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From [The Times](#) January 29, 2009

Bitter memories of the Troubles threaten to wreck £300m Ulster healing plan

Enraged protestors target Gerry Adams



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Rachel Sylvester

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David Sharrock, Ireland Correspondent

Anger boiled over yesterday at the publication of a government-commissioned report into how to heal the wounds of Northern Ireland.

Lord Eames and Denis Bradley, two former churchmen invited 18 months ago to come up with a plan, had not even begun to speak before the ballroom of the Europa Hotel in Belfast — once reputed to be the world's

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most-bombed hotel — was seething with the bad blood that sparked and sustained nearly 40 years of terrorism, causing more than 3,700 deaths.

The authors of the report, by the Consultative Group on the Past, always knew that the terrain in which they worked would be treacherous, but even the controversy over their off-the-record briefing last week — from which was leaked the proposed £12,000 flat fee to the families of everyone killed in the Troubles, whether terrorist, police officer, soldier or innocent bystander — could not have prepared them for the response from the invited audience of dignitaries and the bereaved.

The main targets of the protesters, who were joined by Jim Allister, a hardline Unionist MEP fighting to retain his Brussels seat this year after breaking with the Democratic Unionists over going into government with Sinn Fein, were Lord Eames and Gerry Adams.

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Mr Adams, the Sinn Fein leader and West Belfast MP, looked uncomfortable in the audience as he was haranged by Cedric Wilson, a former Unionist member of the Northern Ireland Assembly, who accused him of terrorist activities in his role as a former leader of the Provisional IRA. Mr Adams has led calls for a South African-style Truth Commission, while continuing to insist that he has never been an IRA member.

Mr Wilson demanded an answer from Lord Eames: "Is Gerry Adams a victim or a terrorist?"

"We are proud of Gerry Adams, leave him alone!" responded one man.

"What about the La Mon bombing?" called one person, referring to an IRA atrocity.

"What about McGurk's?" came the response, referring to another bombing, carried out by the IRA's enemy, the Ulster Volunteer Force.

Through it all sat Sir Hugh Orde, the Chief Constable, who must have still been nursing a bruised ego after not getting the top job with the Metropolitan Police. Some members of the audience appealed to him to call on his officers to eject the protesters, but he remained silent, arms folded.

After a delay, Lord Eames and Mr Bradley finally began their presentation of a £300 million plan to lead Northern Ireland out of strife and division and into peace and stability.

Even then they were not spared further interruptions and catcalls from



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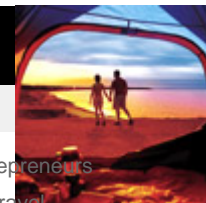
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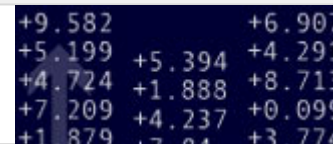
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outraged spectators holding placards reading: "Real victims will not be bought, not now, not ever" and "The wages of murder is £12,000".

The plan includes initiatives as diverse as a repatriation programme for the 4,600 people it estimates were exiled from Northern Ireland by the paramilitaries and an annual "day of reflection and reconciliation". It accepts that "a shared memorial" cannot be agreed upon for now.

A Legacy Commission would take from the police the role of investigating murders to "establish whether there was a realistic chance of prosecution, taking into account the receding possibilities".

Lord Eames and Mr Bradley made an eloquent case for their plan, which, by virtue of Northern Ireland's very divisive nature, could be doomed to failure. The cost will also be difficult to swallow, with the Bloody Sunday inquiry having cost £185 million — and rising — and still no date for publication of its report nine years on.

Four other tribunals into controversial killings are under way, with costs for the most recent already at £20 million before it even begins, and demands for more public inquiries being resisted by the Government.

Lord Eames and Mr Bradley's estimates hold out the promise that at the end of a five-year period of intensive investigations, overseen by a Legacy Commission, a line would finally be drawn under the past. But even that might not be enough for Gordon Brown if the myriad victims' groups do not all buy into the plan and continue their campaigns for justice.

Many of these arise from claims that the security forces were involved in a "dirty war" involving collusion with all the terrorist groups, although the majority of killings were perpetrated by republican groups, principally the Provisional IRA.

Mr Bradley warned that unless the past was dealt with, the cycle of violence could begin again. He said that in many cases what victims' families sought was simply "the dignity of some honest answers" about the circumstances of their deaths.

He and Lord Eames appealed for time and reflection and for their report to be studied without a rush to judgment.

The Prime Minister, speaking in the Commons, said that the British Government would consider the report with great care before making its response. "I understand why one of the recommendations has provoked such controversy in Northern Ireland," he said, in response to a question about the £12,000 payment. "I will never forget the innocent victims in Northern Ireland."

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The bloody sunday tribunal and four others on the way, the deaths of nationalist Irish people by british security force collusion ..the british should be ashamed of their \$1200 Judas kiss

Ryan, Boston, USA

Tough as it may be both communities must move on.

Nothing will bring those who were killed back, but not to move on will provide the grounds for history to repeat itself.

There is peace now and the vast majority do not want to waste it.

Willie Mac, Arden,

Surely this is nothing more than Government trying to appease a terrorist group who refuses to disband despite outward appearances.

It is a disgusting offer made to terrorists families who deserve nothing. Innocent people died for no reason other than an outdated ideals.

KeithW, Merseyside, UK

On television coverage, Adams appeared to be smirking and laughing at the furore. He and the other one has certainly taken us to the cleaners. I am a Catholic and he is a disgrace.

Michael, Bridgwater , UK

"I will never forget the innocent victims in Northern Ireland."

Innocent being the operative word, I hope. Bombers and gunmen are not innocents

Alan , Chelmsford, United Kingdom

Surely members of the IRA Army Council deserve more than this paltry payment, considering how much effort they so selflessly made to inflict carnage on Northern Ireland.

And surely Muammar Gadhaffi deserves a few quid for supplying Czech-made Semtex to the IRA.

Bill Corr, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

It is shameful that the families of terrorist killed during should receive money from the taxpayer. It is a grievous insult to the families of innocent victims killed by the terrorists. Bradley and Eames should resign and hand this job over to people who have some proper moral judgement .

sam, belfast, antrim

I feel for both sides of the Northern Ireland community, but surely £12000 to

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buy some kind of reconciliation is prone to failure.

This money won't alleviate pains from the past but it could have been put towards a living monument to future understanding and remembrance of the torrid times past.

Steve, Braintree, UK

Who is to fund this extraordinary outflow of money into Northern Ireland?

It is extremely unlikely that differences in Ireland are going to be more than papered over by such expenditure & the Bloody Sunday Inquiry seems to have taken on a life of its own with no doubt some making it a career.

Damian, Brighton,

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