

**NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY**  
**Monday 10 March 2008**

**Private Members' Business**  
**Eames/Bradley Consultative Group on the Past**

**Source:** <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports2007/080310.htm#6>

**Mr Speaker:** The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to two hours for this 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. One amendment has been selected and published in the Marshalled List. The proposer of the amendment will have 10 minutes to propose and five minutes for the winding-up speech.

**Mr Burnside:** I beg to move

That this Assembly calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to give their full support and co-operation to the operations of the Eames/Bradley Consultative Group on the Past.

Dealing with the past is one of the most difficult problems that any society has to tackle, particularly following the conflict, death, violence and terrorism that existed in this Province for around 35 years.

I will qualify my remarks — and I have discussed this widely with my colleagues in the Ulster Unionist group — in asking the First Minister and deputy First Minister to co-operate with the Eames/Bradley Consultative Group on the Past, we do not wish to propose a corporate Ulster version of 20, 50 or 100 Bloody Sunday inquiries in this Province. The Bloody Sunday Inquiry is costing about £200 million. I predict that for those who were shot on the day; for the Parachute Regiment and for all who were concerned with events on that day a long time ago, there will be no conclusion that pleases the victims, as they see themselves, or the Parachute Regiment. The £200 million spent on the inquiry would have been better spent on schools and hospitals. Therefore, I am not recommending that we set up a hundred times the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, with no time limit and no cost limit. Such a situation would be ludicrous.

However, we do have to try to deal with the past. The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister symbolises, through its two individual members, Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness, a major part of the history of the conflict. The First Minister and deputy First Minister, Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness, must be prepared to tell the truth about their part in the conflict. We support the SDLP amendment: we have no problems with it.

**Mrs D Kelly:** On a point of order —

**Mr Burnside:** I am sorry, but let me get into the thrust of my argument. The First Minister and deputy First Minister must be prepared to tell the truth. The First Minister was in his normal, old-fashioned aggressive style when I raised this matter during Question Time a couple of weeks ago. In response to my question that there should be no equivalence between victims and perpetrators of violence, he said:

“Looking at the man who asked the question and looking into his past, I think that he would be better keeping his mouth closed on that issue.” — [Official Report, Vol 27, No 3, p188, col 1].

That may be the way that the First Minister talks to his party colleagues: he does not talk to David Burnside in that way, because I know the history of the conflict. If the First Minister wishes to reveal the past, let him start to reveal the past and his contribution to the Troubles. Let us go back to the Ulster Protestant Volunteers in 1966 when Bill Craig proscribed Sinn Féin and the UVF to try to avert that celebration of the 1916 uprising.

Let us also remember the later contribution of the First Minister. I see history being totally rewritten in this Province. I was in the Vanguard headquarters in Hawthornden Road during the Ulster Workers' Council strike and was proud to be there. Ian Paisley was in Canada; so, a johnny-come-lately of Ulster Resistance. Many of us were in and around this Chamber — not as elected Members — in 1975, when Ian Paisley brought down the possibility of a voluntary coalition of five unionists, two SDLP members and one Alliance Party member that could have, perhaps — [Interruption.]

**Mr Speaker:** Order. The Member has the Floor.

**Mr Burnside:** Perhaps we could have pulled ourselves out of the conflict at that stage in the mid-1970s and not have had the 25 to 30 years since of conflict —

**Mr Storey:** Will the Member give way?

**Mr Burnside:** No, I am not giving way to Paisleyites or republicans today. As we move on through the days of the Troubles — and Ulster Resistance — the image of unionism was damaged nationally, in Europe and internationally by the undermining of unionist leaders: the worst description, the language, the venom and the vitriol. Jim Molyneux — whatever one thinks of him; an honourable and decent traditional unionist — was called, in 1985, Judas Iscariot. Is that the language that should have been used for a man who served his country in war and peace? I do not think so. That language was not conducive to good relations in this Province. [Interruption.]

**Mrs I Robinson:** You went into Government with Sinn Féin.

**Mr Speaker:** Order, order. The Member has the Floor. All other Members will have the opportunity to speak, if they wish to do so.

12.30 pm

**Mr Burnside:** He undermined every unionist leader. Carson and Craigavon would have found his language and behaviour unsavoury. While I do not say that there was blood on his hands, there was blood on his tongue. He did serious damage to the image of unionism in this Province for 35 or 40 years.

Let me turn to the deputy First Minister. We seek truth. I wish that Martin McGuinness was here. Are we going to have the truth told? Only last week or the week before, he said that he would have gone around Derry — Londonderry, the Maiden City — after Bloody Sunday and shot every British soldier around. When are we going to have the truth? In 1972, the year of Bloody Sunday, 27 members of the security forces were murdered by the Provisional IRA in Derry. Is he going to reveal the truth?

I was with the family of Marcus McCausland last week. He was a UDR officer from Dreenagh who was tortured and murdered by the IRA at the beginning of the Troubles. Under whose command? The deputy First Minister's. Can we have the truth? Will the truth be revealed?

I can go through the different periods using 'Lost Lives'. All the figures have been published — if we are to have the truth, let us go through the truth. The Provisional IRA was responsible for the deaths of 639 civilians, 454 British soldiers, 273 members of the RUC and RUC Reserve, 181 members of the UDR and the Royal Irish Regiment, 151 members of the IRA or other republicans — good at killing their own — 30 loyalists, 20 prison officers, seven guards in the South, six GB policemen, and seven others, making a total of 1,768 killed. If we are to have a truth inquiry, or some form of structure for dealing with the past, let it be a structure wherein people will admit

what they were involved in. I am told that the president of Sinn Féin was not a member of the IRA — what sort of joke society are we living in?

Many of us were involved in the conflict. We did not do everything right, and we did not do everything wrong. There were major players in the conflict over the past 35 years who made a major contribution to the problems. My colleagues and I are very concerned that we might set up a conflict-resolution industry in Northern Ireland. There is a considerable element of that already operating.

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

Please let Mr Eames and Mr Bradley, in their co-operation with the First Minister and the deputy First Minister, try to deal with the past in a proper way. Will the First and deputy First Ministers give their full support to the Historical Enquiries Team (HET)? Is that unit really carrying out investigations into the crimes of the last 35 years? Are the weapons that are being held in Carrickfergus being tested for the DNA of the commanders of the Provisional IRA, the INLA and the loyalist paramilitaries? If there is proper DNA testing and a proper investigation of historical crimes by the PSNI, those people should take part and tell the truth.

**Mrs I Robinson:** “No guns, no Government”.

**Mr Burnside:** Do not talk to me about “No guns, no Government”. On the last —

Mr Kennedy:

You must have seen the guns, Iris, have you?

**Mrs I Robinson:** Yes.

**Mr Kennedy:** Good girl.

**Mr Burnside:** You would be as well to keep quiet on this one, Iris. Historical crimes and victims — [Interruption.]

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** Order. Mr Burnside has the Floor.

**Mr Burnside:** I plead with the First Minister and deputy First Minister, given all that they contributed to the conflict, to give a full commitment to the Eames/Bradley group. It should not be a massive, no-timescale, no-cost-limit truth and reconciliation programme: but will the Ministers co-operate on historic crimes? Most importantly, will they look after the victims, the victims’ groups, the civilians, the widows and orphans — especially of members of the security forces — and the innocent Catholics killed for being in the wrong areas of Belfast? Will they co-operate with that? A truth and reconciliation inquiry is worth debating here today, and I hope that Eames and Bradley will be given full co-operation by the First and the deputy First Ministers. The truth will set us free; I hope that the First Minister and the deputy First Minister will tell the truth.

**Mr Attwood:** I beg to move the following amendment: Insert after the second “Minister”:

“, the two Governments; the army, intelligence and police services; the paramilitary organisations including those who directed and controlled those organisations; all the political parties; and all others who can assist,”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I apologise to you and to the House — [Interruption.]

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Attwood:** I apologise, because I have to leave the Chamber as soon as I move the amendment; I do not mean any disrespect to the Chamber or to the motion, but, for personal reasons, I have to leave.

I welcome Mr Burnside's comment that the Ulster Unionist Party will accept the SDLP amendment, and I look forward to other parties doing likewise.

In anticipation of what some Members might say in the debate — and considering that dealing with the past is a difficult and perilous matter — it is important that whatever mechanism is developed to deal with the past is as rigorous, representative and wholesome as possible. The SDLP, therefore, recognised that there was a need to deal with the past, but it expressed caution about the establishment of the Eames/Bradley group. Our reservations were due, partly, to the fact that it was sourced in the Secretary of State's office and Downing Street and, partly, because members of the consultative group had made comments about the past with which the SDLP disagreed. For instance, with regard to on-the-run state killings legislation a number of years ago, Mr Denis Bradley — a man who deserves support for many of the things that he has done in the North — said that the British Government should go the whole hog and impose amnesties. The SDLP does not agree with that sentiment.

The party, therefore, expressed caution and vigilance about the proposed initiative to deal with the past. However, whatever about the parentage of the Eames/Bradley group, people — including Members — should consider afresh what it is trying to do now. Several observations can be made about the Eames/Bradley group as a commission. It is clear that, whatever we felt about what one or other individual in the group might have thought, the thinking on the consultative group has broadened significantly beyond any of our preconceptions. That thinking may expand to what we think should arise from the Eames/Bradley group's proposals later this year.

Considering that the Eames/Bradley group has been able to look into certain dark places — including the state's obligation and responsibility for conflict and death in this part of the world — it has seen the enormity of the wrongs that have been perpetrated. Consequently, the group has the potential to produce more broad-based and profound recommendations than was the case heretofore.

When a group such as the Eames/Bradley group has met 70, 80 or 90 victims' organisations — as it has done over the past few months — it is inevitable that they will impact on their thinking. From speaking to the Eames/Bradley group, I know that they were impressed and touched by the narrative of the Ballymurphy families of those who were murdered some months before Bloody Sunday, for instance. Those families told the stories of what they had experienced and the truths that had not been told about that atrocity. Therefore, I have a sense that the Eames/Bradley group — whatever it may have been previously — now has hold of a narrative of the conflict of the past 30 to 40 years that means that its recommendations may move to deeper, bigger and bolder mechanisms for dealing with the past.

For those reasons, the Eames/Bradley group deserves a second look from those who may be hostile, and a broader recognition that it may be fulfilling a difficult job, as Mr Burnside said, in a more broad-based and inclusive way than might have been first thought. However, there are good grounds to be cautious that, over the next few months, the Eames/Bradley group will be unpicked by those who are threatened by it.

To some degree, that unpicking will result from the wounds that were self-inflicted after the Eames/Bradley group briefed the media in January, when amnesty was mentioned and there was debate on whether there had been a war in the North.

However, more fundamentally, some people are threatened by the fact that the consultative group has looked in dark places. Consequently, those who have lurked in those dark places over

the past 30 or 40 years are confused, and they are anxious that the Eames/Bradley group may say that there should be disclosure about a great deal of past events. In my judgement, even though the initiative to establish the group may have been resourced by the British Government, elements of that Government are now anxious about the group, given that it has had sight — to whatever degree — of the report of the Stevens Inquiry and knows about all the devastation on which that inquiry reported. It is clear that the republican movement — the IRA in particular — is threatened by the Eames/Bradley group. That is the reason that it was reported a couple of weeks ago that it was highly unlikely that the IRA would engage meaningfully with the consultative group.

There are reasons for concluding that, regardless of where the consultative group was six months ago, it is now in a different place. As a result, it may be unpicked over the next three or four months because of the attitude of those who have a vested interest in, and the most reason for, covering up the horrors of the past: those who are accountable for what the leaders of the Army, police, security services and paramilitary did over the past 30 or 40 years.

If, as a society, we are going to move forward —

**Mrs I Robinson:** Shame on you.

**Mr Attwood:** If Mrs Robinson has anything to say to me, instead of to other Members, I will give way to her. However, if she has nothing to say to me, I ask for her silence.

**Mrs I Robinson:** I was attacking the Ulster Unionists.

**Mr Attwood:** If the Member is not going to speak to me, I ask for her silence.

The SDLP believes that — [Interruption.]

**Mr T Clarke:** Having read the amendment, I was wondering whether the Member will clarify whether he supports an amnesty. If so, will the Ulster Unionist Party also support it?

**Mr Attwood:** I am glad that the Member raised that point. If he reads anything about the matter, he will realise that amnesty cannot be granted. That is because it offends against international good practice and law. Therefore, it is erroneous to believe that the consultative group will say that general amnesty should be granted to all those who have perpetrated wrongs in the past. The group knows — as should we all — that general amnesty cannot be granted. Even though there can be specific —

**Mr T Clarke:** Will the Member give way?

**Mr Attwood:** No.

Even though amnesty can be granted on a specific case-by-case basis, general amnesty cannot be granted, even in those circumstances for grave matters. We know of all the past grave crimes for which nobody in their right mind would grant a case-by-case amnesty. We should therefore challenge everybody who has knowledge of certain events to co-operate with the consultative group and to account for their past.

In its manifesto of a year ago, Sinn Féin said that it would continue to highlight collusion. It also said that it would urge the British Government to disclose to affected families all the information that they have on collusion and state murder. Yet, in the same manifesto, Sinn Féin is silent about applying exactly the same principle to the IRA, an organisation that, over the 30 or 40 years of conflict, killed nearly 1,800 people. Therefore, I ask Sinn Féin Members to think about this question during the debate: if they believe on principle that the British Government must disclose to families all the information that they have on murder, do they accept, in principle, that the IRA

and loyalist groups are obliged in exactly the same way to disclose to other families all the information that they have on certain murders?

12.45 pm

If we are to have a better future, the leaders of those organisations that were involved in the past 30 or 40 years must be accountable. That includes not only chiefs of staff of the IRA or commanders of loyalist organisations, but living directors general of MI5, living chief constables of the RUC and living general officers commanding of the British Army. If those people made themselves answerable, accountability for the past may at long last emerge.

**Mr Simpson:** I listened with interest to Mr Burnside's opening comments. I was glad that the Deputy Speaker allowed him to get his head and say what he had to — a Member who rarely attends or speaks in the Assembly deserves to say what he wants. The situation reminds me of an old country saying that those in the farming community would know: a young calf, seeing the daylight for the first time, goes berserk, loses control of itself and does not know what it is doing.

I find it difficult to support the motion. It gives the consultative group a blank cheque, and, if I have time, I hope to expand on that point.

The Government gave the group an important job to do. In cases in which assistance can be given to those who are innocent of all crime or wrongdoing but who nonetheless were targeted for murder by terror organisations, such help ought to be given. However, there can be no doubt that several factors hindered the work of the Eames/Bradley consultative group. First is the despicable suggestion that the Troubles be reclassified as a war and that there should be an amnesty for those who come forward to speak about the role that they played in the Troubles. That matter was debated in the Chamber some time ago, and on that occasion Mr Burnside said:

"What happened was not a war; it was an insurrection against the legitimate state: the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland." — [Official Report, Vol 27, No7, p405, col 2].

That illustrates that the Member who moved the motion is already on record as stating that he is against some of the major suggestions that have emerged from the Eames/Bradley consultative group.

However, other factors have hindered the work of the group. For example, the manner in which the suggestion was made to reclassify as a war undermined the group seriously. The group was divided over that suggestion. We must bear in mind what occurred when the press was being briefed on that matter: one part of the group was briefing against another. In effect, one of those parts sought to use the press to get its view of the Troubles and of any potential amnesty into the public domain as a way to spike internal opposition to that suggestion. As such, serious question marks hang over the group's ability to deliver. The group is divided, and those divisions are being played out in the press over the issue of victims. Considering those disgusting recommendations and the fact that internal divisions were used in that way, I cannot but ask myself how such a situation could ever have emerged.

I must also ask exactly what role those who are at the centre of this organisation played in such proposals. I remember well the despicable actions of ECONI (Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland) at the time of the referendum campaign on the Belfast Agreement. I remember how that body produced a document justifying the early release of those bloodthirsty and ruthless sectarian killers, twisting the scriptures in so doing. When I consider the Eames/Bradley consultative group, I recognise the influence that ECONI has at its top table.

I freely confess that I shudder to think that people who have that kind of track record are involved in the consultative group.

**Mr A Maginness:** Will the Member give way?

**Mr Simpson:** I will not give way; I am nearly finished.

Therefore, there are problems with some aspects of the Eames/Bradley consultative group.

**Mr A Maginness:** Will the Member give way?

**Mr Simpson:** No, I will not give way: the Member will get his turn to speak, and I have a few seconds left.

It is likely that Mr Burnside's motives for tabling the motion resulted from concern that the IRA has refused to co-operate with the consultative group on the ground that its members have been appointed by the UK Government. However, listening to Mr Burnside's ranting and raving, one can barely understand what he is getting at.

That would be an honourable motive, and there should be no barrier to republicans' working with the group. After all, Conor Murphy, Michelle Gildernew and Caitríona Ruane are administering Departments that have been devolved to them by that same UK Government. They administer budgets from the UK Government and exercise power granted to them by the UK Government under statutes passed by the UK Government in the Houses of Parliament.

The wording of the motion leaves a lot to be desired, and I urge the House to reject it.

**Ms J McCann:** Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I oppose the motion and the amendment. The Consultative Group on the Past, although having genuine people with integrity in its membership, was undermined from the start by being established by the British Government. I do not believe that the Eames/Bradley group, as it is called, is the way forward in the search for truth. That is also the view of many relatives' organisations and victims' groups.

No one should have anything to fear from a genuine truth-recovery process. However, such a process is doomed to fail if it is constructed by, or has its terms of reference set by, the British Government. That is why the Eames/Bradley approach is so flawed.

Accountability, truth and justice are paramount for all those who were victims — and I mean everyone who was a victim or a survivor — of the conflict. However, the British state must also recognise its role in the conflict and acknowledge that it too had a strong part to play. No truth-recovery process can be completely open and fair unless it is set up in an independent and transparent manner and is not affiliated to any of the protagonists.

Sinn Féin supports the setting up of a victim-led, independent international body. Families who are the victims of state violence and collusion will not feel that they are being treated as equals until their loved ones who died are recognised as victims of the conflict and are treated the same as those who were killed by republican organisations.

The B-Specials, British Army, UDR, RUC and unionist paramilitaries were responsible for many injuries and deaths. The British state, either directly through the deployment of Crown forces or indirectly by arming and directing unionist death squads, was responsible for killing 1,414 people, including men, women and children. [Interruption.]

**Mr Paisley Jnr:** What about the IRA?

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** Order. The Member has the Floor.

**Ms J McCann:** Over the years, more and more evidence of direct Crown force involvement with unionist paramilitaries has emerged. However, the ruthless and random nature of the campaign

of collusion, and the fact that it went right to the door of the British Cabinet, has never been exposed. The campaign was the result of careful organisation and planning and could not have happened without direct state involvement.

It was not until Pat Finucane, a human rights lawyer, was murdered that the level of state collusion in the murder of Irish citizens began to be exposed. It was clear that the British state, in the guise of the British Army, the RUC and the UDR, planned and instigated the murder of Pat Finucane and facilitated his execution. A photograph and address were supplied, weapons were procured, and roadblocks were removed at the last moment to ensure a clean getaway for his killers.

I have worked with some of the families whose loved ones were killed by the state, and I know how angry and aggrieved they are that their loved ones — and they themselves — are constantly demonised and made to feel like second-class citizens, and that their pain and grief do not matter.

**Mr McFarland:** Will the Member give way?

**Ms J McCann:** No; you have had your say. [Laughter.]

People on all sides of the conflict must be open to that, and all participants — including the British state — must take responsibility for their actions over the past 35 years. I was pleased to hear David Burnside saying that there were many players in the conflict.

Now is the time to establish an international independent body, with the resources necessary to investigate the past and recover the truth for all the relatives whose loved ones died in the conflict. Any other such process would not be fair or equal and would make people feel that they were being treated as second-class citizens. Go raibh maith agat.

**Dr Farry:** I fear that this debate will not reflect well on the Assembly. At a time in which the Northern Ireland people are expecting us to be getting down to the business of building a better future for all, ding-dongs among the unionist parties, among the nationalist parties and across the Chamber do not serve that purpose. The enthusiasm with which some Members are engaging in this debate, compared to their lack of engagement in legislation on a way forward, reflects poorly on them. Rather than erecting obstacles, Members must face up to the challenge of ensuring that past issues are dealt with sensitively and responsibly.

The Alliance Party will support the motion and the amendment, although, no doubt, it will be concerned about some Members' comments. For some time, dealing with the past has been a missing element in the Northern Ireland peace process. Arguably, the matter should have been considered long ago, and it is regrettable that we are only now getting round to it.

Sinn Féin's Jennifer McCann has a problem with how the Eames/Bradley group was set up — it is the only show in town, and there will not be another means with which to deal with that matter. Therefore, if Members are serious about dealing with the past, let us engage with that group as it stands rather than dreaming up future mythical bodies. We must grasp the nettle now.

Until now, the problems of dealing with the past have been handled piecemeal, and that has damaged our society's ability to move forward and build reconciliation. Such a process must be consistent with building a shared future.

Attention must be given to several additional matters: a day of reflection, on which people can build as they see fit; memorials, over which, given events in past weeks, the Assembly is struggling and concerning which we have created a major long-term problem; the demand for a forum at which people will be able to tell their stories and have those stories placed on the record; and, perhaps the most thorny issue, truth recovery. Of course, no truth-recovery proposals will



attract universal buy-in; however, it is important that such proposals are devised as, and considered part of, an overall package.

Members must also reflect on the imminent appointment of members to a victims' commission, rather than the former Victims' Commissioner. Some people believe that the victims' commission will be capable of handling the matter of dealing with the past. However, it is important to draw a distinction between, on the one hand, the Eames/Bradley group's aims, which concern society-wide issues of where we have come from and how we can move forward; and, on the other hand, dealing with the concerns of individual victims who, for the past 30 to 40 years, have been disgracefully neglected. Those people deserve relief, by means of proper financial compensation and by ensuring that proper services are in place to deal with their needs. Given OFMDFM's responsibilities in this matter, I am concerned that that Department is not represented in the Chamber to respond to the points raised in the debate.

It will be necessary to encourage people to come forward in order to co-operate with any truth-recovery process, and the notion that the state's actions can be entirely uncovered is unrealistic. However, organisations do have a role to play, most notably the IRA and loyalist paramilitaries, which must come forward to discuss their actions. In addition, I daresay that some political parties here have other matters that they need to put on the record.

It is worth putting on record that although both unionist parties are having their own internal row about who was the worst offender, they have, at different times over the past 30 to 40 years, quite deliberately tried to subvert the state. Let us not duck that issue: those parties have questions to answer in that respect.

1.00 pm

When it comes to providing incentives to people to come forward, I fear that we may have missed the boat, not least with the failure to link the early release of paramilitary prisoners with wider issues. In that context, there has been a leak from the commission regarding ideas about the recognition of a war and the consideration of an amnesty. My party clearly rejects both those notions. It is important to ensure that justice can remain to be done and that history is not rewritten.

**Lord Morrow:** This is an interesting debate, and as I listen to those who have contributed already, I begin to wonder about the real motives of the proposer of the motion. It is good that he comes here once in a wonder. It is remarkable that he has such concern about this matter, for he is seldom here and he refuses to serve on a single Assembly Committee — he is too busy doing other things. I do not know what we owe this motion to, but we are delighted to have the Member here, and we will have to acknowledge his appearance once in a wonder.

He has proposed a motion that is, to say the least, quite confusing. From its first utterances, the Consultative Group on the Past set down markers as to the direction in which it wanted to go. I suspect that it has sought not so much to find a way whereby victims could be dealt with in a proper and right manner, but, rather, to deal with the perpetrators. That is amazing; but that is society at large, and it is the way that human beings turn out. The current situation is that everything seems to revolve around those who carried out the atrocities — do not worry about the victims; they are just victims. The current line of thought seems to be that the victims just have to pick up the pieces and go on.

The early utterances of the Consultative Group on the Past did not set down markers that it was on the side of the victims. It asked whether the past could be dealt with by having the situation declared as a war — a war? If that were to happen, what would the group's next move be? I suspect that it would be to ask whether the perpetrators could be given an amnesty. We had one dose of amnesty in this country that sickened everyone to the pits of their stomachs. We saw prisoners who were given an amnesty walking out of prison in the most triumphalist way. Quite

frankly, I do not believe that the community in Northern Ireland, no matter from which side of the spectrum, is up for another dose of that. We have had it once, and we have seen the results.

It is one thing to be repentant of one's crimes; it is quite another for prisoners to walk out of a prison having been told by the consultative group that what they did in the past was as part of a war. It was no such thing. It was nothing short of sheer bigotry by intolerant terrorists who ethnically cleansed the border areas and drove people from their homes. The Eames/Bradley group may feel that it can put another one over on the whole community, but in the ruthless campaign of the past 35 years, there have been innocent victims on both sides, and my condemnation is equal, and always has been. In the 35 years that I have been in public life, I have never said that one side was more victimised than the other. Innocent people on both sides of the community were slaughtered — there is no other word that can be used.

**Mr T Clarke:** The Member referred to a previous amnesty. Perhaps he will come to that later, but will he highlight who brought about the first amnesty in Northern Ireland?

**Lord Morrow:** That is a salient point. I must refer to Mr Burnside, because he was at pains to castigate my party. He was conspicuous by his silence when he should have told the House that it was his party that signed up to the amnesty for terrorists to be freed back onto the streets. Mr Burnside is not responding to that comment, so I presume that he accepts that that was the situation. It is up to him to say whether he still thinks that that was the right decision. I will give way to him if he wants to address the issue. I notice that he is not taking up the cudgels, because he knows it to be absolutely true.

It is significant that the Minister who is absent today — Conor Murphy — seems to have a direct line to the IRA.

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

**Lord Morrow:** That is a pity.

**Mr Molloy:** Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I reject the motion and the amendment. They were proposed to be divisive, and they have succeeded in being so. Judging by the SDLP's amendment, I think that it does not understand the role of the Eames/Bradley Consultative Group on the Past, or, according to Mr Attwood, it has rewritten the group's remit.

**Mr McClarty:** The Member said that the motion is divisive. Was last week's event celebrating the life of Mairéad Farrell meant to bring people together?

**Mr Molloy:** If people were forward-looking and were dealing with the past in a collective way, that event could have brought people together. However, people chose to be divisive and to ignore the past. We are talking today about the Consultative Group on the Past, yet minds are closed about how we can deal with the past. Therefore, I take the Member's point.

The consultative group cannot be independent, because it was set up by, and reports to, the British Government. Therefore, the group's report will be ignored in the same way as the Sampson Report, the Stalker Report and others were ignored by the British Government. Not only did the British Government ignore some of those reports, but they put them down, and shot the messengers, to ensure that they would be unable to participate in any further inquiries. If the British Government were intent on dealing with the truth, they would have dealt with those inquiries.

Talks at Weston Park resulted in agreement on the establishment of independent, international inquiries into some deaths, including that of Pat Finucane. However, the independent and international aspect of those inquiries disappeared completely after those talks. There has been much talk about victims and their role, yet their wishes have been ignored, and they have been

omitted from the consultative group. Their demand for an independent, international inquiry has been written out of the equation completely, and the British Government have acted as if they are the authority on setting up inquiries, which they are not. They are not neutral by any means; they are combatants and were involved in the conflict situation. They directed their own forces, set up loyalist murder squads, armed them and colluded with them to ensure that the right people were taken out. They encouraged others to murder the citizens over whom they claimed to have jurisdiction, but they reject that line.

The British Government should explain the truth about what they were involved in. They are the Government, so there is nothing to stop them from doing that. They could have ended the Bloody Sunday Inquiry very quickly by simply admitting the truth about their involvement in Bloody Sunday. That would have been a simple line from the British Government, but that would have tied them back to the British Cabinet, in the same way that the murder of Pat Finucane was directed back to the British Cabinet, and they did not want to accept responsibility for that.

There can be no hierarchy of victims. Some people in the Chamber would like to say that one person was a victim and another was not, but there can be no hierarchy. The conflict went on in this country; the issues involved went right across the board, and the British Government were clearly the masters of all sides of it. We must expose all that in order to ensure that we get to the truth.

The Consultative Group on the Past has said that it does not envisage holding inquiries, talking to victims or suggesting anything more than a mechanism to move the situation forward. That is why the SDLP amendment is wrong; it does not deal with the issue of what the Consultative Group on the Past was supposed to do in the first place.

Let us have what we really require — an independent, international inquiry that will get to the truth of the matter and treat all victims equally, so that we can move forward.

Those who are charged with examining the past and exposing the truth have an important role. However, in looking into the past, we should learn lessons on how to create a vision for the future. We, in the Chamber, have an opportunity to ensure that the Eames/Bradley group is set aside. It was a transitional measure — a talking shop — and a way of putting down the victims. Let us move towards a situation in which we can get to the real truth of the issue.

**Mr Paisley Jnr:** The Member for South Antrim Mr Burnside opened the debate by qualifying exactly what his motion said and by claiming that he did not want to support some sort of corporate Ulster sponsorship of Bloody Sunday Inquiry after Bloody Sunday Inquiry. Neither do we. No sensible Member wants to devote that amount of wasted resources to such a process. However, that disguised the fact that he did not qualify what he ought to have qualified. He did not really establish what his motion means.

We, on this side of the House, want to know what he was really talking about when he asked for the Government and all their apparatus to fully support a commission that has not even come to interim, let alone final, conclusions. He is asking the House to handcuff itself entirely to whatever outcome might emerge from Eames and Bradley. That would be lunacy — total madness — and the Member for South Antrim would impose that madness on this House and on the Government.

Let us face the fact that he did not really address the issues raised by the Eames/Bradley group. The House deserves to have a proper debate on the subject, but, today, we have had far from a proper debate on any of the issues posed by the Eames/Bradley group. However, we got the real nub of what Mr Burnside was saying. The real motive and bitterness behind his motion was shown by his throwaway line to a Member from my party. He said:

“I will not be giving way to Paisleyites”.

We got a real sense of the man's bitterness and of official unionism at its very worst. That is what he projected in the Assembly today.

Mr Burnside asks for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to support the police. He must have forgotten what happened on 8 May 2007. Perhaps he was not here; perhaps he was away on other business. On that date, every single party to Government made an oath to support the police, the courts and the rule of law. The Ulster Unionist Party collectively failed to negotiate that for the Assembly, yet it willingly went into Government after Government with the parties that the Member now condemns.

The Member also claimed that certain Members have blood on their tongues. Yet, as Lord Morrow of Clogher Valley mentioned, David Burnside stands today not as the jailer who locks up the gangsters, but as the man who stands with the keys by his side after leaving the gates open and letting the terrorists walk over the red, bloodied carpet, welcoming them into Northern Ireland by supporting the Belfast Agreement.

The Member forgets the indisputable fact that the unionist people of Northern Ireland rejected his brand of unionism a long time ago, and they continue to reject it, because it offers them no hope whatsoever.

I ask the question, and it is important that an answer is given. Will the DUP give co-operation to the Eames/Bradley group? Of course, many of our party members have met the group; our position as a party has been put to it, and I understand that those meetings are ongoing. Until the Eames/Bradley consultative group reports, however, no one should give it a post-dated cheque. I will not dismiss the Eames/Bradley group out of hand, the way Sinn Féin would like to do, because, just as we should not endorse it until we see its report, neither should we dismiss it out of hand until we see the report's contents.

1.15 pm

There has been a one-sided debate in this Chamber today. First the Ulster Unionists attacked the Democratic Unionist Party — because that is all that they seem capable of doing nowadays — and then we had a Sinn Féin Member, Ms McCann, writing and telling her one-sided version of history. We saw a grotesque vista of what republicans believe is that one-sided version of history; indeed, we witnessed it for some moments last week in this House, when they held that grotesque celebration of the life of Mairéad Farrell. As someone who was a student at Queen's University with Mairéad Farrell, I say that that person and her colleagues got everything that they deserved on the rock of Gibraltar — make no mistake about it.

**Some Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr Paisley Jnr:** Finally, I turn to something that Alex Attwood said —

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

**Mr McFarland:** I am not sure what Mr Paisley Jnr is talking about, because the motion seems to have nothing to do with what he just claimed. Dealing with the past is a complex and fraught issue; we have had over 3,500 dead, over 40,000 injured and many others left with psychological damage. There can be few families in the Province who have not been affected in some way.

Of course, after the 1998 agreement, we were full of hope. However difficult it was, I still believe that we did the right thing, and 10 years later, the DUP has agreed with us, and is now sitting comfortably in Government with the former chief of staff of the Provisional IRA. Everyone is now agreed that what happened in 1998 was a good thing.

The deal in 1998 was that we would draw a line under the past, however difficult it was, and we would move on. However, the difficulty is that one grouping here, the republicans, has not moved on. Since 1998, we have got ourselves into what amounts to a one-sided truth commission, and there has been interference with the Police Ombudsman's office. That office was created to examine the actions of police officers as we move forward; however, it went straight back to examining historic cases. Various inquiries, as well as the Historical Enquiries Team, are digging around in the past to try to bring some closure to victims on what actually happened. The Historical Enquiries Team is a good organisation — I was a member of the Policing Board when it supported it — but it has now started to exceed its remit and to interfere in the past.

If everyone were to tell the truth, perhaps some sort of system could be established to work out what went on over the past 30 years. However, the fact is that the paramilitaries will not tell the truth. Martin McGuinness has made it clear that he is not allowed to do so, because of the green book, and Mr Adams says that he was never in the IRA. I suspect that the Governments cannot, and will not, tell the truth, because they would have to start uncovering agents, which could perhaps lead to people being killed. Moreover, the civilian population was running around the place, identifying members of the security forces to republicans. Those people were subsequently murdered. Many people here have things from the past that they wish to hide. The question is, do we want to spend 50 years picking sores? That is what will happen, and this society will never settle if we spend the next 50 years doing that.

What is this move to establish a one-sided truth commission about? It is about republicans trying to persuade the world that they had no option for the past 30 years but to run around murdering people, so corrupt and awful were the Government here. That is what it is about; it attempts to rewrite history, and that is wrong.

Concerning the collusion issue, if the security forces were so tied in with loyalists as to organise murders, why is it that, in the entire 30-year period, only 40 republicans were killed by loyalists? Either the loyalists were absolutely rubbish at killing people — which we know they were not, because they ran around the country slaughtering innocent Catholics — or there was not the level of collusion that republicans like to think that there was. The statistics do not bear out their proposal.

We need to refocus on the victims, as they are the most important part of the process. The victims' families need some form of closure. Many of them want to know what has gone on — that is absolutely fair, and HET should be able to help them with that. Victims' families should be told, and have a right to know, as much as possible. However, a point comes when it must be established whether finding out, for example, that a neighbour was the person who fingered your husband to be shot is going to lead to family feuds and trouble continuing for another 50 years. There have been cases of families feuding in west Belfast, and it something that is prevalent in the Middle East. Once family feuds start, they can be difficult to settle.

Families need closure, and the victims need support. Victims need financial support, but they also need to tell their stories — being allowed to record what happened is important for victims — and, of course, they need family support.

The Eames/Bradley consultative group is a good idea, broadly speaking. It is not yet clear what the group is going to produce, but its findings need to be handled very carefully. We pick at the past at our peril. It could go on forever and prevent our society from ever settling.

**Mr Durkan:** We have been treated to some excursions into the past during this debate. We have also heard conflicting versions of what the Eames/Bradley consultative group's role is, and we have heard conflicting objections to the terms of the motion and the amendment.

The motion does not tie anyone to endorsing the outcome of the Eames/Bradley exercise. It requests support for, and co-operation with, the operation of the Consultative Group on the Past.

All parties have already expressed misgivings about some element of what has been reported from, or attributed to, either the Eames/Bradley group or some of the submissions made to that group. Those misgivings have been expressed again during this debate.

However, all Members must recognise that commitments and promises have been made to victims and to the wider community in relation to issues from our past and issues that affect our present and future circumstances. Those promises were not kept — neither by the political process collectively, nor by the two Governments. Victims want to see some effort being made to address those issues. The SDLP does not consider either the proposed victims' commission or the fact that there are now four victims' commissioners designate to be perfect — we would have gone about that a different way. However, if the victims' commission exists and if it is the one means of addressing victims' issues, all parties should co-operate, engage with it and get on with things so that the most can be made of the opportunity presented by the commission.

Similarly, although we may have misgivings about who put the Eames/Bradley group together and about its remit, if that group is the one body considering this issue, we must ensure that we make the most of it, because a wider exercise in truth recovery may result from it.

Sinn Féin Members say that they do not support the Eames/Bradley group. Francie Molloy told us that that group is simply a transitional body and a talking shop, appointed by the British Government, on a remit established by the British Government. That is the same Francie Molloy who was quite prepared to be nominated and appointed Deputy Speaker of a transitional, talking-shop Assembly, by a British Government, on a remit established by the British Government, and completely controlled by the British Government.

**Mr Molloy:** Will the Member give way?

**Mr Durkan:** No, the Member will not give way, because Sinn Féin Members have not been giving way to anybody else.

Eames/Bradley may well be a transitional body. I hope that it can be a transition to something much more comprehensive for the treatment of the past. Sinn Féin has also criticised the amendment, even though it covers many of the criticisms that Sinn Féin Members have raised about the Eames/Bradley group. Sinn Féin Members say that they are concerned about there being a hierarchy of victims, and that all the players in the conflict — all the people who have truth to contribute — are not being addressed. Nevertheless, our amendment, which covers precisely those issues, has been rejected by Sinn Féin. Therefore, there is complete dishonesty in Sinn Féin's position.

There is also dishonesty in the DUP's position. The two parties are quite happy to debate and fight about the past and unite effectively in voting against the motion and the amendment. Although they are prepared to ghettoise victims on the one hand and patronise them on the other, they are not prepared to ensure that there is a serious process that delivers truth about the past, truth about particular incidents and atrocities, or truth that focuses on wider political responsibility.

Why did we stay locked for so long in the conflict and political paralysis that gave reign to the levels of violence and suffering that we experienced? The fact is that, time after time, people rejected the very institutions and arrangements that they are now embracing. It is an irony — and irony in politics is just hypocrisy with panache. Some people have turned out to be the best practisers of the very things that they preached against for years.

However, the rest of us have the right to ensure that the story of the futility and brutality suffered by people during the Troubles — when the political accommodation that we now enjoy was always available — is properly told. Sinn Féin and the DUP want to connive to ensure that that does not happen. From their different vantage points, they will snipe at Eames/Bradley and at other efforts to look at the past, and they will pretend that they will give us the best future.

Between them, those two parties either excused or produced some of the worst of our past. They will never give us the best future — they will not even give us truth in this debate, never mind truth from a wider truth-recovery exercise.

**Mr Campbell:** We are trying to deal with the motion and the amendment, which has been accepted by the Ulster Unionist Party. Thus far, the Eames/Bradley consultative group has engaged under three headings. It has engaged in a consultation process; I and many other Members were engaged fully in that process and were content to do so. The group either had a leak, or something that was constructed to be construed as a leak. Two issues were raised as well as the consultation process. The first was the matter of the past 30 years being described as “a war”, and that brought about significant opposition and concern, which was not confined to the unionist community. The second issue was the possibility of extending an amnesty to people who took part in the killings during those 30 years.

The context in which the motion has been tabled has been set for us. There is the consultation process, in which Assembly Members and members of the public fully engaged. As I recall, that was the case in other consultation exercises. When Chris Patten embarked on his exercise to review policing in Northern Ireland, he engaged in a full consultation process, and got a similar reaction to the Eames/Bradley group. We know the outcome of the Patten consultation. Some people who expressed full support for Chris Patten, and who proposed the exercise, railed against the outcome. When that happened, Chris Patten wanted to know what those people had expected.

If we give our full support and co-operation to the Eames/Bradley Consultative Group on the Past, then, in a few months' time, or whenever the outcome is arrived at — and if that outcome is similar to what we know now — people will ask whether we were not the same ones who fully endorsed and gave our support and co-operation to a process the outcome of which we will then be criticising. What on earth are unionists thinking about if they are willing to give full support and co-operation to the group given what we already know? That group wants to describe the past 30 years of sectarian shooting, bombing, murder and mayhem as a war.

Some people say that we should co-operate fully with the group that is —

**Mr McFarland:** Will the Member give way?

**Mr Campbell:** No, I will not give way.

Those people want us to co-operate fully and support a group that is leaking that sort of information: the same group that is saying that an amnesty should be considered for all those who were engaged in such activities in the past.

1.30 pm

The DUP knows that now. The Ulster Unionists knew that when they tabled the motion, but they went ahead anyway, and yet they wonder why some parties will not support the motion. The Assembly must deal with the past, and I take on board the honourable Member for Foyle Mr Durkan's point to that effect.

However, the past must be dealt with in a manner that does not encapsulate everyone who died under one heading. Sinn Féin wants to do exactly that; it wants the people who set out to murder in Loughgall to be treated in the same way as those whom they killed before arriving in the village. That cannot be done. There are murderers and there are the murdered, and there is no equivalence between them. Anyone who agrees to a process that arrives at such an equivalence does the work of those who want to ensure that a veil is put over the past and that the past is described in terms that ensure that everyone is treated the same. Unfortunately, whether deliberately or through accidentally wording the motion —

**Mr Durkan:** Will the Member give way?

**Mr Campbell:** No, because I am about to finish.

Unfortunately, the motion's wording enables certain people to get away under a smokescreen, by saying that they were as much victims as anyone else.

The DUP cannot fully support a process that will try to equate the murderers with the murdered. Let us deal with the past appropriately, so that innocent victims will genuinely be able to say that they have had their day in court and that their cases have been heard and dealt with. Their loved ones and those who murdered them must not receive the same treatment.

**Mr Armstrong:** The refusal of the IRA to meet the Eames/Bradley consultative group came as little surprise to many of Northern Ireland's unionist family. I have long wondered at the inconsistency of the republican position on dealing with the past. When republicans are faced with many awkward questions, their answer is that everyone should move on.

However, moving on is the last thing on Sinn Féin's mind when it comes to the hugely expensive Bloody Sunday Inquiry. Sinn Féin is more than happy to call for similar inquiries into any injustice, whether real or imaginary, that they consider can be laid at the door of the British state.

Republicans have long supported the fanciful notion of a truth commission based on the South African model. They conveniently ignore the fact that the deputy First Minister rendered such a body powerless by his statement to the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, in which he said that he would not break his oath of silence to the IRA. If a key member of the IRA is unable to tell the truth about his involvement, equality demands that the same protection be afforded to others, from whatever side, who might be expected to appear before a truth commission.

Even if the IRA were to co-operate with a truth commission, how could anyone trust the word of an organisation that has repeatedly lied about its activities? To name but a few examples, the IRA lied about its involvement with the disappeared; it denied the murder of Detective Garda Jerry McCabe; and it denied the Northern Bank robbery. The IRA's lack of engagement with the Eames/Bradley group is a lesson to everyone who wishes to spend millions of pounds on a truth commission. In the absence of the main dealers in mayhem and murder, such a body would end up pursuing show trials of members of the security forces, who daily risked life and limb in a bid to thwart the terrorists. Truth would be the IRA's first victim.

**Mrs Long:** I do not wish to reiterate everything that Dr Farry said about the Alliance Party's position on dealing with the past and its legacy. However, it must be recognised that that is probably the most important and sensitive challenge that faces our society. The issue goes beyond the victims and those directly affected by violence, although they comprise an important group.

Those who have been affected indirectly by violence, as well as future generations, who live under the shadow of the past, must be considered. We must deal with, for example, the context of the conflict, the impact that it has had over the past 40 years, and the ongoing effect that it has on society both now and in the future. Let us be clear: there is no agreement, either in the House or in wider society, about those issues. I have no doubt that some Members may argue that the clock must not yet start ticking on those 40 years. If so, that point that must be discussed further.

The consultative group's purpose is not to get consensus on those or other issues; it is simply to identify the breadth and range of issues that must be discussed and the mechanisms that could be used to deal properly and satisfactorily with areas of conflict. Therefore, the SDLP's amendment causes no conflict, given that the groups that it lists should be involved in scoping that exercise in order that those mechanisms can deal with all the issues properly.



It is sad and slightly depressing that, rather than adopting a mature and measured approach to dealing with issues, Members have allowed the tone of the debate to become one of finger pointing and accusation, mainly with a view to scoring political points and undermining opponents. On different occasions, all Members have contributed positively and negatively to the conflict. All of us should, therefore, hold up our hands and try to do something about it. Members can argue about the degree to which we carry blame, but we should, at least, be mature enough to face realities.

Reconciliation in the context of a divided society will be a painful process. Elements of the consultative group's final recommendations will be painful — or even unacceptable — to Members. I have two comments to make about that. First, it is still right for the Assembly to co-operate fully and support the group's operations in order that it can be afforded the best chance to devise a solution. Secondly, rather than examine any of the group's recommendations one at a time, it is important that the Assembly considers them as part of a package.

When they discussed those matters in the Preparation for Government Committee and the Programme for Government Committee, Members recognised that a more holistic, rather than piecemeal, approach is needed. Such a piecemeal approach has, frankly, done more harm than good to societal relations. The tit-for-tat approach that is taken to public inquiries is just one example of that. It has caused serious frustration because, first, it creates the impression that high-profile victims or cases are more worthy of attention and investigation than others. That in turn compounds the hurt that is felt by people who have lost loved ones. Secondly, by its very nature, it tends to focus on state and security force actions. Such a view can create imbalance, given that paramilitaries are not subjected to the same scrutiny as those organisations. Therefore, the Assembly must proceed in a manner that ensures that all those issues are dealt with.

Alan McFarland gave voice to the valid concern that we may simply end up picking over the past and reopening old wounds. However, history shows clearly that those wounds are festering, rather than healing. If problems are not dealt with, they will resurface, not in the managed context of a process, but simply one at a time, thus destabilising further the political progress that has been made. The Balkans, for example, teach a salutary lesson to those who believe that a line can simply be drawn under the past and that history does not need to be dealt with.

Finally, my party does not want to rewrite history, nor will it accept a selective edit of it. Issues of the past must be examined holistically and in the round. If the cycle of violence that has blighted this island for a long time is dealt with properly, it can potentially be broken. Although we do not want to rewrite history, perhaps we can move forward and start to write the new and better future that people elected us to deliver.

**Ms Purvis:** I support the motion and the amendment. The amendment renders the motion more inclusive. The situation in question applies to all sections of society, including victims and survivors.

Dealing with the past is difficult. However, that does not mean that it should be ignored. It is crucial to the stabilising of the future for several reasons. The increasing cost of inquiries and retrospective investigations, which some Members have already mentioned, is cause for concern. Although a person's right to seek justice or truth, as he or she sees it, must not be undermined, the question must be asked as to whether, in the context of ever-decreasing resources, those matters could be dealt with another way.

The constant revisionism from both sides of the House, which is reflected in the rest of society, is another reason. Perhaps one official narrative on the past 40 years is a possibility. With collective responsibility, we can zoom in on the truth and cut off the propaganda that sits so far from it.

Whatever the solution may be, we, as a society, need to deal with our past in a comprehensive and collective way. The Consultative Group on the Past may offer a set of proposals, and it is incumbent on all Members to give those serious consideration and engage in a rational debate in order to come to a collective decision on how we, as a society, deal with our past.

Healing Through Remembering is an organisation — of which I am a member — that has conducted a lot of work on this issue. Its work is not a secret, and I commend it to this House as the first serious and comprehensive examination of how we can get to grips with our past.

Our past is continually encroaching on our ability to move forward and to build a better and shared future. The debate about the Maze site is one example of that. Other debates in the Chamber are also examples of how different interpretations of what happened and how blame is apportioned cause not only instability in this Government, but in the communities that were most affected by the conflict. The language and actions in the House have a knock-on effect outside this Chamber.

On one side of the House, there are those who argue that the Troubles were a security problem, that discrimination did not exist and that all that was needed, therefore, was more Army and police to deal with the problem. We are living proof that the so-called security problem required a political solution based on equality, human rights and accountable policing.

On the other side of the House, there are those who believe that the conflict was ideologically driven and that it was a war against the Brits to end years of colonial rule. In other words, they believe that the British presence in Ireland was the cause of the conflict. That conflict has ended and the causes have been addressed; not by the Brits leaving, but by human rights, equality, a campaign for an Irish language Act and bobbies on the beat. Playing to the gallery may improve their standing in their constituencies, but is it helping to build the type of society that they want to live in?

There is no question that people on all sides committed acts of violence. However, we all need to take responsibility for our actions or inactions during the conflict, and everyone should ask themselves the question: what would I have done differently? Mrs Long talked about that during her speech. Every citizen, organisation and institution — from those who committed acts of violence to those who are no less culpable in the creation of a divided society that dehumanised the other community to the point of abject hatred — needs to ask itself that question.

Which Churches rightly condemned murder, bombings and shootings from their pulpits, but continued to preach that theirs was the one true Church and that others were wrong? What woman or man rejoiced when an IRA man blew himself up, or cheered when a UVF man was shot dead? Who listened to the police messages on the radio waiting to find out if the latest bomb killed “theirs” or “ours”? Who vetted their children’s friends to ensure that the other sort was not among them? Who propagated the notion that a Prod could be spotted because their eyes were close together, or that Taigs had horns or tattoos on their heads? These are questions that people should ask themselves. Did they teach their class by the book? Did they report a news story objectively? Did they nurse a patient attentively? Did they provide a house on the basis of need? Did they welcome people to their homes — and I am sorry that certain Members have left the Chamber — when those people were not democrats, and then condemn them as traitors and an abomination when they became democrats?

Some acknowledgement is needed by all who have lived through the past four decades. It is vital to the debate that we all engage honestly and fully in order to build a shared and better future.

**Mrs D Kelly:** It is a widely held belief that the Troubles in Northern Ireland began in 1969. Although there is little doubt that the years that followed 1969 saw some of the most appalling examples of man’s inhumanity to man, there is an increased acknowledgment — as Mr Burnside pointed out — that the Troubles started in 1966. The first recorded deaths came during that year

when two Catholic men and an elderly Protestant woman were killed by the UVF. Many people now believe that those acts marked the start of the Troubles.

Heightened political and sectarian tension created the backdrop for those murders, and there are people in this House who must ask themselves what role they played in creating that environment.

1.45 pm

Over the years of the Troubles — from 1966 to 2003 — 3,697 people were brutally murdered, and thousands more suffered physical injuries and mental trauma. According to 'Lost Lives' — the only existing memorial to all those who died — extremist republican paramilitary organisations were responsible for 58.3% of those deaths; loyalists for 29.7%; and the security forces for 9.9%. The greatest single taker of life was the Provisional IRA, which accounted for almost half the deaths. It is worth noting that, of the civilian dead, the majority were Catholic. It is shameful that Sinn Féin Members have attempted to rewrite history today, rather than acknowledge the part that their paramilitary wing played in those deaths.

As Members from the UUP and the Alliance Party recognised, victims' and survivors' groups have made simple requests for truth and justice, in order to deal with the legacy of the past. Many do not believe that anyone will be brought before the courts for the murders of their loved ones — but they want to know the truth about what happened.

The amendment clearly cites those organisations that have the power to bring closure to the quests for truth of the families of victims. No discussion about the past is complete without recognising the inhumane suffering that has been inflicted on the families of the disappeared — as Mr Armstrong quite rightly said. They continue to be denied a Christian burial for their loved ones. I reiterate the SDLP's call to the IRA to return the bodies for a Christian burial.

I take offence at the remark that Mr Burnside made about defining the victims — as they see themselves — of Bloody Sunday. That was uncalled for. He is quite right to point out that the year dot did not begin on May 8 2007. The opportunities for building a better future — and for ending conflict and violence — existed over the past 30 years, but were denied to the people of Northern Ireland by the actions of both the DUP and Sinn Féin, who pulled down all those who attempted to lead us into a better future.

Dr Farry and Mrs Long spoke of how issues of more critical importance should be discussed in this House. Not only have the DUP and Sinn Féin said that they will not support the findings of the Eames/Bradley group — just as they will not support the cost of division report — but they want to bury the strategic-futures audit that was commissioned and completed in 2007. One of the commitments in the St Andrews legislation was to tackle poverty; but the DUP and Sinn Féin have no strategy for dealing with that, and wish to bin once-in-a-lifetime opportunities.

The all-party panel work on the Maze/Long Kesh site has also been forgotten about, as the DUP and Sinn Féin attempt to revise their pasts. In its attempt to rewrite the past and rubbish all things that came under direct rule, Sinn Féin failed to mention its support for the Northern Ireland (Offences) Bill. Conor Murphy rushed to Westminster to welcome that legislation, which would not only have given an amnesty to all, but would have set out to cover up the truth about what happened.

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

**Mr McNarry:** The big question is whether the political wing of the Provisional republican movement — which is represented in the Executive — will support and fully co-operate with the Eames/Bradley group, or whether it will choose to repudiate the Assembly by following the lead of the Provos in refusing to meet or co-operate with the Consultative Group on the Past — therefore

confirming that, although it holds office in Government, its participation and policies are controlled by the grace and favour of the Provo high command.

Of all the people with a past, the House and the public deserve to know where those Ministers stand on that issue. If the Eames/Bradley Consultative Group on the Past is to be credible, its terms of reference must be addressed fully. Its remit includes making recommendations on any steps that might be taken to support Northern Ireland in building a shared future that is not overshadowed by the past. That is a mighty — almost impossible — task when one considers the events of the present and how they are linked to the Provisional movement, which believes that its role in the past is nothing of which to be ashamed.

Take the eulogising of a dead Provo terrorist and the marking of an office shrine to her in the Building last week. Take the temerity and the bravado of the deputy First Minister in the same week as 'Rambo' hit the cinemas. The deputy First Minister regaled us with fact, not fiction, when he said that, had he had the opportunity, one particular Sunday in Londonderry, he would have killed any British soldier. Did he have the opportunity? Well, did he? This is the same man who thinks nothing of his violent past and who dismisses awkward questions with a "let's move on" quip. However, in reality, he is unable to give up on his past. Those two illustrations — and, unfortunately and regrettably, there will be more to come — are accurate pointers that the Provos are incapable of moving on for fear that they will destroy the myths, legends and lies that they have created.

Nothing that the Assembly can do can change the past, but, ultimately, everything that we do changes the future. That is good enough reason for us to be here, striving to make devolved democracy work. However, the Eames/Bradley group has its work cut out. How can it conclude that events of the past will not overshadow the future, when hardly a day passes by that does not bring in the present and expose republican thinking and its false denials? Take the following quote:

"The British State are protagonists in this conflict".

Note the use of the present tense in that statement. It was made not five, 10, 20 or 30 years ago — that quote was lifted from Sinn Féin's website only last October, and it was made by Francie Molloy after his meeting with the Eames/Bradley group. That is the very same Francie Molloy MLA who sits in this British devolved Assembly, who accepts Her Majesty's pay cheque and allowances, and who is even entitled to extra pay for his role as an honourable Deputy Speaker. What is he telling us? Is it that the British — which is code for all unionists — remain protagonists and that, moreover, in his view, the conflict is not over? Who, therefore, can fault unionists for disbelieving when we are unable to differentiate between the republican-speak of the past and that of the present? Who can blame unionists for having serious reservations about including republicans in our future? Do they — both wings of the Provisional movement — really expect unionists to entertain a future built around a mandatory coalition Executive that embrace one party that is sustaining a culture that justifies terrorism and seeks inclusivity to hero-worship those who forfeited their lives when on a mission to kill or maim innocent people? Do they really expect unionists even to work with those who are now intent on demolishing the historic symbols built in and around Parliament Buildings? Let me answer that: if they harbour such expectations, they will fail.

I have not yet heard a logical case, reason or argument that casts doubt in my mind that there is not a significant difference between those who upheld the law of this country and those who, in my lifetime, procured arms, identified targets, erected signs depicting a "sniper at work", lay in ditches ready to ambush, hid behind women's skirts, robbed banks, peddled drugs, ran fuel rackets, smuggled, showed no respect for human life, made and detonated bombs, and kidnapped, tortured and executed men, women and children. The comparisons prove that there is a massive difference between those who wore a proper uniform and served to uphold the law of this country, and terrorists — I side with those who upheld the law.

However, here I am, along with fellow unionists and other MLAs, playing a pivotal role in striving to make this devolved legislature respected, worthwhile, meaningful, long-lasting and — moreover — legitimate. We are desperate to deliver a viable, stable and economically successful Northern Ireland. Against high odds, and in spite of my own intolerances, I am willing to give the Assembly a chance.

I ask all Members to endorse the motion for its content and, in doing so, help encourage the First Minister and the deputy First Minister to lead by example and demonstrate to others that unless the truth is told about the past, the story is not worth telling. The motion refers to two men who both have pasts about which the Eames/Bradley group would want to hear. However, who will judge the pasts of others? Who is capable of recognising the truth? There is no case being made from this side of the House for a truth commission — that is not what the motion is about. If people suspect that a truth commission would be told a pack of lies, no one would believe anything that it had to say.

The motion identifies how two men who hold high office can help the Eames/Bradley group. It has nothing to do with what the Eames/Bradley group may report on — that is a debate for another day. The motion is about how the First Minister and the deputy First Minister can help the group operate and contribute to its work.

One party in the Chamber can vote against the motion and, in doing so, vote with republicans as a collective against the victims — that choice is theirs.

**Mr Campbell:** It is an amnesty.

**Mr McNarry:** It is nothing to do with an amnesty. It is your choice. What you decide will be on record — people will look at the vote, not the rhetoric. Not the amnesty, Mr Campbell —

**Mr Campbell:** Yes, yes, yes.

**Mr McNarry:** You are wrong. You have dug yourself into a hole, and you cannot get out of it. I commend —

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** Order. I ask Members to make their remarks through the Chair.

**Mr McNarry:** I apologise for not directing my remarks through the Chair.

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** That is OK.

**Mr McNarry:** I commend the motion — it is worthy of the support of the House, and I hope that Members act accordingly.

2.00 pm

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Assembly divided: Ayes 37; Noes 52.

AYES

Mr Armstrong, Mr Beggs, Mr D Bradley, Mrs M Bradley, Mr P J Bradley, Mr Burns, Mr Burnside, Rev Dr Robert Coulter, Mr Cree, Mr Durkan, Mr Elliott, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mr Gallagher, Mr Gardiner, Mrs Hanna, Mrs D Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Ms Lo, Mrs Long, Mr Lunn, Mr A Maginness, Mr McCallister, Mr McClarty, Mr B McCrea, Dr McDonnell, Mr McFarland, Mr McGimpsey, Mr

McGlone, Mr McNarry, Mr Neeson, Mr O'Loan, Ms Purvis, Ms Ritchie, Mr K Robinson, Mr Savage, Mr B Wilson.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr P J Bradley and Mr Burns

NOES

Ms Anderson, Mr Boylan, Mr Brady, Mr Brolly, Lord Browne, Mr Campbell, Mr T Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Dodds, Mr Donaldson, Mr Easton, Mrs Foster, Ms Gildernew, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Irwin, Mr G Kelly, Mr A Maskey, Mr P Maskey, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr I McCrea, Dr W McCrea, Mrs McGill, Mr M McGuinness, Miss McIlveen, Mr McKay, Mr McLaughlin, Mr McQuillan, Mr Molloy, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Murphy, Mr Newton, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Paisley Jnr, Rev Dr Ian Paisley, Ms S Ramsey, Mr G Robinson, Mrs I Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Ms Ruane, Mr Shannon, Mr Simpson, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells, Mr S Wilson.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr Spratt

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister to give their full support and co-operation to the operations of the Eames/Bradley Consultative group on the Past.

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** There being no further items on the Order Paper other than Question Time and the Adjournment debate, I seek, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until Question Time, which begins at 2.30 pm. The sitting is, by leave, suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 2.15 pm.