

EWING

admitted. He did not link the samples to the place of scrutiny, which in itself is enough to invalidate it. The subsequent science outdated the tests anyway, which is enough to invalidate it. So the Crown expert has lost his job for inefficiency. Mr Prout did his best with a bad case — he is a good advocate and good advocates can argue bad cases — but I would say to the Tories: you are going to get egg on your face when these men are released.

In the words of Winston Churchill, the hallmark of a civilized country is the way you treat accused persons. The law of England will have to be improved in line with the rules of corroboration, something we have had in Scotland for a long time. The quickest way to get justice in this case is to release the Birmingham Six so that we can catch the real murderers.

PAISLEY (NI). — Madam President, where a person has been charged, convicted and sentenced, and subsequently new evidence comes to light, then it is the duty of any democratic government to recognize that new evidence and refer it to the courts for consideration. If that new evidence leads to the conclusion that the person has been wrongly convicted and imprisoned, then it is the duty of the State to put right the miscarriage of justice forthwith and pay compensation — although compensation can never make up for wrongful imprisonment. That is a principle that ought to apply right across the board to all citizens of EEC countries, regardless of who they are or the offence they are alleged to have committed. If new evidence is available in relation to the Birmingham Six, then it should be sent immediately to the court for reconsideration in accordance with the principle which I have enunciated.

Moreover, Madam President, no court of any EEC countries should be put under political pressure. They should deal with evidence and not with political feeling. Once that principle is breached, anything can happen. Sadly for the victims of terrorism, there is no reprieve or redress. Our priority must remain to defeat the gunmen and the bombers. While there has been a great deal of publicity about the Birmingham Six, and I can well understand that and understand the feelings of the people concerned, I want to highlight the case of four UDR men in Northern Ireland. There is immense public concern, in view of the number of disturbing circumstances that have now been brought to light indicating that these convictions are unsafe and that this whole case should therefore also be under review. Because they happen to be members of the Ulster Defense Regiment, and because their religion happens to be Protestant, they should not be treated in any dissimilar way from anyone else. I would call on you, Madam President, to see to it that three prisoners now in Paris, who have not seen their families for eight months...

HUME (S). — Madam President, the resolution says everything that I wish to say about this debate. I simply wish to make one or two points.

Fifteen years ago this week, 21 people having a drink in pubs in Birmingham and were blown to bits. Let it be clear that it is the totally unanimous view of this House that the greatest injustice that can be committed is murder, because there is no redress for that injustice. People can come out of gaols; people cannot come out of graves. Let that point be very clear.

What was also understandable was the wave of anger and emotion that swept Britain after the atrocities of Birmingham and Guildford. What is not, however, acceptable is that that anger and emotion, should distort the basic principles of justice. That has already been accepted in the case of the Guildford Four.

Might I say that as an Irish person I was very proud of the demeanour of Mr Conlan and Mr Hill on their release.

(Applause)

A lot of people in Ireland have much to learn from those two people, particularly from the dignity and lack of bitterness they showed and the generosity they displayed in thanking those British people who led the campaign on their behalf — leaders of church and State and ordinary people. Those same leaders of church and State are asking the same questions about Birmingham. They are supported today by representatives from all 12 Member States. I would hope that both of those arguments together, those of distinguished British people and the representatives of the 12 Member States will be taken seriously by the British authorities and that they will respond positively to them. It is also a great injustice to the 21 Birmingham people who cannot come out of their graves that the wrong people are spending their lives in gaol for that terrible crime.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT. — The joint debate is closed.

We shall now proceed to the vote.

(Parliament adopted a joint resolution¹ replacing Docs. B3-525/89, B3-526/89, B3-531/89, B3-536/89, B3-574/89 and B3-588/89 by a new text)

Human Rights

PRESIDENT. — The next item is the joint debate on the following motions for resolutions:

— Doc. B3-537/89 by Mr Deprez and others, on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party, on the

¹ Joint resolution by Mrs Crawley, on behalf of the Socialist Group, Mrs Banotti, on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party, Mr Cox and Mr Maher, on behalf of the Liberal and Democratic Reformist Group, Mr Andrews, on behalf of the Group of the European Democratic Alliance, Mr Blaney, on behalf of the Rainbow Group, Mr De Rossa on behalf of the Left Unity Group, Mr Vecchi, on behalf of the Group for the European Unitarian Left and Mrs Aglietti, on behalf of the Green Group in the European Parliament.