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There's no going back

Blueprint for tackling our violent history

By Noel McAdam
Wednesday, 28 January 2009

A road map for tackling the legacy of Northern Ireland's 30 years of violence and moving towards a more peaceful future was unveiled today.

The comprehensive blueprint of the Consultative Group on the Past – chaired by ex-Church of Ireland primate Lord Eames and former Policing Board vice chairman Denis Bradley – attempted to demonstrate how the past can be dealt with but appealed for people not to rush to judgment.

As the political controversy over proposed payments to the families of victims gathered momentum, co-author Lord Eames urged people to take weeks and months to reflect and said: "This is too important an issue for instant responses."

The Group warned, however, that to continue the already highly-politicised debate on defining victims and the hierarchy of victims is "both fruitless and self-defeating".

The true hierarchy it said was the level of loss and suffering experienced – the difference between having a family member killed or severely injured against a car destroyed or a house damaged.

But they also warned some victims groups are contributing to divisions and some "are little more than mini political parties".

On the single most controversial proposal – the one-off £12,000 recognition payment – the report suggests the only alternative would have been to recommend a further review of compensation.

But the Group said it was painfully aware no amount of recompense "will ever make things right" so decided against a review and believed "all families of those who died should receive recognition of their suffering regardless of past compensation payments."

They then recommend the payments, funded by the British Government, are given to the nearest relative of those who died as a result of the conflict from January 1966.

The nearest relative extends from spouses, through children and siblings to grandparents, uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces and would be evenly divided between eligible applicants.

The Group said to allow the money to be made quickly, an existing organisation – which it does not name – should process the ex-gratia payments which would be tax free and not affect social security benefits or pensions.

Those eligible would include the closest relatives of people killed as a direct result of either paramilitary group or security force



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action, or accidental death from the same sources but the report says the list "is not exhaustive" and the administrator of the scheme "should be able to show flexibility in deciding on payments".

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The 190-page report said concerns about compensation related to the amounts paid to families in the 1970s and 1980s and there was almost unani

mous agreement in the consultations that many payments were inadequate "not least because compensation was primarily based on loss of earnings and did not take into account the loss felt by the family".

The Group recommends a £160m Legacy Commission, headed by an international figure, which would take over the work of the Historical Enquiries Team and conduct "a process of information recovery" which would often be in private.

At the end of its five-year mandate, a Reconciliation Forum would take the lead in initiating a ceremony remem

bering the past and the Commission would challenge political parties and remnant paramilitary groups to sign a declaration they will never again kill or injure others.

It would also, for example, engage with the Christian churches which the report said had "failed to make a sustained united impact during the conflict" to encourage them to consider and re-think their contribution to a non-sectarian future.

The Group fully supports an annual day of reflection, possibly June 21, when the First Ministers would together give an address but also said a shared memorial cannot be agreed "at this time".

The report concluded some serious questions remain on the issue of collusion, comments there were many more people recruited as informers than was imagined at the time and suggests those with conflict-related convictions should be given equal access to jobs and services.

"Any society moving forward from conflict has no choice but to address the separations that exist between its people," the report said. "Responsibility for the future lies not only with those who were directly involved in the conflict, but with every sector of society."

Secretary of State Shaun Woodward was due to be in Dublin this morning for a pre-arranged meeting on a wide-range of issues, including the Eames/Bradley report, with the Republic's foreign affairs minister Micheal Martin. It was expected to be the first chance for both governments to respond formally to the report.

Mr Woodward will also release a written statement to parliament on the controversial recommendations, although the Government will not make any substantive report for some months.

It is understood, however, that the London government is keen to reinforce its view that Northern Ireland's future success is not just dependent on political stability but on dealing with the legacy of its past and the reaching of a genuine consensus.

[Read the full report here \[pdf 640 KB\]](#)

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Pat, when you refer to the "Indigenous population", do you mean those on the island of Ireland before the Gaels arrived?

Posted by mickey | 29.01.09, 14:18 GMT

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Dave....from reading your posts I find it very funny to see you talk of a poor "standard of education".....mind you this entire post is risible and just goes to remind us all of the extremists we still have at both ends of the northern ireland spectrum!

Posted by Baron Stefan von Heinrich | 29.01.09, 14:15 GMT [Complain about this comment](#)

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so do you not think Pat that it's about time to stop harking on about 1921 and move on!

Posted by Tap | 29.01.09, 14:11 GMT [Complain about this comment](#)

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Ne have Marty McFly number by ne chance???? with out him are plan will be well and turly foiled!!

Posted by Dave | 29.01.09, 14:07 GMT [Complain about this comment](#)

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Aoife makes a very valid point. It all boils down to a very simple equation. Indigenous population displaced + their language outlawed + tens of thousands slaughtered over six centuries + tens of thousands starved + catholics must recant or lose their land + no right to vote + not allowed employment with Guinness, Harland and Wolff etc = rather annoyed indigenous population. For the British folk living in Ireland history begins in 1921 - all that nasty business beforehand is completely irrelevant, with the exception of 1690 et al when popery was put in its place

Posted by Pat | 29.01.09, 13:46 GMT [Complain about this comment](#)

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Why not take the £300 Million and invest it into the communities who have sufrered. For example Build a few community areas in North Belfast. The whole community suffered some more than others. Instead of this row just invest the money into those areas.

Posted by martin | 29.01.09, 12:54 GMT

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I totally agree with you HC. I cannot believe that 16 years since the Ceasefire, people cant move on.

It will not be long now until I'm moving away to the Europe countryside. My Daughter lives there & there is no way I would ever expose her to this.

Posted by Dave | 29.01.09, 12:31 GMT

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Millar, great comment. I hope you meant it as a joke! I almost split my sides. Thanks, you made my day!

Posted by Robin | 29.01.09, 12:15 GMT

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After watching the dismal scenes of dissent during the Eames- Bradley discussion I believe that everyone should be given 12000 pounds to enable them to leave this sick, sordid and sectarian statelet. No amount of money can bring back loved ones but I dont think that this was the intention. I personally know 23 people who were killed by Loyalists? and also know that the time has come to move on

and get a life. Some people just love to wallow in their outdated opinions, especially those with elections on their minds.
 Ther will always be a strong undercurrent of Sectarianism that allows the numbskulls to feel good about themselves.
 Grow up, move forward or just move out. The twentyfirst, century awaits, especially for those currently in the 17th. century.

Posted by HC | 29.01.09, 12:11 GMT

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Aoife, listen to yourself. In Ireland we have two nations; he unionists of NI use the argument: "we are different from the rest of Ireland and thus should have our own government." this is the same argument the IRA/SF used in 1918-1923 within the context of the UK. Taking it from that perspective the IRA of the 1970s and 1980s onwards was NOT defending their country, but ignoring the democratic wish of a nation (NI)...obviously contradictory as they used the same argument against the British after the 1918 elections. The IRA were not defending their country; if they were they would have attacked the so called 'invaders'- the British army. But they didn't always to this. Instead the IRA terrorised the province with bombs and killed many Irishmen and women whom they are supposedly defending. Similarly so did loyalist paramilitaries who were just as bad. To think Lenny Murphy's family will get the money too is appalling. Nobody with terrorist links should get the money.

Posted by Chris | 29.01.09, 12:08 GMT

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I cannot beleive that out of the 71 comments posted not one person has relaised that the answer to all this is, and has staring eveyyone in the face since 1981!! I mean the level the level of standard eduction between you girls and boys is way below the mark! So heres a bit of back round so please, read and take in!!

The DeLorean DMC-12 is a sports car that was manufactured by the DeLorean Motor Company for the American market in 1981 and 1982 in Northern Ireland. It is most commonly known simply as the DeLorean. In 1985 Doc modified into a time machine. All we need is this money to be invested in rebuilding Doc orgainal plan. Then we simply go back in time and prevent Bif from ever noticing the sports almanac displayed in that shop window!! we may have to go through a long and complicated series of events, but ital be mildly intertaining. Like that movie.....space balls!!

Then eveything will go back to being fine and there will no trouble in the world again!!!!

Posted by Dave | 29.01.09, 11:56 GMT

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Your lack of historical setting is amazing.

The irish gealic people who claim to own this island, taken of them by the british, do not seem to realise that they are in fact the raiders.

when rome pused west, they displaced the gaels from spian france germany and the nordic countrys. the cuthrins who lived across all the british isles couldn't defend ireland because of the weather and bos etc

the cuthrins were susequently pushed into what is now wales by the saxons, hugenots, vikings etc.

these is all baked up by genetics research carried out at UCD.

it may also interest you to know that the first plantation of ireland was carried out by catholic monarch. ireland has only ever been united when under british rule.

you also seem to forget it is democratic will of the people in northern ireland to remain in the uk.

Posted by dave | 29.01.09, 11:34 GMT

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Mark says..

'Both communities believed that it was justifiable to kill....' 'To each community the other was barbaric....'

This is NONSENSE. The vast majority of both communities did NOT believe it was justifiable. We all lived in NI, listened to the rhetoric, experienced the 'troubles' and had a choice to make. The vast majority chose the civilised democratic path. A small minority of individuals CHOSE to kill. This is the fundamental difference. Innocent victims had NO choice in the matter.

John Hume for example (who understood as much about the discrimination the nationalist community suffered as anybody on the island) chose the democratic path and achieved an enormous amount without resorting to killing people.

Posted by Andy | 29.01.09, 11:32 GMT

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The most worrying thing about the whole debacle is that Cedric Wilson, a man who wore a silver grey mohair suit with white socks and Brown shoes to a televised meeting with the PM, should get more publicity. He clearly wears ready made suits.

Posted by Sartorius | 29.01.09, 11:18 GMT

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anyone else think the guy in the background looks like he was about to ask Adams for his autograph??!!!

Posted by RepublicanStones | 29.01.09, 11:05 GMT

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Aoife - move on dear - this is now 2009, not the 'plantations'. - Now go and do the dishes or something useful like that

Posted by *Blunko* | 29.01.09, 10:59 GMT

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The money is not the issue. It is the redefining of terrorists (both republican and Loyalist) as victims that is the problem.

Posted by *RS* | 29.01.09, 10:51 GMT

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I think that people are reacting to quickly to this without considering the future. There were people killed who were believed to be paramilitarie's but their families denied they were involved in any organisations. If these people were denied compensation there would be complaints and possibly court cases over whether or not they were entitled to it, and if they were then the families of known paramilitarie's would feel they were as equally entitled to it as the suspected paramilitarie's families. This is similar to those killed in the security forces. If a member was accused of collusion or killing innocent people and was then themselves killed, are their families entitled to it, and again how can you prove which officers where involved and which weren't? By offering it to everyone this avoids any of this and could therefore be better in the long wrong in helping us come to terms with our past.

Posted by *Brónagh* | 29.01.09, 10:51 GMT

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What people seem to forget is that republicans were retaliating against the invasion of their country.'Great'

Britain invaded many countries and succeed but they faced a stronger opposition in Ireland which led to the unfortunate death of many innocent people but were they wrong to defend their country? If someone knocked on your door and told you to leave, would you? If compensation is to be given, it should be divided fairly, as fairly as Ireland was divided during the plantations!

Posted by Aoife | 29.01.09, 10:37 GMT

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it's as well we dont have suicide bombers in this country, if their families were all given money the economy would never recover!

Posted by Millar | 29.01.09, 10:14 GMT

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