the two Irelands

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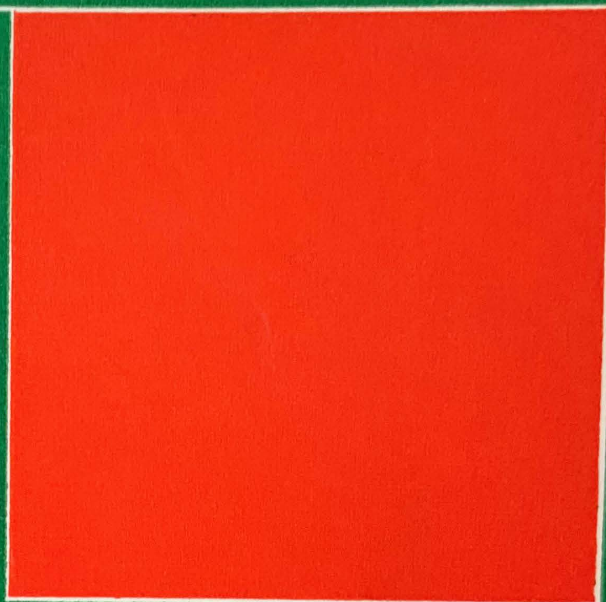

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1. partition

Was the political future of Ireland settled once and for all time with the passing of the Government of Ireland Act in 1920? Did British recognition of an Irish Free State, even if such a state went beyond the terms and intention of anything in the act, and support for the government of Northern Ireland mean that henceforth there would be two separate and distinct states in Ireland?

To these questions, almost 50 years after 1920, there are almost as many answers as there are political parties on both sides of the border that divides the country. The Ulster Unionists and the Northern Ireland Labour party both assert that the 1920 act gave Ireland—or at least Northern Ireland—a settled constitution that cannot now be interfered with. The other political parties in Ireland challenge this assertion with, of course, varying degrees of emphasis, though there are few politicians, apart from the militants in the Sinn Fein party or in the Irish Republican Army, who feel strongly enough about partition to think of taking serious action to end it.

The larger political parties in the southern part of Ireland and their ideological fellow-travellers, the nationalists of the north, are anti-partitionists in theory only. In practice they accept the division of Ireland, probably realising that apart from propaganda and debate there is little they can do to change the *status quo*. Moreover, their propaganda is directed exclusively to their own followers while the debate is generally amongst themselves.

government of Ireland Act

The Government of Ireland Act was designed to create two identical governments and parliaments, one for Northern Ireland and one for Southern Ireland, and to permit all Ireland to elect representatives to Westminster. It also provided for a Council of Ireland to be representative of both Irish parliaments.

The British House of Commons in 1920 conceived these arrangements as more or less temporary and hoped that after a settling-down period Ireland would, by the mutual consent of North and South, have one parliament and one government. Introducing the measure Ian McPherson, Chief Secretary for Ireland, said: "The division of Ireland, I need hardly tell the House, is distasteful to the government just as it is distasteful to all Irishmen . . . All of us hope that the division may be temporary and our arrangement has, therefore, been to frame the Bill in such a manner as may lead to a union between the two parts of Ireland."

The Government of Ireland Act was, however, rejected by Southern Ireland whose leaders were determined at that time to have nothing short of the all-Ireland republic which had been proclaimed in the 1916 rising. On the other hand Northern Ireland accepted the Act, though not with great enthusiasm, and has since operated within the limited, but nonetheless considerable, powers which it allows. The constitution of Northern Ireland is often quoted as an experiment in devolution; seldom is it regarded as "part of a compromise that failed" (Hugh Shearman, *Ulster Since 1800* BBC *Publications,* 1954).

In the remaining part of Ireland the government that emerged — again as a compromise but between the aims of the republicans and the provisions of the act — was one of dominion status, administering what was at first known as the Irish Free State. In 1925 the boundary between Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland was firmly established and the Council of Ireland abandoned. The abandonment of the council was a tragic decision because on the council both governments might have grown to understand each other and to work in the interest of the whole country.

Then followed a period of hostility between north and south, the 40 years of Ireland's cold war. This estrangement ended dramatically on 14 January 1965. At noon that day Ireland's two prime ministers, Mr Sean Lemass from the republic and Mr Terence O'Neill in

Northern Ireland, met and pledged their goverments to a future of friendship and economic co-operation.

republic declared

In 1949 Dail Eireann, the parliament of Southern Ireland, repealed the External Relations Act, which was the last legal link the country had with the United Kingdom and Commonwealth, and declared a republic. But because of the freedom by which citizens of Ireland and of the United Kingdom were able to move into and out of their respective countries this declaration, which made the Republic of Ireland a foreign country, raised the question of whether Irish citizens in Britain should be treated as foreigners or put into some sort of special and privileged category.

The Ireland Act (1949) solved this problem by granting the full rights of British citizenship to all immigrants from Ireland. At the same time the act sought to protect the constitution of Northern Ireland by stipulating that "in no event will Northern Ireland or any part thereof cease to be part of Her Majesty's Dominions and of the United Kingdom without the consent of the parliament of Northern Ireland." In this way the Ireland Act, though passed for an entirely different purpose, reinforced the partition of Ireland.

an election issue

The Northern Ireland general election which was held immediately after the passing of the Ireland Act was the last major political contest on partition. In that election the forces on both sides fought what was, in many constituencies, a violent contest. Since then, and particularly since the 1950s when economic problems began to demand more attention, partition has lost much of its force as an issue in Irish elections.

Nonetheless politicians on both sides, conscious that partition is a major national problem, feel that they must from time to time reaffirm their attitudes. In 1963 Mr Lemass went so far as to ask Mr Harold Macmillan, who was then Britain's prime minister, to declare that his government was no longer interested in keeping Ireland divided and that, if Irishmen themselves could agree, Britain would not stand in the way of reunion. Mr Macmillan did not reply, but the *Observer* (17 October 1963) suggested that the unity of Ireland could be achieved by the republic rejoining the Commonwealtn. The Commonwealth solution had however already been rejected by Southern Ireland. On 23 July 1959 Mr Sean Lemass stated in Dail Eireann that the Republic of Ireland would not seek to rejoin the British Commonwealth.

Then in January 1967 Mr Harold Wilson, the British Prime Minister, told the European Assembly in Strasbourg that "the real duty of all those in Northern Ireland and in Southern Ireland was to get together and solve the Irish problem." Nationalists in Ulster read into this statement the answer which they thought Mr MacMillan should have given in 1963. It seemed to them that in his heart Mr Wilson desired a united Ireland. The Unionists, on the other hand, asserted that the statement was nothing more than a reaffirmation of the principle of non-interference laid down in 1949.

the extremists

It is virtually impossible to write about politics in Ireland without at least mentioning the extremists—the IRA and Sinn Fein on the one hand, Paisleyism and Ulster Protestantism on the other—if only because they are known throughout the world and because they loom large in a small country where politics has too often been a matter of extreme attitudes. The IRA, armed and trained on military lines, is illegal in both parts of Ireland. Its real strength and influence remain something of a mystery but its represents a tradition of physical force that has run through Irish politics for the past three centuries, and there are times when it seems to enjoy considerable sympathy. In every decade since 1920 this movement

has struck against partition in its own peculiar way.

In 1926 the IRA lent its support to Fianna Fail, the party which De Valera and his comrades formed in 1926 when they gave up the gun and became parliamentary politicians. Some members of the IRA moved towards the left in the early 1930s to form organisations such as Saor Eire (Free Ireland), which was suppressed as communistic in 1931, and the Republican Congress. Immediately before the outbreak of the second world war the IRA seems to have come under the influence of pro-Nazis. It was responsible for a campaign of explosions, in pillar boxes and railway stations, throughout England. When the war ended the IRA concentrated its attacks on the border between Northern Ireland and the republic. In the years between 1956 and 1962 this campaign caused the deaths of several policemen and civilians and material damage to the extent of some £700,000. Today the IRA seems to be dormant.

no home rule

Although the Unionists accepted the 1920 Government of Ireland Act and proceeded to make it operative in the six counties over which they had been given control it would be true to say that they never wanted a separate government, even for themselves. From 1886, when the first Irish Home Rule Bill was introduced in the British House of Commons, until 1920 all the efforts of the Unionist party were directed towards preserving the union of Great Britain and Ireland.

But, as a recent writer has put it, "in 1920 the long struggle over Home Rule had come to an end, at least for the Ulster Unionists. It was not the end they sought, for, ironically enough, in order to escape home rule from Dublin they were forced to accept home rule in a partitioned Ulster instead of direct government by Westminster" (J. W. Boyle in "Belfast: Origins and Growth of an Industrial City" BBC Publications, 1967).

Today the Unionists are determined to resist every encroachment on the rights which they have been given under the 1920 Act. When, for instance, it was suggested early in 1967 that the Westminster Parliament should exercise its powers under the Section 75 of the Act and investigate the Unionist administration there was an immediate reaction from Mr William Craig, Northern Ireland's Minister of Home Affairs. This section of the Government of Ireland Act states: "Notwithstanding the establishment of the Parliaments of Southern and Northern Ireland, or the parliament of Ireland, or anything contained in this act, the supreme authority of the parliament of the United Kingdom shall remain unaffected and undiminished over all persons, matters, and things in Ireland and every part thereof."

Mr Craig promptly stated that "it would be quite improper to take away from the sovereignty of Northern Ireland without Stormont's consent. It is not a section subtracting from or entitling any interference with the parliament or government of Northern Ireland (*Irish News*, 25 March 1967).

And in tones all too familiar in Ulster Mr Craig added, "Let me sound a note of warning. 'Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right' and this sort of attack will mobilise Ulster loyalists in the same way as attack by bomb and bullet."

the only solution?

It is not clear what politician originally conceived the idea of partitioning Ireland so as to separate the north-east, where two-thirds of the people are Protestants, from the predominantly Catholic population of the remaining counties. A form of partition was suggested as early as the 1840s when Daniel O'Connell campaigned for repeal of the Act of Union. Partition was mentioned again when Gladstone made up his mind that Ireland should have home rule.

Yet it was never a solution that appealed strongly to Irishmen, either Unionists or Nationalists. This probably explains the

duplicity on the part of certain British politicians when they finally decided, during the last home rule crisis at the beginning of the present century, that partition was the only answer to the Irish question.

In May 1916 Lloyd George assured Edward Carson, the Unionist leader that "Ulster would not, whether she wills it or not, merge in the rest of Ireland." A few days before this he had told John Redmond, the Irish Nationalist leader, that partition was not intended to be permanent. Five years later he threatened Ireland with immediate war if the delegates whom the republicans had sent to London to negotiate a treaty did not accept his terms. And his terms included partition.

settling down

The Unionists of Ulster may never have sought Home Rule but once Ireland settled down after the turbulent years from 1916 until 1922 they saw the advantages of self-government, even in a limited form. And as the administration in Northern Ireland has grown it has at the same time engendered its own built-in resistance to change.

Financial help from Britain, increasing steadily in the past twenty years, has made the task of governing Northern Ireland easy. It has also enabled the Unionist government to maintain British standards of social and industrial welfare and to promote a growing number of modern industries. Northern Ireland maintains its own civil service, in which the number of non-industrial employees has risen from a pre-war figure of 3,000 to more than 11,000 today. Its parliament at Stormont, on the outskirts of Belfast, consists of a House of Commons with 52 members and a Senate with 28 members. The Unionist party has held an overwhelming majority of seats in both Houses since 1920. They are unlikely therefore to follow the example of that corrupt Irish parliament which in 1800 accepted the Act of Union and voted itself out of existence. The probability that partition will be ended by consent of Northern Ireland's Senate and Commons is very remote.

partition a protection

Partition has created conditions from which the politicians in Southern Ireland as well as those in Northern Ireland are finding escape increasingly difficult. In the south those industrialists who have benefited from the state's protectionist policies, as well as those churchmen who fear that a united Irish parliament would be uncomfortably more liberal than the present Dail Eireann on such matters as birth control, divorce, the censorship of publications, education and social welfare, would conceivably resent or even oppose the ending of partition.

Employers of labour and those politicians who speak for the interests of the employing classes may well be haunted by the fear that a united Ireland would greatly strengthen the trade unions and the Labour parties.

In an interview for *Ogra* (*Belfast Telegraph,* 24 April 1967) Mr Lemass said that in his opinion "an essential condition for ending partition must be the preservation of the present powers of the northern parliament to ensure against discrimination in education and business." He also admitted that the constitution of the Republic of Ireland is "more restrictive than Catholic doctrine" and suggested that an ideal constitution for a united Ireland would give "every citizen the rights in law which his religion allowed."

the new Ireland

A United Ireland would, however, be so vastly different from either of the two states that exist in the country today that many of the politicians now in power might not survive long in public life. Just as the Irish Parliamentary party was swept into oblivion with the rise of Sinn Fein in 1918 so it is conceivable that those political parties which have dominated their separate parts of Ireland since 1920

might be completely eclipsed in the new Ireland. From this viewpoint Mr Lemass's plan for a united Ireland with two parliaments is understandable. It is his compromise between national idealism and the need to protect the interests of the power groups in both parts of the country.

2. political parties in the Irish republic

In Ireland there are six major political parties, three of them in Northern Ireland and three in the republic, as well as a number of minor but moderately effective parties such as Sinn Fein and Clan na Talmhan in the republic, the National Democratic party and the Republican-Labour party in Northern Ireland.

In the republic, proportional representation makes it comparatively easy for the minor parties to win seats in Dail Eireann, and at the same time, by imposing a check on its growth, forces Fianna Fail, the largest party, to govern with razor-edge majorities. Yet proportional representation was reaffirmed by national referendum in 1959, and nobody has paid much serious attention to the suggestion that politics in the republic would be more "rational" if Fine Gael merged with Fianna Fail to form a right-wing front, leaving the Labour party to fulfil its natural role as the socialist opposition.

Fine Gael

Fine Gael, which means the United Irish party, was formed in 1933 with the amalgamation of three right-wing organisations: Cumann na Gael, the party of the original Irish Free State government; the Centre party, led by James Dillon, the son of a prominent member of the Irish Parliamentary party; and the National Brigade, which was the remnants of a suppressed "blueshirt" movement.

Cumann na Gael, under the leadership of W. T. Cosgrove, a veteran of the 1916 rising, was in power from 1922 until 1932. For the first half of that decade, due to the refusal of De Valera and his followers to accept an oath of allegiance to the British crown as a condition for entry into parliament, Labour was the official opposition in the Dail Eireann. The oath of allegiance, which Lloyd George insisted should be included in the treaty that ended the war between Britain and the Irish nationalists, was one of the issues that wrecked the republican movement and plunged Southern Ireland into a civil war that lasted until 1923. The civil war split is evident to the present day even though the antagonists, Fine Gael and Fianna Fail, now represent much the same social strata and economic interests. This was not so in the 1920s when, as J. L. McCracken points out in his *Representative Government in Ireland* (OUP, 1958), Cumann na Gael, standing as it did for peace and orderly government, attracted the support of the conservative-minded propertied classes including many former Southern Unionists. On the other hand, in its early days Fianna Fail was the party of the small farmers, the Irish petty-bourgeoisie and the non-left labouring classes of town and countryside.

McCracken's analysis of Dail Eireann in 1948, 25 years after the end of the civil war, shows that by then Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, represented much the same social groups as shown below.

DAIL EIREANN 1948

	Fine Gael	Fianna Gail
professional	30%	27%
commerce: Finance and Industry	28%	22%
farmers	25%	31%
miscellaneous	11%	11%
unclassified	6%	9%
total	100%	100%

Fianna Fail

These figures seem to substantiate the view that there is now little to choose between Fine Gael and Fianna Fail. Since 1948, moreover, a new generation of politicians has arisen to take control of both parties and there seems even less to divide these men than was the case with their forbears. The present prime minister in the republic, 50-years old Mr Jack Lynch, was obviously not old enough to be even aware of the civil war when it was being fought. Neither was Mr Liam Cosgrove, son of the former Free State prime minister, who now leads Fine Gael.

In 1926, three years after the end of the civil war, Mr De Valera founded the Fianna Fail Party. In the general election

of 1932 he won 72 seats in Dail Eireann and, with the support of the seven Labour deputies, formed his first government. Another general election in 1933 gave Fianna Fail an overall majority with 77 seats and from then until the formation of the first Labour/Fine Gael coalition government in 1948 De Valera was prime minister, his official title in the Irish language being *An Taoiseach*.

De Valera's years of power

Between 1932 and 1939 the policies of Fianna Fail, based largely on protective tariffs, created the nucleus of an Irish economy which, though national, was far from stable. In 1937 De Valera formulated and published the new *Constitution of Eire*. This document was much resented by the Unionists in Northern Ireland because it claimed "the national territory" as consisting of all Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas. The document also outlined the form and power of the parliament and government in Eire "pending the reintegration of the national territory" (Articles 2 and 3, *Bunreacht na Eireann — Constitution of Ireland*).

Fianna Fail also abolished the oath of allegiance to the British crown, which was of no significance anyhow, and persuaded Neville Chamberlain to hand over certain strategic naval bases which Britain had insisted on retaining at the time of the treaty.

From the early years of his premiership, however, it was evident that Mr De Valera did not intend to make partition a major issue in his dealings with Britain. The constitution of Eire was in fact all that his government ever offered to the large Catholic minority in Northern Ireland who felt they had been betrayed by partition and hoped that in a united Ireland their problems would be solved and their troubles brought to an end. Apart from this failure to do anything at all about partition, Fianna Fail's other policies during the years of De Valera's leadership were not conspicuously successful. Until Mr Sean Lemass, once a revolutionary but in his mature years a plain unemotional businessman, became prime minister of the republic in 1959 almost nothing had been done to reduce the alarming rate of emigration from that part of Ireland, particularly during the immediate post-war years. "By the early 'fifties up to 40,000 Irish men, women and children were emigrating every year, a figure that amounted to 1.5 per cent of the population" (Tony Gray, *The Irish Answer,* Heinemann, 1966).

new economic policies

Mr Lemass's elevation to the premiership coincided with the publication of the republic's First Programme for Economic Expansion. Since then there have been many notable improvements in the national economy. New industries have been established, particularly in centres of large population such as Dublin, Cork, and Limerick, and "the long established excess of emigration over the rate of natural increase of the population was reversed" (*Second programme for economic expansion,* pr 7329, Stationery Office: Dublin). In August 1963 the Second Programme for Economic Expansion was published with the encouraging message that the republic had "reached the final year of the first programme a much better-off nation than in 1958" (*ibid*).

In promoting industrial development the Republic, like Northern Ireland, has had to rely on generously subsidised outside enterprise. This policy is accepted by the Fine Gael opposition and, with only minor reservations, by the Irish Labour party and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

foreign policy

One quite remarkable phase in the history of Fianna Fail began when Ireland joined the United Nations Organisation and Mr Frank Aiken, Minister for External Affairs, followed a courageously independent line on nuclear armaments, colonialism and the cold war. But

even at the UN despite the commanding platform which the General Assembly provided, the Irish delegation remained silent on partition. Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien, who was for several years chief adviser to the Minister for External Affairs, later attributed this silence to Ireland's desire not to embarrass the United States and its allies. O'Brien wrote: "nobody anywhere by any means is seriously trying to bring about the political reunification of the country . . . This change really dates from Ireland's entry into the United Nations, which created an embarrassing opportunity of really bringing Ireland's case to world attention. It had been quite safe to raise the problem at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, because one could be sure that nobody there would pay any attention. But a resolution in the General Assembly of the United Nations would run the risk of attracting support. The Communist countries would support it, and so would a number of anti-colonialist countries. This would be very embarrassing. The Church would not like Communist support. The British would be seriously annoyed, not just amused as in Strasbourg. And the Americans would be much more annoyed, because the tabling of such a resolution would lead to pressure on the administration from Irish-American voters and the consequent necessity either to offend an ally or alienate a group of voters—or do a little of both by abstaining. . . . The anti-partition movement was dropped, at first tacitly, later explicitly, by Mr Lemass" ("The Embers of Easter" *Irish Times Review of the Easter Rising,* 7 April 1966).

So for years the Irish delegation at UN championed the national rights of Cypriots, Algerians, Congolese and Vietnamese but remained modestly silent about the partition of their own country.

Labour in Ireland

The Irish Labour party, with 22 members in Dail Eireann is the third party in the Republic. It is also the oldest, having been established by the Irish Trades Union Congress in 1912. It is however separate and distinct from the Northern Ireland Labour party, which did not come into existence until the early 1920s. The real founders of the Irish Labour party were Jim Larkin, the Irish trade union pioneer, and James Connolly, a socialist theorist with many years of political experience. Connolly had founded the Irish Socialist Republican party in 1895 and the Socialist party of Ireland in 1907.

In 1907 Jim Larkin burst upon the Irish industrial scene when he led a strike of transport workers in Belfast. This strike, comparable to the great London dock strike of 1889. started a chain of events that culminated in the formation of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, an organisation which to the present day bears many of the characteristics of its syndicalist origins.

And just as the voters of the new unions of unskilled workers in Britain influenced the political outlook of the Trades Union Congress during the 1890s so the votes of the ITGWU swayed the Irish TUC in 1912. Yet for the 23 years between 1944 and 1967 this great union, the membership of which overshadows that of all other trade unions in the Republic, was estranged from the Irish Labour Party. Following a decision of its annual delegate conference in 1967 the ITGWU has again affiliated to the Labour Party.

James Connolly was a revolutionary and a Marxist. He led the Irish Citizen Army in the 1916 rising and was one of the rebel leaders who were executed when the rising was suppressed. Connolly's writings and especially his *Labour in Irish History* are a unique contribution to political thought in Ireland. However, despite the revolutionary philosophy of its founder the Irish Labour party of today is moderate in its tactics and policies. Labour's first objective is, according to its constitution as approved in 1952, "to secure control of the machinery of state in order to establish in all Ireland a democratic republic based on the teachings of James Connolly."

The circumstances of James Connolly's

death have made it impossible for anyone in Irish republicanism or nationalism openly to repudiate his socialist principles. His execution in the cause of national freedom has compelled Catholic Ireland to acknowledge him, an avowed Marxist, as one of the national heroes.

At the inaugural meeting of Fianna Fail in 1926 Mr De Valera admitted that he would find it difficult to disagree with the political philosophy of Connolly and in 1963 Mr Sean Lemass claimed that there was little difference between the policies of Fianna Fail and those of the Irish Labour party.

This may be nothing more than the usual small talk of platform politicians, yet it is worth noting that there have been times when the policies of Fianna Fail have been more to the left than those of the Labour party. It is doubtful if a Labour foreign policy would have been anything so venturesome as the one followed by Mr Frank Aiken in his heyday at UN. It could be that the influence of James Connolly has spread much further than the ranks of the Irish Labour party.

Some have tried, by a subtle exercise in dialects, to make of Connolly two men, one the socialist leader, better kept in obscurity, and the other the honoured Catholic nationalist. This exercise has been defeated by Connolly's own writings, wherein it is impossible to find anything but a socialist philosophy. Moreover in his day Connolly asserted, as Pope John was to assert fifty years later, that socialism and Christianity are complementary philosophies, not irreconcilable dogmas.

minor parties

Among the minor political parties in the Republic of Ireland are Clan na Poblachta (people of the republic) and Clan na Talmhan, a small farmers' party. These two parties joined with Labour and Fine Gael in 1948 and again in 1955 to form the inter-party governments.

In recent years the more militant republicans have revived the old name Sinn Fein, but despite the opportunities offered by proportional representation this party has been unable to gain even a foothold in Dail Eireann. On the other hand a Sinn Fein candidate was elected for Mid-Ulster, one of Northern Ireland's Westminster constituencies, in the 1955 general election.

One of the peculiarities of Irish politics is that although Sinn Fein has been banned by the Stormont government it cannot be prevented from nominating candidates in British imperial elections. It has not been banned by the British government. So, Sinn Fein is illegal in one part of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland, but not illegal in the United Kingdom as a whole.

social backwardness

The Republic of Ireland has often been criticised because it is economically underdeveloped, has inadequate social services, and high rates of unemployment and emigration. It has also been criticised for such socially immature practices as the censorship of books, the prohibition of contraceptives and divorce and for an undue weight of clerical influence.

Much of this criticism is perfectly justified though in recent years there have been welcome signs of progress. The censorship of books has been relaxed enough to allow the publication of translations from Gaelic (such as Frank O'Connor's translation of Brian Merriman's "The Midnight Court", an eighteenth century Gaelic classic which had been banned for 20 years) and the works of modern Irish writers. Something is being done to improve the social services and education. There is encouraging evidence that the younger clergy and the more intelligent of the Catholic laity in Ireland are responding to the lead of their church's liberals.

It must not be forgotten, of course, that the partition of Ireland created in the southern counties a state in which 95 per cent of the population belong to the Catholic church. In such circumstances

and with the peculiar religious and political history of Ireland it would be surprising if the Catholic clergy did not have great influence. After the Cromwellian conquest patriotism in Ireland became almost synonymous with religious fidelity, and yet nationalism and republicanism in modern Ireland owe much to the great liberal Protestants of the nation and nothing at all to the Catholic church *per se*.

But is clerical influence in the Republic of Ireland quite so strong as is generally supposed. Fianna Fail has never been supine in its dealings with the churchmen, nor have individual politicians like the socialist, Dr Noel Browne, who resigned and brought down the first inter-party government when the bishops objected to his Mother and Child Bill in 1950. Mr Frank Aiken refused to be intimidated when highly-placed priests, in Dublin and in New York, disapproved of his anti-imperialist policies at the United Nations.

state enterprise

From the time of the Free State, the governments of Southern Ireland have sponsored a number of state industries and other enterprises the full range of which might well surprise socialists in other countries. Ireland's air lines, its shipping and inland transport are state-owned. The production of all sugar consumed in the republic is controlled by a state enterprise, the Irish Sugar Company, while a subsidiary of this company processes and markets a number of agricultural products.

The state exploits Ireland's extensive peat deposits, thus providing domestic and industrial fuel in the form of either compressed peat briquettes or milled peat. The state produces steel, and is also responsible for all power generation and for the construction of hydro-electric, oil fired, peat fired and coal fired generating stations.

One result of this is that the Republic of Ireland is more extensively electrified than Northern Ireland. The Republic's Electricity Supply Board has, in fact, been remarkably successful in the difficult task of carrying electricity to the remotest rural areas and even to the islands off Ireland's southern and western coasts.

Ireland's state industries are not burdened with the debt of compensation to former owners; there were no former owners. The state industries "were established . . . to do something that the private sector was either unable to do or was unwilling to do" (Dr C. S. Andrews, Chairman of Radio-Telefis Eireann and former chairman of Bord na Mona, *Sunday Press*, 18 February 1968).

foreign capital

But impressive though they are, these state industries have not relieved the Republic of Ireland of dependence on foreign capital. As the number of foreign (which includes British) firms operating in Ireland has increased so have Fianna Fail's original protectionist policies been modified. The republic is now in the process of gradually reducing its tariffs, presumably as a preparation for entry into the European Economic Community— if admitted along with Britain.

3. political parties in northern Ireland

The Unionist party dominates Northern Ireland. It controls parliament, the municipal corporations of Derry and Belfast, the six county councils, all but five of the urban councils and the majority of rural councils. It has exercised this control since Northern Ireland was established in 1920. Where they lack majority support the Unionists retain control, in local government, by adjusting the ward boundaries. This they have done in Derry city, the most shameless example of their gerrymandering, and in other local government areas. In Derry two-thirds of the population reject Unionism yet the Unionist party holds twelve of the 20 seats on the corporation.

Another Unionist stratagem has been to abolish ward boundaries, thus reducing the minority to a position of political impotence. In the important town of Portadown, for instance, the Catholic minority have no representatives on the urban council. In neighbouring Lurgan, where there are 8,000 Catholics in a total population of 20,000, the Unionists hold all 15 seats on the urban council.

Portadown and Lurgan are in the process of being merged in a new town (already named *Craigavon,* after Northern Ireland's first premier) and this, it is feared, will provide the Unionist party with the opportunity to create a new religiously and politically segregated community over which they expect to have complete and permanent control.

basic Unionist principles

Taking Northern Ireland as a whole it is nonetheless true that the majority of its 1,500,000 people support the Unionists, and even amongst those who do not vote Unionist there are many, particularly in the Northern Ireland Labour party, who accept the basic Unionist principle of maintaining Northern Ireland's constitutional links with Britain. Generally speaking, Protestants vote Unionist and Catholics anti-Unionist because in Northern Ireland political behaviour still follows the contours of religion. And despite certain advances by the Northern Ireland Labour party in recent years this pattern remains, though voting in the municipal elections in Derry City in May 1967 indicated that attitudes may be changing, however slowly.

Labour in Derry

The elections were the first in Derry since 1926, for during the previous 40 years something resembling an electoral truce had existed between the Derry Unionist party and the Nationalist opposition. Apparently each side tacitly agreed to allow the unopposed return of the other. The absence of a third force capable of cutting across Derry's traditional lines of political demarcation helped only to confirm the distorted state of democracy in the city.

In the 1967 elections the Northern Ireland Labour party, with a relatively inexperienced corps of election workers, challenged the Unionists and the Nationalists in every ward and gained around 30–35 per cent of the poll. In the predominantly Catholic wards the Labour vote was much the same as in the Protestant wards. This was a significant result. It proved that the Labour Party, though it won no seats, was capable of opposing both the Nationalist party and the Unionist party as an acceptable third force, and of convincing working class people that it was in their interests to vote Labour irrespective of religious or other considerations. Moreover, Labour in Derry campaigned under the handicap that the municipal franchise in Northern Ireland is restricted to ratepayers. This restriction excludes a high proportion of the younger adults and gives a weighted advantage to the professional and business classes.

the Unionist front

The Ulster Unionist party, which originated in 1886 as a movement of Tories and certain defectors in the Liberal party against home rule for Ireland, today leads a combination of Conservative and "Loyalist" organisations. These include the Orange Order, an exclusively Pro-

testant oath bound secret society with a massive membership in Northern Ireland and connections in Toronto.

It would be impossible to draw any clear line of division between the Orange Order and the Unionist party. The Orange lodges nominate 122 members to the Ulster Unionist council; local Orange lodges and local Unionist associations are also linked in a similar sort of way. Indeed Orangeism has such widespread power that it is impossible for anyone outside its ranks to hold any major position in the Northern Ireland administration. Every member of the Northern Ireland cabinet and almost all Unionist members of the Northern Ireland Parliament are Orangemen. The Ulster Unionists who represent Northern Irish constituencies in the British House of Commons hold leading positions in the Orange Order.

At the Orange celebrations in Belfast on 12 July 1965 Capt L. P. S. Orr, Leader of the Unionist MPs at Westminster, stated that "the Orange Order must never surrender its dominating influence in the Unionist party which was created by Orangemen for Orange aims" (*Belfast Telegraph*, 12 July 1965).

The ancillary organisations of the Orange Order include the Royal Black Institution of which Sir Norman Stronge, Speaker of the Northern Ireland House of Commons, is Grand Master, the Apprentice Boys of Derry, a ceremonial society which Northern Ireland's present premier, Mr Terence O'Neill, joined in 1963, and Orange institutions for women and children.

Unionist Labour

The Unionist front includes the Unionist-Labour Association which was set up in 1914 to combat the growing influence of radical socialism in Belfast. At that time James Connolly was organiser of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union in Belfast and a member of Belfast Trades Council. Membership of the Unionist-Labour Association is confined to Protestant trade unionists who accept the politics of the Unionist party. Probably all its members are also in the Orange Order. Certainly they nearly all come from the Protestant working class of Belfast, where Orangeism has deep roots.

The Young Unionist Association, Unionism's youth movement, appears to be a kind of preparatory school for Unionist politicians. At least two of the present cabinet ministers, Mr Brian Faulkner, Minister of Commerce, and Mr William Craig, Minister of Home Affairs, graduated through the Young Unionist associations. But the Young Unionist Association has all the characteristics of a politically immature movement. In recent years its leading members have veered from Unionist orthodoxy to a form of liberalism—in which they suggested that Catholics be admitted to the Unionist party and that the alliance with the Orange Order be terminated — and back to Protestant extremism.

Finally, there is the Unionist Society, an obscure organisation consisting largely of Unionist intellectuals such as newspaper editors, lawyers, and authors. Any comparison, however, with the British Conservative Party's Bow Group would be misleading.

official opposition

A general election in 1965 and a Queen's University by-election in 1967 have brought the total number of Unionist members in the Northern Ireland House of Commons to 37. The opposition consists of nine Nationalists, two members of the Northern Ireland Labour Party, two Socialist-Republicans, one Liberal and one National Democrat. Seldom however do these 16 opposition members act together. Their common duty to oppose Unionism is invariably overshadowed by a mass of petty differences, personal friction, and often unwarranted suspicions.

The Nationalists are now the official opposition, a role which they rejected

before Mr Lemass and Mr O'Neill met in 1965. But even in this new role they are an ossified rather than an active opposition.

The political truce, so evident in Derry, extends also to parliamentary elections for in Northern Ireland's general elections half the Unionists, and almost half the Nationalists, are usually returned unopposed. In this connection a recent comment by Mr Sean Lemass is interesting. Addresing the New Ireland Society at Queen's University, Belfast on 24 October 1967 Mr Lemass said that: "Politicians of both persuasions . . . find it easy to rely on the religious persuasions of the constituents from whom they draw electoral support rather than dwell on serious thoughts of economic or social problems . . . " This forthright comment stung the Nationalists and their leader, Mr Eddie McAteer, sent a formal protest to Dublin.

But in one way the apathy of the Nationalists of Northern Ireland is understandable. The people whom they represent are convinced that so long as Northern Ireland exists as a Unionist-controlled state they have little chance of rising above the status of second-class citizenship. They see little point in mounting a vigorous political campaign against their very well-entrenched opponents.

In the main the Nationalists represent rural and semi-rural constituencies where their support comes from Catholic small businessmen, farmers, professional people and farm labourers, though even among these classes there is an appreciable fund of sympathy for the republicans, Sinn Fein, and other extreme anti-partitionists.

committed to constitution

When the Nationalists responded to the Lemass-O'Neill summit of 1965 by becoming the official opposition at Stormont they committed themselves, in a considerable degree, to acceptance of the constitutional position of the Northern Ireland parliament. At the same time they reserve the right to advocate the abolition of that parliament or its absorption in an all-Ireland state.

Beyond that Nationalist policies, especially in so far as they are concerned with the gerrymandering of constituencies and economic discrimination on religious grounds, are mainly defensive or expository. The Nationalists have yet to offer a policy for Northern Ireland that can be seen by the electorate as a reasonable social and economic alternative to Unionism. They describe themselves as a political movement rather than a political party. Recently however they have been acquiring some of the characteristics of the party apparatus: they have improved their constituency organisations, in some places have provided for individual party membership, and since 1966 have held party conferences.

less than political reality

After nearly half-a-century of partition the reunification of Ireland must seem something less than a political reality to the Nationalists in Ulster. Nonetheless they see their objective being achieved in several possible ways, none of which involve the direct annexation of the north by the south. They have long ago realised that persuasion, no matter how peaceful, is not going to change the Unionist outlook. But continuous exposure of the iniquities of Unionist rule could undermine the Stormont regime and possibly lead to a major inquiry into what has been happening in Northern Ireland. Membership of the European Economic Community and long-term economic co-operation might force Northern Ireland and the Republic to live together as good neighbours with an inevitable weakening effect on partition.

isolated movement

The Nationalists have rejected physical force as the means of ending partition, yet the Unionists repeatedly accuse them of being quasi-revolutionists whose goal is the overthrow of Northern Ireland. This is an absurd exaggeration because

the Nationalists of Ulster are an isolated band of politicians who have remarkably little contact with any of the modern political parties in the Republic. One explanation for this isolation is that Nationalism in Northern Ireland is linked historically not with the revolutionary Sinn Fein movement, from which Fine Gael and Fianna Fail sprang, but with the old Irish Parliamentary party which Sinn Fein so effectively routed in 1918. Another explanation is that neither Fianna Fail nor Fine Gael have ever been interested in organising branches of their movements in Northern Ireland. Motions calling for the formation of branches in the six counties have been repeatedly defeated at the annual conferences of Fianna Fail. This isolation undoubtedly contributes to the apathy so common to Nationalist politicians.

National Democrats

The formation of the National Democratic party in January 1965 was an attempt to dispel this apathy and to lead Nationalists in Ulster towards new and more active forms of party organisation, and also new policies and new tactics. The NDP, conceived at first as an ancillary to the Nationalist party, has become a separate political organisation in its own right, with an estimated 500 individual members, one member in the Stormont House of Commons and, since the municipal elections of May 1967, control of the urban councils in Strabane, Ballycastle and Downpatrick.

Generally, the policy of NDP is to convince the people of Northern Ireland that the alternative to Unionism is sound democratic government, free from the sectarian pressures of institutions such as the Orange Order.

The NDP takes the view that good government is far more important at the moment than the unrealistic aim of national unity. It strives to unite all the anti-partition forces in Northern Ireland and in pursuance of this goal has made an electoral truce with the Nationalists. This truce leaves the NDP free to create organised opposition to the Unionists in those constituencies in which such opposition does not exist.

Republican Labour

The Republican-Labour Party is the left-wing of Northern Nationalism. This party, which has two MPs at Stormont, one of whom, Mr Gerry Fitt, is also a member of the British House of Commons, and eight members on the Belfast City Council, grew from a small group of working-class republicans and Connolly Socialists in Belfast. Its policy is avowedly republican, anti-partition, and working class in its appeal.

The energetic tactics of Mr Fitt, who entered the British House of Commons in 1966, have been extremely damaging to the Stormont government and to the Unionist party generally. Mr Fitt has drawn parliament's attention to such Unionist practices as gerrymandering, religious discrimination, plural voting and restrictions on the local franchise, and, by these exposures, has inspired MPs of all parties to pay closer attention to what is happening in Northern Ireland. But his attempts to invoke Section 75 of the Government of Ireland Act received a setback when Roy Jenkins, at that time Home Secretary, indicated during a House of Commons debate on 25 October 1967 that his attitude to Northern Ireland's affairs was influenced by the policies of previous governments which "refused to cut away the authority of the Northern Ireland government". Roy Jenkins told the House of Commons that a Royal Commission to inquire into the constitution of Northern Ireland was not necessary. He expressed the view that "there was a great deal to be said for not trying to settle the affairs of Northern Ireland in London".

Northern Ireland Labour Party

Before the passing of the Ireland Act (1949) the Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP) maintained close liaison with the Labour party in Southern Ireland. Within

the NILP the border was then a matter upon which each member could think whatever he considered right. In this way the party saved itself from being split into Catholic and Protestant factions. But this was an unstable compromise; eventually the Unionists took advantage of it and accused the Labour party of "sitting on the fence" with regard to Northern Ireland's constitutional position, a matter which, according to them, should be considered the most important in Ulster politics.

Relentless Unionist pressure, the passing of the Ireland Act and the Labour government's support for the Unionist position soon forced the hand of the NILP which at a special conference in 1949 declared its unequivocal support for the border. This immediately split the Labour party, as the Unionists had intended it should, isolated northern Labour from Labour in the south and contributed to the defeat of every official Labour candidate in the Northern Ireland general election a few weeks later.

The Northern Ireland Labour party did not recover from the defeat of 1949 until the general election of 1958 when four members were elected. In 1962 Labour held all four seats with increased majorities but four years later the Unionists regained two of the seats they had lost in 1958.

early days of Labour

The roots of the Northern Ireland Labour party go back to 1885 when a group of Belfast trade unionists entered politics with the nomination of a Lib-Lab candidate in the North Belfast constituency. A branch of the Independent Labour party was active in the 1890s, and in the early years of the present century promoted candidates for parliament and local government.

The Northern Ireland Labour party — though this name was not officially adopted until 1949 — originated in 1923 with the post-war reorganisation of the former Independent Labour party under the title Belfast Labour party. During the 1920s and 1930s Labour was modestly succesful in Belfast and at one period had four members in the Northern Ireland House of Commons.

From their earliest days, however, socialists in the North of Ireland have been divided in their attitudes to Irish nationalism. Some, like James Connolly, asserted that socialism implied national independence; others held that there was no conflict between socialism and Ireland's links with Britain.

It is understandable that Protestant working class socialists in Belfast, many of whom were members of British craft unions, would look to London for leadership, but equally understandable was the attitude of the Catholic workers who, being mainly unskilled, did not feel the influence of British craft unionism. They readily accepted the leadership of the republican socialists, Connolly and Larkin.

These divergent points of view led to a controversy between Connolly and William Walker, a Belfast official of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, in the columns of *Forward* in 1911.

Connolly took the anti-imperialist view that socialism must mean the separation of Ireland from Britain; Walker maintained that the best interests of the Irish working class would be served by remaining within the United Kingdom. Unfortunately a full and frank discussion was not possible. The controversy, which might have helped to clear away some of the misunderstandings that still plague the Labour movement in Ireland, ended in acrimony.

Partition has since deepened the division and confirmed the early disagreements. As James Connolly predicted, it has "destroyed the unity of the Irish Labour movement" (*Socialism and Nationalism,* p111, the Three Candles Press, Dublin). Early in 1967 in an attempt to unite the Labour parties in Ireland, it was proposed that a Council of Labour be formed

to co-ordinate the work of the entire Irish trade union and Labour movement.

Labour unity

The Council of Labour, which has now been established, will be concerned, not with partition, but with co-ordinating Labour policies on education, employment, housing, social security, wages, working conditions and other matters common to working people in both parts of Ireland.

The Northern Ireland branches of the Irish Labour party, formed immediately after the split in 1949, were once strongly represented on the Belfast City Corporation. But the heyday of Irish Labour in the north was short and recently the party has shrunk to two small but active groups in South Down. There they have a majority on Warrenpoint Urban Council (the only Labour-controlled local council in Ireland) and would undoubtedly control the important town of Newry but for all too familiar dissension and disagreement.

The Ulster Liberal Association, formed during the Liberal revival of the 1950s has one MP in the Northern Ireland parliament (representing one of the four university seats that are now to be abolished), but otherwise has not been noticeably successful. Recently however branches of the Liberal party have appeared in the Republic, an indication perhaps that the ambition of the Liberals is to become an all-Ireland party.

Finally there is a Republican party in Northern Ireland, organised in clubs which were originally connected with the neo-Sinn Fein Party that arose in the republic in the 1950s. The Stormont government banned Sinn Fein on the grounds that it was associated with the IRA and has recently attempted to ban the republican clubs. This time the ban has been challenged by opposition MPs at Stormont and by the National Council for Civil Liberties in London but with little effect because the Northern Ireland Minister of Home Affairs has ignored both the opposition and the NCCL. At the same time the republican clubs have ignored the Minister's ban. They meet openly, carry on their activities and, for the first time in their history, have elected to protest constitutionally.

4. democracy modified

Northern Ireland has for long been indicted as a place where democracy has been modified to protect the Unionist party. While this indictment is valid it may at time be exaggerated as when, for example, the Nationalists accuse Stormont of running a "Rhodesia-type democracy". Democracy does exist in Northern Ireland but under certain handicaps, such as the gerrymandering of Derry and other places and the already-mentioned restriction on the local government franchise, that would not be tolerated in Britain.

Equally familiar is the accusation that Ulster's Catholic minority is discriminated against in employment, in professional and judicial appointments, and in housing. For more than 40 years Nationalist politicians and other spokesmen for the minority have documented these accusations and presented the evidence to successive British governments. At no time, however, has any government in Britain even rebuked Stormont for its treatment of the minority.

Catholics excluded

It has been alleged, specifically, that Catholics are virtually excluded from state medical appointments, from the school inspectorate, from official positions in the courts and from state agencies such as the Northern Ireland Housing Trust, the Health Services Board, the Northern Ireland Hospitals Authority, the Youth Employment Board and so on. Indeed the appointment of a Catholic to the Housing Trust in January 1968 was a major news sensation. Where Catholics are not excluded altogether their representation is merely nominal and bears no relation to the fact that they are one-third of Northern Ireland's population.

At the level of ordinary industrial employment there are undoubtedly many firms which either exclude Catholic workpeople altogether or employ them only in the lower-paid unskilled occupations. In this connection it is worth quoting a recent article by the labour correspondent of a Belfast newspaper: "Religious discrimination in industry is perhaps not such a live issue as it used to be when the craft unions were predominantly Protestant and the manual unions largely Roman Catholic. New industries have brought new attitudes but there are still traditionally Protestant and Catholic firms, and especially where employment is at a premium some employers feel an obligation to keep senior jobs "in the family." The trade unions are hotly opposed to this in principle — and the Northern Committee (of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions) which usually stays out of non-industrial politics, has lent its support to a Labour plea on citizens' rights — but they cannot deny their involvement" (Barry White, "The Trade Unions", *Belfast Telegraph,* 21 September 1967).

The Unionists try to counter these accusations by asserting that there are Catholic employers who discriminate against Protestants. But as there are few large Catholic employers of labour in Northern Ireland the exclusion of Protestants from Catholic firms is not so conspicuous as the exclusion of Catholics from Protestant firms. Denis Barritt and Chas. F. Carter, who published a study of community relations in Northern Ireland in 1962, indicated various degrees of discrimination on both sides but they could not identify any large firms from which Protestants were excluded (*The Northern Ireland Problem,* OUP, 1962).

campaign for social justice

In recent years, with the formation of a "Campaign for Social Justice" within Northern Ireland and the emergence of a Westminster parliamentary group designated the "Campaign for Democracy in Ulster", complaints against the Unionist administration have reached a new level.

These complaints have been given further weight by the various activities of a Protestant movement led by the Rev. Ian K. Paisley. This movement, whose activities have been intensified since Mr Terence O'Neill became prime minister in 1963, has drawn the attention of many

countries to the more unpleasant aspects of politics in Ulster.

In September 1966 the Northern Ireland Labour party and the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions presented a "Charter of Citizens' Rights" to the Ulster Cabinet. This document listed seven major causes of complaint. They were:

1. Electoral law and electoral practices in Northern Ireland parliamentary elections.

2. Electoral law and electoral practices, particularly gerrymandering and the limitation of the franchise to ratepayers, in local government elections.

3. Inequitable representation of minority groups, especially of Catholics, on government-appointed public boards.

4. Discrimination in employment because of religion or politics.

5. Discrimination in the allocation of houses because of religion.

6. Failure to appoint an ombudsman in Northern Ireland.

7. Disparities in trade union law between Northern Ireland and Britain.

Those who complied the charter expressed the view that if Northern Ireland shares a common fiscal system with Britain and receives the same social services there ought to be equality of citizens' rights. Otherwise, they asserted, the people of Northern Ireland are reduced to the status of "second-class citizens in the United Kingdom".

The Northern Ireland cabinet ministers, to whom it was presented, rejected this charter completely, as they had so often rejected similar complaints from the political spokesmen of the Catholic minority. Mr Brian Faulkner, Minister of Commerce, and, at the time, acting prime minister in the absence of Mr O'Neill, asserted that "the rights of the citizens are no less extensive in Northern Ireland than in England but the method of expressing these rights should have regard to local needs".

The Labour party and trade union representatives found it impossible, however, to extract from Mr Faulkner any satisfactory explanation as to what he meant by "local needs". "Throughout the meeting, which lasted for one and a half hours, Mr Faulkner and his colleagues were pressed by members of the joint deputation to specify the "local needs which were alleged to justify departure from British procedure complained of; on this fundamental point no reply whatsoever was elicited." (*Joint Memorandum on Citizens' Rights in Northern Ireland*. Northern Ireland Labour Party.)

winds of change

Nonetheless since Mr Terence O'Neill became Prime Minister there have been some changes, few though they are and far from satisfying to the opposition, in the government's attitude to the complaints of the minority. Mr O'Neill himself has been the first Unionist leader to admit that there is anti-Catholic discrimination and that it is the duty of all publicly-spirited people to end this and so create a fully united community. He has also been the first Unionist politician publicly to associate with the Catholics and has, in fact, courted unpopularity and invited opposition from within his own party by visiting Catholic schools and hospitals in the full glare of press and television publicity.

reforms limited

The Queen's Speech to the Northern Ireland parliament in December 1966 promised that the Government would abolish the special business vote in Northern Ireland parliamentary elections, the Queen's University franchise and the four seats which the university has in the Northern Ireland House of Commons. The reforms went no further than that. The business vote remains in local

government elections and it is doubtful if even the university seats would have been abolished if a second university, the New University of Ulster, had not been established at Coleraine, in County Derry. It was obviously easier, in the case of the university franchise, to level down than to level up. Certainly it would have been incongruous for one university to be represented in the Northern Ireland parliament and the other not, yet it would have been constitutionally impossible, because of the Government of Ireland Act, to increase the number of parliamentary constituencies to allow the new university to be represented. A discreet politician, wishing to retain university representation in parliament, might have divided the four seats between the two universities.

A boundary commission, after hearing the views of the main political parties, has recommended that, to replace the university seats, four new constituencies be created in the vicinity of Belfast. The boundaries of these new constituencies have been so arranged that three of them: Newtownabbey, Bangor and Lagan Valley, are safe for the Unionists. Larkfield, the fourth new constituency, has been described as marginal but, as the opposition parties are all expected to contest this seat at the earliest opportunity, it too will go to the Unionist party. Thus in return for giving up the university seats, of which they controlled only two, the Unionist party is almost certain to gain four.

reluctant reformer

The Northern Ireland Labour party, Nationalist MPs, members of the Campaign for Social Justice and of the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster have all accused Mr O'Neill of being a most reticent reformer. They say that in the four years of his premiership he should have offered more than a redistribution of the university seats and the abolition of some business votes. Mr O'Neill's reply has been that the practices of almost fifty years cannot be ended overnight. Too many reforms, he obviously fears, would rouse the opposition of certain fundamentalists within the Unionist party and antagonise the Orange Order in which it seems the struggle between reformers and traditionalists is already joined. In June 1967 two prominent Orangemen, Mr Phelim O'Neill, Unionist MP for North Antrim, and Colonel Henry Cramsie, a deputy lieutenant for the county of Antrim, were expelled for the offence of attending a Catholic church service during a civic week in the town of Ballymoney. A few months later Sir George Clarke, one of Mr Terence O'Neill's political friends, resigned from the leadership of the Orange Order. His place was taken by an 81-years-old traditionalist, Mr John Bryans.

Unionist Party interests

Mr Terence O'Neill probably believes that, while reform is desirable and, in the long run, unavoidable, his immediate responsibility, as Unionist leader, is to keep his party united. He feels bound to defend the interests of the party even when those interests so evidently conflict with generally accepted standards of democracy. In Northern Ireland, unfortunately, the interests of the Unionist Party usually take precedence over democracy. The opposition has been arguing for many years that the limitation of the local government franchise to rate payers is indefensible if only because the taxpayers, many of whom are disenfranchised, contribute more to the cost of local government than ratepayers. Yet in May 1967 a Labour motion calling for universal suffrage and the abolition of plural voting in all local government elections was defeated by 20 votes to 8 in the Northern Ireland House of Commons. In that division four Unionist MPs, to their credit, refused to vote against the Labour motion.

local government reform

On the other hand, Mr William Craig, who as Stormont's Minister of Home Affairs is responsible for electoral matters, has said he has "an open mind" on the

question of the local government franchise. It is a matter, he has hinted to parliament, that will have to wait until a plan now being prepared for the reorganisation of local government is complete.

This line of argument does not impress the opposition, least of all the Nationalists. They already suspect that the proposed reorganisation of local government may be nothing more than a new scheme of gerrymandering on a grand scale. Their suspicions are justified by events in County Fermanagh where, within the past twelve months, five local authorities have voluntarily re-grouped themselves into one council of 50 elected members for the whole county.

The electoral boundaries for each division of this new council have been so arranged, however, that the Catholics, who are slightly more than half the population of Fermanagh, have only twelve members on the council. The Unionists hold the remaining 38 seats.

This was a case of the Unionists unashamedly abusing their power and even deceiving the Opposition. When the plan for reorganising local government in Fermanagh was announced, June 1966, Mr John Carron, Nationalist MP for the county, expressed the hope that "under the new administration there would be a change of heart among the Unionist members towards the Catholic community, that they would endeavour to run the affairs of the county in a democratic manner, and that the vicious system of discrimination towards Catholics in the matter of houses and jobs would come to an end".

transfer of power

Autonomous jurisdiction over trade unions and industrial affairs was one of the powers which the Government of Ireland Act transferred from the parliament of the United Kingdom to the parliament of Northern Ireland in 1920. Northern Ireland may, but is not bound to, follow labour legislation passed by the British parliament. That it has not always done so means that there are reasonably good grounds for the allegation, often made by the Northern Ireland Labour party, that Stormont exercises its power to the detriment of the trade unions—or at least with a bias against the Labour movement.

For instance the Stormont parliament has amended but refuses to repeal the 1927 Trade Disputes (N. Ireland) Act. That part of the act which requires those trade union members who wish to pay political levy to sign "contracting in" forms remains in operation. The Unionist case is that this is perfectly reasonable as the majority of trade union members in Northern Ireland have shown, by the way they vote, that they do not support the Labour party and consequently should not be forced to pay political levies.

It is by no means certain, of course, that the "majority" of trade union members in Northern Ireland always vote Unionist. But apart from that debatable point, the Labour party asserts that if Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom its trade unions are entitled to have the same rights as trade unions in Britain.

Moreover, the Rookes-Barnard judgement has all the force of law in Northern Ireland. Stormont has not even considered legislation, such as the Trade Disputes (Amendment) Act, 1965, to safeguard the position of the trade unions. The Unionists may well believe, of course, that in matters of trade union law what is suitable to Britain need not necessarily be suitable to Northern Ireland. But in adopting this attitude they leave themselves open to the accusation of class bias.

unions and government

On other matters concerning industrial relations, industrial welfare, and economic policy Stormont has accepted the enactments of the British parliament. National superannuation, earnings-related benefits, redundancy payments, contracts of employment, etc. are all covered by acts of

the Northern Ireland parliament identical to those passed in Britain. The Prices and Incomes Act applies in its entirety to Northern Ireland.

Apart from their dissatisfaction on a few points of law, the trade unions in Northern Ireland have established reasonably good relations with the Stormont government, particularly since 1964 when the government formally recognised the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Recognition of the committee opened the way to co-operation between the government and the unions in economic planning and in the administration of the many acts covering industrial welfare, the social services etc.

The Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU nominates one-third of the members of Northern Ireland's Economic Council, which is responsible, under the general direction of Britain's Department of Economic Affairs, for local economic development. And there is no indication that the trade unions find this partnership irksome. Indeed it appears that the entire trade union movement in Northern Ireland accepts the policy of the Northern Committee of the ICTU.

5. problems of the economy

It is hardly surprising to find that a government which condones gerrymandering and religious discrimination should have a poor record in dealing with economic and social problems. Northern Ireland's high unemployment figures have often been a matter of national debate. Its overcrowding and unsanitary housing conditions are worse than those of any other part of the United Kingdom.

At least 40 per cent of all dwellings in Northern Ireland were built more than 80 years ago. The proportion of similar dwellings in Britain is 25 per cent. In Northern Ireland overcrowded households amount to 10.3 per cent of the total; the figure for Britain is 3.8 per cent. Almost one-fifth of all houses in Northern Ireland lack cold-water taps while 22.6 per cent have no water-closets. In addition Northern Ireland's rate of housebuilding per thousand of population is lower than Britain's. (*The National Plan*, Cmnd 2764, p 175).

unemployment

Unemployment is Northern Ireland's most serious economic problem. Today the rate of unemployment is more than four times the national average for the United Kingdom, twice the rate in Scotland, and higher by substantial margins than unemployment in any of the development areas in England and Wales.

In recent years certain economic surveys, made at the request of the Northern Ireland government, have sought to explain the basic reasons for this high unemployment.

The most detailed of these surveys is the 600-page Economic Survey of Northern Ireland upon which Professor K. S. Isles, formerly of Queen's University, Belfast, and Mr Norman Cuthbert spent most of the ten years between 1947 and 1957. They point out that Northern Ireland's post-war rate of unemployment has been between 5 per cent and 7 per cent higher than the British average because, at least this was true at that time, the region depended much on agriculture and on specialised but declining industries such as linen and shipbuilding. The absence of minerals and other industrial raw materials and of basic industries like steel-smelting, along with the comparative isolation of Northern Ireland from the main markets and centres of population in Britain, has inhibited the growth of the economy.

In 1962 a joint working party on the economy of Northern Ireland under the chairmanship of Sir Robert Hall, published a report which reached much the same gloomy conclusions as the Isles-Cuthbert survey and forecast rising unemployment during the present decade. (*Report of the Joint Working Party on the Economy of Northern Ireland*, Cmnd 446, 11, HMSO).

new industries

But by the time Isles and Cuthbert and the Hall Committee had completed their investigations the government of Northern Ireland had already embarked on a programme for attracting new industries to the province. The inducements offered included capital grants (now 33⅓ per cent), reasonably generous loans, rate rebates, fuel subsidies, factories at nominal rents, expert advice and ready personal assistance and guidance from ministry of commerce officials.

Industries in Northern Ireland have some slight marginal advantages over industries in the British development areas. Moreover they enjoy the benefits of selective employment tax and development area premiums. These premium payments in Northern Ireland come direct from the Treasury and amount to some £11 million a year.

Nonetheless for most of the twenty years between 1945 and 1965 the Stormont government's new industries programme made little impact on the total unemployment figures. One reason for this was that Northern Ireland, with a weaker economy, was exceptionally vulnerable to

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the policies of the Conservative governments. Cuthbert estimated that the credit squeezes of the 1950's were four or five times more drastic in Northern Ireland than in Britain. ". . . whereas in the United Kingdom as a whole the effect of the recession on each of these occasions was to reduce employment by 1 per cent. in Northern Ireland it fell by about 6 per cent in 1951–52 and by about 4 per cent in 1957–58." (Belfast Telegraph, 25 November 1959).

A high local birth rate, the flight from the land, large scale loss of employment in linen, and eventually in shipbuilding, were other factors that minimised the benefits of the new industries policy. It seemed that as quickly as the government created new jobs old ones disappeared.

unemployment and politics

The Northern Ireland Labour party fought the general elections of 1958 and 1962 mainly on the failure of the Stormont government to bring unemployment down to somewhere near the British level. In 1963, after the election, Mr O'Neill confirmed as prime minister, unemployment was still in the forefront of political issues.

One of the new premier's first acts of policy was to commission Professor Thomas Wilson, who had already criticised the Isles-Cuthbert survey for its gloominess, to prepare an economic development plan that would carry Northern Ireland through until 1970. (*Economic Development in Northern Ireland,* Cmnd 479, HMSO.)

This plan, which was published in February 1965, set a target of 65,000 new jobs in the five years, 1965–1970, and a total capital investment of £900 million. Half of this capital investment would be provided by the government and public authorities while the other half, the plan presumed, would be forthcoming from the private sector. The plan was designed to dovetail into Britain's national plan, which was then being prepared but which was not published until September 1965.

Achievement of the targets laid down in the "Wilson plan" has, however, been frustrated by what Cuthbert had already drawn attention to in 1959. Britain's economic standstill of July, 1966 had exactly the same effect on Northern Ireland as the credit squeezes of the Tory governments. In April 1967 unemployment reached 42,844 which was equal to 8.4 per cent of the insured working population and 12,942 above the figure for April 1966. Heaviest unemployment appeared in Londonderry where two government-aided factories closed; in Newry where a meat-processing plant went out of business; in Enniskillen, Strabane and in other towns outside the industrial belt surrounding Belfast.

prosperity of Belfast

The rise of unemployment in these places was not unexpected considering that one of the most frequent criticisms of the Northern Ireland government is that its policies are devised to promote the prosperity of Belfast and its adjacent regions. And it seems that these policies are pursued even at the expense of the rest of the province. Unemployment figures, district by district, prove this. In May 1967 unemployment in the town of Strabane, which has a total working population of 9,000, reached 21 per cent. In Newry it was 18.0 per cent: in Enniskillen 17 per cent, and in Londonderry almost 19 per cent. On the other hand unemployment in Portadown, which is within 30 miles of Belfast was 5 per cent in May 1967: in Lisburn it was less than 3 per cent, and in Larne just under 6 per cent. In Belfast the rate of unemployment was approximately 5 per cent.

It is clear then that unemployment in Northern Ireland's depressed districts is not only between two and two-and-a-half times the overall average but in some instances more than four times the Belfast rate. Taken separately, the figures for male unemployment look quite appalling. In Strabane nearly 30 per cent of the adult male working population are unemployed: in Londonderry 22 per

cent, and in Newry and Enniskillen over 21 per cent. On the other hand male unemployment in Belfast and Portadown is approximately 5.5 per cent.

Moreover, just as Northern Ireland as a whole suffers proportionately more than Britain in times of economic crisis so within Northern Ireland the depressed districts suffer more heavily than the Belfast industrial belt. And in times of relative prosperity the depressed districts are painfully slow to recover. Between January 1964 and January 1965, a year of growth, unemployment in Belfast fell from 13,084 to 9,671. This represented an improvement of 25 per cent. In the same twelve months unemployment in Londonderry feel by 150, a mere 4 per cent improvement.

regional discrimination

Further evidence of regional discrimination is contained in the several surveys and reports commissioned by the Stormont Government in recent years. *The Belfast Regional Survey and Plan* (Cmnd 451) prepared by Professor Sir Robert Matthew and published in February 1963 is based on the assumption that over the next 20 years economic development in Northern Ireland will be concentrated in Belfast and in the districts that lie within a radius of 30 miles from the city. Hence the Matthew recommendation that the new city, Craigavon be created around a nucleus which comprises the existing towns of Lurgan and Powtadown.

A few months after the publication of the Matthew plan, Sir Henry Benson's report on Northern Ireland's railways (Cmnd 458) recommended the closure of the main lines linking Belfast and Londonderry. The government acted on this recommendation and closed the western line that ran from Belfast to Derry through Portadown, Omagh, Dungannon and Strabane. The line was cut at Portadown thus isolating the main towns of Fermanagh and Tyrone. Derry's second main railway connection, running through Coleraine, Ballymena and Antrim to Belfast is also scheduled to be closed though public clamour has so far prevented the government from implementing this part of the Benson plan. On the other hand public protests and the objections of the many members of parliament did not alter the government's decision to build Ulster's second university at Coleraine even though Londonderry, already a centre for higher education, had the prior claim. And even Professor Thomas Wilson's economic plan, all-embracing as it is supposed to be, virtually ignores Londonderry and the other centres of population that lie west of Lough Neagh and the river Bann. The Unionists indignantly deny that they discriminate against these regions. On 14 June 1967 Mr Brian Faulkner, Minister of Commerce, attacked what he alleged to be the falsehood that the government would rather foster industrial growth to the east of the Bann than to the west. Mr Faulkner asserted that the government had spent £20 million on industrial in Fermanagh, Tyrone and Derry and had provided 9,000 jobs. (*News Letter*, Belfast, 15 June 1967).

Considering, however, that the Northern Ireland government has spent more than £250 million since 1945 on various kinds of aids, inducements and grants to industry, the figures quoted by Mr Faulkner are not impressive. The money spent on economic development in the three western countries represents less than 10 per cent of the total. Furthermore it has been stated in the Northern Ireland House of Commons that of the 111 factories which the government had built up until 1965 only 16 had been sited in the three western counties.

west of the Shannon

Industrial development in the Republic of Ireland has been in many ways similar to development in Northern Ireland. In the republic, grant-aided enterprise, along with very generous fiscal concessions, has created employment yet, as in Northern Ireland, the development has shown itself to be mainly in certain areas of large population, such as Dublin, Limerick and

Cork. The counties west of the Shannon face the same problems of economic underdevelopment as certain parts of Northern Ireland. Underdevelopment, however, has been the lot of Ireland's western regions for many centuries. The impoverishment and isolation of these counties have inspired many schemes of improvement. Among the more recent of these schemes is the rural co-operative organised by the Rev Fr James McDyer at Glencolmbkille in County Donegal.

economic expansion

The Republic's equivalent of Northern Ireland's Wilson plan is contained in the First and Second Programmes for Economic Expansion and in the Report on Full Employment. This last-mentioned document was compiled by the National Industrial Economic Council (Ireland's NEDC) and published in May 1967. It sets a target of full employment by 1980. The first Programme for Economic Expansion, laid before the *Oireachtas* (the parliament of the Republic of Ireland) in November 1958, was intended to be "an outline of the more important contributions, direct and indirect, which the government propose to make to economic development". (*Programme for Economic Expansion,* p8, Stationery Office, Dublin).

To promote this programme the repulic appointed two bodies, the Committee on Industrial Organisation and the National Industrial Economic Council. The CID eventually examined the performance of the main industries and published some quite sharply-worded reports on their shortcomings.

In March 1961 an interim report on progress under the first programme for economic expansion showed that "an increase of 3 per cent in the volume of national production in 1959 had been followed by a rise provisionally estimated at 4 per cent in 1960)". (*Progress Report,* Stationery Office, Dublin). "These advances" the report stated, "compared favourably with the average growth of 1 per cent in the preceding decade." The first programme, which had cautiously forecast a modest annual increase of 2 per cent in the national product, was hailed as highly successful. Consequently the preamble to the second programme, which was published in August 1963, stated: "We have reached the final year (1963) of the first programme a much better-off nation than in 1958. The rise in the community's standard of living during the four years to 1962 is expressed by an increase of $18\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in the GNP measured at 1958 prices. This increase has been achieved in conditions of near-equilibrium in external payments. Over the period 1958–1963, employment created in industries and services has come closer to off-setting the continuing and not unexpected movement of manpower from the land. During 1961–62 the long-established excess of emigration over the rate of natural increase in population was reversed. The population is rising again, though slowly." (*Second programme for economic expansion,* Stationery Office, Dublin).

Economically the Republic of Ireland had a great leeway to make up, because for more than a hundred years the more enterprising of Ireland's native population had been leaving their country. In 1963 it was estimated that there were about 1,000,000 Irish-born people living in Britain. Starting from the low point which the economy of the republic had reached any determined plan for expansion was bound to show results fairly rapidly, particularly since Ireland was well-situated amongst the western industrialised nations, and since outside capital, attracted through government inducements which included long-term exemption from taxation, became available fairly quickly.

Ireland and the EEC

During the second programme the Irish republic concluded a new trade agreement with Britain (the free trade agreement) and announced its intention to join the European Economic Community if judged eligible for membership, though what effect membership of EEC would have on the Irish economy is still an

unanswered question. An influential and noticably vociferous section of Ireland's politicians and industrialists are optimistic enough to think that competition under the rules of the Treaty of Rome would be an incentive to industrial development and that Europe would provide a larger and better-priced market for the produce of Ireland's farms. On the other hand a substantial minority, which includes the Irish Labour Party, are convinced that membership of EEC would retard Ireland's economic growth just as enforced membership of the United Kingdom inhibited the economy from 1800 until long after the establishment of an Irish native government.

Northern Ireland, being part of the United Kingdom, must enter the Common Market if Britain joins. Some members of the Stormont government have expressed the view that membership of EEC would be healthy for both new and existing industries, yet there are many Unionists who have grave doubts. When, for instance the British House of Commons debated the Common Market on 11 May 1967, six of the Unionist MPs who represent Northern Ireland at Westminster voted against the government's decision to apply for membership, four voted with the government, and one abstained.

The case of those Unionists who want Britain to remain outside EEC is probably based more on political prejudice than on economic reasoning. Sir Knox Cunningham, Unionist MP for South Antrim, believes that membership of the European Common Market would encourage migration from the republic into Northern Ireland and thus undermine the electoral strength of the Unionist party. (Speech at the annual meeting of South Antrim Unionist Association, 10 March 1967).

an Irish common market

Since 14 January 1965, when Mr O'Neill and Mr Lemass met in their historic summit, Ireland has taken the first tentative steps towards creating its own economic community. The Lemass-O'Neill meeting ended more than 40 years of mutual distrust. It opened the way to forms of economic co-operation that are bound to bring benefits to the whole of Ireland. Indeed the republic had been urging such co-operation for many years but Lord Brookborough, Mr O'Neill's predecessor in the northern premiership, remained suspicious. He feared that economic co-operation would weaken Northern Ireland's close constitutional links with Britain; he decried the theory that Ireland could be an economic unit.

But even while holding these suspicions, Northern Ireland had, during Brookeborough's time, already co-operated with the republic. The two governments have been represented on the Foyle Fisheries Commission since the early 1950s. Until 1957 a joint board representing the public transport authorities on both sides of the border controlled the railway between Belfast and Dublin. In 1948 inter-government co-operation made possible the building of a hydro-power station for the republic in County Donegal and the drainage of the Erne valley in Northern Ireland. On many minor matters such as fire-fighting on both sides of the border, the drainage of agricultural land and the opening of schools to children who live near the border the two governments have been involved in the closest co-operation. What is now visualised is an extension of this co-operation on a national scale. Since 1965 cross-border economic co-operation has become accepted as the policy of the government of Northern Ireland. It is no longer a matter of political argument, except for a few extremists on both sides.

When, for example, Mr O'Neill and Mr Jack Lynch, prime minister in the republic, met in Belfast a few days before Christmas 1967 for the second of Ireland's summit meetings the Rev Ian K. Paisley and his followers protested outside the gates of Stormont. A few weeks later "the Irish Republican party meeting in Dublin passed a resolution condemning the Eire government for co-operating with the Stormont government" (*Belfast Telegraph*, 30 January 1968).

The framework of inter-government co-operation has already been created for electrical supply, tourism, internal transport and for the development and protection of agriculture. On 5 October 1967 Mr Brian Faulkner, Northern Ireland's minister of commerce and Mr Erskine Childers, the republic's minister for transport and power, signed an agreement providing for the link-up of electricity supply throughout the whole island.

This power link-up will become fully effective in 1971. It should mean savings of up to £200,000 a year for each government and should help to stabilise electricity prices on both sides of the border.

Through time cross-border economic co-operation will extend to the promotion of new industries, to the exploitation of Ireland's natural resources, including sea and inland fisheries, to technical training, social services, the promotion of markets abroad, and so on. In this way, whether Ireland becomes a member of the European Economic Community or not, the people who live on both sides of the border will realise that their common interests are more numerous than the points of politics and religion on which they have in the past disagreed. Partition need not be an obstacle to Ireland's economic progress.

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Enquiries about membership should be sent to the General Secretary, Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, London, SW1; telephone 01-930 3077.

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