

Heritage, History & Memory Project
(Workshop 6)

**The influence, relevance and lessons of the ‘Long 60s’,
and the issues of ‘Civil Rights for all Citizens’ today**

*A panel presentation
followed by a general discussion*

compiled by

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Introduction

The Fellowship of Messines Association was formed in May 2002 by a diverse group of individuals from Loyalist, Republican and Trade Union backgrounds, united in their realisation of the need to confront sectarianism in our society as a necessary means to realistic peace-building. The project also engages young people and new citizens on themes of citizenship and cultural and political identity.

In 2018 the Association initiated its **‘Heritage, History & Memory Project’**. For the inaugural launch of this project it was decided to focus on the period of the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement, and the early stages of ‘Troubles’. To accomplish this, it was agreed to host a series of six workshops, looking at different aspects of that period, with each workshop developing on from the previous one.

This pamphlet details the sixth of those workshops. It took the form of a panel presentation, which was then followed by a general discussion involving people from diverse political backgrounds, who were encouraged to share not only their thoughts on the panel presentation, but their own experiences and memories of the period under discussion.

The theme of this sixth workshop was: *The influence, relevance and lessons of the Long 60s, and the issues of ‘Civil Rights for all Citizens’ today*. The workshop took place in the Maldron Hotel, Derry/Londonderry, on 11 January 2020.

The event was chaired by **Maureen Hetherington**, from The Junction, Holywell Diverse City Community Partnership, and the discussion was facilitated by **Martin Snodden**, Loyalist ex-prisoner and international trauma and conflict resolution worker.

The panellists were **Peter Bunting**, **Sean Farren**, **Peter McDonald**, **Derek Moore**, **Sean O’Hare** and **Linda Watson**.

Harry Donaghy, *Co-ordinator*, The Fellowship of Messines Association

Note: The day before the workshop took place the Stormont Assembly/Executive was resurrected after a three-year absence. The two main political parties had finally agreed to sit down together following a document prepared by the British and Irish governments, entitled *New Decade, New Approach*, but generally known as the ‘New Deal’, This document, as well as the new Assembly, was repeatedly referred to during the discussions detailed in this pamphlet.

[**Harry Donaghy**] I would like to welcome you all here today, whether as panellists or as audience members. Today's workshop/discussion is the sixth and final one in the particular programme that we called *The Long 60's: Heritage, History & Memory*. The Fellowship of Messines project has been involved in many varied programmes involving common and shared history, and as we approached the Decade of Centenaries we felt that the Civil Rights period would be something worth revisiting. Our intention was to begin with the relationship between Britain and the Irish Republic in the aftermath of World War II, and then explore the decades leading up to those crucial events of the sixties in Northern Ireland. That's why we called it 'The Long 60s', because this whole phenomenon didn't just happen on 5 October 1968 in Duke Street, Derry. There was a long history of individuals, groups and organisations struggling around the issues of rights: civil rights, workers' rights, and in each decade there have been significant events: you could argue that the Outdoor Relief struggles of the 1930s were a common issue where people united around the dire need for the poor to be given what we would basically take for granted today.

Just prior to the sixties the creation of the Welfare State and National Health Service in Britain was actually a living memorial to the trauma of the Second World War, and it reflected people's ideas of what a good society, or a decent society, could actually be, and that *this* time around it *would be* 'a country fit for heroes' to live in. That monumental transformation of our everyday lives awakened aspirations which we still live with today. And we've covered a good few topics on our road to here today, and now our final theme is: *The influence, relevance and lessons of the Long 60s, and the issues of 'civil rights for all citizens' today*. So I will hand over now to Maureen Hetherington who is going to introduce the panel members, and hopefully we can all look forward to a good and thought-provoking discussion.

That monumental transformation of our everyday lives – the creation of the Welfare State and NHS – awakened aspirations which we still live with today.

[**Maureen Hetherington**] You are all very welcome. Thank you for turning up on such an awful morning. As Chair I will kick off the proceedings and it will be a respectful discussion today: lots of good conversation, healthy conversation – what we would call 'positive encounter dialogue' at The Junction. I am going to ask the panellists to introduce themselves, and then I will ask the audience

members to briefly say a wee bit about themselves. And my fellow co-ordinator for today, Martin Snodden, will facilitate the conversation as well.

[Linda Watson] My name is Linda Watson, and I am co-ordinator for a community group in Nelson Drive, in the Waterside†. I came to live here in 1982, I am a ‘blow-in’ from Belfast. I am also the Chair of the Central Housing Forum which is a body set up by the Housing Executive to deal with tenants’ issues. I am also Vice-Chair of Supporting Communities, which is another body which oversees tenants’ issues. I sit on the local PCSP [Policing and Community Safety Partnership]. So tenants and the community is where my heart is at.

[Peter Bunting] My name is Peter Bunting. I also come from Belfast. In ’64 I joined a monastery, left it in ’68, then joined the republican movement. After the split in the movement I worked as the first full-time employee in modern-day Sinn Féin. Left there, went to work in Dublin Bus as a bus conductor, and became General Secretary of the National Bus and Rail Union (in the Republic of Ireland), before becoming general secretary of ICTU, with responsibility for Northern Ireland. I got involved in community work, including peace and reconciliation work, and in assisting decommissioning and ceasefires with dissident groups. I work with loyalist and republican prisoners in Maghaberry Prison. I sit on the board of Resolve, which is the restorative justice body for the UDA in East Belfast. I sit on the Management Committee of Northern Ireland Alternatives, which was originally set up by the UVF. And I sit on the Messines Board, and also the Reintegration of Prisoners board.

[Peter McDonald] My name is Peter McDonald. I am originally from the Creggan estate here in Derry. I am an ex-republican prisoner and have been involved in community work since the early eighties. I am now manager of the Leafair Community Association community group. I sit as Chair of a Greater Partnership for an area encompassing roughly 37,000 people, the majority of them young families. I am involved in a lot of peace-building projects with the International Fund for Ireland, and through PIP [Peace Impact Programme] I have met many people through the journey of sharing my own experiences. Today I am not here representing any party, or any political aspiration. I am very much involved in the development and growth of the Outer North area.

† The east bank of the River Foyle which bisects the city of Derry/Londonderry is generally referred to as the ‘Waterside’; the west bank is referred to as the ‘Cityside’.

[Sean Farren] My name is Sean Farren. My early working life was spent teaching in West Africa so I missed the Civil Rights movement and only came here in 1970 when I went to the University in Coleraine. I joined the SDLP and became Chair of their central executive, was elected a member of Coleraine District Council, and of the 'Prior Assembly', as it was called. I was elected for the constituency of North Antrim. And again in 1996 I was elected to the Northern Ireland Forum which preceded the negotiations leading up to the Good Friday Agreement in '98. I was elected again in '98 for the constituency of North Antrim, and served in the Assembly until 2007, and during the period when the power-sharing Executive was in operation from '98 to 2002. I held the ministerial post of Employment and Learning, and subsequently Finance. I am now retired from frontline politics.

[Sean O'Hare] My name is Sean O'Hare, from Ballymurphy, Belfast. I am the Chair of the 6th Connaught Rangers Research Group, which is a group which revives the history of the several thousand Belfast nationalist volunteers who fought, and many of whom died, in the First World War. I am also on the committee of the Messines Association. I joined the republican movement in 1964. I was interned as an Official Republican. I later became chairman of An Eochair, ex-prisoners' support group. I stood in the Forum elections for the Republican Clubs but was unsuccessful. Most of my time now is involved with cross-community work and anti-sectarian activities.

[Derek Moore] Good morning. My name is Derek Moore. For the past six years I have been employed as co-ordinator of the Londonderry Bands Forum through the International Fund for Ireland. Previous to that I worked in the building trade, so I have a grasp of reality! During my time with the Londonderry Bands Forum I chaired the talks which created the Maiden City Accord, which fought for the civil rights of bandsmen to march around their own city. And along the way I also fell in with a group of like-minded people who created the North-West Cultural Partnership, of which I was Chairman up until very recently; a very progressive group who endeavour to create a better space to work in and a more grassroots approach and alternative leadership. Given the current 'new deal' we hope to use our influence to push on society.

[Martin Snodden] I am facilitator for some of the conversation today. I am an independent international trainer and consultant. I love working in grassroots communities right across the whole of Northern Ireland, and further field. So it's a pleasure to be here today. I am a loyalist political ex-prisoner and spent

fifteen years in Long Kesh, which was certainly a great opportunity for internal reflection and growth. And I feel that I am still growing, particularly with these types of conversations that we're having. Hindsight's a wonderful thing, as long as we learn from hindsight, as long as we can be sure that we're not going to repeat the past that we have all experienced.

[Maureen Hetherington] I know Martin from a long, long time ago. We worked together in the Balkans for a number of years. I would now like you, the audience, to introduce yourselves, before we hand over to the panel members.

[Michael Hall] I am Michael Hall. I produce *Island Pamphlets*. I sit down with community groups, record their discussions and then bring those discussions to a much wider grassroots audience through pamphlets.

[Robert Sterritt] I'm Robert Sterritt. I am ex-armed forces.

[Charlene Anderson] I'm Charlene. I have been a community activist some twenty-five years. I am a member of the Progressive Unionist Party [PUP], which deals with all the human costs, and the impact of lack of housing, welfare reform, so it's a mixed bag what I do. I live in Newtownabbey and am a mum of five sons who keep me busy.

[Teena Patrick] I'm Teena. I am here as a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment but I have worked in the community for thirty-five years along the Springfield Road interface. I am also involved with restorative justice practice and I am a mental health counsellor.

[Jacqueline McNeilly] I'm Jacqui. I am also an ex-service member of the UDR. I work alongside Teena at community work along the interface. I have worked for the health service for thirty-one years on senile dementia and alzheimer's. I am now a member of the PUP on the Shankill Road.

[Brian Dougherty] I'm Brian Dougherty. I have been a community worker here in the city for about thirty years; and have grown up here. I am ex-director of St Columb's Park House reconciliation centre which helped develop the Londonderry Bands Forum which Derek is involved in. Currently I am a member of the North-West Cultural Partnership, and I am also doing research for the Londonderry Bands Forum looking at lack of Protestant engagement in Derry, Tyrone and Donegal. I am also trying to complete a PhD looking at alternative leadership, using the Bands Forum as a model of good practice.

[James Kee] My name is James Kee. I am from the PUL [Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist] community. I am based in the Sollus Centre and am currently employed by Bready & District Ulster-Scots Development Association, which I helped set up in 2001. Am currently working on a peace-impact programme under the International Fund for Ireland. I have recently taken over chairmanship of the North-West Cultural Partnership.

[David Ramsey] David Ramsey. I live over on the Cityside at Newbuildings. Was in the building trade until about six years ago. Got involved in politics and am now a DUP councillor for the Waterside. I volunteer in Newbuildings, Lincoln Courts and Clooney Community Associations. Am on the board of Resolution North-West which was started by the local UDA. I work closely with the ACT [Action for Community Transformation] group, which is connected to the UVF. I have worked closely with other groups, especially North-West Cultural Partnership. Was re-elected this year so am going back as a councillor for the Waterside.

[Seamus Farrell] Seamus Farrell is my name. I have a background in International community development and in peace and conflict stuff, but more immediately I work with Maureen at The Junction, and specifically with our 'ethical and shared remembering' project, which very much mirrors what Harry is also doing: we are about learning around the Decade of Centenaries, learning from the past in the present for the future. A big aspect of that recently was two trips to Messines with cross-community groups from mid-Ulster. What we learned from those trips to Messines is that when relationships are dealt with then anything is possible, but until they are dealt with we are going to meet roadblocks. So I think this event today is a wonderful opportunity to be about what matters fundamentally: the building of relationships.

[Deirdre Mac Bride] Deirdre Mac Bride, originally from Tyrone, and I got involved in community-based issues in London and then in North Belfast, and that led on a journey into reconciliation and peace-building. I then moved to work with the Belfast-European Partnership Board, Peace I Programme. And then after that to CRC and worked on the Decade of Centenaries programme on cultural diversity issues, and influenced by the work The Junction was doing. Am now doing a post-grad, trying to research that Decade of Centenaries stuff.

[Maureen Hetherington] As Seamus mentioned, in The Junction we look at ethical and shared remembering, remembering a decade of violence and change

between 1912 and 1922. So when Harry asked me to chair this I was really intrigued by its title: *The influence, relevance and lessons of the Long 60s, and the issues of 'Civil Rights for all Citizens' today*. And if you just indulge me for one minute before I pass over to the panel... At a recent conference in Cookstown we looked at the Ulster Covenant and also the Declaration of Independence. And the former says: "We do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn Covenant throughout this our time of threatened calamity, to stand by one another in defending, for ourselves and our children, our cherished position of equal citizenship." And we have to ask the questions: *who* is 'equal', *who* are 'the children', and what is that about 'equal citizenship'? But also then in the Declaration, it says: "The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities of all its citizens." So, the title of today's event feeds into those events of a hundred years ago. And I am not sure if you know what Sir Edward Carson said to the Parliament of Northern Ireland in 1921:

You will be a parliament for the whole community. We used to say that we did not trust an Irish parliament in Dublin to do justice to the Protestant minority. Let us take care that that reproach can no longer be made against your parliament and from the outset let them see that the Catholic minority have nothing to fear from a Protestant majority. Let us take care that we win all that is best among those who have been opposed to us in the past in this community. And so I say: from the start be tolerant to all religions, and, while maintaining to the last your own traditions and your own citizenship, take care that similar rights are preserved for those who differ from us.

Be tolerant to all religions, and, while maintaining to the last your own traditions and your own citizenship, take care that similar rights are preserved for those who differ from us.

And I just thought that that was relevant to this conversation we're going to have today. So we are looking at a respectful conversation, a lot of interaction. But first of all I want to invite the panellists to give an input at the start, and that will be followed by questions and answers, facilitated by Martin.

[**Peter Bunting**] Just in relation to my own history: Twenty-five years ago I became a member of the Church of Ireland, which was an interesting move by someone who had once been in a monastery. Not too interesting for some of my

family members, but however! Anyway, when you look at our theme today, we have to ask: what have we learned about civil rights? Contrary to what Mr Carson might have hoped for, we ended up with a parliament for only one section of the community, and that had a detrimental impact on our whole society. To me, we need rights for all: social, political, economic rights, as well as trade union rights for people who are at work. And today we embrace an even broader range of rights, including LGBT rights and abortion rights for women. Now, some people, from a religious perspective or whatever, have problems with some of those rights. The reality is that it is about *those people making up their own minds* – we cannot be the moral guardians of each individual from a theological point of view.

The reality is that it is about those people making up their own minds – we cannot be the moral guardians of each individual from a theological point of view.

When we look back to 1960s Northern Ireland and the ‘denial of rights’, it wasn’t that Protestants had good houses and Catholics had bad houses. Both working-class communities lived in identical housing stock, with outdoor loos, etc. The denial of rights leads to unrest because those who have been denied rights will always seek those rights. And if the denial of those rights leads to demonstrations, or political unrest, then, depending on how the state reacts – for example, if it uses repression and oppression – it can end up in violence.

However, our own situation was made much worse because we are a deeply divided society. And if we don’t meet members of the ‘other’ community we can never build the relationships which Seamus and Maureen spoke about. In 2002, academic Pete Shirlow did a survey of a thousand young people aged between 18 and 26, and 78% had never met a member of the other community! So for all those young people growing up it is easy to see the ‘others’ as ogres. They never meet each other, so they never learn to socialise with each other. They may be lucky if they go to university to meet some people from the other community. And then we have a constant PUL community ‘brain drain’: there are too many young Protestants leaving Northern Ireland who will never come back. And that’s going to be a big problem for our society in the future.

So when we talk about equality and rights we also need to build into the discussion things like integrated education, integrated housing, mixed employment – we’re lacking integration on so many fronts. For me it is all about building new relationships. And the future has to be inclusive; I think ‘parity

of esteem' is for *everyone*, it's not specific to any one community.

A big problem for me is this conversation going on at the moment about a 'new Ireland', or a border poll. If you had a border poll tomorrow, it would be the same as those who voted for Brexit: you wouldn't know what you're voting for. I don't think that, at this stage, we are in *any position* to have the knowledge about what this 'new Ireland' is going to look like, if there ever is going to be one. If I was a voter from the Protestant/Loyalist tradition my vote would be a big NO! We have a whole building of relationships to conquer *first*.

Anyway, with regard to our discussion on rights, we would have to define the rights of those who will be part of this 'new Ireland': can Protestants maintain their British citizenship, can they still have their marches and whatever else that they have? Will there be a free national health service? I go to the doctor in the Republic and it is 60€ up front; if I go to the pharmacy, depending on the prescription, it could be 30-40€. Those are the things we need to iron out before we go anywhere. And yet there are people screaming for a border poll. To me it is complete nonsense. We are a long way from having a united *anything*. Even a united Derry/Londonderry, or a united Belfast. So to me it is all airy-fairy until such times as we build those relationships. And *only then* do I think it will be time to move to a discussion on what a 'new Ireland' might look like, one where *everybody's* rights are protected.

We are a long way from having a united anything. Even a united Derry/Londonderry, or a united Belfast. So to me [this call for a border poll] is all airy-fairy until such times as we build those relationships.

I speak to numerous Loyalist groups in the Carson Society and one of the things that annoys me is that Loyalism constantly sells itself short. To a lot of people Loyalist culture is about bands marching... end of. But the biggest aspect of the 'British' heritage – applicable to the Catholic community as much as to the Protestant community – was that living memorial that Harry talked about at the end of the two world wars. Clement Attlee said he would build a 'new Jerusalem', and this new Jerusalem was going to be built on four foundations: the welfare state, social housing, free education, and the NHS. And *those* are rights which people are losing sight of in Northern Ireland, because Tory politicians are dismantling those fundamental foundations. I maintain that this new Jerusalem is being whittled away on a regular basis, and people would be far better employed – while marching in a band is very important – to fight for

those rights. And coming from a trade union perspective that is more meaningful to me in many ways, or *just as meaningful*, as the right to march.

The republican community as well need to have a vision of what a ‘new Ireland’ is. I don’t want to be part of a Fianna Fáil-led republic, with its gombeen men in mohair suits and all the corruption. There has been a lot of focus on the RHI heating scandal at Stormont. But the Republic, following the banking crash, paid off *non-secured* bond holders to the tune of over £64 billion! And we are still paying for it today.

So what sort of society is it that we really want to build? I think Northern Ireland has a better opportunity of creating that model, a successful model, than the Republic has. There are more relationship-building efforts going on here than there are in the Republic, and evidence of that can be seen in the latest furore over the RIC [Royal Irish Constabulary]. Those of us who participate in discussions like ours today are probably more mature – I am not talking about the general populace – but there is a dynamic here among so many people who years ago probably wouldn’t be talking to each other, they would be shooting each other. Now we’re sitting down talking about what type of society we really need here, and we are united on many, many aspects of it. And I think we can build that new Jerusalem for our people, north and south.

There is a dynamic here among so many people who years ago probably wouldn’t be talking to each other, they would be shooting each other. Now we’re sitting down talking about what type of society we really need.

But, reflecting back on the Civil Rights period, we should always remember that the issues of gerrymandering, poor housing, lack of ‘one man, one vote’, and the fact that Catholic people did not feel welcome in the Northern Ireland state, were the catalysts behind the Civil Rights movement. But although it tried to be broadly-based, we had sectarianism coming into it, and then we saw the growth of republicanism where there had been no republicanism. In 1968 there was no real IRA, it didn’t exist at that stage. It was gone, buried. And, all of a sudden, the republican movement grew. And then we moved on into terrible conflict. So there is lots of stuff we should be learning from the past. I had to do my own self-searching, and I found the trade union movement as *my* way of becoming engaged in helping everyone, and not seeing people as Orange or Green or whatever. I am a person who believes in my fellow person.

[Peter McDonald] Basically where it began for me, and what makes me who I am today, was I suppose the circumstances, causes and conditions of where I came from. That shaped me to where I am. I am a strong believer that you need to know where you are coming from to know where you are going to go. So, who am I? I was reared in the Creggan estate. I was born in 1960 and when the Civil Rights movement came onto the streets, at nine years of age I didn't understand any of it. We lived in a tin bungalow at the back of Creggan and it looked all right to me, I had no complaints about it. My father spent twenty-two years in the British Army, across Asia, the 'Burma Star' and all the rest of it.

I started to realise there was something wrong after Bloody Sunday. I was now twelve years of age. I started to think: what is wrong? As I got older I realised that I was living under what was known back then as a 'Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people' and Catholics weren't welcome. And the evidence of that was the very fact of where Civil Rights came out of: 'One man, one vote', no jobs, poor housing. Now my mind was set that it was all Catholics was treated like that, until in later years I realised that there was Protestant people living in the Creggan estate, and living across in the Waterside, in the exact same conditions that I was living in. So I'm baffled; I'm saying: them people are being treated the same as me. So, it became a middle-upper class type of society which didn't care much about ordinary people.

I believe that it was inevitable that violence was going to spill out onto the streets. We don't need to rehearse what took place over them years. And conflict then, whether it was armed struggle or whatever, was inevitable: there was no other way people could change things. And when I became involved with the republican movement I was about fifteen, and I ended up in prison at sixteen and a half years of age. I went into the juvenile remand unit in Crumlin Road prison, around December 1976. Sitting in a cell, not

knowing why I was there, asking myself: what was this all about? And facing a whole multitude of charges which I didn't even understand. And I have to say this: prison educated me. Many a man and woman went through prison and came out the same the other side. I used that space for me. Because I needed to know first of all: why was I there? And I learnt a terrible, terrible lot, to my cost by the way.

I ended up in prison at sixteen and a half years of age. Sitting in a cell, not knowing why I was there, asking myself: what was this all about? And facing a whole multitude of charges which I didn't even understand.

And coming through them years, when I was released the conflict in '78, '79, was very much at the height. And then it took off particularly into the 80s and then into the 90s. So what caused it was because there was a lack of civil rights, that's where it began. You quoted Lord Carson, but what he said in his statement didn't happen: we never got a parliament for *all* the people. Even the police force was a Protestant police force. Policemen were coming from Ballymena and places like that to police these areas. I'm looking down this road at Buncrana and Muff and the policemen down there live in the same village, and they go into the same pubs and the same shops. And yet we had a police service coming from outside.

You quoted Lord Carson, but what he said in his statement didn't happen: we never got a parliament for all the people. Even the police force was a Protestant police force.

But then again, if you look at the conflict that was going on, you couldn't have a Catholic, or someone coming from a Catholic area, be a member of the police force, or the UDR or whatever. Because obviously you were a target. And a lot of people in them times, Protestants, moved away from the Creggan, and went over to the east bank, to the Waterside. And I heard somebody saying that 75% of the Protestants were forced out of the west bank. I don't buy that at all. There is not one sectarian joint in my body, never was, never will be. A lot of people left, yes, for fear and safety of their own, and maybe they had connections to the security forces, and *I* would have left if I had been the same. So that was a big factor in Protestant people moving to the east bank.

Then you had 'no-go' areas, totally controlled by different factions within the republican movement. So you were brought up with all that, and at a young age it was all excitement, a great craic. But when I was returned to prison in 1992, for a short period of time, I could see a mirror vision of myself, with all these young fellas from Ballymurphy, Turf Lodge, on murder and bombing charges – and them only sixteen, seventeen years of age. And I said this is unbelievable, and they really thought they were making a blow for Ireland. And I'm talking to some of them and they were looking at me as if to say: what would *you* know? And I suppose when I think of it I would really have been the same back then.

The talking, the negotiations were going on from the late eighties behind the scenes, and yet the conflict was very alive. There then came the ceasefire of '94, which broke down but was re-established.

And today? I believe that the causes and conditions of conflict have now been

removed. There is no need or reason – if there ever was – for anyone, or any organisation, to take up arms and do any of that kind of stuff. And this Assembly has only just got up again, it mightn't be great but at least it's giving us a chance to be getting basic human rights. And that's what it was all down to. I talk to a lot of young people in my role in work and the majority of young people who were my age back then are not interested in politics, never mind conflict: all they want is an education, a job, maybe a wee car, and a good weekend to themselves. I have a son and a daughter who are in their thirties now, and they aren't interested in talking politics in the house. And that's the way it should be. What I am saying is that, at the end of the day, it was all down to basic rights, and when you give people their basic civil rights you will have no bother.

[**Derek Moore**] As to what Peter said there, my life went sort of parallel. When I was born my parents had to live with my grandparents in a house that was owned by the Unionists. And it had no electric, no gas, one toilet between three flats, and things like that. I don't buy into the notion that there was a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people; I think it was a *class* parliament for a certain class of people, and I think the rest of us were *all* in the same boat. And maybe as a Protestant living in Derry it was a double-whammy for us. At that time we had a unionist *class* council who owned the property which I lived in, and it then became a nationalist council for nationalist people.

I don't buy into the notion that there was a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people; I think it was a class parliament for a certain class of people, and I think the rest of us were all in the same boat.

My parents got a house at the top of the hill, where Gobnascale is, and as a Protestant living amongst a lot of Catholics I didn't actually realise anything about religious differences, but my Catholic friends did, they knew the ins and outs. My father was in the B-Specials, and he had a rifle at home, but I didn't know what the B-Specials were. Peter talks about families moving out from the Cityside; we were a bit different, we lived in the Waterside, and we moved from our home to Irish Street. And in 1968 I was ten, and myself and a couple of other boys were sent by local men out to the graveyard to keep watch for a civil rights march coming. These men were making a lot of preparations for violence, and we had to go back to alert them when the march was coming. And then the next thing I was grabbed by the scruff of the neck by my

father who came over and dragged me back to the house – so I missed all the craic!

Between my time at school, then working in the building trade, and eventually going to work for the Bands Forum, I never actually gave what was going on in society that much thought. I simply listened to what was being said on TV, believed everything that was getting put out there, and it is only since 2013 that I have started to see the reality of the crap that everybody was being given.

Peter’s remark about bands marching struck a chord with me because very early on, in 2013, at the Bands Forum we created this slogan: ‘to challenge preconceived or misconceived ideas through education and dialogue’. And that probably highlights it. There are three big parades a year for us down in the city. What do we do with the rest of our time? Peter spoke about social issues. But within the bands there are 30,000 members, and people running bands are actually social workers; they are dealing with young people who are coming from difficult home backgrounds and they have to deal with different issues. So I feel that dismissing it as simply about looking for rights about parading... it is actually about tying the whole fabric of society into that group of people. We were looking out for young people from problem homes... bruising and stuff like that, we just didn’t realise we were doing it. We were looking at people about work, we were looking at people who had no money, everyone was treated equally. So we have tried to change the preconceived ideas people hold about band culture.

At the Bands Forum we created this slogan: ‘to challenge preconceived or misconceived ideas through education and dialogue’.

Another point about the movement of people: I agree that not everybody was threatened, it was the whole feeling in those areas that really caused that. And nobody blames people’s neighbours for not standing up for them; nobody even stands up now when people put flags up on the lampposts. Indeed, one of the things we’re doing now in the Partnership is standing up and asking them not to. And I think there’s also a current exodus from the Bogside and Creggan because there’s a lack of policing in it, there’s a lack of respect for law and order, so there are a lot of Catholic families now who are leaving that area and moving to the Waterside, and creating a sort of society that we *should* be living in, an integrated society where young people can go to school in their uniforms and such. There’s a group of people in this country, 50% who don’t vote and want to just live together. I think the Waterside provides a good role model for the whole country, where there is acceptance and tolerance in our community.

[Linda Watson] I started my life in Donegall Pass [Belfast], that's where I was born. Everybody was in a band from no height, there was a big band culture. My two great-uncles went off to fight on the Somme: one came back and one didn't, he died on the first day of the battle, his name is on the Thiepval Memorial. So a big thing within our whole family was remembrance. I was the first person in our family to go and visit the Thiepval Memorial and see his name there. So I was brought up in that whole culture of remembrance, bands, Protestant culture. We lived in a two up, two down, same as everybody else. My uncle used to sit at the weekends and cut up all the newspapers and string them together for use as toilet paper. Then when I was six we moved to Seymour Hill, but unfortunately when I was eight my daddy died and my mum was left with three of us. My Mum kind of protected us from all that was going on in the outside world, especially when the Troubles started. I can remember bin-lids being banged in a Catholic area, and I asked my Mum what was going on. And she said: "Oh, they're celebrating your birthday!" I was born on 9 August and that was the anniversary of Internment!

I had to go out to work at sixteen with my dad having died and my mum not in good health. Went to work for the Chamber of Commerce in Great Victoria Street. So every bomb that went off in the Europa [hotel] I was in the building opposite it. All through the Troubles I kept saying: nothing will ever happen to me; it never affected me directly, as none of my family were killed or injured. It is only in later years when I came into community work that I realised that I actually did have trauma from the Troubles: being near bombs, having to go through security gates every time you went for your lunch, and things like that.

When I was nineteen I married an RUC man, but it only lasted a couple of years and then I met someone from here and moved here, and had two children. Unfortunately that marriage broke up and I moved to Nelson Drive in 1992. It was all paramilitary murals, flags – which I'm used to, don't get me wrong – but I really wanted to have my children brought up in something that wasn't what I was brought up in: all the hatred and that kind of stuff. Then I got involved in 1998 with a local community group, and I realised I really loved working for local people. So I was a volunteer to 2006 when a job came up under Neighbourhood Renewal, and I got the job and have been working there ever since. Done a wild

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lot of cross-community projects, cross-border. But what struck me was in those days you got funding because you were going to do *cross*-community work. But I don't think we ever got the chance to do our *inter*-community work and that is coming back to bite us now, within our own communities.

We have built up great relationships with Galliagh Women's Group. Indeed, we nearly felt at one point that we were *one* group because we realised that we had all gone through the same things. In the estate where I live there are Protestants who were part of that early exodus from the Cityside. And it was interesting to discover that they didn't really see the estate as their 'home' – their memories were all back in the place they came from. So around 2006, when Helen Quigley established the Mayor's Tea Dances, we took some of our older people's group across town to the Guildhall, and they really enjoyed meeting all their old Catholic friends and neighbours.

I was doing a course through the Rural College in Draperstown and there was a mix of people on it from across Northern Ireland. And they took us on a residential, and we were put into four groups of five. And one of the things we had to do was an exercise in which we were asked: "On a scale from '1' to '10', if you could draw a line in the sand under the Troubles and move on, where would you put your mark: '1' being you couldn't really move on, and '10' being you could." I put mine at '8' for I felt I hadn't really been affected. And in our group we started to tell each other our stories. And one girl said that her brother had been shot dead by the RUC with a rubber bullet. And she told how it had affected her whole family. Then a guy started to speak and he was a ex-RUC man and he said: "It was actually my friend who shot your brother." He told how it had affected his friend: he had lost his family life over it, and he ended up killing himself. And they said if they could draw a line on the sand it would only be at number '2'. That was a big turning point for me. I thought: well, maybe *I* could draw a line and move on, but there's a lot of people in our community who can't. There's a lot of stuff out there that we all have to deal with, but we have to deal with it together. I think that's how we move forward, by learning from each other, talking, dialogue, and moving forward together. That's the future for me.

There's a lot of stuff out there that we all have to deal with, but we have to deal with it together. I think that's how we move forward.... That's the future for me.

[**Sean Farren**] When I make my contribution to discussions like this I often ask a question: how was it that we, living in such a small community that Northern Ireland is – and a society that would have, at least in principle, have said that it upheld basic Christian values, basic human rights values of respect for the individual – how was it that over the period of the Troubles we allowed three and a half thousand people to be killed, murdered, and many thousands more injured? How was it that we made it easy or simple, or something that was done without a great deal of thought about the consequences? How was it that we allowed, particularly young men, but some young women as well, to walk up to somebody’s door, knock on that door and ask: “Is your daddy in?” And then shoot ‘daddy’ when he came to the door? And that happened so frequently in our society, as well as many other atrocities. And this despite our political leaders, our church leaders, and other civic leaders, who would have regarded themselves as people who would have abhorred the record of killing and maiming and destruction that we experienced over the thirty years.

So in a sense when we look at the Civil Rights movement – and remember the Civil Rights movement proclaimed itself to be non-violent, and to be seeking change by democratic means – how was it that the Civil Rights movement wasn’t strong enough, or influential enough, to contain the violence that broke out in our society? By the end of the 1960s many, if not all, of the immediate demands of the Civil Rights movement were

By the end of the 1960s many, if not all, of the immediate demands of the Civil Rights movement were being met or were being promised. And yet, despite that, we descended into a chaos of destruction and killing.

being met or were being promised. And yet, despite that, we descended into a chaos of destruction and killing. Why was there no inhibition in us, as a society? And how do we ensure that it doesn’t happen again? I don’t suppose there is a magic wand, but there is a phrase that says: the price of peace is eternal vigilance. And what do we mean by ‘eternal vigilance’? I suppose it means making every possible effort to ensure that the causes of that violence don’t exist, that the civil and human rights that are now widely accepted, not just here but right across the globe, are respected and implemented.

I suppose when we look back over the period since the Second World War there has been a huge growth in the scale and depth of the institutions that have been established to uphold civil and human rights: conventions under the United

Nations, conventions under the European Union, all proclaim the need to respect civil and human rights, all provide also the means to investigate violations of those rights. And the things that we campaigned for, in *our* civil rights movement, can be linked and joined to the campaigns for civil and human rights across the globe. And therefore when we are campaigning today for whatever rights we are concerned about, we can appeal to international standards and we can point to where those standards are not being met.

Looking back on our own Civil Rights movement, it lacked, to my mind, the cohesion necessary to help withstand the outbreak of violence and to proclaim that that was not the way forward. That no matter what grievances we might feel, resorting to violence to redress those grievances was only going to precipitate a worse situation, and indeed, that's what it did. So, I come back to the phrase I just quoted about the price of peace being eternal vigilance. What are the measures that we need to take in order to ensure that the peace which was dearly won, and hopefully we will never move away from, will continue to be upheld in our society? And ultimately what are the measures that our political leadership can take to maintain and develop the Good Friday Agreement principles and values; so that they too will be part of that vigilance which is necessary in order to sustain our peace?

That no matter what grievances we might feel, resorting to violence to redress those grievances was only going to precipitate a worse situation, and indeed, that's what it did.

[**Sean O'Hare**] I wasn't going to go into my history but perhaps I should as it shows how we are moulded into what we are today. I was born in Belfast in a house with three families, my grandmother's house. It was a house built for refugees of the 1920s troubles. My grandfather had been in the British Army for 18 years. He was home on leave in 1920 from India and was burned out of his house, therefore he got a refugee house. About five years old I moved from there to Ballymurphy. I belong to a diminishing group of people who *did* intermingle before the Troubles, who went to dances, cinemas, and worked with people from the 'other' community. And I think that we have a lot to teach people about it; how simple it is to do it, even with the differences that were there then. Growing up in the late fifties, early sixties, I would say about 25% of the population of Ballymurphy was Protestant, but even when intermingling with Protestants there was always the

sense that you can't trust then, and they had the same attitude to us.

In Ballymurphy at that time republicanism was dead and gone. It was tried and didn't work: that was the attitude of people. The nationalist attitude was that we've got new houses, we've got family allowance, they're giving us all these things, and we know our position, just keep your heads down and accept it. I was an oddball in joining the republican movement at the time, 1964; I was the youngest member.

At that time I think the Unionist government missed a golden opportunity, for the nationalist population then would have been willing to partake in Stormont, as you can see by the nationalists that they elected, who were not republican. When I went off to England I became involved in left-wing politics, strikes and all that sort of thing. I came back in 1969, rejoined the republican movement, thinking that we were on the road to a socialist republic. We had learnt all this in England, we all believed in the late sixties that socialism was just around the corner, and within twenty years there would be world socialism. That's what we believed; it's hard for people to realise nowadays that we believed that back then.

1969 I came home, I was shot on 14 August by a B-Special. Then everything got very emotional; in the vast majority of working-class nationalist areas we thought that we were going to bring the state down and there was going to be a United Ireland. The idea of socialism was left to the side, emotion took over. And it took a good while for that emotion

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to die down and for some of us to realise that it wasn't a socialist revolution, that it was heading for a sectarian civil war. After the split in the republican movement I sided with the Official republicans, and our ceasefire came a couple of years after that. I stood in a few elections for the Republican Clubs. And when the Troubles ended I got involved in cross-community activity, initially with ex-prisoner groups. And I have to say now that among ex-paramilitaries we reached a stage after so many years that was well ahead of where we are now; things are not as good now, it is past its best, it's on a downward slope.

Regarding citizenship and rights, you can't be a citizen without being active in your citizenship; you can't just sit and complain that the government is doing this or doing that, and nobody is doing anything, if you're not active in your own community. And we are going to have to separate land from nationality:

we're going to have to accept one another as perfectly entitled to feel either Irish or British while living together on this island.

Regarding a border poll, I agree with Peter that it is ridiculous to call for a border poll now. But I do think we have to make a start at discussing the future. I think it has reached the stage where people like those of us here today, and others involved in similar activities, trust each other enough to be able to sit down

together and debate: what *is* our future? What do *you* think is *your* future, what do *I* think will be *my* future? That discussion has to begin, because things *are* going to change, and people like ourselves who were in the lead in stopping sectarianism, or at least easing it, now need to be in the lead on that. And we can also challenge different parties by saying to them: "All right, you are talking about a 'new Ireland', explain to me what it is?" Because nobody seems to feel they have to explain it, they just say: "Oh, there's going to be a new Ireland." But what *kind* of 'new Ireland'? And *when* is it going to be, and what are going to be the interim steps between now and that new Ireland? Indeed, is there *ever going to be* a new Ireland? What is the future for these islands? What's the relationship between Ireland and England going to be like in the future? These things are all wide open for discussion, and I think it's time for community activists like ourselves to begin that debate, especially as we have built up the trust to ensure that any discussion is non-threatening.

[Martin Snodden] Okay, folks; we've had six presentations here this morning. There's certainly a lot has been said, with multiple perspectives on this particular period: it's now over to you to ask questions, or make offerings yourself with regards to things that have been triggered. So would anyone like to give us a start?

[David Ramsey] The thing that kind of struck me was that statement from Lord Carson. And my question to the panel is: does the panel believe that the current 'deal' that we have in Stormont is closer to what Lord Carson wanted back then in parliament but which didn't happen?

[Martin Snodden] Okay, that's one question: is the current deal close to what Carson was suggesting 100 years ago? Anybody else?

We are going to have to separate land from nationality: we're going to have to accept one another as perfectly entitled to feel either Irish or British while living together on this island.

[**Charlene Anderson**] I agree with Sean [O'Hare] when he said it shouldn't be about land any more. Also, the debate should be about the human cost, and that what went before should never be repeated. I really think there is a void there. I see it in my own community; if the DUP or whoever isn't doing what my community wants somebody is going to come along and want to fill that void in a destructive way. What we need is more actors from the past, on both sides of the community, who are prepared to say: we *mustn't* do that again, there is no room for that type of activity any longer. The problem is that that's not being said at present. So that void is very dangerously being left ignored. And if you're reading social media it only takes a negative message to fall on the wrong ears for people to build up their anger. It only takes one person to throw the first stone. That void is being left unattended to.

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[**Martin Snodden**] Okay, so that's question two. Let's go for one more.

[**Deirdre Mac Bride**] I would be interested to know if the panel think we have any real chance of getting a Bill of Rights, because that would be part of the protections we all need. And also, as Sean [O'Hare] said, that sense of having a conversation about *what is* the future in terms of this island. Because, if handled sensitively, that conversation could become reassuring rather than scary for people.

[**Martin Snodden**] Okay, so that's three questions. I am not asking each panel member to respond to each question, but just if you have a comment to make with regard to them. Take David's question first: does the deal which was done yesterday at Stormont, reflect what Carson was suggesting 100 years ago?

[**Peter McDonald**] If we had've come out of this week with *no* deal at Stormont, we would have been facing ten years of direct rule, which would only have worsened that void. Regarding the point made earlier about whether what happened here was justifiable or unjustifiable, once you deal with the core of the problem then there is no justification for any of that. And a Bill of Rights would help to ensure that; so a Bill needs to be enshrined alongside this new 'deal'. Maureen read from three documents; there's a paragraph in the Irish Declaration which talks about 'cherishing all the children of the nation equally'. We're

talking about future generations, and that's what it is all about. Equality and rights is the two main factors in any settled society. And Sean's right about land and traditions: whoever you are, basic human rights is the core to it all. Charlene is right too: if there is a void left there is a danger of it all falling down.

[**Peter Bunting**] First of all, could I just apologise in case Derek took me up the wrong way: I wasn't trying to be dismissive about the bands, what I was saying is that there's *other* stuff just as deeply important. Derry/Londonderry is a brilliant city, and has shown some great models. A couple of years ago there was a nationalist band which usually led the participants in the Foyle Cup, but couldn't do it, so a band from the Waterside came over and led the parade down to the Brandywell! I was fascinated that a loyalist band could come over and do it and not a bother. That's the type of model we're looking for, and it serves to reinforce Derek's comments about the positive side of his work.

With regard to the void. That void is definitely there. It has become very noticeable by the Jamie Bryson 'betrayal of Ulster' carry-on. That has tremendous implications for our society, because we don't know what the difficulties down the road are from Brexit, which could have an enormously negative impact on our society – in terms of jobs, etc. So the last thing we need is this 'betrayal of Ulster' talk making the problem worse. The Bryson thing is very annoying because we know that certain ones in East Belfast seem determined to instigate some form of demonstrations, etc, and these could well end up in violence. To me it is a big problem. All we need is for somebody to assassinate a Catholic, or whatever, and we will be back into sectarian tit-for-tat.

That void is definitely there. So the last thing we need is this 'betrayal of Ulster' talk making the problem worse.

The other point I would make is about a Bill of Rights. I want to relate the last conversation the trade union movement had with both Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness. We would meet with them twice a year under an agreement we had. And we went through the normal agenda: employment, economics, etc., and then brought up a Bill of Rights. And this was during the 'flag protests' and Martin McGuinness said he was on the same page as us on a Bill of Rights. But Peter Robinson's response was: "Well, I'm certainly not on the same page." I said, "Surely, Peter, in the interests of your own community – like flying the flag, etc. – a Bill of Rights would protect that?" His response was: "Why do you think

it is always political? It is religious; you will never see a Bill of Rights which incorporates sexual orientation, it's against our religion, it's not political." I mentioned earlier my own belief that it's up to each individual to decide what they are going to do. So that's a problem with a Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland. It is probably made easier that the government in Westminster made those decisions for us. Also, part of the Good Friday Agreement was to have a Bill of Rights in the Republic of Ireland. They're escaping scot-free with not honouring that aspect of the Good Friday Agreement, where they should also establish a Bill of Rights. A Bill of Rights would certainly help many people, but it has to be both in the Republic and here in Northern Ireland, to protect everybody.

[**Linda Watson**] Reflecting on what Carson said, I'm thinking: how do we get this up to Stormont? I hope you don't mind if I read it again: "And so I say: from the start be tolerant to all religions, and, while maintaining to the last your own traditions and your own citizenship, take care that similar rights are preserved for those who differ from us." So, is there any way this group could take that message back up when they're starting up this new Assembly?

[**Charlene Anderson**] The word 'tolerant' is a word that is uncomfortable for me, it's almost like 'I'm going to have to accept this, because I have been told to accept it.' I think it should be changed to a word like 'acceptable' or 'mutual respect'.

[**Martin Snodden**] Language is important. We have recognised that for years, language is important.

[**Linda Watson**] Obviously this was written back in 1921, so the language could be changed slightly, but I do think it's a very important message.

[**Sean Farren**] Carson's words could be turned around and put in the mouths of the leaders of the nationalist community as well. Tolerance has to go both ways. With respect to the 'deal': look, it has been done, let's trust the political parties that have committed themselves to it. Let's trust that they *do* live up to the commitments that they are making. They are faced with huge challenges. As to the third point, the Bill of Rights. Yes, I believe a Bill of Rights is very important, but some of the most oppressive regimes in the world have great Bills of Rights. The

Carson's words could be turned around and put in the mouths of the leaders of the nationalist community as well. Tolerance has to go both ways.

Soviet Union had a great Bill of Rights but a great deal of oppression occurred notwithstanding. Implementation and the vigilance I spoke about earlier is key to ensuring that there is proper scrutiny and accountability of government action, or state action. And we're not completely devoid of a form of Bill of Rights at the minute. We can get a lot of issues dealt with that would fall under that heading if there are violations of human rights alleged. But nonetheless, a Bill of Rights would be a clear statement, but it is the implementation of what follows that is critical. And that is where civil society, along with political society, has got to be exercising its responsibility to hold government to account.

[Peter Bunting] Just two comments in relation to Lord Carson's statement. That comes from an old tradition of the Presbyterian ethos. If you go back to the Magheramorne Manifesto, which set up the Independent Orange Lodge. It broke away from the 'big house' Orange Order, it was more working class orientated. It supported, for example, the carter-docker strike in 1907, it supported the RIC mutiny, and they held collections for the workers during their marches. The constitution of the USA was partly drafted by Presbyterians whose backgrounds were from Ulster. So there is that huge ethos there.

The other difficulty, is that the CNR [Catholic/Nationalist/Republican] community need to recognise that there is sectarianism in *their* community as well. *Where I grew up, those who were sectarian were all 'over there', there were no sectarian people on 'our' side of the fence. Which was absolute baloney. The worst element in our society is sectarianism, that's the thing we need to accept, and all political parties need to say: let's engage without sectarianism. Anyway, sectarianism itself should be a crime.*

[Martin Snodden] Part of the Craig-Collins pact, in 1922, was to set up an anti-sectarian commission to deal with sectarianism.

[Seamus Farrell] The learnings from the past, there's richness there. That message from Sir Edward Carson, duly re-written to make sure that it is spoken to both sides, is precisely what the future needs. There's a cynic in me that says that both the DUP and Sinn Féin went through a choreography the last two weeks, because the alternative was suicide. That augurs ill for their capacity to work

together. But I have read the document and its potential is extraordinary, provided relationships of mutual respect emerge. They can do every single one of those visionary ideas, provided those relationships are built up. Now, on the evidence so far the signs aren't great, but it's a last chance, and they *might* just do it if they realise it is their last chance. But, Linda, this idea of sending a customised version of what Sir Edward Carson said is a good suggestion.

[**Peter McDonald**] You're saying this is the 'last chance salon'. I think they're thinking the same as me and you: if this goes down where do we all go? That's what will keep it together.

[**Derek Moore**] The Protestant working-class community lost out by not having people who had been involved in the conflict also involved in decision-making structures, and the Unionist Party made sure that never happened. As for a 'Bill of Rights', to be honest, I am not 100% sure what people want. A couple of statements in this 'new deal' document about the rights of Irish speakers, rights of cultural expression, are already creating problems. I think a Bill of Rights is better left in the hands of the people in civic society rather than government.

[**Sean O'Hare**] I think any movement at Stormont is heading towards Carson's statement. I think there *will* be a Bill of Rights, because at one stage a Bill of Rights was something that was going to be granted to nationalists, but I think times are changing and I think *everybody* will realise that a Bill of Rights is needed. Just on the void, that void exists on the nationalist side as well. There's loads of people who were active in the Troubles, who are now sitting in their houses with carry-outs, and they're falling into a situation where they're being led by fools and zealots. Maybe not leading them back to war but leading them without an alternative. And I have watched them: they move from organisation to organisation, for the simple reason that they have nowhere else to go, the same as the Unionists.

I say at every one of these meetings that we often all agree that something should be done, but when the meeting is over we are all back to where we were. There *has* to be some sort of a community-based forum set up where discussion about the future, involving the whole community, is facilitated. Where people like ourselves could come in and participate. I would come in as an

There has to be some sort of a community-based forum set up where discussion about the future, involving the whole community, is facilitated.

Official Republican, I wouldn't have to give that up. Someone else could come in as ex-UVF or whatever, and they don't have to give that up; we all just come in and discuss things that are relevant and that we could agree on. Like housing, education, jobs, all that sort of thing. And we might reach a stage where we can set out a 10-point plan of the commonalities we agree on, issues we think politicians should be taking on board. And this 10-point plan is then sent to every politician, telling them that if they agree with even five of the points, or whatever it might be, then we will vote for them. Then if, say, an ex-UVF person was standing for election and he agreed to some of the points made by our forum, it would begin by me voting for him by PR, perhaps number 8 down the list of candidates. But once you have done that, once you have voted for somebody who is not of your own tribe, it will be easier the second time, and it will be easier to move that person up the list of preferences. And in that way we slowly break away from tribal voting. That's why I think we should be thinking of having some sort of community forum. When people say to me we should be doing something and they ask: but what can you do? that's my opinion of what we should do.

[**Deirdre Mac Bride**] Part of me is very cynical, having read the document last night, that the DUP and Sinn Féin have any interest in doing anything other than protecting their own hides, really. But reading the document there's obviously a huge amount of lobbying went into it, because there's organisations named, there's projects named, there's places named. And maybe we need those lobbying efforts to continue and to be made visible to each other. Because I think in a way it requires us to find some of the energy we had after the Good Friday Agreement, which as a society we seem to have completely lost.

I think in a way it requires us to find some of the energy we had after the Good Friday Agreement, which as a society we seem to have completely lost.

[**David Ramsey**] Lord Carson's statement sought a stable government, but it obviously didn't happen. I'm grassroots, but the grassroots were usually left at the door, and many felt there was no other alternative but to get involved in paramilitarism. But the grassroots are getting more involved in the whole political set-up, and that could mean that Lord Carson's statement could actually happen. Remember, the 100th anniversary of Northern Ireland is coming up: wouldn't it be nice if we had something like what Lord Carson was wishing for?

[**Charlene Anderson**] I think if Arlene Foster and Michelle O'Neill said together that that's what they want, then that would be a great future for my children and my grandchildren. But realistically? The minute you introduce the words 'Lord Carson said', you are automatically introducing a sectarian element into it. Nevertheless, I pray for that to happen, every single day, and in everything that I do. I couldn't have said I was that person fifteen years ago, but allow me the distance I have to travel and I will allow that to everybody, it doesn't matter where you are from. Because I am a whole lot of things. I am a Protestant, I am a Unionist, I am a Loyalist, but first and foremost I am a human being. And I think that's what we're missing – the human story, and the human cost of wanting to move on.

I am a Protestant, I am a Unionist, I am a Loyalist, but first and foremost I am a human being. And I think that's what we're missing – the human story.

[**Martin Snodden**] Is it the case that the thinking here generally is that we should not leave our future up to the two main parties, we need to take more control of our own future?

[**Peter McDonald**] David Ervine once said: "The Unionist working class need to understand something. In Stormont there is a chocolate cake up there, and they're slicing it up between them. And until we get in, we're not going to get any." Grassroots loyalists were being ignored by middle-class Unionism and the top tier of the Unionist parties. Unionists even told people not to vote for loyalist parties like the PUP because they were terrorists. The opposite happened in the nationalist/republican community. Martin McGuinness was born and reared in the Bogside, John Hume was born and reared in the Bogside, and the people of the nationalist community aspired to them type of people, whereas in Unionism, those who hold the power don't live on the Shankill Road, or wherever, they don't know the reality of the normal Protestant working-class person. And as for a Bill of Rights it should be designed by people from civic society, and they should have the final say on its drafting.

[**Jacqueline McNeilly**] We are talking about the rights of people, but where do we start to implement a discussion on those rights? I was working in the health service and with senile dementia. And we had one lady – it was Remembrance Sunday – and she said "I would love a poppy." And my work colleague said, "No, you can't have one of them." And I asked, "Why can't she?" And she said, "Sure,

she's a Roman Catholic." And I asked the lady if she would wear a poppy, and she said, "Oh yes, my brother was killed in the air, and I know what that symbol is." So rights were taken away from her. How do we start trying to educate people what their rights are?

[James Kee] We can talk about rights, we can talk about Bills; we can create whatever documents we want. To me a more important word is 'accountability'. I have listened all morning and the only person who has come up with a practical idea, or a potential solution, is Sean O'Hare talking about a community forum. There are boards and committees that are all appointed by politicians, and if you look at them, what are they? They are all failed politicians, they're 'jobs for the boys'. So, as this lady asked, how do we move to the next step? A Bill of Rights is fine, but it's just another document. Look at the American Declaration and then look at what's happening in America now.

The biggest recruitment thing we have is controversy. When Drumcree happened the Orange Order went from 30,000 members to 40,000 members. Why? Because there was something controversial happened. We are living in a society where there is competition, whether it is a football match or politics. That competitive edge is always going to be there, we're not ever going to have this perfect marriage. So we need accountability. A Civic Forum: there's another chamber up in Stormont, but then again the trick is: who do you select? I would select all the people in this room to start with, from what I've heard this morning. I looked at the 62 pages of the document and I am glad to say that there are bits in there that the North-West Cultural Partnership has contributed to, but it should have been people that I thought was representing me was putting that in, and that didn't happen, I had to go and do that myself. We need a mechanism, we need a structure, we need accountability.

[Teena Patrick] I am going to throw in a couple of questions. Sean [Farren] mentioned about this being a small community and a Christian community, and how did we accept 3,500 people dying here. That takes me back to our political leaders, and the engagement that they're having isn't with the people they need to have it with: the grassroots people. And when we talked about the Civil Rights movement,

And when we talked about the Civil Rights movement, where did those people go to when it all turned violent? Why did it have to be the way it was?

where did those people go to when it all turned violent? Why did it have to be the way it was? I know the RUC came in with a heavy hand, and people were caught in the middle, but why was there so much violence created afterwards? And some of the people who organised that violence, even within my own Protestant community, started to control the people. As a teenager local vigilantes told me what I could and couldn't do, and how many other people did that happen to? They took away my civil liberty, my human rights.

[Brian Dougherty] First of all, after you hear about the type of activity going on through social media, about how fragmented we are as a community, I really find it refreshing to come to events like this and realise that regardless of how diverse people's individual experience and background is, we can usually come to the conclusion that we're all looking for a more peaceful and modern society.

In terms of the Civic Forum there *is* a role for civic society. I was a member of the original Civic Forum set up under the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, I was a community development rep. I could write a book about where it went wrong and the lessons we could learn from it. The main feeling was that it never really got support from the political parties. I think the DUP were very critical of it, but at least they were honest, whereas all the other parties only paid it lip-service. It was bulky, it was unmanageable; I mean, there were 90 members of the Civic forum and a secretariat of three. I was on the first Policing Board in 2001 which had eighteen members and a secretariat of seventy! So it was quite clear there where the government, the NIO, saw their priorities. But it is encouraging that, in this new deal document out yesterday, they have put it back on the table. I would also be interested in hearing the panel's views on the impact of Brexit, because I think it has provided an unfortunate opportunity for political opportunism. And people have used it for the constitutional referendum debate, and also three years of 'Brit-bashing'.

[Martin Snodden] So we have had four questions/comments there. Anyone like to start responding to that?

[Sean O'Hare] When peace came people were discontent that they didn't get

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a 'peace dividend'. I thought peace *was* the dividend. The media have a lot to answer for in this, by saying that if Stormont's up and running again, the health service, schools, everything, is going to be fine. We'll be lucky if we get as good as England – and England is bad, regarding the health service and schools. So we shouldn't expect too much. At the same time we shouldn't just sit back and do nothing: we have to put some sort of pressure on the politicians to be proactive instead of them sitting waiting to see what's going to happen.

With regard to the change and things, we do need to have personal courage. We have to go out into our communities and say: I am still a member of this community but I think this is wrong, and this is wrong. We don't have a touchstone. Let me give you an example. The Official republican movement was involved in a war, and then when they came to their senses the leadership started to give the people an alternative: they said sectarianism isn't socialism, so if you are a socialist you can't be sectarian. The problem here is that I think there is no alternative for people. If I was a militant nationalist, I couldn't step away from that old ethos because there is no alternative. It's the same with unionism; if there is no alternative you will stay in your camp and keep your mouth closed. Anyway, I think that violent Irish Nationalism and Unionist Defenderism have peaked, I think it is over. There may be violence but never on that scale again. There's no argument for it. But we do have to worry about the void you mentioned; it is there, and as community activists we have to concentrate on it.

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[**Sean Farren**] Drawing on my experience as Minister for Finance we should all be aware that the per capita expenditure in Northern Ireland is way above per capita expenditure in Scotland, England and Wales. I was at meetings at which ministers from Westminster would be present and they would laugh at me, saying that their constituents were getting much less spent on them than my constituents in Northern Ireland. And in terms of raising our own public finances we only raise two-thirds of what we require, the rest comes from Westminster. I just put that out so that people appreciate the situation that we're in financially.

To come to some of the other points raised. There is a grave danger, when Brexit comes, that the rights protected by being members of the EU,

particularly workers' rights, will be diluted. So there's somewhere we could start and make sure that at least our concerns in that respect are heard. There's a lot that we can do in terms of making representation. As for the Civic Forum, we might get as cynical about the membership of a Civic Forum as we get about the members of the Assembly and the Executive. Because not everybody, not every interest, could possibly be represented within the Civic Forum.

But my experience as Minister was that I was in touch with people on the ground as much as I possibly could. Northern Ireland is a small society; you don't have to go very far to get round and meet people in their various organisations. So let's use the opportunity of access to ministers. There's much more access to ministers here than there is in Westminster. And use that to make representations, on Brexit and the dangers that it presents to rights, in whatever respect. Let's mobilise ourselves in whatever organisations we're working, to make ourselves alert to the rights that need to be protected, and to the threats to those rights. So that at least we make our concerns heard.

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We can't always expect that when we're listened to that what we ask to be done will be done in the way in which we expect. Coming back to my own experience, particularly when you're drawing up a budget, you get representations from this group, and from that group... and you are supposed to square the circle, you're supposed to be able to satisfy everybody. But you can only satisfy everybody to a certain extent. Maybe this is a plea for a little bit of understanding, having been in there. Let's try to ensure that we do make our voices heard, but that we appreciate the need for compromise and not to be too cynical or critical of the nature of the compromises which have to be made.

[Peter Bunting] It goes back to this: what type of forum do we want? Who is going to be on it? There are so many diverse community groups in Northern Ireland, it is going to be a hellish problem to decide who gets elected and who doesn't. But it does need to be set up. However, a forum, by its very nature, will only make so much progress, because as the head of ICTU at the time, representing 225,000 people, from all religions and all politics and none, we still found it very difficult to make headway in our own discussions with the CBI, the

Federation of Small Businesses, the Institute of Directors, the Ulster Farmer's Union – and we didn't really get an cohesive economic plan put together.

And there is another problem. If you go into any village in this province you will find there is a Protestant school, a Catholic school. Two different costs. In Belfast you have a health centre over here, and across the wall you have another health centre over there. We're duplicating everything we do. So there's a double cost for so many of the things, which is unfair for spending, but which is also inhibiting integration, people getting closer to each other. The Civic Forum was too unwieldy and even within it there were competing interests. A practical way forward might be to keep this current group talking together.

[Peter McDonald] I think a Civic Forum should be set up at council level, and we have eleven councils within the Six Counties. There should be a Forum in each council area, consisting of no more than 21 people – 7, 7, and 7 – people from a civic background, people from a professional background, and then the communities from both sides. If you create a forum which is unwieldy and you have 90, or 190 people, you are going nowhere, it's mad. It needs to be small, focused and taking on issues which can be supported by your council, which then can move to a different stage, with each council's Civic Forum appointing three people to sit on a forum of 33 people which is your Civic Forum that sits at the 'house on the hill'. And that's all fed through from the grassroots, to your council, to your statutory and voluntary people, and right through to get the support of your local MLAs, or councillors. That to me makes sense, it is structured, and it's the voice of the people. Because this peace process must come from the ground up, not from the top down. We are the people that's creating the peace process, the political process is up on the hill, and if them two don't join, you're bound for failure.

[Sean O'Hare] Politicians are very suspicious of forums, but I don't see a community forum continuously badgering the politicians, rather we would be there to encourage them to do the right thing. The two main parties are each playing to the lowest common denominator in their constituencies. If there was a forum which could introduce issues that they would *like* to tackle but don't want to be the first to raise, that would be one way of actually assisting the politicians.

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[Derek Moore] I think that until we as a country let go of the past, we are never going to move forward. We talked about rights, but then again we are going to impose our rights on legacy stuff on our young people, who had nothing to do with it. I think that we have to let the past go, hard as it is for me to say that.

[Martin Snodden] For me there were a few comments. We don't want to seek parity; we don't want to have what the South has, or what England or Wales has, we want to have something better. It is not about seeking parity, it is about being creative in terms of what *we* would like to have. And, also, not to be silent: for people often take silence as agreement, and acquiescence to the system. Also, to keep the voices loud and active. And there was a sense too that the role of a Civic Forum can be in two directions: it can push issues up to the politicians, but it can also give people in the community an understanding of the difficulties the politicians are facing. So we can lobby more effectively. And now I am going to hand it over to Maureen and Harry to wind up.

[Maureen Hetherington] There is no way I could even begin to summarise what has been said, it has all been so impressive. I have loved this discussion today. It was powerful when people actually talked about their lives, both personally and professionally. And we saw each other as human beings: we can have our differences, but the bottom line is that we are all human. I also wanted to add the importance of the community sector; many people are working at the grassroots but it is the first sector which is always hammered, and is set aside until the politicians need consultations to bring things forward. When people don't have any hope, what is it they resort to when they don't have alternatives? I think there is a real need for civic leadership to offer those alternatives and accountability. I would like to finish off by saying that the Ulster Covenant wasn't the only one, there were two other covenants that were signed by 10,000 and 3,000. They would bring you to tears to read them because they talk about 'working alongside our Catholic neighbours'. I really think these positive encounter dialogues are really important conversations. Can I thank everyone for their contributions. Can I especially thank Harry and the Messines Association – and their series of workshops – and the panellists for their superb input, and to Martin as well.

I have loved this discussion today. And we saw each other as human beings: we can have our differences, but the bottom line is that we are all human.

[**Harry Donaghy**] I have the privilege to not only passionately believe in the purpose of the Messines project when it was put together, but I have been working full time for it. And one constant theme keeps arising, from back when we – an assorted group of loyalist and republican ex-combatants – had our first discussion in a primary school in the village of Messines in Flanders, and it was this thing about learning from history. Not just studying it, academically, but endeavouring to *use* the lessons of history positively and constructively. I should also point out that the people who sat in that village classroom, despite their diverse backgrounds, are still friends to this day.

We can start conversations on topics that others might agree with, but which they hesitate to address. If we can help assist in making those conversations actually take place that would be a positive contribution. Some conversations are going to be difficult, some very difficult – indeed, in our next series of workshops we hope to look at Partition, and the Irish Civil War – but to move this society forward we are duty bound to engage with these difficult elements of our history.

One of the most positive aspects of our recent, and complementary, *Reflections on 1969* series of discussions, was that we had people in the room who were basically front and centre of the violent events that took place in Belfast on 13th, 14th and 15th August. So not being afraid, and having the moral courage to engage with one another, is going to be important in all of this. And we have to confront this nonsense that engagement with the ‘other’ community is some form of ‘betrayal’ of one’s own community. We are going to have to learn – we have already wasted twenty years – how to compromise. And if we can help in any way at all in influencing, assisting our politicians – a lot of whom *want* to do the right thing — then that too would be, in my opinion, a worthwhile venture.

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