

The Motion condemns violence from whatever source. We can abhor violence, but can we bring it to an end? The theory used by successive incumbents of Stormont Castle and supported by many hon. Members has been that if we isolate the violent men from the community in which they live they will have to cease their activities. This has been tried and tried again with some but not total success. It will not in itself bring violence to an end. I do not believe there is a sizeable section of the community supporting the gunmen. I cannot see what more can be done to isolate them further. But do we live with these men or do we eventually confront them? Even if we establish new institutions which can command widespread acceptance, the gunmen will still oppose us because they do not recognise this Chamber as a legitimate body and they will not be bound by our decisions. Would we collectively have the will to oppose them, even if it meant using unpalatable means?

The real source of violence in Northern Ireland is the continuing uncertainty as to the British Government's intentions. This doubt is the seedbed of subversion. It is the justification in some eyes for counter-violence and it is the reef on which the political process will ultimately perish unless we ourselves can bring it to an end. There has been considerable criticism of the way in which the security situation has been handled on the ground. There has even been criticism of the make-up and nature of individual sections of the Security Forces. I refer here to the campaign of the hon. Member for Mid Ulster (Mr. Ivan Cooper) and what I consider to be his vilification and innuendo against the U.D.R. and the R.U.C. Reserve. Unfortunately, Mr. Cooper is not in the House, although I told him that I intended making this point. If the hon. Member believes that those of us on this side of the House would tolerate a campaign to discredit these men, in the same manner as the U.S.C. and the R.U.C. were discredited in the late 1960s, then he has another think coming.

The real culprit on the security side is not the man or the woman who patrols our streets at night; it is the political policy that has misguided them over the last five to six years. Regardless of how each of us may view that political policy—whether we feel that it was too weak or too soft or introduced at the wrong time—the main fault lies with the politician and not with the policeman or soldier on the streets. It is interesting to note that the Secretary of State only now proposes to make the internment of an individual a political decision rather than have some form of sham court to make the decision for him. This is being introduced at a time when the whole thing has practically come to an end.

Unfortunately violence has become an

endemic disease in Northern Ireland. We see this in our housing estates and especially in our urban areas. Vandalism is rife in these estates and is running up to hundreds of pounds a week. If one goes round Belfast one cannot get a public telephone that has not been smashed to ribbons. There is no respect for authority, not even in some of our schools. We have opened a Pandora's box of evil and those responsible for this have to bear a terrible burden. The hon. Member for East Belfast (Mr. Cardwell) made reference to our younger people. It is here that the greatest danger lies. We have got a generation growing up that knows nothing but the use of force in order to get its way.

We are hoping to have political negotiations in the Convention, but the point ought to be made that we are concerned with creating a new structure of government. We are not concerned with a carve-up of the responsibilities of that government. We are hoping to provide channels through which we can govern this country effectively. We should also remember that there are forces outside this Chamber that will never be reconciled to any decision that we may make, be it by unanimity or by majority. At some stage—and I hope it never comes—those fellows may have to be faced up to by us.

They prevented or attempted to prevent some hon. Members from taking their seats in this House. They prevented many constituents from even casting their votes. I do not think that any decision we may take will ever meet the points of view which those individuals hold. We are in the middle of our first agreed Motion. There may be a temptation to get carried away from time to time, but I hope that during this process we are giving the people outside this Chamber the genuine and sincere impression that, whatever the result of our deliberations here may be, we have made an honest attempt to reach resolution. As I said when I first spoke in this Chamber, there will be no shame in failure provided we have tried.

3.19 p.m.

Mr. Hume: Like all hon. Members who have spoken on this Motion I support it fully, not only because of the opportunity it gives us as an agreed Motion to talk generally about the problems that face us but in particular because it gives all of us a chance to state our ideals and our attitudes. It gives us the chance to state them as we see them and as we believe them and not as others would represent or misrepresent them.

One of the great weaknesses and causes of failure in this community has been that the ideals which different sections of it have held have been misrepresented by other sections. I am prepared to accept that my colleagues and I may and do misrepresent the ideals and atti-

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tudes of those who sit opposite. I am certain that they misrepresent ours, not perhaps through any malice but through sheer misunderstanding. This debate gives us an opportunity to state what our ideals are. The first thing that should be said in a community like Northern Ireland is that ideals are good things when held by a substantial section of the community—ideals which spring from a distinctive culture and a distinctive tradition. If there is any large group of people anywhere in the world who have a distinctive way of life, that can only be a good thing.

The world is a much richer place because there is diversity. There are distinctive ways of life and there are differing groups of people in differing countries who have a different approach, yet their very existence is a good thing. Diversity is a good thing. The question we have to ask ourselves is, "Have we learned that lesson?" It often seems to us that the division which exists here is at the root of our problem. Perhaps it is not so much in the division as in our approach to its solution that we make mistakes. There is diversity in Northern Ireland. There is diversity in this Chamber. There is diversity even among the group which calls itself the U.U.U.C.

The question we must ask ourselves is, "Should we seek to end that diversity or end the division by conquest or by domination?" In effect, that is what both traditions in Ireland have tried to do for centuries. Each has tried to end the division and the difference with the other by conquest or by domination. "Ourselves alone" has been a powerful attitude in both Irish traditions for a long time. It is the attitude that is dominating the thinking of many people in both sections of our community today.

The questions we should be asking ourselves are, "Are we right to think that our tradition, whatever it is, is the only one? Are we right in thinking that a solution can only be based on the recognition of one tradition? Is there only going to be one mould into which this whole community is to be poured to produce a uniformity at the end of the day?" If that is what we are saying we are abandoning some of the greatest riches this community has got. We are asking that the traditions that go back for centuries—cultural traditions and the varied gifts of all our people—be simply obliterated in order to conform to one point of view, whatever that point of view may be.

I believe that both traditions are guilty of this basic exclusivist approach which feels that one tradition can exist only by getting rid of the other or by dominating the other. The net result of that is seen sadly on our respective gable walls and kerbstones. Our culture and our

tradition, from whatever side we come—this is a terrible commentary on the development of our society over the years—are reduced to scribbling graffiti on gable walls. The very emblems which each side claims to be proud of are painted not only on gable walls but on kerbstones for people to walk over. That is a message to all of us of total defeat for the positive development of our traditions. In some senses that has led to the graves of many of our people. It is wrong that two traditions with such rich historical backgrounds should be reduced in the 20th century to expressing their thoughts on the walls of our streets and on our kerbstones.

We have all made mistakes in this country: let there be no mistake about that. We have a division. Our task is to harness the diversity into one source. If countries like India with its teeming millions and diverse traditions, or Canada with its differing national traditions, or the United States with so many races, were to adopt the attitude of mind which both sections in this island, in their traditional approach, have adopted, where would they be? Instead they sought to find a Constitution to which all gave their loyalty and in which all traditions were respected and allowed to flourish—not one mould but a diversity; unity in diversity.

We have to try to do the same but, as Mr. West rightly said at the beginning, in order to do so we need to rethink our position. I hope he meant what he said because we certainly mean it when we say that not only have both traditions on this island got to rethink their position but we have got to re-examine the fundamentals of our traditions, including the basic political commandments that have been handed down to us.

Perhaps I could address myself first to the Loyalist tradition. What I say may be regarded by some Members as offensive. It is not intended to be. I will deal with my own tradition later. It is intended to give Members opposite a view of how we see their tradition in the historical perspective and how it has approached the problem of living together. The Loyalist tradition in Ireland—I do not like using religious terms—has always rightly sought—I emphasise rightly—to protect its basic traditions and rights, and we would support the Loyalists in upholding those traditions and rights. Sadly, we believe that in protecting them they have taken a course which has been wrong. They have taken refuge in a situation throughout Irish history. We go back three centuries. Your tradition has lived under many different constitutions on this island but it has always had one thing in common, that you sought to protect yourselves by retaining power and protecting ascendancy.

Today you can do likewise. You can retain

control. You can retain power. You can give the outward emotional expressions to that which we all know. You can wrap your flag around you. You can beat your drum. But one thing we know, and all know if we have any integrity and intelligence, is that you will fail. It has failed before and it will fail again because it is an approach which seeks to exclude other traditions and in the end will lead only to the grave, to death, destruction and conflict. It may satisfy the bugles in our blood, or in your blood. It may satisfy the atavism that is in every one of us. You may feel proud and patriotic in what you are doing because it appeals to the fundamental emotions that exist here. But it will not succeed. There is no point in seeking security in that approach. The real security your tradition has rests in your own strength and numbers and in nothing else.

It does not rest in Acts of a British Parliament. The history of Anglo-Irish relations is littered with Acts of the British Parliament giving promises to the Irish Protestant population, every one of which has been broken. In 1793 the Act of Renunciation promised that Grattan's Protestant Parliament would last for ever. "For ever" lasted seven years, until 1800. Establishment of the Church of Ireland in 1800 was to last for ever. "For ever" this time was a little longer; it was 67 years. You had 1920. You had 1949. We had 1973. These were Acts of Parliament promising security to the people of Northern Ireland, to your tradition. Did they provide that security? They did not. Even in debating the 1973 Act, in the first debate of the old and now defunct Assembly, I said the Constitution Act did not provide a basis for security for the people of Northern Ireland. It only provided a framework, an opportunity.

In the end the real protection the majority tradition in this part of Ireland has rests in its own numbers, not in defensiveness or siege mentality but in positively coming out, working in co-operation and partnership with the other tradition and building an entirely new society. The same applies to the traditions from which we spring. I have asked you to re-examine the fundamentals of your approach. We have to re-examine the fundamentals of ours. We have been handed down a set of political dogma that has served us badly. We have been handed down a romantic notion of Ireland, a dreamlike thing which bears little or no reality to the life of the people in Ireland. We have been given an exclusivist notion of Ireland which excludes and wants to exclude the million people in the northern part of Ireland who have every right to be there. The exclusivism, that undefined Irishness to which if you do not ascribe you do not belong, is the same thing again—ascendancy of one tradition over another.

We have had that handed down to us—the attitude of mind which says it is patriotic to

unite a piece of earth irrespective of what the people on that piece of earth think; the attitude of mind which says it is even right to do it by force; the attitude of mind which says we, too, can wrap our flags around us; beat our drums; sing our patriotic songs; let our chests fill with pride and let us believe that that is the patriotic and Irish thing to do. We know from hard and bitter experience that we can continue with that approach, but we know for certain that if we do we shall fail because it, too, leads only to conflict and to the grave, and we have too many graves to remind us of the folly of that approach.

Mr. Wright: Would the hon. Member give way, please?

Mr. Hume: Yes.

Mr. Wright: When the hon. Member mentions the methods by which we can achieve this agreed State of Ireland would he agree that the S.D.L.P. entered into the power-sharing Executive and Council of Ireland in order to achieve this by subverting the instruments of government? Is this what he is saying is a legitimate way to do it?

Mr. Hume: I do not think subversion is a legitimate way, either openly or by stealth, of doing anything, and I would suggest to the hon. Member that what he has just said represents what I said at the beginning—a misrepresentation of our beliefs and ideals.

Mr. Wright: These are Mr. Devlin's words.

Mr. Hume: If you let me finish you will hear what I think in the positive sense. I have been dealing with what I regard as wrong approaches in the past by both traditions. If we examine the fundamental approaches of both traditions we find they are anti-Christian because both are prepared to uphold that it is right not only to die in their defence but to kill. In other words, the first principle of any Christian—the sacredness of human life—should be subjected and made secondary to a political objective. That is anti-Christian.

That approach must be set aside and there must be a new way forward. There is no point in our simply condemning those who have taken these traditions to the extreme—the young people of both sections of the community who have felt, because of the handed-down dogma, that they are honouring their cause by doing what they are doing. There is no point in politicians and everybody else washing their hands of those people if we do not re-examine the basis on which our respective political approaches have been made in the past and will be made in the future.

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What do we do about it? What is the alternative to these conflicting traditions? I suggest that when people speak of power sharing and an Irish Dimension—both British phrases, by the way—they would do better if they talked about the thinking that lies behind them rather than the actual words themselves, which have become slogans. We are under no illusion, and never have been, that power sharing is an unnatural system of government. But we are living in an extremely unnatural situation and the question we have to ask ourselves is, "How do we get from here, where there is a deep gulf and a deep divide, to the point where we can describe Northern Ireland as a normal society in which issues are fought on the basis of normality in politics and not on the basis of two traditions confronting one another?" How do we get from point A to point B if we do not have an intermediate situation in which there is a genuine, positive effort to build trust between both sections of the community?

Trust cannot come simply from words but only from working together and from discovering—I address this to Mr. Wright—that there is nothing subversive in a genuine partnership between both traditions.

Mr. Wright rose.

Mr. Hume: If you do not mind, I am running out of time. We must form a partnership between both sections if we are to go anywhere, if we are to develop trust and confidence to replace the distrust, the fear and the prejudice that have poisoned our past. Out of that will come an entirely new situation and it will be based on a much more normal society because it will have been built by the people in this part of the country working and spilling their sweat together and not their blood. Similarly, we cannot ignore the fact that this problem not only affects us—it affects us principally—but that there is a British Dimension and an Irish Dimension. It affects both these islands; we all know that. Therefore, we must also look at what our relationships are going to be with the rest of these islands.

There are many problems on the island of Ireland which we have in common. The hedge which separates my constituency from the constituency in north-east Donegal does not change the problems of the farmers on either side of it. We all know that to be true. Neither are many other problems changed by the existence of a political frontier. There is nothing wrong—there is everything right—in a good relationship between both parts of this island expressed through a positive partnership, not a take-over. Take-overs do not work. You cannot subject and coerce people and we do not ask for that to be done. We ask for a partnership

between both our traditions, both parts of this island, for the development of matters of common concern. Through that, things like security and ensuring that there can be no hiding place for anybody who attacks the institutions of either part can be forwarded. This is the sort of positive partnership that will build the trust we should be looking for.

To answer the question Mr. Wright asked me, we are not looking at this. I know that question concerns him and many others. We do not see the process of partnership leading to some ulterior ultimate objective.

Mr. Wright: Have you given up that objective?

Mr. Hume: We do not see that the unity we talk about need be—

Mr. Wright: Have you given up that objective?

The Chairman: If the hon. Member wishes to intervene he should ask leave to do so and it will be up to the Member who is speaking to give way or not.

Mr. Hume: What we see is a partnership between both of the traditions here and between both parts of this island leading to a new situation. It is not a form of territorial unity because territorial unity is meaningless. This piece of earth we all stand on is only a jungle if we ignore the people who live on it. We cannot ignore those people and must recognise that the ultimate objective as we see it—we are talking about a completely new definition of unity in this island—is unity in diversity, in the acceptance and the marrying of differences for our common good so that at the end of the day we have an agreed society, North and South, and agreed institutions in the North supported not only by the entire population of the North but by the entire population of the South.

That sort of agreement—you must admit this—is the only sort of agreement that matters, because for the first time all the people of this country would be publicly, honourably and totally accepting one another's differences and agreeing to respect one another in the way that everybody wants to do. For the first time in our history we would have the entire population of this island respecting the institutions that exist, North and South. Surely that is something we should aspire to and is the type of solution we should all seek because at the end of the day it is the type of solution that will bring conflict on this island to an end for ever.

It demands from all of us a re-examination of our fundamentals. That re-examination does not apply just to all of us in the North but to all

of the people in the South as well. The Government, the political parties and the people there have to ask themselves where their political dogma and political commandments have led them or led us in the North. They have not solved the problem of our people. They have been part of the traditions I referred to earlier which, if carried to their logical conclusion, would lead in the end only to conflict based on concepts of Ireland that have little to do with the people of Ireland. There is a great duty on them as well to re-examine their dogma and commandments if we are ever to solve what has been called the Irish question.

What does all this mean in practice, in terms of institutions and systems of government we can all support? As Mr. West has said, it means that economically, socially and in every other way the best way we in the North can look after the problems of our people is by looking after them ourselves; by ensuring that we do not have the indirect rule we have had for the past few years but that we have direct rule by the people of Northern Ireland through their own Administration. There is a British Dimension to that because the majority has said it wishes to retain such a dimension. There is also the Irish Dimension which I have outlined. We should try to get a situation in which our institutions are supported not only by ourselves but by the people of Britain and the people of Ireland as a whole. The only thing then missing would be the full loyalty of the people of the North. I put it to you sincerely that in present circumstances what we require to get that is a major act of trust and faith in one another. That can only be found by working together in partnership in the administration of our affairs.

What we must seek for all our people is real security. I have already said that is not to be found in Acts of Parliament or in police services although my party and I recognise and accept that in a situation where both sections of the community are controlling their own system of government they should also control a police service to which all would give their support and loyalty. Constitutions, systems of government, do not give us the security we need. We have had constitutions and systems of government. These are only opportunities, frameworks. The real thing to give us security is the people here having faith in one another, living on the same piece of earth and having the trust to work together. I have no doubt that when people genuinely try to make constructive speeches and to point the way forward there will be those on both sides of the Chamber who will privately say, "Watch them. They are at it. Do not trust them." People may well do that, but let them remember that the price of distrust is very high. We will have only our flagpoles left and we will go down in history clinging to them. We will pass to another

generation the deplorable legacy of what is happening on our streets today.

Dr. Carson (Armagh): May I, through you, Mr. Chairman, put a question to Mr. Hume? Perhaps it is not in order, but I did not want to interrupt his excellent speech.

The Chairman: The hon. Member has finished.

Mr. Hume: With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I will take the question.

The Chairman: Very well.

Dr. Carson: Does what he has just said mean that he repudiates his words of three years ago? He said then, "A united Ireland or nothing."

Mr. Hume: Like so many statements which have been made in this community, that one has been quoted repeatedly. My remark was not as the Member has quoted it, but I make no apology. Mr. West and others have made the point that we should not rake over the ashes of the past. I am not prepared to do so. I simply remind the Member of the circumstances in which my statement was made. Thirteen people had been killed in my constituency, close to my home. In answer to questions I said that the feeling of the people in the area was such that they would accept nothing but a particular solution. Today we are discussing the future of this part of Ireland. It is an important debate. We could all rake over the ashes of the past. I could remind Members opposite of their remarks.

Mr. Devlin: Do not.

Mr. Hume: We could all talk about the past, but if we do we will commit ourselves to failure.

Mr. Wright: Would the hon. Member care to expand on the meaning of the word "tradition", as used by members of the Social Democratic and Labour Party? It might be useful to put their thoughts in the political context rather than the traditional context. How do traditional dancing, singing, and so on relate to the situation in which we find ourselves?

Mr. Hume: Perhaps one day we will all begin to understand what we actually mean by the words we use.

3.48 p.m.

Mr. Bleakley: It is generally agreed that this has been a remarkable week. Three or four of the main speeches have made it remarkable, and perhaps it is not an overstatement to say that we may well be in the middle of an historic debate. I pay tribute to Mr. West, Mr. Paisley, Mr. Devlin and Mr. Hume, who, in a sense, gave