

**Northern Ireland Assembly
Monday 18 February 2008**

**Oral Answers to Questions
Victims' Groups: Funding**

Sources: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports2007/080218.htm>

5. **Mr Storey** asked the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide a breakdown of the amount of funding allocated to victims' groups, broken down by those from (i) an army background; (ii) a police background; (iii) a prison officer background; (iv) an ex-prisoner background; and (v) a civilian background; in each of the past three years. (AQO 1963/08)

The deputy First Minister: In the past three years, OFMDFM has allocated some £15 million to address the needs of victims and survivors. Over the next three years, we are providing £36 million towards those issues, which is an increase of some 140%. Some of that funding will support the victims' commissioners designate.

All groups that access funding in that area must demonstrate that their work is designed to support individuals who have been affected by the conflict that we have all experienced over the past four decades.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

2.45 pm

Mr Storey: I am glad that the Ulster Unionist Party Members have such confidence in the supplementary question that I am going to ask. [Laughter.] I would have appreciated — [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member has the Floor.

Mr Storey: I remind the Ulster Unionist Party Members that one swallow does not make a summer.

I am disappointed that the deputy First Minister did not answer my question. I asked for a breakdown of the funding that was allocated to victims' groups from an army background, a police background, a prison-officer background, an ex-prisoner background and a civilian background, instead of two headline figures of £15 million and £36 million. What steps does he plan to take to adjust the levels of funding so that innocent victims of terrorism are prioritised and so that members of terrorist organisations who heaped sectarian violence on the Province for decades are not rewarded?

The deputy First Minister: It is our duty to ensure that funding is directed to those who are most in need. The Department intends to bring forward a strategy, which will have the requirements of victims and survivors at its core. We want to ensure that no one is forgotten and that a more comprehensive and co-ordinated system is implemented.

The Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 defines a victim as:

“(a) someone who is or has been physically or psychologically injured as a result of or in consequence of a conflict-related incident; (b) someone who provides a substantial amount of

care on a regular basis for an individual mentioned in paragraph (a); or (c) someone who has been bereaved as a result of or in consequence of a conflict-related incident.”

The Member expressed disappointment with my answer, but the Department does not have the information in the format that he asked for.

Mr McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Will the deputy First Minister assure the House that the determining factors for the funding of victims' and survivors groups will be transparent and equality proofed to ensure that there is no hierarchy of victims?

The deputy First Minister: Funding for victims' and survivors groups will be based on assessed need, and the processes involved will be transparent and equality proofed.

Dr Farry: How does OFMDFM intend to avoid balkanising the issue of victims? Does the deputy First Minister feel that the manner in which the victims' commissioners designate were appointed has contributed to the perception that the issue has been balkanised? Has the approach of the Executive helped or hindered the eventual devolution of policing and justice?

The deputy First Minister: The Member has rolled a number of questions into one. The devolution of policing and justice is a work in process. I reject the Member's first point outright because we are not interested in balkanising the issue of victims.

Mr Speaker: Question 6 has been withdrawn.

Reclassification of the Terrorist Campaign

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes for the winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr McClarty] in the Chair)

Mr Storey: I beg to move

That this Assembly repudiates any suggestion that the 30 year terrorist campaign in Northern Ireland be re-classified as a “war”.

I preface my remarks by remembering all those innocent victims who have been murdered, maimed and injured over the past 35 years as a result of what can only be described as a terrorist campaign. The motion should act as a reminder to the republican movement that, however it may view its position in the Assembly, it is being scrutinised. Despite what Caitríona Ruane may wish or think, my party will continue to scrutinise it in every aspect, policy and issue. Sinn Féin Members should never think that they may have pulled one over on the unionist community. We will not see their portrayal of IRA violence as anything other than an attempt to airbrush history and distort the true facts. Robin Eames and his colleagues should also be clear that any attempt to support the rewriting of paramilitary terrorism will be totally rejected by the unionist community. I hope that Members on the SDLP and Alliance Benches will also utterly reject such a notion.

I am not blind to the activities of loyalist groups. However, their support was always tiny and, as we can see from the Chamber, it has diminished further.

The IRA murdering campaign will always remain what it was: the grubby, cowardly actions of sectarian terrorists who are in denial about their past and who betrayed the very cause that they claim to support. Republicans are in denial about the nature of Irish republicanism, about their so-called struggle and their personal responsibility in it. They still try to deny, for instance, their direct

role in the demonising and targeting of the Loyal Orders, despite Gerry Adams's boastful claiming of credit for it on the part of Sinn Féin activists. They are still in denial about what they have called "collusion", because they claim that loyalists colluded but that republicans did not. They still try to deny that the republican movement was riddled with informers, even though it was, and that the security forces utterly infiltrated and fatally compromised it, even though they did. Sinn Féin still denies the truth that by the early 1980s, surveillance was in place, by the mid-1980s, it had been infiltrated and agents recruited at all levels across the entire movement, and that by the early to mid-1990s, it was a busted flush looking for a way out.

Although Sinn Féin means "ourselves alone", the truth is that, for many years, it was not alone, because British Intelligence had placed its people at the very highest level of Sinn Féin, ensuring that it would, in the words of Mr Molloy in 1999:

"administer British rule in Ireland for the foreseeable future."

He continued:

"The very principle of partition is accepted."

I shall return to that theme in a few moments.

Irish republicanism is also in denial about the true nature of its so-called struggle. There was no war fought out in the ditches, houses, hedgerows, back alleys or dark corners of Northern Ireland. We know that because, when terrorists crawled out of their lairs to murder their neighbours, they ignored every convention of warfare. In warfare, prisoners are afforded certain rights and standards of treatment; however, the Provos tortured and murdered their prisoners and then booby-trapped their bodies.

The Provos also broke regulations with regard to the wounded, whom they tortured and killed. There are regulations to ensure that people do not:

"employ weapons, projectiles, materials or tactics of a nature to cause superfluous injury".

Once again, the Provos ignored that. Consider the planning behind Bloody Friday — in the Sinn Féin leader's territory — when bombs were planted specifically in order that civilians might run directly into their path.

Furthermore, they ignored the regulation that states:

"The attack or bombardment of towns, villages, habitations or buildings which are not defended, is prohibited."

Consider the Claudy bombing — in Martin McGuninness's territory. Consider how many major town centres were blown to smithereens. In all of those cases and others, the Provisional IRA deliberately ignored the international conventions of warfare, at will, for decades. Therefore, no war was fought in Northern Ireland.

If the IRA campaign was not a war, what was it? In order to answer that question, the Assembly must consider exactly what the IRA did. In some instances, the IRA murdered people for no reason other than their religion. The Kingsmill massacre was carried out by the IRA under a cover name. The gunmen asked each of the workers their religion. One of them was a Roman Catholic. He was told to get out of the way. The rest — 10 men in total — were riddled with bullets because of their religion. In other cases, people were specifically targeted because of their ethnic background. Consider the bombings of Birmingham and Warrington, where people were attacked because they happened to have been born British.

In other cases, people were murdered because of their political opinion. When I look across at the Ulster Unionist Party's Benches, I think of the late, and greatly missed, Rev Robert Bradford and Edgar Graham. I look at my own Benches, and although I am thankful that planned attacks failed, I know that many of my colleagues are only alive today because the IRA failed in its plans. Its intent, however, was the same.

The Assembly knows that the IRA did not fight a war because it ignored the international conventions that govern warfare. It knows that the IRA stands guilty of sectarian, ethnic and racial murder and political assassination. Therefore, what exactly was the IRA's campaign about? It simply fought a seedy, grubby, sectarian, terrorist campaign — nothing more or less.

The only alternative would be that if the IRA's campaign were a war, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness are war criminals every bit as much as Mladic and Karadzic, or any others who are associated with atrocities in the former Yugoslavia. The IRA campaign was no war. The IRA merely inflicted its sectarian misery on society.

It was, however, a fatally compromised and infiltrated sectarian terrorist organisation. As I said earlier, by the mid- to late 1980s, British intelligence had agents across all levels and every section of the organisation. In 1984, Gerry Adams was still saying that:

"You cannot claim to be an Irish nationalist if you consent to an internal six county settlement and if you are willing to negotiate the state of Irish society with a foreign government."

In 1986, Gerry Adams was still saying that:

"Irish nationalism within British constitutionality is a contradiction in terms."

In 1986, Martin McGuinness was saying that:

"Those who collaborate with Britain in exchange for a slice of the cake will implement British policy and remain silent when Irish people are murdered and oppressed."

In 2008, however, McGuinness and Adams implement British rule, just as Francie Molloy had foretold.

The IRA was simply the largest terrorist organisation in Europe. The people who were dead and mourning were left that way, not as part of any war, but as the result of the Provisionals' naked sectarian hatred. It is painful for democrats to comprehend that the political representatives of such a body should sit in an Executive in a democratic country. For some people, it is not only painful, but unbearable. I have every sympathy with those who feel that way.

However, I take comfort from the fact that although there was no conversion on Sinn Féin's part, there was corruption from the inside.

Although there was no transformation, there was infiltration from the outside, and although Sinn Féin used to be a political wing of the IRA, it is now, in many ways, a political wing of MI5.

4.45 pm

The House should send out a clear message today that, although all that is true, we will not play along with Sinn Féin's self-delusion, nor have anything to do with the Eames/Bradley group's proposal to airbrush history. Members should send out the message that we know Sinn Féin for what it is and what it did, and that its past crimes should neither be covered nor whitewashed. As we try to complete the task of creating a new, better and prosperous Northern Ireland, we should send out the message that, in the process of achieving that, we will not leave the truth behind. I support the motion.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that every other Member who speaks will have five minutes to do so.

Ms J McCann: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I want to say, at the outset of the debate, that I very much doubt whether the sponsors of the motion really care how the conflict that we have all been through is described. It was not that long ago that they were calling on the IRA to say that the war is over, and they consistently called on the IRA to say that. They had no problem using the word “war” when it suited their own political interest, but now it is like a scene from ‘Fawlty Towers’: “don’t mention the war”.

In speaking against the motion, I am mainly concerned about the relatives of all those who have been killed in the conflict. I could bring Mervyn Storey, or anybody, to any republican or nationalist constituency — even just a few streets from where I live, he could speak to a woman whose 12-year-old daughter was murdered by a British soldier firing a plastic bullet, as the child went to fetch a carton of milk. We can all talk about that type of thing, but I am not going to do that now.

Not for the first time in recent months, unionist parties — in their endeavours to score points against each other — have brought motions to the Assembly that have more to do with reaching out to the unionist electorate than with improving the quality of people’s lives. The sponsors of the motion know that Sinn Féin, and its electorate, have an entirely different view of the origins of the conflict and of the reasons why we ended up in the conflict situation that resulted in so many people losing their lives.

To nationalists and republicans, the core problem in this country is partition and the British Government’s historical occupation of Ireland. I know that the Members opposite think that we lived in a wonderful little place prior to 1969, and that is always their reference point. They simply ignore the injustice of unionist one-party rule, which treated nationalists and Catholics as second-class citizens in their own country.

Mr D Kennedy: Does the Member not accept the historically accurate fact that Ireland has never been united except under the British Crown?

Ms J McCann: No, I do not agree with that at all. [Interruption.]

Can I finish? I did not interrupt you.

It is the unionist parties opposite that are living in denial, not republicans. Those parties are in denial about the role played by unionists from the time of partition, and about their responsibility for the conflict. They need to get real about the injustice of partition and about the society that they created and forced nationalists and Catholics to live in.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Ms J McCann: No, I let you finish and I would like to finish what I have to say. I only have five minutes to speak. [Interruption.]

Right, go on ahead.

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for giving way. I will ask a question that I have failed to get an answer for from republicans. I do not accept the premise that there was injustice, because unionists had equal difficulties with the problems of running water and housing that it is claimed were suffered by nationalists and Catholics. However, even if that injustice did exist, did that justify the murder, mayhem, graves and sorrow that were inflicted for 35 years?

Mr Deputy Speaker: I will allow the Member an extra minute.

Ms J McCann: It was not just the IRA that did those things, OK? I am not even going to get involved in that debate, because it must be recognised that other people were involved in the conflict, including the British state.

The sponsors of the motion need to be mindful of the language that they use, because it could be deeply offensive to the people whose lost loved ones were members of the IRA. Those who died on the republican side were noble, brave people: they were patriots, involved in a struggle to end Britain's occupation of this part of Ireland — [Interruption.]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. The Member has the Floor. It is fine to disagree with her, but Members must allow her to have her say, just as they were permitted to have their say.

Ms J McCann: I am not asking anyone in the Chamber to accept my views, but I have a right to express them. I am asking Members to respect the feelings of the relatives of those who died. Their grief is the same as that of anyone else who has lost a family member. Their tears are the same.

I have no difficulty in accepting that because of the actions of republicans, relatives of members of the Crown forces who were killed, are hurting. I would not, for one minute, consider making remarks that could cause offence to those families. All I am asking for is the same level of respect for republican families.

The sponsors of this motion, and similar motions, should bear all that in mind when referring to IRA volunteers and their families. I remind unionist MLAs that they are part of a power-sharing Administration with nationalists and republicans. It is a very —

Mr T Clarke: Under British rule.

Ms J McCann: Well, you are still here. It is a very popular Administration among unionists and nationalists across Ireland. Many people in conflict situations around the world visit us, seeking help to —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. The Member's time is up.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this debate. The suggestion that the IRA terrorist campaign of the past —

Mr McCartney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kennedy: Very briefly.

Mr McCartney: The Member made an intervention and stated that Ireland was only ever united under the British Crown. Is that an acceptance that uniting Ireland is a worthy cause?

Mr Kennedy: Yes — under the British Crown. If the Republic wants to rejoin the British Commonwealth and renegotiate the terms and conditions for the union, I would withhold any objection.

The suggestion that the IRA terrorist campaign over the past 35 to 40 years was a war — as opposed to an insurgency — is not only emotive but offensive to unionists. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the motion has been tabled for debate because of recent leaks from the Eames/Bradley Consultative Group on the Past, and that this course of action was, perhaps, under active consideration.

The move that this motion exposes and opposes would be very inappropriate in any Western democracy at any time. However, in the world climate, following 9/11, it is a complete non-starter. I can only imagine what people in the United States, for example, would think of such a proposal, given the brutality and loss of life that took place on 9/11, and the ongoing threat posed by the terrorist organisation al-Qaeda.

Legitimising terrorism is not what the world is about these days — dealing decisively with terrorism, in the interests of the public who are threatened by terrorists in life and limb, is what we are about nowadays. Trying to rewrite history is never a good idea, even at the best of times. In a very real sense, one cannot rewrite history in any case. The past is exactly that — warts and all. Playing with words is also not a good idea — because that is all it really is. Nothing can take away from the sacrifice of the thousands of victims of the IRA terrorist campaign.

At the very least, we owe victims the respect of refusing to place their murderers on a moral par with them. That would be dishonest and grotesque.

I counsel the political representatives of the terrorists who perpetrated crimes against humanity — and that is exactly what they were — that their interests would be better served by keeping quiet about the past in the hope that, in time, people would stop seeing them as the men who gave up Armalites for Armani suits and would begin to view them as members of a legitimate political party.

Sinn Féin is taking a big risk with the continued existence of the IRA army council, which, if that party had any sense, it would disband. Tomorrow, a debate is due to take place on the murder of Mr Paul Quinn. Every such incident inevitably raises the question of whether the IRA was involved and whether it is still inextricably linked to Sinn Féin, which places its political project, as it calls it, at risk every day that the IRA army council continues to exist.

Talk about terming the IRA terrorist murder campaign a “war” is as laughable as any debate about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin — it is irrelevant and inappropriate. However, such talk still has the power to hurt the victim community.

When proposing the motion, Mr Storey remembered the sacrifices of many politicians, including the Rev Robert Bradford. When Members approach this Chamber and the Senate Chamber, they see memorial tablets in honour of Senator Paddy Wilson, Senator Jack Barnhill, Sir Norman Strong and his son, Jim, and Edgar Graham. Those are chilling reminders on which all of us should reflect, every day, as we pass them. We do not want to go back to those dark days.

This Assembly should pass the motion and, in doing so, should dismiss the notion that a terrorist insurgency was in any way a legitimate war. I shall watch with interest to see which way the political representatives of the IRA vote. I support the motion.

Mr Durkan: Contributions to the debate have already demonstrated that this is an emotive subject. The colour of those contributions perhaps suggests why a body such as the Consultative Group on the Past had to be established and why the victims’ commissioners designate for might be better able to make progress on the legacy of the past than politicians in this Chamber or elsewhere.

It is all very well for the DUP to tell us — as Mr Storey did — that people find it unbearable to take part in the power-sharing arrangements. It seems to me that the DUP is grinning and bearing power-sharing rightly. DUP Members use motions such as this to beat their breasts and Provo-bash and to talk about the past in a very emotive and one-sided way.

The SDLP does not believe in classifying as a war what we went through during the Troubles, the conflict, the division, the violence — all the terms that Members are comfortable with. Members use much the same language about the past few decades of our history.

The SDLP does not believe in equating victims with victim-makers in any way; however, there was not just one set of victim-makers. My party never condoned, excused or indulged violence from any source in any circumstance. However, today, we are being lectured by members of a party that was prepared for years to retell the lie that loyalist violence existed simply in response to republican violence. That is an absolute lie and is completely wrong.

Mrs I Robinson: Does the Member accept that his party was happy to use IRA violence to ensure that it got plenty of handouts from the British Government through the years — by claiming that if the Government did not do a, b or c, succour would be given to Sinn Féin/IRA?

5.00 pm

Mr Durkan: I refute that as an outrageous untruth. The SDLP neither did anything nor argued for anything on the back of the IRA campaign. Unionism argued for plenty on the back of the IRA campaign, and on the back of the so-called loyalist backlash, which was supposedly responsive, yet was not. Loyalist violence was absolutely wrong; republican violence was absolutely wrong.

Some of the people who examine issues of the past mean well, but it would be equally wrong were those people, in a well-meaning effort to deal with the past, to airbrush from history some of the hurtful truths that were experienced. To pretend that what happened was a war would be completely wrong. To talk about there being blood on everybody's hands and about there being wrong done on both sides would be wrong, because many, many people in this society made a conscious decision to play no part in supporting violence, whether that violence was committed in the name of the state, in the name of Ireland or in the name of Ulster. Those people do not have blood on their hands. The only blood that some people have had on their hands was the blood of their innocent loved ones while they tended to them.

The SDLP is opposed to all the crass moves to deal with the past in a false, phoney and dangerous shorthand, whether that be done through branding our recent past a war — as though everybody should have been on one side or another — or through somehow trying to pretend that the Troubles were some necessary and inevitable prelude to the peace process. Thank God that we are here in these power-sharing institutions; however, we could have been here decades ago. Parties must ask themselves about the position that they attempt to justify. There is no point in their simply condemning the violence that others practised. What about the vehemence that they displayed in opposing power sharing, North/South arrangements and political accommodation? That opposition ensured that we endured lost years, lost opportunities and lost lives for longer than was necessary.

That is why, Mr Deputy Speaker, although the SDLP does not wish to see our recent past, in order to airbrush atrocities and people's suffering, branded some sort of war, we shall not trot along behind the DUP into the Aye Lobby to vote in favour of the motion. The DUP does not have the right to propose a motion that deals with the past in a partial and emotive manner. That is no way in which to deal with the past, and it proves why we need — [Interruption.]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr T Clarke: Provo lover.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Please give the Member —

Dr W McCrea: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Dr McCrea, I am talking about the noise that has been created. Allow the Member who is speaking to make his point. Several Members have yet to speak, so those Members who have been interrupting will have opportunities to make their point.

Dr W McCrea: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. It has been said that we had no right to bring the motion to the House. Is it not correct that the Business Committee accepted the motion, so it has a right to be debated?

Mr Deputy Speaker: Absolutely, I could not agree more. Those Members who tabled the motion had a right to bring it before the Business Committee. The Business Committee decides whether a motion can be debated, and its decision was that it could be debated.

Mr Durkan, I shall allow you a further 30 seconds.

Mr Durkan: I was making the point, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the DUP had no right to table a motion that, in purporting to deal with the past, deals with it very partially and emotively. Rather than jumping in irrationally and emotionally, what we all need to do is allow Eames, Bradley and the others who are dealing with the issues to deal with them.

Yes, for its own political convenience, it suits the DUP to have such a motion debated, but that motion makes no contribution to the past, no contribution to the victims' lot and no contribution to progress. We are hearing lectures from the man who shared a platform with Billy Wright, yet he dares to call me a Provo lover?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Lunn: The Alliance Party has no difficulty in supporting the motion. [Interruption.]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Lunn: The Alliance Party has no difficulty in supporting the motion, although we doubt its necessity. As far as we are concerned, those who view the years of conflict as a war will continue to refer to it as such, and no number of motions being debated will change that.

The proposers of the motion evidently feel so strongly about recent comments made by people who should, by now, know the effect of wrongly used language in this country that they must emphasise their point again. I must say that I was equally surprised by the language that the Eames/Bradley group used, and the circumstances in which that language was used.

Factually, our conflict was never a war. The internationally recognised Army of the state was never placed on a war footing in Northern Ireland. That is why the Alliance Party was correct to back demands for investigations into allegations of collusion. It was also correct to oppose internment many years ago. Collusion and internment are not legitimate features of peacetime counterterrorism or intelligence gathering.

The positions that have been taken by the unionists and Sinn Féin are contradictory. The broad unionist position — not just that of the DUP — rejects the term “war” but is quite happy to use the term “private armies”. Unionists have been known to demand assurances that the war is over. They do not see the urgency of investigating collusion, although that should be a massive issue for them in peacetime. Sinn Féin, however, sees the past as a war, but it demands inquiries into collusion and events such as Bloody Sunday. If it really was a war, collusion and such events would, by now, be regarded as unfortunate but necessary, or, in the modern, Iraqi-style terminology, “collateral damage”.

The real issue is that there are parties who are so entrenched in division that they cannot deal with the tragedy of the past 30 years without dividing it up. Sinn Féin's campaign is concerned with legitimising the illegitimate by trying to make out that a grubby campaign, which failed utterly, was somehow a glorious success. Meanwhile, others seek to deny their role in creating the conditions for that tragedy.

It is interesting to debate such matters. Indeed, raking over the past seems to be one of our national pastimes. Although the past must be dealt with, rewriting history is not desirable. I hope that a campaign by terrorists will never be reclassified as a war, or given any kind of legitimacy.

Lord Morrow: As my name is one of the ones in which the motion stands, I support it. Over the past 35 years, Northern Ireland has suffered severely as the result of a vicious, sectarian murder campaign. It was waged, in the main, by the Provisional IRA, which claimed some 1,800 lives. The brutality of that campaign can be measured by the number of people who lost their lives — around 3,600. It seems that hardly a family has escaped. That systematic annihilation was carried out by those who were intent on driving out a people who wanted to be a part of the United Kingdom, and forcing those who remained into a united Ireland.

The neighbouring state, the Irish Republic, was not a disinterested bystander. Rather, it permitted its territory to be used as a safe haven for those who fled there after carrying out their deadly deeds. During the long years of that terrorist campaign, co-operation from the Irish Republic Government was in short supply. Extradition was never going to be implemented, and the reason for that was simple: the aims and objectives of the Provos were similar to those of the Dublin Government. They agreed on those; the only thing on which they disagreed was the tactics.

We have moved to the stage at which some in our society want to see the past redefined as a war. They want to lend some respectability to what happened over the past 35 years; to lend some credibility to those who carried out those dreadful deeds, with victims and perpetrators treated as equal. Could anything be more absurd? That would be rubbing salt into very raw wounds.

We all thought that the release of prisoners under the Belfast Agreement and the destruction of the RUC was the final insult, but now comes a further heinous suggestion — that those who carried out those murders be treated in the same way as their victims. Could anything be more hurtful, repulsive and soul-destroying than such a dirty suggestion? Surely, victims and Northern Ireland as a whole have suffered enough. To even attempt to justify such actions is a travesty — it is an insult to the victims and the memories of their loved ones. That would be to conveniently smooth over a horrendous part of this country's past and piece together a more presentable history on which to build its future.

To attempt to cloak the past 30 years or more of terror in a shroud of respectability demeans the intelligence of all right-thinking people and heaps additional pain and suffering on victims and their loved ones. Reclassification of the terrorist campaign as a war feeds the ego and is a misplaced belief that there was a struggle towards a goal. A romanticised “La Resistance” image is always portrayed by the so-called IRA volunteer who gave the ultimate sacrifice in search of freedom: that is a fairy tale. They were sadistic, bloodthirsty, remorseless criminals of the worst calibre who cared for nothing but the sheer driven imposition of their will.

In reality, the struggle was carried out by the citizens of Northern Ireland, who were caught up in a nightmare for over 30 years. They strove to carry on against all odds to maintain some semblance of normality. However, some of those citizens were caught up in attacks and became victims. The real claim to fame of the so-called fallen heroes, who are commemorated at various locations across the country, is murder and atrocity. They play no part in the sensible thinking of any society.

Attempts are being made to systematically remove the legal, justified heritage of this country — a country that is part of the United Kingdom. Those attempts are being made to facilitate the sensitivities of those who claim a desire for neutrality. However, they have not offered to remove the sick monuments that extol the virtues of a murderous villain who fell while on active duty. Once again, we are being exposed to the all-too-familiar stench of republican hypocrisy. They love to instigate the rules of change but fail to apply them to themselves. That is what we now

define as Sinn Féin equality — it has a different meaning to the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of equality.

Mr O'Dowd: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. In the past, I treated this type of debate as a challenge, but now I approach it as a chore. I do not want my colleagues across the Chamber to think that they have worn me down in some way; they have not. If there is a debate on this subject next week, we will return to debate it, and, if necessary, we will come back again the week after that and the week after that.

What do we achieve by continuing to have this debate? I suspect strongly that it is more to do with providing therapy for the DUP Back Benchers than with anything that is based in reality. No matter how much some DUP Back Benchers wish to shy away from it, they are in a power-sharing Executive with Sinn Féin, and they will continue to be in a power-sharing Executive with Sinn Féin for as long as tens of thousands of people vote for us and put us in power. They will have to accept the reality that we have come out of 40 years — some would say 80 years or even longer — of terrible conflict. However, the motion gives an insight into the thinking of the unionist parties.

The motion is about reclassifying what happened over the past 30 years to a terrorist campaign. Three unionist Members have spoken on the debate so far, and the most time that has been spent on loyalist violence is three seconds. I watched the clock as Mr Storey, the only Member from the opposite Benches to mention loyalist violence, spoke only for three seconds on that subject before he moved off it. Therefore, on average, each of the unionist Members who spoke spent only one second on loyalist violence.

If it was not a war, it was hell. War is not nice. Republicans have not asked anyone to reclassify the campaign as a war. We know what we went through, and we know what our communities went through. Unionists will refer to it in whatever way they wish, but it was a war because it was hell. War is not a nice thing — people die, terrible things happen, and terrible things are done by all sides in a conflict.

Mr Storey said it was not a war because the IRA killed prisoners, but the British Army and the RUC killed prisoners. He told us that it was not a war because the IRA tortured prisoners, but the British Army and the RUC tortured prisoners.

Mr Burnside: Will the Member give way?

Mr O'Dowd: No, I will not give way.

Loyalists tortured prisoners. Mr Storey told us that it was not a war because the IRA targeted civilians deliberately. Civilians were targeted deliberately on Bloody Sunday. A 12-year-old child who was going to the shop to buy a carton of milk for her mother was a civilian, and she was killed by the British Army.

5.15 pm

The loyalist campaign of the UVF and UDA — with whom Members on the opposite Benches have marched — is based on the definition of terrorism. We got an insight into that from David Ervine who said that the UVF existed to terrorise the Catholic community — [Interruption.]

Mrs I Robinson: He did not represent us.

Mr O'Dowd: Members of the parties opposite marched with him often enough. They marched with him on more than one occasion and shared platforms with him.

The UVF existed to terrorise the Catholic community into submission. Who armed the UVF? The British Government armed the UVF. Who armed the largest terrorist organisation in western Europe? The British Government did that as well. The Ulster Defence Association is the largest armed group in Europe. It is no wonder that that group retains its weapons. If unionists devote only three seconds in this debate to talking about loyalist paramilitaries, what pressure is there on such groups to hand in their weapons? There is absolutely no pressure on them. Is it any wonder that loyalist paramilitaries have murdered 30 people — the majority of whom were Protestants — in the past five years, when unionist representatives speak for only three seconds on the issue in the Chamber?

Members can feel free to define the campaign as they wish, but I would like to know why 30,000 troops of one ilk or another were on the streets of the North. The soldiers who served in south Armagh, east Tyrone and north Armagh and those who were in bases hidden under 20 feet of concrete should be asked whether they were at war. They knew that they were at war, and they knew that they were up against the force that was at war with them. [Interruption.]

The British Government put the Army on the streets; I thought that the Member might have known that. If Members want to have a quick history lesson, I will remind them that the British Army was put on the streets in response to a peaceful civil rights campaign.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up. There is no time for a history lesson.

Mr Simpson: When the Eames/Bradley group briefed the media that it was considering recommending that decades of terrorism should be repackaged as a war, it was understandably met with outrage, because it is an outrageous suggestion. It was also met with shock, not only because of its shocking revisionism but because it appeared to come out of nowhere. However, in Northern Ireland, nothing of that nature comes out of nowhere. My understanding is that the Eames/Bradley group was divided on the issue, and there were two differing factions on the matter.

There are serious questions for the Eames/Bradley group to answer. Why were the press briefed about something that was not the view of the entire group? Did the press briefing amount to one faction briefing against another? How can we, or the public, ever trust the group's recommendations? The proposal to reclassify the terrorist campaign is disgusting, but so is the way in which the hurt and bereavement of the long years of the Troubles has been used by elements of the Eames/Bradley group for their own ends.

There ought to be no cover given, or legitimacy afforded, to those who over many decades have visited sectarian misery and slaughter on all sections of the community. Did republicans claim to be at war with Roman Catholics? They say no. Why, therefore, was the IRA the greatest killer of Roman Catholics during the Troubles? In her speech, Jennifer McCann said that those republicans who died during the conflict were brave, noble people. Jennifer McCann should tell that to her co-religionists who were butchered by those people and to the young victims of the Omagh bomb — whose limbs policemen had to carry — and its unborn victims. There is nothing brave about that sort of republican activity. As a woman, Jennifer McCann should understand the feelings that were stimulated when unborn children were butchered by republicanism.

Did they claim to be at war with their Protestant neighbours? It often appeared that way; however, republicans tell us that they were not. Why, then, did the IRA follow Protestants for many weeks, carry out dummy runs in preparation for real operations, and then cut many hundreds of Protestants down in cold blood simply because they were Protestants?

Did they claim to be at war with people who held a different political opinion? Today, they would tell us that they were not. Why, therefore, did they set out to murder unionist representatives and leaders?

Did they claim to be at war with the British Government? They say yes. Why, therefore, did so many republicans, from the top down, so readily, quickly and effectively collude with the security forces against the ideals for which they claimed to be fighting? We have already heard that old phrase, "collusion is not an illusion", and that certainly applies to the republican movement.

However, that did not simply drop out of the sky onto an unsuspecting and ill-prepared republican leadership. The groundwork was carried out over years. In 1981, Sinn Féin decided to contest Northern Ireland elections. In 1982, it fielded candidates in elections to the Prior Assembly. In 1985, its members took up seats on local councils. In 1986, it recognised the legitimacy of the Dáil. By the end of that year and into 1987, it was negotiating with the British Government. Someone once said that the definition of a good politician is someone who, once he is bought, stays bought. Few would argue that Sinn Féin members are not good politicians.

My time is running out. I fully support the motion tabled by my colleagues; it is a disgrace that anyone, or any organisation, would even attempt to offer amnesty or declare that this was a legitimate war.

Mr Burnside: I support the motion because I do not wish to glamorise or dramatise the conflict as a war. However, in some ways, I have a split mind on the subject. In some ways, I wish that, back in the late 60s and early 70s, it had been declared a war. Sinn Féin/IRA thought that it was a legitimate state army, representing authentic Irish republicanism, and it wanted to declare its vicious little insurrection a noble war against the British state, with the objective of British withdrawal from Ireland — which it has totally failed to achieve.

Sinn Féin/IRA was glamorised and given authority by the then party of Government in the Irish Republic, which is the same party that now forms the Government in the Irish Republic — Fianna Fáil — and which, through Haughey, Boland and Blaney, organised Sinn Féin/IRA's original financing and has helped to finance the republican movement for the past 35 to 40 years.

Those of us who supported the British state — the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Ulster Special Constabulary, the UDR and the regular Army — were not allowed to fight a war. If we had, there would be many fewer of the current elected representatives sitting on that Bench, including the president of Sinn Féin and the deputy First Minister. However, the British Government did not authorise the fighting of a war.

Mr Molloy: Will the Member explain whether that is a threat directed at the Members on these Benches about what he would have done if he had been given the free rein that he would have wished?

Mr Burnside: If there had been a declaration of war and, through emergency powers, the methods acceptable in war had been used by the British Army and state, many of the commanders and members of the Provisional IRA — and of any other terrorist organisation — would have been removed from society using those methods. That is the reality of life. However, we had to fight a Southern Government that laid claim to us and was helping to finance a terrorist campaign — [Interruption.]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Burnside: — terrorist campaign in this country that did not allow the security forces the opportunity to act as in a war in order to achieve their objectives.

Special methods had to be used. We had to bend civil society, using Diplock courts and other methods that no one in a normal democratic society would want to use to defend democracy and freedom against rebellion and insurrection. Credit is due to all those who served in the RUC, the UDR, the regular Army, the support services and all the brave Catholics who stood up against intimidation. Credit is due not just to those Catholics who joined the police, the UDR or the Prison

Service but to ordinary Catholics who had to keep their heads down in their own communities because of intimidation by the same people who still intimidate in south Armagh. The remnants of the terrorist army — an army only by Sinn Féin's definition — is still intimidating there.

Let us not rewrite history. We stood up against the party opposite; we will not glamourise what they stand for by calling what happened a war. We will not glamourise the disgusting acts of those who, in the name of loyalism, took out ordinary Catholics because they were in the wrong part of Belfast at the wrong time of night. That butchery shamed loyalism and unionism. It is nothing that we should be proud of, and we condemn it. It happened during the conflict, and it should be condemned completely.

This is a condemnation society; it is very easy to condemn. It was much more difficult to support the security forces during the Troubles to fight the terrorists who wanted to glamourise themselves by calling the Troubles a war. It was an insurrection, which I hope is now over. Sinn Féin has not moved fully from terrorism and criminality to democracy, but it is going in the right direction. Do not go back to where we were. I support the motion. What happened was not a war; it was an insurrection against the legitimate state: the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The IRA was defeated in the war that it wanted to fight, because there is not and will not be a united Ireland — unless it is under the Crown.

Mr Molloy: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome the opportunity to debate this issue, even though it provides the DUP with the usual ritual that it goes through every once in a while to assure its base that it is still as hardline as ever.

Forty years ago, the civil rights campaign took to the streets in a peaceful protest to demand the rights that Mr Storey said were not denied. That campaign was an attempt to secure civil rights for everyone: the basic right to a vote, a house and a job. This little statelet could not deliver those basic rights; this little black statelet ensured that it went down rather than grant those basic civil rights.

Mr Storey says that it was not worth one death. That is true, to a point. Mr Storey ignored all the nationalist deaths. However, the first death that he forgot to tell us about, which I witnessed, was that of John Gallagher. He was taking part in a peaceful civil rights march on Cathedral Road in Armagh when he was mowed down by the Tynan platoon of the B-Specials, who were brought in with their .303 rifles to mow down peaceful demonstrators. Let us talk about reality: the people of this country were denied the basic civil rights that they were entitled to, and they were shot down in the streets for demanding them.

We could talk about other incidents. Patrick Rooney was a young fellow who was shot dead as he lay in bed in his home in Divis Flats by an amalgam of the B-Specials and the RUC. The aim of the unionist pogrom was to burn the area down, as happened later in Bombay Street. There was no sign of the IRA. In fact, the IRA was criticised for not defending the community at that time.

We have talked about other deaths. No one wants to glorify any death, but we have to face reality. Mrs Kathleen O'Hagan was a young pregnant mother from Creggan in County Tyrone who was mowed down by Portadown loyalists in her own kitchen only days after the RUC had raided the house.

5.30 pm

Mr T Clarke: It is interesting to note that everything that the Members cites is from the republican side. When will he get to the part where his party perpetrated murder on the innocent Protestant victims — and I stress that they were innocent victims — in Northern Ireland?

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask the Member to please be careful about what he says.

Mr Molloy: I have already talked about the innocent victims. Let us be quite clear: my party did not inflict any death on anyone.

The murder of the victims that I mentioned earlier shows how this conflict started and how people had to defend their homes — and I make no apology for that defence of their homes at that time. It was the British Government, through Reginald Maudling, who declared that they were at war with the IRA. Let us be very clear where the declaration of war came from. It was those who were part of the British Government's murder machine — the RUC, the B-Specials, the UDR and the RIR — who wanted their names on the war memorials to justify their actions. They declared it a war because they wanted to be included in that particular line.

Mr Kennedy: What is the Member's view on the murder of Jean McConville by the IRA? What status has that murder in republican theology?

Mr Molloy: Republicans have made their position on that very clear; they have said that they regret all deaths that have occurred, whether as a result of IRA actions or the actions of other organisations. Every death is regrettable.

Remember the situation that existed at the time: people wanted very basic civil rights. While we are on the subject of equality, the Rev William McCrea was the man who gloated on television that republicans were on the run from loyalist paramilitaries. On that same weekend, he stood on a platform in Portadown in support of Billy Wright, the loyalist murder squad leader who, day and daily, brought death and destruction into republican homes around Mid Ulster and the murder triangle. Let us be very clear where you stand and about your association with — [Interruption.]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a debate, and the two sides of the House will get an opportunity to debate. I ask each side of the House to please give the other side the opportunity to put their argument across.

Mr Molloy: Thank you, a LeasCheann Comhairle.

Republicans do not have to justify to our community whether or not what happened was a war. The nationalist and republican people know that there has been a war for 800 years, during which the British Army and the British Government have occupied this country against the will of the people. When the people voted for the independence of Ireland, the British Government imposed partition and denied the people their rights. They armed the loyalist murder squads, and, as they have done in every other country around the world, they adopted the policy of divide and conquer. They created and supported colonial powers, and murder and destruction was part and parcel of what they did at that time.

Let us be very clear about collusion. If there was as much collusion as Mr Simpson talks about — although he does not talk about it that loudly — then why did the British Government, your Government, allow the IRA to be so successful on so many occasions?

Mrs I Robinson: Time.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. Mrs Robinson, thank you for that reminder; I will decide when time is up.

Lord Browne: I support the motion and reject any suggestion that the Provisional IRA's 35-year terrorist campaign should be classified as a war. Historically, the term "war" has been used to describe conflict between nation states. So-called rules of war have been drawn up since the time of St Augustine until the present day Hague Conventions. Those rules extend to the justification of war in self-defence, the treatment of enemy aliens, the treatment of prisoners of war and the outlawing of certain weapons, such as gases and biological agents.

Today, we talk loosely about all kinds of wars; for example, the war against poverty, the war against drugs, and the war against crime. However, today I will confine my remarks to the traditional definition, which confers a certain dignity and legitimacy, because of the rules that I have just outlined.

There must be an agreed definition of terrorism, and I suggest the following attributes: the terrorist is a non-state actor who uses violence for political ends, contrary to both domestic and international law. That, undoubtedly, accurately describes the Provisional IRA's activities of the past 30 years.

Terrorists seek to achieve their objectives by instilling fear and frightening their opponents into submission. I do not need to list the numerous occasions on which civilians were deliberately targeted. However, the occasions when naked sectarianism was displayed in the singling out of victims from the unionist community are perhaps particularly worthy of mention — one need think only of the appalling massacres at Kingsmill and Darkley.

A terrorist employs unconventional military methods that may be regarded as immoral. Again, I do not want to provide a detailed list, but the summary execution of three off-duty Scottish soldiers, who were lured to their deaths when out for an enjoyable evening, was outside the rules of war and morally repugnant to all right-minded people.

Such acts of terrorism can be accorded the dignity of the description of acts of war only in exceptional circumstances. Such atrocious means of achieving political ends may have limited justification when all other means have been exhausted. For example, Jews in the Warsaw ghetto were being systematically murdered in the Treblinka extermination camp — imprisoned and denied any right to political action, they were justified in employing unconventional military measures when they rose against their oppressors. To a lesser extent, Nelson Mandela may be regarded in a similar light, because blacks were denied the right to vote and freedom of movement in their country.

Those campaigns could, perhaps, be dignified by being described as wars, but the Provisional IRA's campaign in Northern Ireland in no way meets those criteria. Those with nationalist sympathies were free to organise political parties, and on several occasions Sinn Féin won seats at Westminster that they refused to take up.

Nationalists had complete freedom of movement in Northern Ireland and beyond. They were free to address meetings and circulate literature that advocated a united Ireland. [Interruption.]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr Molloy is shouting from one side of the Chamber to the other. He should be acutely aware of the necessity to maintain order in the House.

Lord Browne: The much maligned Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Acts were applied only when acts of terrorism were being contemplated.

It is absurd to apply emotive language, such as a war of liberation or a war of independence, to civil disorder and violence in a liberal democracy.

Mr Brolly: Will the Member give way?

Lord Browne: No, I have nearly finished.

It is doubly absurd to apply such language when one considers that the vast majority of the population indicated through the ballot box time and time again that they had no desire to be freed and liberated by the IRA's terrorist campaign. I support the motion.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mrs I Robinson: Of all the proposals mooted in recent times, one of the most nauseating is the attempt to rebrand 40 years of cowardly terror as a war, thereby lending some credibility to those who participated in a diabolical campaign of murder and destruction. Despite the political progress and the fact that the DUP is today in a position to form an Executive with others who have committed to the principles of non-violence and constitutional politics, what happened in the past was what it was: a campaign of guerrilla terrorism that included a dimension of genocide and the clearance of people from certain border areas because of their religion.

The legal questions as to whether the Troubles constituted a war have been well aired over the years and were put to bed long ago. It was anything but a war: the IRA failed to issue a declaration of war; its members targeted and murdered individuals because of their religion or their occupation; they caused billions of pounds worth of unnecessary damage; they tortured and murdered anyone whom they discovered had informed on their nefarious activities; they detonated hundreds of bombs that claimed the lives and destroyed the property of those not directly affected in their tawdry little campaign; and they tied victims into car bombs and ordered them to drive to checkpoints and blow themselves up under threats to kill their families. All those activities are in contravention of all internationally recognised laws of war.

At the same time, that organisation generated millions of pounds through tax fraud, racketeering and drug pushing. By the end of the 1970s, IRA members had even carved up Belfast between themselves and so-called loyalist organisations for the purpose of criminal activity. In doing so, they brought unparalleled deprivation to the community that they purported to protect.

I want the last female Member from Sinn Féin who spoke in the debate to tell me what my mother got as a widow bringing up six children in the Cregagh estate, which was built over 59 years ago and was a mixed estate. The answer is that my family got nothing more than our Catholic neighbours; we got no more help or no more money than the O'Neill family, the Hanna family and every other Catholic family in the Cregagh estate. Therefore, I want to put that argument to bed.

Ms J McCann: Will the Member give way?

Mrs I Robinson: I will not give way.

Ms S Ramsey: Her name is Jennifer McCann. The Member asked her a question, so she should give way.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. Please allow the Member to speak.

Mrs I Robinson: I also condemn the loyalist paramilitaries — I make no bones about it because I have been threatened by them. As far as I am concerned, they are hoods, thugs and murderers. I always spoke out when a Catholic was murdered; I never held back on that.

Mr Molloy: Will the Member give way?

Mrs I Robinson: No, I will not.

Mr Molloy: Why not?

Mrs I Robinson: I am not subject to you.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr Molloy, you of all people should understand that it is a Member's prerogative whether he or she decides to give way.

Mrs I Robinson: The difference between the unionist community and the nationalist community was that the nationalist community supported terrorists by electing them to a place of

Government. The unionist community elected two, and, thank God, they are not here any longer, because they were an abomination to me and to the people whom I represent.

Yesterday, on the Lord's Day, I joined the families of those who lost loved ones and who were seriously injured in the La Mon House Hotel bombing 30 years ago. They were simply attending the annual dinner of the Irish Collie Club, and they were murdered because they were Protestants. We know who was responsible, and we know who did that damage; I named him in the House of Commons. Unfortunately, he is not present today. That bombing was one of the most cowardly gutless murders ever committed in Northern Ireland.

As for the SDLP, the moderate nationalist John Hume, when he was asked why the unionist population of one million Protestants and their elected representatives were ignored when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, said that it was because they would not accept it. So much for being moderate; so much for democracy. Therefore, SDLP Members should never stand up and lecture me about moderate nationalism — it does not exist.

Sinn Féin/IRA are now targeting all that unionists hold dear, to the point of absurd pettiness in being offended in a local council by a mug with Princess Diana's face on it. SDLP members in Downpatrick would not even support the removal of the paramilitary trappings in a park in that town that saluted the heroes of Sinn Féin/IRA murderers.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. The Member's time is up.

5.45 pm

Mr Armstrong: Members should listen carefully to my speech in case they miss a wee bit. I welcome the motion, and I am pleased to support it.

Sinn Féin and the IRA have long sought to peddle the notion of a just war, and it is no surprise that they seek to rewrite history in a desperate attempt to justify the hell that they created and the misery that they put the people of Northern Ireland through.

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

Mr Burnside: Northern Ireland.

Mr Armstrong: Yes; Northern Ireland.

It is more surprising that the so-called Consultative Group on the Past, which was established to find the best way in which to deal with the legacy of the Troubles, is throwing the IRA a lifeline by considering asking the British Government to say formally that they fought a war against the IRA. That is utter nonsense and must be rejected firmly from the outset. We must not allow ourselves to forget the carnage that was inflicted on this country and its people. The Troubles were not inevitable; every death, shooting and bombing occurred because terrorists chose to carry them out. They had choices, and they chose violence deliberately. Those people must be forced to take responsibility for their actions, and they cannot be absolved by well-meaning liberals who, in the comfort of a more peaceful Northern Ireland, seek to rewrite history.

The IRA might think that it fought a war against the British state. The IRA can think what it likes, but the rest of us do not have to agree. The IRA fought a terrorist campaign, not a war. I base that statement on the principle that if something looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it is a duck.

I can recall many atrocities, but I shall mention only a few to make my point. I remember the horrific images of the Abercorn bombing, Bloody Friday, La Mon, Enniskillen, the three policemen who were killed at Carnan Corner, the two civilians who were killed outside Stewartstown, and the

many other people from my area who were gunned down and lost their lives purely because of their religion. I also remember the so-called disappeared who were dragged off, tortured and had their bodies hidden. Sectarian murder, indiscriminate bombing and ethnic cleansing of Protestants in the west bank of the city of Londonderry, north and west Belfast and along the border area, are all the handiwork of republicans.

Some people may have forgotten what Northern Ireland went through at the hands of terrorists. It suits their agenda to forget. However, as an RUC reservist in Tyrone in the 1970s and 1980s, I assure those people that I have not forgotten. I have not forgotten the night, over 30 years ago, that I was hit by a bullet while I was on patrol in Stewartstown.

The terrorist campaign tried to end British rule in this part of Ireland and end the Union by force. It failed. Sinn Féin's acceptance of partition in 1998 was a public admission that the campaign had been defeated. Sinn Féin representatives sitting in the Assembly is daily evidence of the scale of that defeat. I have one question for those who still try to claim that there was a war: would they be prepared to have those responsible for acts such as Bloody Friday, La Mon, Enniskillen and Warrington tried as war criminals? If not, why not?

Dr W McCrea: I feel privileged to be making the winding-up speech on the motion because, before the so-called ceasefire, my family and I were to be the last people to be executed by the gutless Provos. It is good to be alive and to be able to speak in the debate.

In Northern Ireland, we know how important language is, and that is especially true for victims. Former terrorists who attempt to reclassify themselves as volunteers add further insult to injury to the people whom they hurt deeply over the past 30 years. When a family is told that their loved one was not murdered as a result of an act of terrorism but instead was a legitimate target, killed by someone on so-called active service, they are made to suffer again.

There is no way that those who suffered at the hands of murdering thugs and gangsters of terrorism would ever describe the murder of their loved ones as being part of some "war". Those who went out to deliberately maim and murder can never be equated to those innocent people who suffered at their hands.

I reject utterly the description of terrorists as being "volunteers" and "on active service". That terminology is designed to infer that the IRA was a legitimate army. It most certainly was not. It was an illegal terrorist organisation that went out to murder, slaughter and maim an innocent law-abiding people, whose only crime was a desire to remain a part of the United Kingdom — a legitimate and democratic desire of any people. Thank God we still are, and will remain, a part of the United Kingdom.

Regardless of what terminology people want to use, the fact remains, and always will remain, that Tony McBride — and others of that ilk — was a terrorist who was shot by the SAS because of the illegal murderous campaign in which he was involved. The Provisional IRA never fought a war; it usually hid behind a hedge and shot innocent men in the back, without the guts to face them eyeball to eyeball.

I agree with the honourable Member Mr Burnside. In many ways, I wish that it had been declared a war, because our army could have taken the Provos on and they would have been put six feet under where they belong. Sad to say, that did not happen. It was a cold-blooded, sectarian, terrorist campaign that sought to wipe out the long-suffering Protestant minority along the border, with a desire to steal their farms after they had slaughtered their sons and daughters.

It thinks that Members across the way protest too much. Martina Anderson did not go to jail for being innocent. Some other Members across the way were smarting under the remarks that were made. As a child, I was told that when I threw a stone among a pack of dogs, I would know which one had been hit because it would yelp the most.

When I was MP for Mid Ulster I stood in the House of Commons — the Mother of Parliaments — and held up a wedding photograph of a bride, a bridegroom, a bridesmaid and a best man, and the only person alive that day was the bride. The best man, the groom and the bridesmaid were murdered by gutless thugs of the Provisional IRA. Those people were butchered because they wanted to remain a part of the United Kingdom. We do not have to demonise those who supported the terrorist campaign; their actions stained with blood demonise them, and they will never be able to wash away their guilt. It is on their conscience, and neither God nor man will be able to remove that guilt from their conscience. Until they repent of their sins, God Himself will not forgive the deeds that they have done.

One Member said that if the terrorist campaign was not a war then it was hell. If that Member knows anything about the Bible, he will know that it was certainly not hell. However, there is a hell for those who will not repent of their sins and who have done the dastardly deeds of murdering and slaughtering the innocent people of the Province. That is the reality of the eternity that they are facing. Men and women must repent of their sins.

Let me make it clear. There can be no confusion — [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member has the Floor.

Dr W McCrea: There can be no confusion on the issue. There can be no comparison between those who deliberately set out to murder and those who were murdered. There was a campaign of terror by the republican movement, and there was a totally inadequate response from our Government. Thank God that, at the end of the day, this is still British Ulster, and we are proud to be in British Ulster. No Provo will be able to take us out of our homeland and the place that we love the best.

Question put.

The Assembly divided: Ayes 46; Noes 20.

AYES

Mr Armstrong, Mr Beggs, Lord Browne, Mr Buchanan, Mr Burnside, Mr Campbell, Mr T Clarke, Mr Cobain, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Dodds, Mr Donaldson, Mr Easton, Sir Reg Empey, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Kennedy, Mr Lunn, Mr McCallister, Mr McCausland, Mr B McCrea, Mr I McCrea, Dr W McCrea, Mr McFarland, Miss McIlveen, Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Newton, Rev Dr Ian Paisley, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mrs I Robinson, Mr K Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Shannon, Mr Simpson, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr S Wilson.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr T Clarke and Mr Moutray.

NOES

Ms Anderson, Mr Boylan, Mr Brady, Mr Brolly, Mr Butler, Mr W Clarke, Mr Doherty, Ms Gildernew, Mr G Kelly, Mr P Maskey, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mr Molloy, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Ms S Ramsey, Ms Ruane.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Butler and Mr McCartney.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly repudiates any suggestion that the 30 year terrorist campaign in Northern Ireland be re-classified as a 'war'.