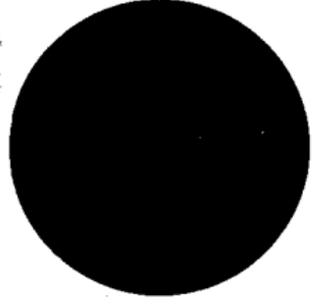
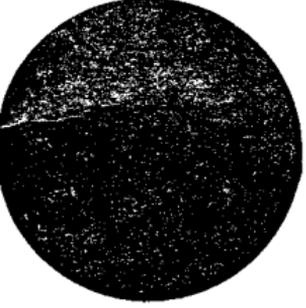
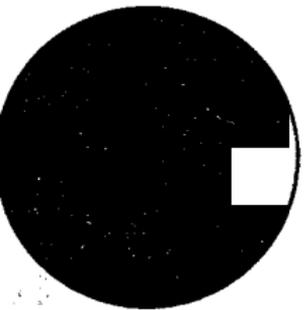
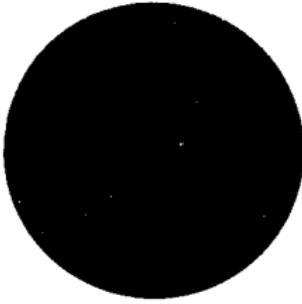


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27



MYTHS



ABOUT
ULSTER

The fiction- and the facts

What is really happening in Northern Ireland? Who is to blame? What's it all about?

These are the questions people all over the world are asking, as, almost every day, newspapers, television and radio carry reports of violence in Belfast or Londonderry, and of shooting, bombing and arson or clashes in the streets, often involving the Army.

The outrages have been going on since 1968 when a Civil Rights demonstration, demanding the abolition of a restriction that confined voting in local council elections to rated occupiers, clashed with the police.

Since then the disturbances have been intensified by the intervention of the Irish Republican Army, a militant nationalist organisation that is illegal both in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

Coupled with this subversion is a vicious and insidious propaganda campaign which colours the reports and commentaries of even the most impeccable and reliable observers, who, to preserve their impartiality and reputation, must draw upon information from all sources, whether it is tendencious and incomplete or based upon fact.

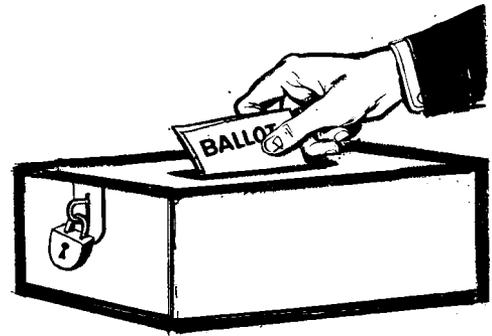
It was with these thoughts in mind that Dr. Hugh Shearman, widely recognised as an historian and authoritative writer

on Irish affairs, compiled the record of "Myths" that make up this booklet.

In it Dr. Shearman exposes some of the fallacies and emotive slogans which, through skilful and persistent repetition have come to be accepted as fact. At the same time he removes the veil of misrepresentation which has been spread as part of an operation to set aside the wishes of a democratically elected Government and a substantial majority of the people of Northern Ireland to remain British.

"27 Myths about Ulster" was first published in Northern Ireland's leading morning newspaper, the Belfast "News Letter" and now is issued in this handy-for-posting form by the Ulster Unionist Party.

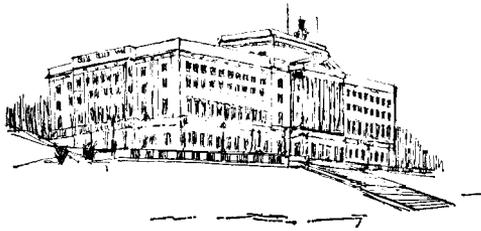
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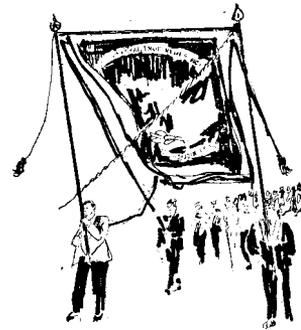
★ **One Man One Vote:** The use of this emotive slogan has persuaded people all over the world, and indeed even here at home, that in some way votes were deliberately withheld from certain specific sections of the community, that Roman Catholics were not allowed to vote, or a variety of other quite untrue notions.

★ **Civil Rights:** It is widely believed that, if, at any time during the last fifty years, a Protestant living in Northern Ireland were suddenly to become a Roman Catholic, he would immediately lose a wide range of civil rights. In fact he would not have lost a single civil right of any kind.

★ **"The" minority:** By a curious custom, Roman Catholics have come to be referred to as "the" minority. But Presbyterians are also a minority in Northern Ireland. So are the members of the Church of Ireland. So are the Methodists. But these other minorities do not demand separate education systems for themselves and more jobs, more houses, more welfare expenditure and more civil rights than other people.



Stormont Parliament



Orange Parade

★ **Treatment of minorities:** Constant claims are made for the good treatment accorded to Protestants in the Irish Republic in contrast to alleged oppression of Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland. Census statistics from the Republic tell an exactly opposite story. Under a very sectarian regime in the Republic, the Protestant population has been halved in fifty years, while Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland have prospered and increased more rapidly than any other section of the population.

★ **The natives:** Roman Catholics are often represented as the “native” population of Ulster, with Protestants as colonial intruders. Actually, a large proportion of the Roman Catholic population today are descended from ancestors who emigrated to Ulster from other parts of Ireland more recently than did the ancestors of most of the Protestant part of the population.

★ **Unionists:** Naively, many people are found to have the idea that Unionists are those who seek a United Ireland. Let it be gently revealed that Unionists seek to preserve a United Kingdom and historically preferred a united British Isles.

★ **The Orange Order:** This is represented as dominating the Unionist Party and Government in a sinister way. About 1,000 persons are elected or nominated as members of the Ulster Unionist Council, the Unionist Party’s ruling body, and only 122 or 10% of these are elected by the Orange Institution, and 638 are elected by county, constituency and affiliated associations which anybody can join, most of the remaining nominated members being from similar open organisations. Has the Orange body—only one ingredient in a large pudding—been specifically shown to exert reactionary or destructive influence anyway?

★ **The Twelfth of July:** The celebration of that day is often represented as a fatuous commemoration of some 17th century religious squabble. But the Battle of the Boyne was a strategic turning point in a major European war against French imperialism. Compare it perhaps with Alamein. William of Orange’s victory was particularly welcome to the Pope, among other Europeans. Its traditional commemoration nowadays has rather the character of an Independence Day celebration.



★ **The prevalence of violence:** There is wild talk about Northern Ireland as a Vietnam or a Bangla Desh. But casualties from violence in the Province have been lower than those from road accidents, and the death rate from violence has been well below the normal murder rate in the normal city in the United States of America, a problem which Senator Kennedy has not yet solved there.

★ **Source of troubles:** This is represented often as being entirely within the Province. A record of the truculent and often mendacious utterances of Dublin politicians, a list of cross-Border shooting incidents and details of the provenance of the gelignite that gets into Northern Ireland ought to help to dissipate this notion.

★ **Internment:** This is widely represented as a peculiar Ulster sin. Yet it is adopted by every country which is involved in war or intensive terrorism. In Eire both in the 1920's and again in the 1940's, political opponents of the regime were not only locked up but, in certain cases, put to death by a form of judicial murder.

★ **Fifty years of misgovernment:** Compare quite factually the record of government in Northern Ireland with that of the Republic over a period of fifty years in education, in housing, in industrial development, in value of annual exports and in many other matters. Which government would then be shown to have been misgoverning?

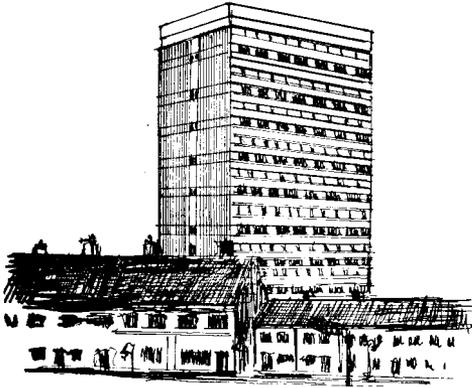


Belfast City Hall

★ **Gerrymandering:** This is represented as an old Ulster custom, with constituency boundaries constantly fiddled to keep the ruling party in office. Actually, there was no change in the parliamentary boundaries from 1929 until the general election of 1969. This very conservative policy actually militated against the Unionists, leaving them with large accumulations of "wasted" votes. In local government, only five boundaries were redrawn between 1923 and the present reorganisation of local government.

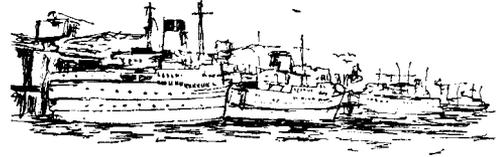
★ **One-party Government:** When the Opposition is out to destroy the State, the electorate understandably does not vote it into office. But actually there is a bigger range of opinion represented within the Unionist parliamentary party than in the whole spectrum of party politics in the Republic.

★ **Unemployment:** This is represented as a sort of Ulster disease. In various forms, some of them concealed, it is the problem of every advanced country in which there is rapidly rising productivity; for to achieve this, there is more and more automation and hence diminishing opportunity for less skilled labour.



★ **Housing:** It is widely held that housing has been backward in Northern Ireland and available only on a basis of Protestant sectarian discrimination. Proportionally more housing under public authorities has been provided to Roman Catholics than to any other group in Northern Ireland.

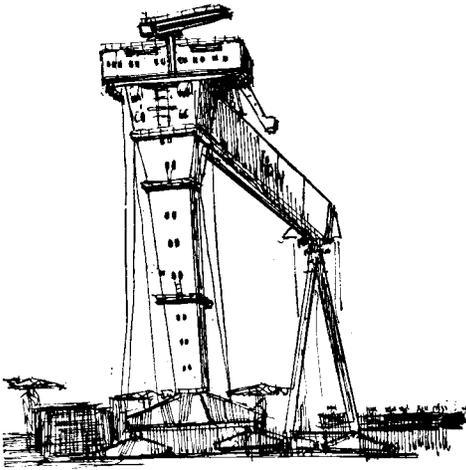
★ **Ghettos:** Press and television picturesquely describe people in Northern Ireland as living in “ghettos,” conjuring up visions of dark twisting alleys in some medieval Russian or Polish town. But the places so described in Ulster are open garden suburbs, like the Ballymurphy or Creggan estates, where people seem to live because they like it. The bleak derelict houses with bricked-up windows, which sometimes figure on television are evidence not of battles or decrepitude, but of the active implementation of huge schemes for rehousing and redevelopment. More than 40 per cent. of families in Ulster live in homes built since 1945.



★ **Emigration:** They cannot get jobs so they have to go away. Yes, but this applies to nearly the whole of the British Isles outside the English Midlands and the London area. It is question of degree. In round figures, a quarter of a million people have left Northern Ireland in the last half century, but a million left the Irish Republic. In addition, Northern Ireland is now carrying a quarter of a million more people today than it did half a century ago.

★ **Job discrimination:** In Ulster, as in most parts of the modern world, one has to employ a man because he is competent to do the job, not because of his theological affiliations. But how many Protestants are employed in that separate Roman Catholic education system or in the many businesses owned by Roman Catholics, such as the licensed trade?

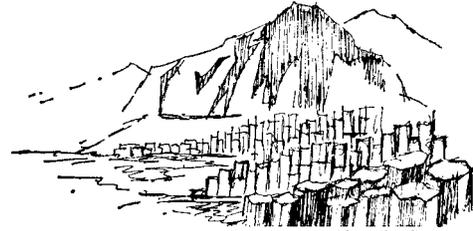
★ **Neglect of the West:** No. While the West has wilted in most parts of the British Isles and, in particular, there has been a drastic decrease in population in every western and peripheral county in the Republic, every western county of Northern Ireland has had a rising population and new industries, including, close to Londonderry, the largest complex of synthetic fibre industries in Europe.



Goliath crane at Belfast Shipyards

Money: It is widely imagined that the main flow of finance between Britain and Northern Ireland is in the form of Exchequer payments. Apart from the fact that, over many past years, the average individual in Northern Ireland was costing the Exchequer less than the average individual in Scotland, profits and trade involve much larger financial flows, in the other direction and Northern Ireland is a solid asset to Britain's balance of trade.

Education: It is sometimes made a reproach that Roman Catholic children are segregated in a separate education system. Unhappily, alone among religious denominations, the Roman Catholics insist on having it that way. But it is a luxury for which they do not really have to pay financially, whatever the social and psychological cost. The Government foots over 95 per cent. of the cost of this separate sectarian system.

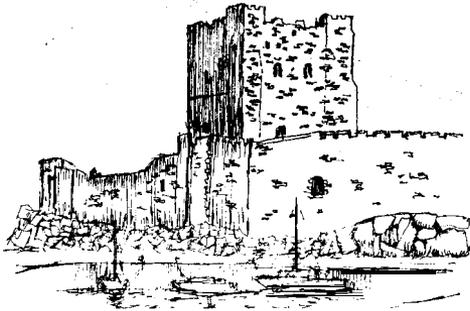


Giant's Causeway

Reforms: A foolish word, of course, because it has made people think that there was something shocking in the past that had to be profoundly changed. But the several changes of recent years, such as a Commissioner for Complaints, a central housing executive and so on, have been aimed, not so much at ensuring that justice was done, for it was pretty amply done in the past, as at ensuring that justice is seen to be done.

Relations with the Irish Republic: Northern Ireland is credited with being intransigent towards the Republic. But the world is not told that a treaty, in very cordial terms, was made in 1925 with the Dublin government, providing for mutual recognition, consultation and co-operation, and a subsequent Dublin government dishonored its obligations under that treaty. And the world is not told that, for thirty-five years, the total annexation of Northern Ireland to the Republic has been written into the Republic's constitution, precluding any kind of uncommitted and unprejudiced negotiation.

Desire for incorporation in the Republic: Dublin politicians keep saying that this desire is shared by 40 per cent. of the people in Northern Ireland. How curious it is, then, that parties or candidates seeking to abolish the Border keep getting less than 25 per cent. of the total votes cast at successive general elections.



Carrickfergus Castle

★ **Ulster political traditions:** These are represented as uniformly reactionary. But historically, Ulster has the most radical and progressive political tradition of any region in the British Isles. Protestant Ulster provided the roots of the American revolution, worked for and welcomed the relaxation of penal laws against Roman Catholics, indignantly refused to participate in those slave-trading enterprises on which Bristol and Liverpool were growing fat, and sent a dozen very radical Liberal members to Parliament until Gladstone ceased to keep faith with them. Those progressive sympathies are just as alive today as in the 18th and 19th centuries.

★ **Historical analogies:** Far-fetched comparisons have been made between Ulster and Vietnam, Algeria and other places. No analogy can be quite complete, but Lord Craigavon, Northern Ireland's first Prime Minister, was not far wrong in saying "Ulster is nobody's Czechoslovakia" He was referring to the Czechoslovakia of the 1930s, where an aggressive neighboring power, Nazi Germany, was whipping up hatred and discontent among the small German community in Czechoslovakia, and a weak British Government was putting pressure on the Czechs to give in to the Nazis in everything.

