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Editorial

Let's win the peace for all the people

North Belfast News

There was something terribly depressing about the self-serving protest by loyalist hardliners at this week's dignified Europa Hotel launch of the report from the Consultative Group on the Past.

Their catcalls and jeers, finger-pointing and hectoring, was evidence, if such were needed, of the fact that some of our people are more comfortable living in the past than moving into the future.

And yet, ordinary decent people can take heart from the fact that those disrupting the launch represent only a section of a section of unionist holdouts who, 11 years on, still refuse to accept the compromise which was the Good Friday Agreement.

And in those 11 years, of course, much has changed despite the naysayers and the no-men.

The vast majority of our people — and this was reflected in the quiet dignity of the hundreds of people who had to endure the disgraceful Europa Hotel protest — are ready to shake hands and move on in an agreed manner which respects all equally.

And where the victims of the 'Troubles' are willing to lead, the rest of the community will surely follow.

For no-one knows more than the victims the heavy price paid for the 30 years of conflict we endured. Perhaps it's no surprise then that they are leading the difficult process of peace and reconciliation by giving a broad welcome to the 30-plus recommendations of the Eames-Bradley report.

That's not to say that the report does not have shortcomings: for example, how can victims of the British state expect their battle for truth and justice to be made any easier by the proposed legacy commission? And while it's understandable that Eames/Bradley would argue that inquiries have benefited no-one, there is still an urgent need for an international and independent investigation of the murder of Pat Finucane.

Due to the nature of this divided society, it was inevitable that recognition payments to victims would be controversial but the fact is that similar payments have been made without public furore in the South for some years now. Regardless of the sum paid, no one should argue that victims aren't entitled to the resources and support which will help ease their burden.

Though the DUP, spooked by the Europa antics, immediately rejected the Eames/Bradley report, even they know that by agreeing to share power with their old enemy, they are sending out the message which the serial protesters of unionism will never accept: the war is over.

Now let's win the peace for all our people.

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