



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 98<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 129

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 1983

No. 114

## Senate

### THE IRISH ISSUE—JOHN HUME'S MAIDEN SPEECH TO THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, on June 28, John Hume delivered his maiden speech to the British Parliament. His subject was, of course, the Irish issue, for Mr. Hume is the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party in Northern Ireland, and he is the newly elected Member of Parliament for the constituency that includes his home in the troubled city of Derry.

Mr. Hume deserves his reputation as one of the great political leaders in Irish history. His maiden speech exemplifies the power of his leadership, the eloquence of his rhetoric, and the sweep of his vision of a New Ireland that respects the rights of both traditions on the island, Catholic and Protestant.

I hope that President Reagan and each Member of the Senate and the House of Representatives will take the time to read Mr. Hume's address, and to ponder what I think is his irresistible challenge to the British Government to change its policy on Northern Ireland.

I ask unanimous consent that Mr. Hume's maiden speech to the British Parliament may be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the speech was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

### TEXT OF SPEECH BY MR. JOHN HUME IN THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT, JUNE 28, 1983

I have come here to represent a new constituency in the North-West of Ireland. It contains the ancient and historic City of Derry and the town of Strabane. It is a commentary on the politics of the North of Ireland—or the fact that there is a problem there—that never before has someone with either my religious or my political persuasion stood in this House to represent the City of Derry.

I represent an area which has the undeniable distinction of having the highest unemployment rate of any constituency represented in this House, with 38 percent in Strabane and 28 percent in Derry. Those are statistics which interact seriously and severely with the political crisis in the North of Ireland, because that same area has borne more than its share of the brunt of the atrocities that have taken place in the North of Ireland over the past decade. It is the interaction of the economic situation with the political situation that requires a great deal of attention if the problems of that part of the world are to be resolved.

People have wondered about the rise in the political strength of extremism in the North of Ireland. There is no greater example of the reasons for extremism in that area than that we now have a generation of young people who were only four years old in 1969 and 1970 and have grown up in a society in which they have always seen security forces and violence on the streets, in which they have been continually searched simply because they are young people and in which, when they reach the age of 18, they have no hope of any employment because they happen to have come of age during the deepest economic crisis for a long

time. Therefore, there are resentments, and there are sadistic people who play upon those resentments, point to a British soldier and say "get rid of him and all your problems will be solved". That simplistic message has an appeal to young people; and people such as myself and members of my Party, who seek to show that the problems are rather more complex, have a difficult task.

If the Government were to take seriously the economic crisis in the North of Ireland and make a sensible and determined attack on the problems of youth employment, they would also be making a determined attack on the problems of extremism.

The debate is about defence and foreign affairs. In the gracious speech there is reference to the major issue between Britain and Ireland—the problems of Northern Ireland. It also happens to be one of the most serious human issues facing the House. Having come here after surviving over a decade on the streets of Northern Ireland, I have to say with some bitterness that I do not see much evidence that there are many Hon Members who think that it is an issue of great human concern.

We have been told repeatedly by Ministers, Secretaries of State and Prime Ministers, of whatever Party, that Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom. We are told by the Prime Minister that we are as British as Finchley.

I should like Hon Members to take any part of the United Kingdom over the past decade and to imagine the following things happening. Imagine 2,00 people being killed on the streets in Yorkshire, 20,000 people maimed and injured, and 430 million pounds spent on compensation for bomb damage: two new prisons built and a third under construction: the rule of law drastically distorted, with the introduction of imprisonment without trial: senior politicians and policemen murdered, and innocent civilians murdered by the security forces and by paramilitary forces. Imagine a shoot-to-kill policy for people suspected of crime being introduced from time to time instead of their being arrested. Imagine jury courts being disbanded, plastic bullets used on the streets and innocent children being killed. Imagine paramilitary organisations engaging in violence and the type of interrogation methods that led to the British Government being found guilty in the European Court of Human Rights being introduced. Imagine hunger strikers dying in Prison in Yorkshire and representatives of the paramilitary being elected to this House to represent Yorkshire.

If those things had happened on what is commonly called the mainland, can anyone tell me that those events would not have been the major issue in the general election campaign? Can anyone persuade me that any speech made since that election would not have referred to that issue? However, the only Hon Members who have referred to it were leaders of two parties in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, we are told that we are as British as Finchley.

Does any Hon Member believe that Northern Ireland is as British as Finchley or any other part of what is called the mainland? Do any Hon Members honestly believe that in their hearts? If so, where is the evidence of their concern? The truth is that if every Hon Member spoke his heart, he would say that he has psychologically withdrawn from Northern Ireland. The truth is that Britain has psychologically withdrawn from Northern Ireland. Britain and Northern Ireland would be healthier places if that psychological reality were translated into political reality.

The extent of the problem in Northern Ireland today can be summed up by the desperate indictment of a brick wall that has been built between two sections of the community in Belfast to keep them apart and to protect them from each other. This is happening in what is described as a part of the United Kingdom.

That wall is an indictment of anyone who has governed Northern Ireland in the past 14 years. It is also an indictment of every political party in Northern Ireland. It is an indictment of everyone who has any part to play in the problem. It is an indictment of the Unionist tradition, the Nationalist tradition and the British who govern from this House. It is an indictment, but it is also a challenge because the only truth that has emerged out of all the suffering of the past decade is that all our policies have led us to that wall in Belfast. The real challenge is to re-examine urgently our traditional approaches to a solution.

Hon Members who represent the Loyalist tradition have a lot of thinking to do. Their consistent stance on Northern Ireland has been to protect the integrity of the tradition in an island in which they form a minority. I have no quarrel with that objective. Any country is richer for diversity. I quarrel with the methods of protecting the integrity. Put crudely, that method dictates, "we must hold all power in our own hands". That is precisely what has been said. It is a violent attitude. It is an attitude which demands the exclusive exercise of power. The

leaders of that tradition have consistently maintained that view, but it invites violence. It is not possible permanently to exclude an entire section of the population from any say in the decision-making process.

The Nationalist tradition has also taken a rather simplistic approach. Its argument has often been presented in emotional and romantic terms. Its simplistic definition of Irishness is extremely sectional. It is based substantially on two powerful strands of the Irish tradition—the Gaelic and Catholic—to the exclusion of the Protestants. That narrow definition makes the Protestant tradition feel excluded from that notion of Irishness. In its more extreme form, it is thought right not only to die, but to kill, for that version of Ireland. In those circumstances, we can understand what contribution my tradition has made to the deepening of Irish divisions.

When one considers the streets of Belfast and examines the performance of the organisation that represents itself as the ultimate in Irish patriotism—the Provisional IRA—and one considers the bitterness that it has created by its campaign of destruction and killing, one can see how much rethinking and examination we must do if we are to bring about a settlement of the Irish problem and bring forward a definition of Irishness which is inclusive, not exclusive.

The third element is the British Government and the House. As matters stand, it now has all the power over Northern Ireland. Examination of history reveals one consistent policy. Moreover, it is the only policy that I have heard enunciated here—that Northern Ireland shall remain part of the United Kingdom as long as a majority so wish. On the face of it, that seems to be a democratic statement and guarantee. However, if one looks behind that, one sees that the majority that is being guaranteed was created artificially by a sectarian headcount. When one tells the majority that it can protect itself only by remaining in majority, one invites it to maintain sectarian solidarity as the only means of protection. Therefore, one makes sectarianism the motive force of politics. Northern Ireland has 60 years of elections to demonstrate that that is precisely what has happened.

If we are to break that sectarian mould and the divisions, we must recognise that they cannot continue for ever. We cannot deny that 5 million people in a Europe which twice this century has slaughtered its people by the millions could find the wisdom and foresight to say, "let us build structures whereby we can grow together at

our own speed." What is wrong with asking for that for our small island of 5 million people? What is wrong with asking to be able to build structures whereby the different traditions can live in peace, harmony and unity in a new relationship with Britain? What is wrong with the Government adopting that as a policy objective? That policy was stated by no less a person than Sir Winston Churchill who, on 7 July 1922, in a private letter to Michael Collins, wrote.

"Meanwhile, in the intervals of grappling with revolts and revolution, I think that you should think over in your mind what would be the greatest offer the South could make for Northern co-operation. Of course, from the Imperial point of view, there is nothing we should like better than to see the North and South join hands in an all-Ireland assembly without prejudice to the existing rights of Irishmen. Such ideas could be vehemently denied in many quarters at the moment, but events in the history of nations sometimes move very quickly."

They often move quickly when there is a strong Government in power who have the courage to grasp the nettle and face up to reality. Ending divisions in Ireland has evaded Statesmen for centuries. Ending the divisions requires strength and leadership. It is not asking a great deal of the Government to adopt as policy the statement that Sir Winston made on 7 July 1922.