution of housework to the index soared, although almost the same amount was done.

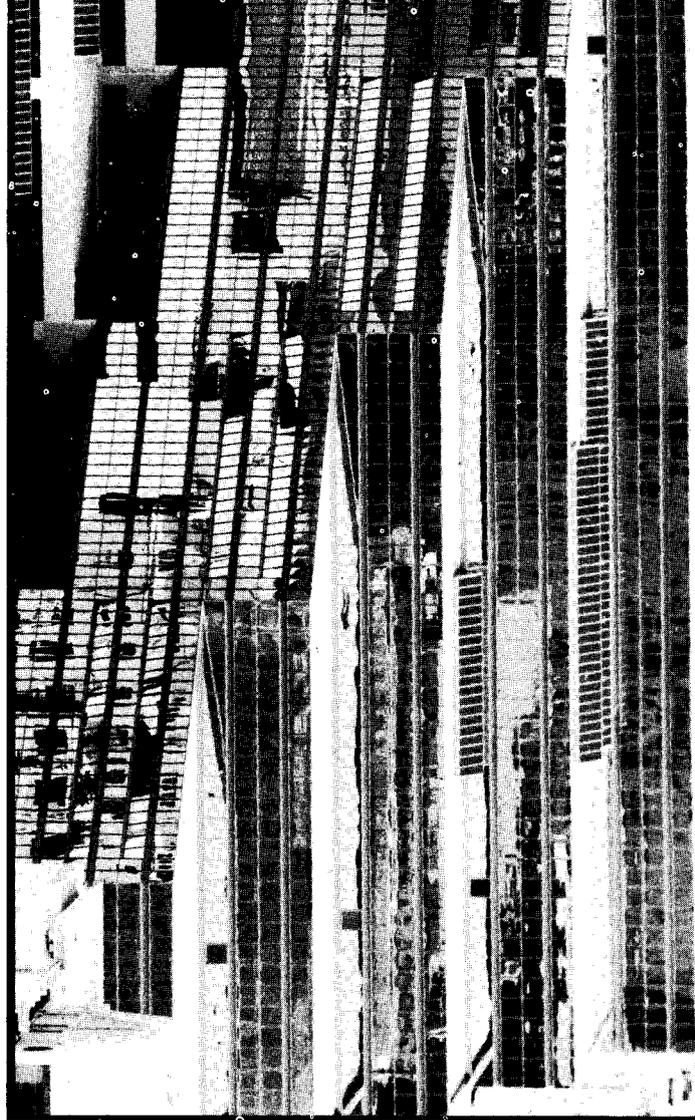
Should we be surprised at this evidence that the quest for economic growth is actually making life worse for many millions of people? Hardly, when you think about it. Which groups make growth happen in modern capitalist societies? Businesspeople and entrepreneurs. And why do they do so? To make a profit for themselves or their companies, not for society as a whole.

**T**his is where our economic system has gone terribly wrong: it has no mechanism to ensure that commercial profit goes hand in hand with public gain.

Why is the left so reluctant to accept that recent economic growth has done more harm than good? For generations, socialists pointed out, entirely correctly, that certain things cannot be left to be determined by the free market. Yet, although growth is a process whose direction and nature are entirely determined by market forces, today's leftwingers seem unprepared to question it at all.

The Left's current attitude to the second experiment, that with free trade, is no more enlightened. As with growth, the massive trial the world is carrying out is based on a grotesque over-simplification. The standard economic 'proof' of the superiority of free trade assumes that the economies of the two countries proposing to trade are in equilibrium before trading begins – that each country is producing at the highest level possible given its technology.

This means that all the factors



of production – land, labour and capital – must be fully occupied. The proof also assumes that the countries reach another similar equilibrium once trading is in progress.

By assuming these two equilibria, most undergraduate-level economics students can show that, in a two-country, two commodity world with perfect competition, the trading equilibrium is better than the non-trading one because it allows both countries to have more of the two traded commodities than they would if they did not trade.

**B**ut it is doubtful whether such a proof, based on these peculiar circumstances, has any relevance to our present world. This is because most countries are not generally working at maximum production since they are using neither all their factors of production nor the latest technology.

In these circumstances, even the most sophisticated economist will find it difficult to prove that the post-trade situation is better than the pre-trade one, especially if changes in income distribution caused by trade are brought into the account.

Since the most significant feature of the years since 1973 has been the steady growth of unem-

Growth has done more harm than good

ployment, it is clear that such equilibria did not exist in most countries which adopted free trade as a goal and economists should have admitted that it was impossible to say whether higher imports and exports and the removal of trade restrictions would prove beneficial.

That almost every economist of note failed to do so is a black mark against a profession whose support for free trade was based on faith and intellectual idleness rather than evidence.

**U**ntil both the trade and growth experiments have been terminated, the outlook for many people is grim because our political leaders will try harder and harder to make them work as so much of their prestige rests on a successful outcome. They have reached the stage of desperately hoping rather than believing that, with tax cuts and an end to trade barriers, a more general prosperity will return.

This is a forlorn hope. All that will happen is that unemployment will continue to climb, generating crime and misery. Social welfare will be whittled away to permit tax cuts. Many academics are already cheering this immiseration process on, arguing that the faster wages are cut, the brighter the future will be.

The Greens are not cheering with them. We expect the human costs to be immense. Already they have led to more death and ill-health than have nuclear weapons. But we are still looking forward with hope rather than dread, perhaps in the same way as the left looked forward in the 30s. This is because we see Green ideas filling the intellectual vacuum when the current notions are exposed.

The world we would cheer for is not one dominated by the transnational companies or by the conditions of international competitiveness and growth. We want a world of small communities which govern themselves and which, rather than trading across the globe meet or make most of their requirements from their local resources.

For it is only if communities can develop a culture that enables them to live indefinitely within the limits of their own place that humankind as a whole will be able to live sustainably within the limits of the natural world.

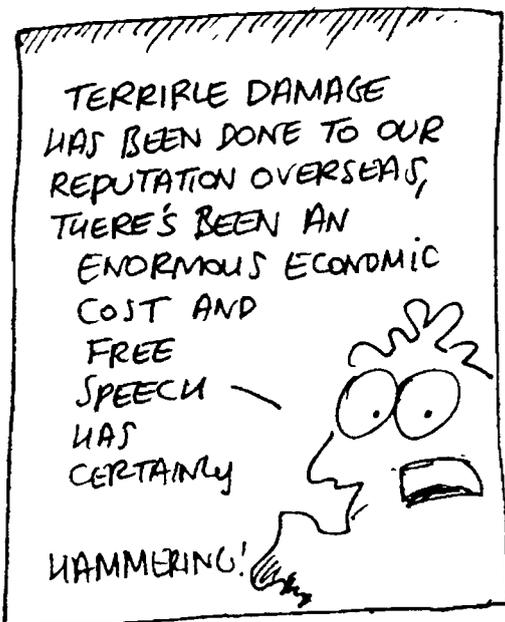
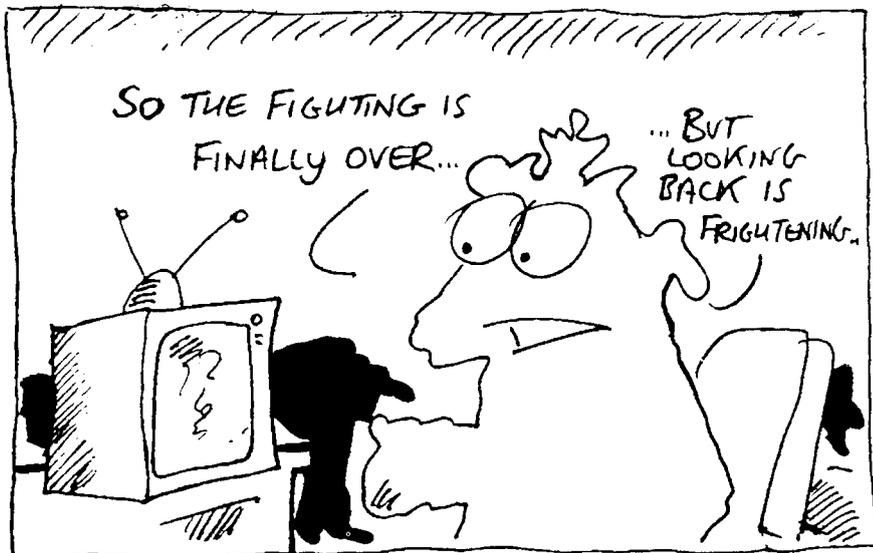
Don't deride this as a naive bucolic fantasy unless you have something better to offer. My suspicion is that the Greens are the only political party which regards the future, unpleasant as many of its aspects will be, with anything approaching enthusiasm.

Why? Because we are the only party with a vision, the only people setting out to build their shining dream.



# MISE EIRE

BY JOHN BYRNE



# No Citizens Invited To the Party

## The Political Class Serves Itself

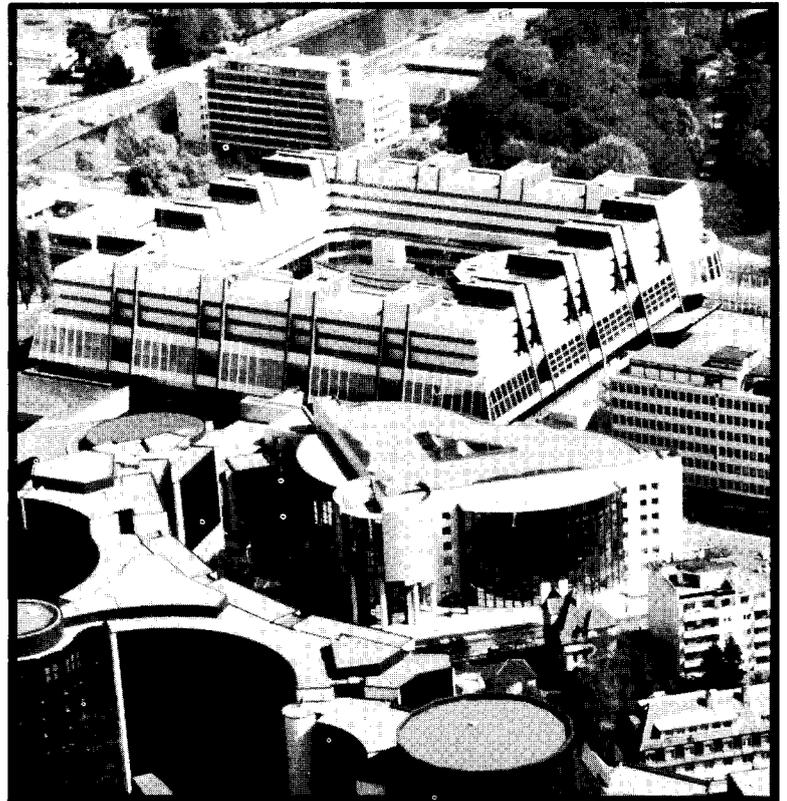
*Peter Mair* looks at how mainstream parties are accumulating more power while becoming more isolated from civil society

**T**ODAY, IT IS WIDELY believed that there is a drift away from traditional politics and that there is a growing gap between the citizens on one hand and the political elite on the other. In western Europe, explanations of this development are generally based on analyses of *political change* and the supposed 'irrelevance of politics', or at least on the irrelevance of what might be called 'grand politics'. The great political struggles are over, it is argued, and political conflicts now revolve around essentially minor matters of little day-to-day importance.

The century-old struggle of socialism versus capitalism has come to an end and we are all capitalists now. Political rights, at least for our own citizens, are now guaranteed. So are social rights, at least to the extent that they can be afforded, and we are all social marketeers now.

Moreover, even when sharp conflicts do emerge, they are soon fudged by the need to adjust to international pressures on the one hand and the need for Europeanisation on the other. Statehood is disappearing and we are all Europeans now.

Politics, in Marx's phrase if not in the way he imagined, has become 'the administration of things', not something which engages a citizen's close attention.



The European Parliament - ever been there?

Thus Fukayama has spoken of 'the end of history' and John Kenneth Galbraith, with an eye on the marginalised minority excluded from this consensus, has written more critically of 'the culture of contentment'.

**A**nalyses of *social change* are often used to explain this development. In post-industrial society, traditional collective identities based on class, religion, or whatever, have been eroded. Life has become privatised and we hear of the 'individualisation' of civil society, the 'particularisation' of individual preferences.

Of course, some observers believe that turning away from traditional party politics and politicians is actually quite a healthy process. They welcome the replacement

of outdated Jurassic Park-style politics by involvement in other 'political' activities which are actually closer to the citizen's interests and in which they can play a more direct and responsible role. These would include campaigns around local issues or involvement in social movements.

Thus citizens, or at least those who have the political skills to do so, are becoming more self-sufficient and this self-sufficiency can only be good for democracy. The decline of party politics reflects an inevitable change, for the better rather than the worse, towards a healthier participative style of democracy.

However attractive this picture might be, it nevertheless fails to accord with reality. For, whatever about social change, the reality

Campaigns  
around  
local  
issues  
and  
social  
movements

is that the traditional parties in western democracies are *not* in fact in decline. Indeed, in many ways, it can be shown that parties are actually *stronger* than ever before, having more power, more money and more resources than at any other stage in their past.

Moreover, they have accumulated these resources through an increasing penetration of and reliance on the state – a development with sits in marked contrast to that of earlier generations when they rooted themselves in civil society.

The result is that traditional political parties are accumulating more and more power at the same time as they are becoming more remote and more isolated. The parties, like the citizens, are becoming more self-sufficient, hence the very real gap between the people and the politicians.

**T**he increase in coalition rather than single-party government means that more European parties are gaining access to power. With the exception of some of the recently mobilised 'new politics' parties of the left and those of the extreme right, there now remain very few significant parties of opposition.

Secondly, and despite their fears of bankruptcy, most European parties now have more money at their disposal than ever before. Parties in almost all European countries, including Ireland, report substantial income growth in *real terms* over the past two decades. Much of this money comes from state resources and direct subsidies.

Even in Ireland, where such subsidies officially do not exist, state funds provide the parties with almost half as much again as they get from their own fundraising efforts.

The amounts are sometimes breathtaking. In Denmark, state subsidies to the national and local party organisations for 1990 came to more than £7 million. In Finland, the national parties were given £14 million in 1989.

In Norway, the figure was almost £20 million, in Austria £23 million and in Sweden £44 million. However, these figures pale by comparison with West Germany in 1989 where the parties and their various foundations received more than £300 million.

Increased numbers of party staff, many of whom are paid by the state, also testify to the growth in party resources. Almost all parties are better staffed than 20 years ago. Numbers of party bureaucrats have increased two-fold in Denmark, three-fold in Germany and more than four-fold in Ireland.

Finally, parties in government appear to be increasingly willing to use state resources to reward their own supporters. Party patronage through the state extends not just to Italy but also to Austria. Bel-

gium, Finland, Germany, Ireland and Britain.

This exploitation of the state by the parties should not simply make us think they have suddenly discovered some sort of *external* drip-feed from which their otherwise ailing organisations can draw more and more nourishment. On the contrary, whether we are dealing with regulations, laws or subventions; we are always dealing with decisions which have been taken by parliament – by the political class.

Hence we are dealing with decisions which have been taken by the parties themselves.

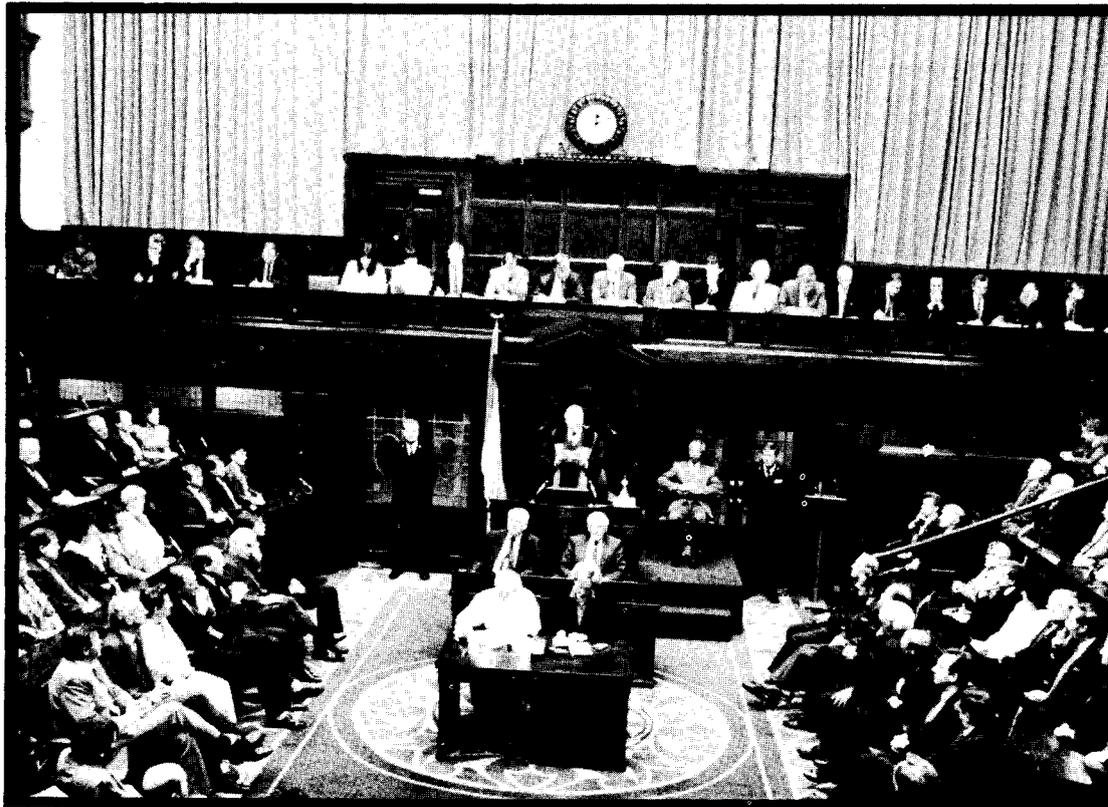
a decline in popular legitimacy is hardly surprising.

What is surprising is that this has not been reflected in a weakening of the parties. In many ways, they have actually enhanced their privileged status at the same time as their legitimacy has declined.

This is a dangerous combination of developments. Declining popular legitimacy combined with increased public power strengthens the popular view that the political class is increasingly venal, self-serving and even corrupt.

There is a darker side to this phenomenon. The newly-emerging extreme-right parties in Europe

Decisions which have been taken by the parties themselves



The Dail - a family portrait, the only time they're all there

Picture: Courtesy Irish Times

Rather than thinking in terms of 'the state' helping the parties, it is perhaps more useful to think of it being the parties which are helping themselves, in that they are regulating themselves, offering resources to themselves and paying themselves, albeit in the name of the state.

**I**t isn't so much that the parties have exchanged dependence on civil society for dependence on the state. It's rather that, since they themselves *are* the state (insofar as they devise the rules and regulations promulgated by the state), they have in fact developed a dependence on themselves. This is self-sufficiency *par excellence*.

Hence we have both self-sufficient citizens and self-sufficient parties, with the mechanisms which once linked the traditional parties to the voters tending to diminish in importance. That the parties themselves have suffered

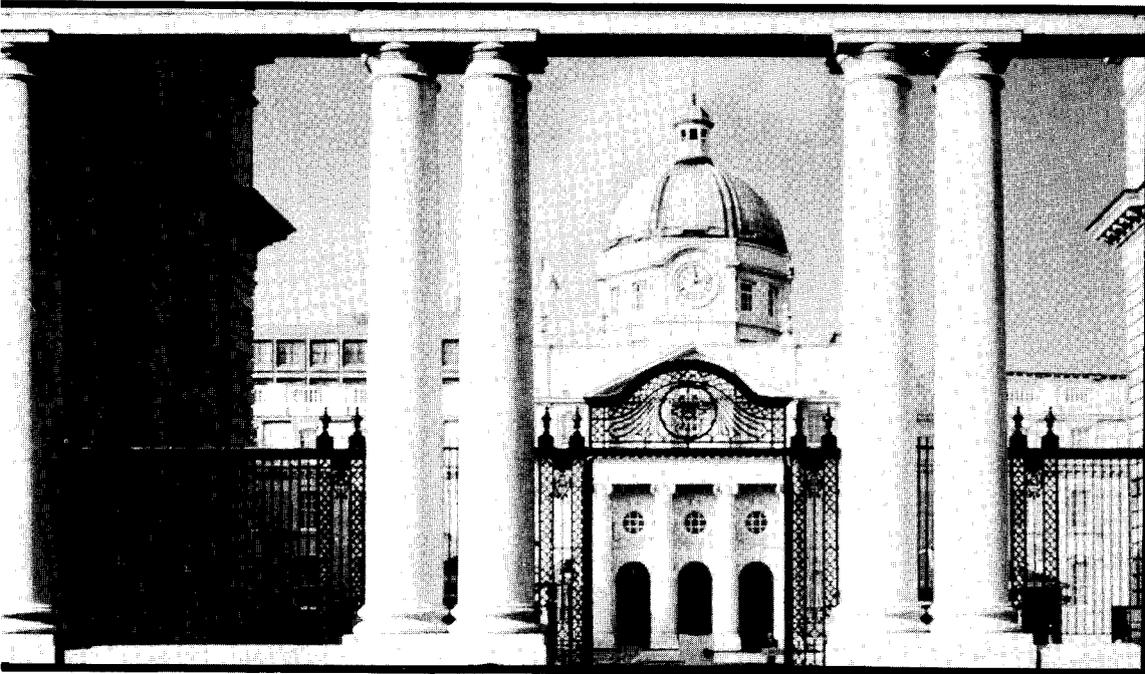
have made great use of this hostility towards the privileges of the traditional party elites. The National Front in France, the Freedom Party in Austria and the various leagues and neo-fascists in Italy have clearly exploited this antagonism.

What is particularly worrying is that otherwise understandable criticism of the remote, self-serving, cartel-like character of the political class is being used to dress up racist and xenophobic ideologies.

By turning their backs on civil society in an endless quest for resources, by consciously turning towards the state, the traditional party leaders throughout Europe have helped to undermine former linkages based on trust, representation and accountability. Albeit inadvertently, they have helped to create a situation which can be exploited by profoundly non-democratic forces.

# Democracy Entails Openness

## The Real Operation of Power In States



Government Buildings

*Paddy Smyth* suggests that freedom of information is as much a democratic right as the right to vote

**T**HE CONCEPTS OF openness, transparency and *glasnost* have become key words in the political vocabulary of the 1980s and 1990s, but they have yet to become embedded in popular definitions of democracy. We take for granted the notion that a constitution which does not guarantee freedom of speech and assembly is – by definition – not democratic.

Deals brokered in corridors instead of committees

Why, in the age of information, do we not also insist that, without the right of access to public documents, a state is undemocratic?

The traditional answer is that of the policy elite and it is not one of principle but a practical objection – that excessive openness will hinder decision-making by exposing the decision-makers to the constraints of public opinion. The ‘contamination’ of the policy process would prevent radical solutions and probably drive policy-making underground.

Deals would be brokered in corridors instead of committees, options debated verbally instead of on paper. Or so the argument goes.

Does this picture correspond to

the real world? Perhaps at the margins, but most political scientists stress the irrationality and the piecemeal character of the policy process. The vast majority of decisions do not arise from consideration of a vast array of options and the selection of the most rational.

The complexity of public programmes and the need to balance rival interests mean that reform proceeds step by small step – and not always in the same direction. In political systems like our own where there is substantial consensus among policy-makers despite changes of government, this is especially true.

**B**ut, if the policy process is as piecemeal as that, if the range of options is really as narrow as the observers describe, then it cannot seriously be argued that public scrutiny of it is a problem. That is certainly the evidence from countries like Canada, New Zealand and Australia where the systems of law and government are similar to our own.

Mr Justice Kirby, President of the New South Wales Court of Appeal and an expert on the Australian freedom of information laws, notes that ‘extravagant claims’ were made when these statutes were enacted. “The fall of the Westminster system of government” was predicted as were “the loss of frankness and candour amongst public servants” and the “imposition of inordinate costs”. But “none of those dire prognostications were borne out”.

The Canadian Information Commissioner tells a similar story. Openness laws are ‘not a precipice’, he writes, just ‘a six-inch drop’. Civil servants and politicians “certainly won’t die from the impact”. The New Zealand Information Authority reported in 1986 that fears of a deterioration in the relationship between public servants had not been borne out.

However, even if it were possible to show some impairment of the decision-making process, it can be

argued that this is a legitimate price to pay for a democratic right. Mussolini made the trains run on time, but most would prefer late trains to what went with the express service.

Of course, the fears of public servants, whether well-grounded or not, should be taken into account. They can be addressed in the move towards freedom of information by distinguishing between 'objective' and 'subjective' advice to government – between the statement of 'facts' by civil servants or consultants and the making of recommendations.

In Sweden, where the constitution has guaranteed freedom of information for the last 200 years, this distinction takes an institutional form. Very small policy-making ministries are serviced by substantially independent state agencies which implement day-to-day policy, free from political interference.

This freedom from political pressure appears paradoxical. Public scrutiny, according to the opponents of freedom of information, increases the pressure on the public servant to do the 'popular' rather than the correct thing. Yet Swedish public servants – the country's foremost defenders of openness – say that it is the transparency of the system which guarantees their independence.

They argue that this their best protection from the vagaries of public opinion precisely because politicians know they cannot overstep a mark without being exposed. The constitutional right of a civil servant to leak matters of public concern to the press without fear of disciplinary sanction effectively puts manners on politicians and acts as a valuable check on impropriety or the misuse of state funds.

There is no evidence that policy-making suffers in Sweden and considerable evidence that the *ofentlightetsprincipen* (the openness principle which gives public access to official information) contributes substantially to bridging the gap between the citizen and the state. This is no small consideration.

Moves towards freedom of information around the world in the last two decades have been prompted less by the wish to extend democracy than by political crises that have undermined public confidence in the 'impartiality' of the state itself.

**I**n the wake of Watergate and The Pentagon Papers, the US introduced its own Freedom of Information Act and legislation to protect whistleblowers. In Britain after the Clive Ponting case, where a jury defied the instructions of a judge, acquitting the person who exposed the Belgrano scandal, and the *Spycatcher* fiasco – even the Tories were forced to talk about

reform. Such was the contempt for the Official Secrets Act, it was becoming increasingly unlikely that the state could again get a conviction under it.

In the post-Maastricht panic about an alienated European public, even Brussels has caught the transparency bug. A directive from the Council of Foreign Ministers in December 1993 endorsed the key principle of openness, although its practical effects have yet to be felt. The *Guardian's* attempt to get access to Council minutes of the debate on children's working hours has been blocked and is now in the courts.

In Ireland, the series of business/political scandals that culminated in the Beef Tribunal meant that a coalition deal between Labour and Fianna Fail was only possible if Fianna Fail agreed to commit itself to a number of openness initiatives – from financial disclosure of TDs' interests to reform of Dail procedures. The Programme for Government also pledged to consider the introduction of a Freedom of Information Act.

Work on this is now very advanced and junior minister Eithne Fitzgerald has promised it will be her priority once the Ethics Bill has been agreed.

**R**esponses to scandals like these should not obscure the most important argument for openness legislation – that it is part of the natural evolution of democratic government. Post-war democratic theory has sought to go beyond the formal content of model constitutions to the real operation of power in states. After all, no constitution was *ostensibly* more democratic than that of the Soviet Union!

In modern models, competing elites vie to set agendas which are then legitimised through the electoral process. Access to information determines influence and the struggle for freedom of information is a critical democratic battle to tilt the power balance away from the charmed golden circles that are a feature of all class societies.

In this regard, Ireland is way behind the practice in many democratic states. It is also in breach of its obligations both under the European Convention on Human Rights and under a solemn declaration of the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 1982, which is legally binding on this country. The truth is that, over the years, the Irish government has felt little pressure on this issue from within the country.

Since the Beef Tribunal and the other scandals, that situation may well change. It would be ironic if the real legacy of Larry Goodman to this country was the most important extension of democratic rights in decades.



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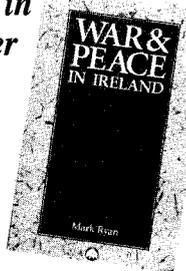
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## War and Peace in Ireland: Britain and the IRA in the New World Order

by Mark Ryan  
Pluto Press  
162 pp £8.95



This is a rather apocalyptic book, predicting that the signing of the Downing Street Declaration presages the collapse of the British state itself.

This is predicated on the observation that the Union of Britain and Northern Ireland is central to the nature of the British state itself, and that any tampering with this institution could unravel the threads that bind it together. Given this prognosis, it is perhaps hardly surprising that the book received a not unfavourable review from Conor Cruise O'Brien, though it is safe to assume that he and the author would have little in common politically.

Before reaching his conclusions on the Downing Street Declaration, the author takes us through a survey of the past 25 years of Irish history, notably of the crisis in the North. He correctly identifies the threat that the upsurge of the nationalist population there represented, not only for the 6 County regime, but for the stability of both the British and Irish states.

But underlying the many indisputable observations in this book lies the author's own, unstated, agenda. The leadership of the nationalist movement is operating according to the wrong analysis and programme, one determined by its middle-class and opportunist character. It refuses to conduct its political campaign according to the truly revolutionary programme, snippets of which pop up in the book from time to time.

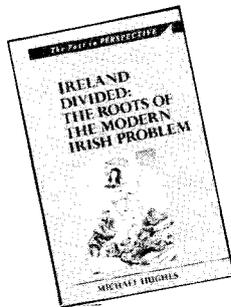
In support of this contention it cites the absence of references to socialism in Sinn Fein's policies and its refusal to become involved in the campaign against the 1983 abortion amendment. Many would agree with this latter criticism - but Ryan continues by denouncing the 'more radical republicans' who did get involved for not campaigning for the 'right to abortion', but "avoiding the issue of abortion and opposing the constitutional amendment on diverse technical and libertarian grounds."

This is just one of the many examples which shows how Mark Ryan does not understand and is fundamentally out of sympathy with mass popular political movements, and the necessity for tactics which allow them to advance. He is fixated on leaderships, and when they do not accord with his views of what programme they should be following, then the whole movement is a waste of time, and those involved in it no more than dupes.

Thus he can make the sweeping statement: "Today there is no mass enthusiasm for national independence" (dismissing in a sentence the resurgence of nationalism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe), in blithe contradiction of the evidence of the rise of new nation states like the Eritreans, the extraordinary tenacity of the East Timorese, and the very real enthusiasm for national independence disguised in the form of Islamic fundamentalism in the Arab world.

There are very real problems for Northern nationalists - and the Irish people as a whole - raised by the Downing Street Declaration and the IRA ceasefire, problems discussed elsewhere in this magazine. They must be widely and comprehensively discussed. But the judgemental sectarianism revealed in this book will do little to bring that discussion forward.

Carol Coulter



## Ireland Divided: The Roots of the Modern Irish Problem by Michael Hughes University of Wales Press 143 pp

This is a book probably written for a British audience. Its blurb says it 'deals evenhandedly with the two Irish states and their politics'. In the foreword the author writes: "I see the Northern Ireland problem as a clash of two nationalisms, claiming the same piece of soil as their own and sustained by powerful myths."

The opening chapter is entitled 'Myth as History'. Its conclusion states: "the old view of the past, which sees everything in simplistic terms as a conflict between Catholic and Protestant, English and Irish, Irish-speaker and English-speaker, has not been eliminated from the history taught in (Irish) schools, and among the ordinary people of Ireland it retains a very tenacious hold."

Michael Hughes, the author, who died in 1993 as the book was in the press, clearly regarded himself as Welsh. But Welsh, Scottish, English, Irish (with one or two variations) are equally clearly co-nationalities for him. His methodology, which sees the writing of history as 'balanced' if not 'neutral', leads him to an 'on the one hand and on the other hand' approach.

If history were a science - which it is not, being driven by subjective and contextual propositions - hypotheses could be proven by test and experiment. But the past cannot be treated as a problem to be resolved intellectually.

Hughes writes very much as a 'dispassionate' academic, although the writer of the book's preface says the "relationship of Britain with her 'Celtic fringe' was something which fascinated him."

All this said, in a short book - 88 pages with 42 of illustrative documents - he presents a condensed version of the official, political party, state level historiography of the two states in Ireland and the relations between the 26 Counties and Britain. However, brevity has its drawbacks. For instance, the 1960s and the Lemass period are summated in phrases like "In the late 1960s there was economic improvement..." I condense not!

Hughes has the view, expressed in several key sections, that the North can only go in the direction of long civil war, even though he places a condition against this because of its proximity to Britain and 'Eire'. He says: "Under present circumstances it is unlikely to be integrated into the British state or with the Irish Republic, or given independence."

One might ask then, what is its current status, if not part of the British state?

A subtext of Hughes's book is that Irish nationalism, in extreme form, is based on myth and is irrational. In his all too brief tour through the roots of partition one feels his sympathies lie with liberal, Victorian, utilitarian, pragmatic policies. How come the Irish nationalists could never rise above the myths and be reasonable?

The series of which this book is number five is called "The Past in Perspective". Any artist will tell you that perspective can be a means of rendering reality based on consistent illusion. Hughes has produced a sort of old-fashioned 'reader' which gives an illusion of being an open investigation of a living political confrontation, without the benefit of delving into its deeper social, geographical, economic and ideological fabric, which would be necessary for a truly rounded book.

Contrary to what he says, the Northern Ireland problem is not sustained by myths but by tangible and terrible realities. Hughes evades the responsibility of the historian to be partisan. Even scientists accept this as part of their method today.

Harry Vince

## Books Received

### Nor Meekly Serve My Time: The H-Block Struggle 1976-1981

Edited by Brian Campbell, Laurence McKeown  
and Felim O'Hagan  
Beyond the Pale Publications  
267 pages £9.95

This is an account of the long-drawn-out battle of republican prisoners in the H-blocks of Long Kesh against the policy, introduced by Margaret Thatcher in 1976, of treating them as criminals rather than 'special category', or political, prisoners, told in the words of the prisoners themselves.

In the words of one prisoner, Jaz McCann, who described one attempt at a compromise to end the dirty protest which preceded the hunger strike: "Had they, instead of shutting all doors, given us a face-saver, there would have been no hunger strike."

### Trials by Ordeal: Irish Political Prisoners, English Law Irish Prisoners Support Group 110p £4.99

This book is based on the experiences of groups of wrongly-convicted Irish prisoners like the Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four and the Maguire Seven, and draws together the lessons of these cases. It makes a number of recommendations for changes in British legal procedure, which were the basis of the group's submission to the Royal Commission on the workings of the criminal justice system announced the day the Birmingham Six had their convictions quashed in 1991.

### Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society by Lynn Innes Harvester Wheatsheaf 201 pages

This book looks at the interplay of gender and nationality in the cultural conceptions of Irish identity, examining the influence of economic and religious, as well as political, developments on this identity. She also focuses on the ways in which women operated within this context, often seeking to assert community and group interest above that of individuals

### Rain on the Wind and The Bogman by Walter Macken Brandon Press both 320pp £5.95

Two of Macken's evocations of rural life, republished in popular format. Both reveal Macken's talent for dialogue and are, their way, archives of a vanished way of life, made accessible to a new and hopefully young audience.

### Walk in a Lost Landscape by Sheila Barrett Poolbeg New Writing 265 pp £6.99

This novel is set against the backdrop of a nuclear war whose wave of effects are felt in Ireland. But is the fallout-laden landscape real, or a complex metaphor for a state of being many already feel exists in the slow corrosion of places and personalities in the Ireland of today?

The scenario is placed on the borderline between lived experience and dream, or nightmare. Multiple threads are drawn between continuing family life, individual and racial identity, places and times. Unthinkable but general horror is contrasted to personal struggles for meaning and survival in an environment which can give of nothing except perhaps memory and a hope for improvement.

### The Lost Testament Of Judas Iscariot by Michael Dickinson Brandon Originals pp157 £6.95

Turkish based author, Michael Dickinson, presents a 'translation' of a 'document' that had been gathering dust in the Vatican 'for several centuries'. Contrary to traditional teachings, Judas ended up in hiding, from where he wrote this book.

## ***On the Back of the Swallow*** **by Danny Morrison** **Mercier Press** **256 pp £7.99**

It is inevitable that Danny Morrison's past career - he was spokesman for Sinn Fein and editor of its newspaper, *An Phoblacht*, and is now serving an eight-year sentence for IRA-related activity - will colour most readers' expectations of this book. They will expect, perhaps unconsciously, that it will touch on life in republican West Belfast, or at least contain folkloric reminiscences of pre-Troubles working class life in that city.

But this is not the case. While there are hints that the city environment is that of Belfast, it could be anywhere on these islands, and there is no suggestion that the city has experienced any political conflict. The backgrounds of the characters, as revealed in their names, seem to be Protestant. The arena of the novel is resolutely the private world of individual emotions.

In this arena Morrison explores the evolving sexuality of Nicky, the central character, and the catastrophe which engulfs him when it collides with the sexual and class prejudices of a wider society. Confounding media-created expectations of aggressively macho republican male attitudes, he gives a deeply sympathetic portrayal of a gay man and his - reciprocated - love for a 15-year-old boy.

The latter part of the novel, when Nicky is remanded in prison, charged with the unlawful imprisonment of the boy, makes compelling reading. It is written in a direct and spare style, with plenty of convincing dialogue, which leaves the reader in no doubt of the truth of the Nicky's experience - vindicating the old axiom that writers should write of what they know!

Morrison's touch is much less sure in the earlier part of the novel, describing Nicky's close relationship to a boyhood friend who dies. It is overwritten, the language is often either too florid or stilted, especially when attempting to describe landscape and atmosphere. Thus people are 'encountered' rather than 'met', rain comes as 'showers of spears' and overall there is a sense that the author has not yet found his voice.

Nicky's contradictory feelings about his first, and only, heterosexual relationship are well conveyed, and the novel improves as his emotional experiences develop, reaching a climax with his response to his persecution in prison.

This is a brave attempt to escape, in literary form, the ghetto of West Belfast and republican themes. As he showed in the pages of *An Phoblacht* and in his previous novel, Danny Morrison can write. But he has yet to settle on a voice and style that is his own.

**Carol Coulter**

## ***Selected Writings*** **by Gerry Adams** **Brandon £7.95**

The selection of writings by Gerry Adams published here, can be divided broadly into two groups: the political and the fictional.

The former are much easier to deal with. For the most part the extracts published here are taken from *The Politics Of Irish Freedom*, published by Brandon in 1986, and they are all - at least as far as *that* publication is concerned - uniformly excellent. Not that they are in anyway impartial; they are not. It is precisely their partiality, their bias, which makes them so worth while. It is the very thing that media pundits - on both sides of the Irish Sea - so deplore about Adams, his inability, as they see it, to come off the fence, and denounce violence, that make his political writings so illuminating. For, as he has always (quite correctly)

articulated himself, the question is not whether or not you agree or disagree with violence, but why it is that men are driven to violence in the first place, that is of core interest when dealing with the problem that continues to exist - IRA ceasefire, or no IRA ceasefire - within the Six Counties.

The more recent political extracts are less satisfying, mainly because of their strangely self-congratulatory tone. I say strangely, not because congratulations are not in order but because elsewhere, particularly in his short stories, Adams is consistently self-deprecating, modest even. And in a genuine rather than calculated fashion.

So what about those short stories? Well, for the most part, they are disappointing. Some of them are downright bad. Indeed, after having read the opening pair, "The Lower Wack", and "Deja Vu", from *Falls Memories*, his first collection from 1982, I feared I was going to be left with nothing positive to say about them at all. But the third story, "Bunking Off", from the same collection, is excellent.

This qualitative discrepancy I also found in examples from his other two collections, *Cage Eleven*, 1990, and *The Street and Other Stories*, from 1992. "Dear John", for instance, from the former, and "The Street", from the latter, are both excellent, in stark contrast to the confused "Slainte", and the overly sentimental "Shane" from the same collections.

My conclusion was that the problem rested not with the writer, but with the editor - or rather, with the absence of one. Surely somebody could have told Adams that the title of one of the stories published here from *The Street*, "Does He Take Sugar", had already been used as a series title by the BBC". Which is a pity, because apart from the astonishingly laboured piece of dialogue from which the title is taken, it's actually rather good. Likewise with "Up The Rebels", another dreadful title.

Perhaps I am being too harsh, but I don't think Adams wants to be regarded as a 'considering all the things he does' type of writer, but in a serious literary light.

In which case, he'd have been better advised to have published not three, but one set of short stories, including for instance, "Remembering A Hedgehog", and "The Mountains Of Mourne", as well the ones mentioned above.

Ultimately then, an impressive if uneven collection of writings, which would have been even more impressive, had a more discerning editor wielded a sharper knife.

**Anthony O'Keeffe**

## ***Nothing Like Beirut*** **by Brieghe Duffaud** **Poolbeg New Writing £6.99**

The first of these thirteen short stories is the most disappointing in the collection. Not that it's badly written, it isn't, it's just that it in no way prepares you for the dazzlingly articulate and varied nature of the remaining twelve. It gives one the feeling that it was included after the title had been decided upon, as opposed to the other way around.

As for the remaining twelve, where to begin? From the Donleavy-like despondency of "On The Stairs", to the Orwellian displacement of "Swan Song", right up to the delightfully arrogant, Nabakovian, almost vicious "Pieces D'Identite". Duffaud succeeds in rendering a vast array of disparate literary styles, whilst nevertheless remaining true to her own unique prose.

But above and beyond all else, it is the shadow of James Joyce which hangs over this impressive collection, and in particular, *Dubliners*. Or, to put it another way, paralysis. Marriage, employment, in-laws, Catholicism, the 'Troubles' and above all else the paralysis induced by family life, in all its many manifestations. The difference being that here the paralysis extends across the whole of Europe, instead of being contained within the walls of Dublin's fair city.

There is no need for me here to go into specific details. Suffice it to say that "The Prize", the last story, is exactly that. A small gem in a literary crown.

**Anthony O'Keeffe**

## ***The Fabulists*** **by Philip Casey** **The Lilliput Press, £8.99**

Whenever I am told that a novel is making a contribution to the school of social realism I cringe in fearful expectation of mean streets, sweaty sheets and urine stains and *The Fabulists* does not let me down. Philip Casey's first novel obliges relentlessly with all the unpleasant physical details one could ask for.

To be fair, the Dublin that he reveals is a gritty place and his account of working class - ie unemployed - life strikes home. His main characters, too, are not stereotypes, but individuals who breathe air, draw benefit and go shopping. Tess and Mungo inhabit their own skins with the same solidity that they inhabit the streets and housing estates of the city.

Maybe it is not so surprising, then, that Mungo seems to lose some of his credibility when he visits his mother's farm in Wexford. What is strange is that the farm life doesn't seem to share in the determined realism of the city scenes. Paradoxically, compared with Dublin, it doesn't seem mucky enough.

We are told that Philip was raised in Co Wexford, yet the scenes there lack the grimy immediacy of the Dublin setting. Is country life being idealised, or has the author just lost interest? Either way, inheriting the farm seems to be an unlikely salvation for Mungo's damaged family.

Perhaps this problem arises because central to *The Fabulists* is the issue of escape. Mungo needs to escape from the round of addiction which has led to the physical scarring of his dearly-loved son as well as the emotional numbness of his marriage.

His lover, Tess, theoretically free from the futility of her unhappy marriage, is in fact tied into an oppressive relationship with her husband by her love for her troubled young son. Yet, ironically, the family ties that bind both Tess and Mungo into domestic prisons are also the bonds that give shape to their lives in the real world.

I say 'the real world' deliberately, as so much of the relationship between Tess and Mungo - the 'fabulists' of the title - is taken up with the exchange, often in serial soap opera form, of complex sexual and romantic fantasies. The supposed glamour of past adventures in Berlin and Barcelona is interwoven with the sordid present. And out of this the lovers find some kind of resolution, some kind of happiness.

The novel ends in a moment of glory with the inauguration of Mary Robinson as President. Life can't be all bad.

**Sandra Cooke**

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