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Eames, Bradley proposals deserve close scrutiny

Wednesday, 28 January 2009

Today the Consultative Group on the Past will unveil its proposals on how the people of Northern Ireland can confront the demons of the past and build a new shared future.

Some people may be tempted to ignore this important document because of the furor raised over the controversial recommendation to offer the relatives of every person killed during the Troubles the sum of £12,000.

This was a misjudged, hamfisted and, to many people, an offensive suggestion. People will just not accept that there is an equality in principle, never mind in monetary terms, between innocent people and terrorists who were also killed. It is a recommendation that should be rejected by the Government when it comes to consider this report.

That said, the report is the result of two years of hard work by a group of distinguished individuals, led by Lord Eames and Denis Bradley, men whose integrity and reputation for fairness is above reproach. It is self-evident that any attempt to address

the problems caused by nigh-on 30 years of violence will not gain universal acceptance.

The violence was the result of severe fault lines in society at every level, political, social and civic, yet there is no common acceptance of the reasons for the violence or even how to define who were victims of that violence.

The group consulted widely during its deliberations, ensuring that everyone who wanted to have their say on addressing the past and creating a new future were enabled to do so. The group also jealously guarded its independence and in its two main voic

es, Lord Eames and Denis Bradley, have men well able to articulate views that are rarely heard in our factional political arenas. They are not afraid to put forward unpopular suggestions or to challenge every section of the community to play a full part in rebuilding Northern Ireland.

It is known that the report will include recommendations for the establishment of a Legacy Commission, which will have control of both an investigative body to look into past killings — taking over that work from the current Historical Enquiries Team — and also a truth recovery forum where people may

find out how and why their loved ones died.

Those giving evidence to the forum would be granted immunity from prosecution. If truth be known, the chances of killers being brought to justice at this stage are fairly remote, particularly for murders committed during the early days of the Troubles. It may well be that the truth recovery mechanism will be the best option for many of the bereaved. There is more, much more, in the report which will present challenges to the Government and to the community in Northern Ireland at large. It is a document which requires careful reading and thorough discussion.

There will be recommendations which will be hard to accept for many people, but addressing the legacy of the past and building a shared future where no-one will ever have to resort to violence to make their political points is not an easy task. Difficult decisions will have to be taken. We owe it to ourselves and our children to find a way forward, and this report is a blueprint deserving of the closest scrutiny.



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Why does anyone think that money is of any importance in the fight for truth and justice and reconciliation? Shame on these men who should both know better than this, has history taught them nothing! People can not be bought, truth is priceless!!

Posted by *Mairead Kelly* | 28.01.09, 23:48 GMT

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What about the innocent victims and their families 'seriously injured' by terrorists - are they entitled to the proposed £12, 000.

Posted by *BILLY* | 28.01.09, 18:37 GMT

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