

ENVOI

THERE are people living in the Republic of Ireland, especially in the remoter parts, who talk nostalgically about 'the fourth green field', and think that Ireland should be united forthwith. Pluralistic ideas are beyond many of their spokesmen. They are so steeped in Irish nationalism that they are incapable of making observations on the situation here without annoying the Ulster Protestant community, even citizens who are neither Orangemen nor Unionists. I can assure them that a simplistic approach has no place in the thinking about Northern Ireland. It is a very particular, even peculiar, place.

It should be appreciated by outsiders that in order to survive, many Catholics have had to conform to a small degree to the ethos of the majority. This makes them slightly different people from their brothers and sisters down south.

The Protestant majority have developed, over the years, their own inward-looking, isolationist attitude, referred to as their 'siege mentality'. Just as it is a safe assumption that every Northern Irish Catholic suffers to some extent from an inferiority complex, in the same way every Protestant feels to some extent threatened. This explains many of the things they have done, and still do. The fact that they feel Irish and British at the same time does not discomfort them.

The least civilised Protestants and Catholics have each their own completely unacceptable solution to the Irish problem. The Protestants suggest that all Catholics should be expelled to the Republic. The Catholics propose that the Ulster Protestants should emigrate to Scotland. It would

surely be a lesser place, a mediocre province, if either of these were to happen.

The stern resolve of the Protestant community to remain as they are has been the cause of all the trouble in Northern Ireland. They have indulged in mass religious discrimination to counter the menace, as they see it, of the increasing number of Catholics in the province who would eventually vote them into a united Ireland. To understand this is not to excuse, in any way, the grinding injustices they imposed to keep Ulster as it is.

Because they see it as a further impulse towards the equality of the two communities most nationalists have welcomed the initiative of Dr Garret FitzGerald, his colleagues, and the Labour members of the Coalition Government, who negotiated the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Following it, it is a great comfort to feel that Charles Haughey's Government of Fianna Fáil has played its part, and comforting, too, to see that the two sovereign Governments have already achieved some small success by working together.

There is one small group of people in the Republic of Ireland whose approach to the Anglo-Irish Agreement causes resentment amongst Northern Catholics. They are those who, probably to curry favour with some group, have made it clear that they disapprove of the way the Agreement was negotiated, because the Unionists were not consulted as the negotiations proceeded.

Unionists already had their opportunity to contribute to the solution of all our problems, three chances in fact, which they rejected. Firstly they turned down the Sunningdale Agreement. Later, there was a Convention in 1975 to negotiate power-sharing which they aborted. Again, trying for the third time, Mr (later Sir) Humphrey Atkins's Conference in 1980 was torpedoed by them.

It would have been too much to expect that the pragmatic, no-nonsense Margaret Thatcher, upon whom they had so often heaped abuse, should have wasted time arguing with them as the Agreement was negotiated. They are people who for over sixty years had steamrollered opposition of even the gentlest kind.

It is obvious that the present situation of bitterness, cruelty

and murder will have to pass. Sooner or later the two communities will have to do what they find most difficult; compromise, and sincerely co-operate in running their own affairs together.

The police, trying to overcome their more than inauspicious past, will have to continue to endeavour to be fair to all sections and to react very strongly to those of their number who show bias, while the minority community must acknowledge generously police evenhandedness, because without a successful police force this country would not be a place even to contemplate living in.

Considering the weakness of purpose of past Labour Governments we can thank our lucky stars that in Margaret Thatcher we have a person of resolve who would never, as Mr (later Sir) James Callaghan did, increase the Westminster seats available to Northern Ireland from twelve to seventeen, in exchange for a morsel of political power.

Even at this late stage, in certain areas of employment religious discrimination against Catholics is still almost total. The Fair Employment Agency has not yet been provided with real teeth. The British Government is optimistic indeed if it expects real progress when these discrepancies are still occurring.

The second of the two scraps of paper (see p. 60) which Patricia always refused to surrender to the Campaign for Social Justice files must surely point a moral. It is a press photograph taken in the very early days of the Campaign, before the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was formed. It shows a surgeon, John Ward, a gynaecologist, John Watson, John Donaghy, Jack Hassard, Patsy McCoe and Patricia, and also among the group Ken Magennis, later the Westminster Unionist MP. They were on their way as a delegation of the Dungannon Community Council to see Mr Brian Faulkner.

Here were responsible Protestants and Catholics going together to Stormont to petition Mr Faulkner to abolish the Dungannon Urban Council because of its misdeeds. At that time Ken Magennis was an involved and concerned united community man. Now as a Unionist representative he feels he should take a completely one-sided line.

Surely we are all entitled to seek an explanation and the explanation should not be sought from Ken Magennis alone but from deep in our own hearts.

It has been noted more than once that the middle class has been slow to support civil rights. To a degree this is an excusable human instinct. The same tendency has been seen among the blacks both of the USA and of Africa. Presumably after fighting their way out of the 'ghetto' or from some less auspicious environment, and having achieved middle-class status, they want to forget that they, or perhaps their parents, were members of the dispossessed.

Looking back over these last tragic years there is one inescapable reality. It is this. Complaints by the minority, and later full documentation of the facts by our Campaign for Social Justice, were not acted upon by the politicians of either of the two main British parties when they were in power. Had they intervened promptly to put things right in Northern Ireland at a time when the Republican movement was still a small rump, the grim price that has already been paid, both in lives and money, in an attempt to heal the situation, might have proved unnecessary. Further, delay has so embittered many people, and so clouded their judgment, that they have not been prepared to accept that considerable improvement has already taken place.

Finally, this farewell must extend to that little band of amateurs, who by choice did not associate with any political party but rode the tiger when they came together to form the Campaign for Social Justice in Northern Ireland. Being true amateurs, these people did not count the cost. The Campaign was run from start to finish on an absurdly small sum of money which was collected by Peter Gormley and carefully husbanded by our treasurer, Conor Gilligan. Printing and postage were the only two items on which Conor would agree to spend money.

There was a warmth, dedication and even sometimes humour in our very serious and responsible deliberations—taking part were tired men after a full day's work, sometimes even splitting hairs in their efforts to be absolutely fair and absolutely accurate. Patricia and I salute them.