



ADDRESS
BY THE SDLP
PARTY LEADER

JOHN HUME, MEP, MP

To the
Annual Conference
of the SDLP

SLICK HUNARD HOTEL NEWCASTLE
6th-8th NOVEMBER 1987

This past year has been the most successful year electorally in the short history of this young party. Here at our 17th Annual Conference we might be permitted some self-congratulation. Let us not congratulate only those who carried the banners of victory — the outstanding consolidation of Newry-Armagh by Seamus Mallon and the historic victory by Eddie McGrady in South Down but all of those candidates who carried our banner and who contributed massively to the fact that we were the only party in Northern Ireland to increase both its vote and its representation. This success, above all, was a tribute to the grass-roots of our party, to the substantial and energetic influx of a new generation and to the massive and enthusiastic effort that built our success. It was also a tribute by the electorate to the steadiness of this party, a party which continues to rationalise and refuses to sloganise, a party which makes steady progress, a party which keeps building.

As we meet for our seventeenth Annual Conference, we meet in the presence of our friends not only from Ireland and Britain but from all over the world. In the short but eventful life of this party from the very beginning we have turned our backs on the politics of the ghetto mentality, realising that whatever our problem whatever the answers to them, we live in a wider world smaller today than ever before as Chernobyl and Sellafield continue to remind us. A world whose influences shapes much of our present and will increasingly shape much of our future. That is why we have striven to build relationships with other parties of similar philosophy not alone on this island and in Britain but in Europe and elsewhere in the world. This is why we can welcome here today not only our friends from the parties to the South — the Irish Labour Party, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats — parties who together with their members have worked steadily and consistently with us down the years since our foundation, but our friends and fraternal delegates from the European Confederation of Socialist Parties, the confederation which links us to the most powerful grouping in Western Europe and gives a voice in the shaping of that Europe, and friends and fraternal delegates from all the member parties of that Confederation who are either here or have sent warm messages of solidarity; from the British Labour Party, from France, from Spain, from the Federal Republic of Germany, from Denmark, from Holland, from Italy, from Belgium as well as our fraternal parties from outside the Common Market in Austria, in Finland, in Sweden and in Israel. We have, too, here today Mr. Brian Atwood and Mr. Peter Fenn from the Democratic Institute for International Affairs representing the strong links that we have forged with the Democratic Party in the United States.

As Party from its inception has always tried to widen its horizons and as a party committed to peace it is fitting that I should begin today by, on this crucially important deadline date of 7 November, sending our warmest good wishes to our sister parties and all peace-seeking democrats in the troubled and impoverished region of Central America. Today is, of course, an important date in the peace plan for that region. That plan is notable for the fact it secured the commitment of five governments of quite different perspectives, some with historic mutual grievances and all with serious internal pressures. It is interesting that the Arias Plan seeks to get all the various internal divisions and civil wars into the regional framework which is really their historic background and which offers all a way out from the narrow ground of their particular dispute and which is the framework of all the conflicting relationships of the region. It is also worth noting that agreement's commitment to establishing an intra-national parliament for the region to provide a common forum of elected representatives not unlike the European Parliament on the proposed parliamentary tier of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

This whole process is a very imaginative and daring undertaking by its architect and those who delivered it. It merits full respect, tolerance and support by that region's powerful northern neighbour. The United States cannot expect credibility for its foreign policy if it contrives to feel threatened by the prospect of an historic accord yielding peace, democracy and stability in Central America.

It is certainly welcome that the US and the other superpower, the USSR, now seem to be on the verge of agreeing to dismantle some of their nuclear arsenals. This development must be used as a basis for ongoing disarmament and should not be allowed to pass as an isolated, one-off agreement.

It is worrying to hear some argue that any agreement is proof that a tough arms policy pays. They are trying to tell us that disarmament could not happen if there had not been armament in the first place and so credit must go to armament policies. The logic of that means that we should create lots more weapons if we want to have more disarmament. What a dangerous and wasteful outlook. For our part we should have no doubt that the steady work of peace groups and political parties urging disarmament gradually shifted the defence agenda and created conditions for disarmament moves. That work must continue and we and our colleagues in Europe must share in it.

I find it interesting that the "be tough with Moscow" brigade are also the "don't be too hard on Pretoria" brigade. They are prepared to engage in wars with smaller and poorer countries, they can invoke sanctions against

Argentina, Libya, Nicaragua, Iran and Poland but they find non-violent economic sanctions against Apartheid "immoral". International trade is the oxygen of the apartheid economic apparatus. That supply must be cut if we are to end the life support for that anti-human political regime.

Those people who object to anti-apartheid sanctions on moral grounds tell us that they do not want trade measures which might affect employment for black people in Africa or leave them poor and hungry? I will believe that when I hear them say that they want to change their international trade and economic structures which imprison Africa and the rest of the third world in underdevelopment with its attendant poverty, disease and malnutrition. Apparently the only black Africans about whose condition we should be morally concerned are those who work for multi-nationals under Apartheid.

Never home the European Community is at a crucial stage in its development. Just a fortnight ago I participated with the other leaders of the socialist parties in the EEC as we prepared our joint input into the crucial debate that is shaping the future of the EEC. I was pleased at the emphasis given to the development of a real and powerful regional policy as a means to more evenly distributing the gains of Community cohesion.

The final ratification of the Single European Act, and the consequent drive to complete the internal market should concentrate our minds on the fundamental purposes of the Community. To date the lofty rhetoric on social and economic cohesion has not been matched by action to achieve the convergence of living standards which was one of the major principles and purposes of the founding fathers. In fact the gap between the richer and poorer regions of the Community has widened.

The danger in the completion of the internal market is that it will accelerate the widening of that gap, that it will lead to greatly increased specialisation of production and an uneven distribution of gains from trade. If these dangers are to be avoided then we need a new approach to regional policy both at Commission and Council level, and within the member states themselves.

On the one hand the European Regional Development Fund must be greatly increased - at least doubled, as recommended by the President of the Commission. And there must be greater concentration of the resources of the fund in the most deprived areas of the Community. In a report I presented to the European Parliament last month, I argued that the Republic should be permitted to receive a higher rate of Community contribution towards defraying the cost of regional projects and programmes, following the precedent of the 70% authorised for Portugal. The same consideration, obviously, must apply to Northern Ireland.

The point which we must keep pressing is that real choice cannot exist without real opportunity. The facility to buy up public agencies and then to profit from the public dependence on that agency and the historic public investment in it is only open to those who can afford it. That is not our idea of democratic choice. Giros are not a common currency in the stock market.

We see only this week that the electricity service is to be fattened up for the market by the imposition of unreal price rises. Mr. Parkinson tells us that this is to fund necessary investment. He is really saying that the necessary investment would not be made if electricity is in the private sector. That is one reason why this vital industry in both economic and social terms should not be abandoned to the whims of private owners.

Mr. Lawson says that the price increase is to ensure a better return on capital. This tends to contradict Mr. Parkinson's claim about investment. It also underlines that a public utility can provide a cheaper service because it does not have to charge for its profit margin as well as production and investment costs. Through all this Mr. King unconvincingly insists that his recent electricity supply order was not preparing Northern Ireland Electricity for privatisation. It seems to be irresponsible to induce unnecessary energy price rises to gratuitously create incentives for the markets. Have people really forgotten the debilitating effects on the economy of unreal increases in energy costs not least in a region like ours where industry carries extra cost burdens?

Privatisation seems to be the main theme of government energy policy. Selling off British Gas, public shares in BP and next the electricity service are all part of giving us this choice that we are supposed to be getting. Nobody here was allowed much choice about Natural Gas - but then they were consumers and it is mainly investors' choice that count it seems.

It is really too naive or too idealistic for us to believe that fuel policy should be about providing warmth in homes rather than profit in the markets? Privatisation and share issues do nothing to eradicate the growing problem of fuel poverty. There are old people and young families who will not be able to keep warm this winter. Should fuel policies not be about protecting them instead of feeding more moneymaking opportunities to the markets? Fuel should be first and foremost for generating warmth not wealth. With the price increases associated with privatisation and the erosion of Social Security provision, the government are leaving some people with very cruel choices. There are old people who will make the choice between using a little more warmth or trying to put money aside to help pay their funeral of a pauper's grave. There are people who will die of cold in the

next few months and others who will suffer serious ill health. There are mothers who will make the choice between getting hot food into their children or putting money aside to buy them warm clothes. More people are being put into a situation where they will choose between debt and warmth. It is dilemmas like these which are part of the price people have to pay for this illusory politics of choice.

There are not many nice choices for people trying to cope on supplementary benefit. Things will be even harder when the rest of the Social Security changes come in. Further cut in payments for special needs are tearing at peoples' living standards. In removing many of the dimensions of legal entitlements and the notion of welfare rights these changes are ignoring people's dignity. This whole approach can only add deprivation to the marginalisation of unemployment.

This we are told is a part of targetting needs. We have nothing against targetting need but not the needy. Our paper this weekend on fuel poverty shows that we want to target that need but the government are actually removing social security facilities for helping against fuel costs. The Chancellor has said that the welfare state is a heavy burden on the taxpayer or to put it crudely we cannot afford the poor. We certainly cannot afford poverty which is why it is crucial to have an equitable welfare state and to pursue job creating economic policies. How can we afford the unmitigated free market society towards which we are being led and in which we will all have to pay more for the incentives and profits for those creating undue wealth for themselves out of the basic infrastructure of a modern society.

The British Government's own tax figures show that our society has a more unequal distribution of wealth than it had when they came to power. Under monetarist policies people were put down by unemployment. Cuts in Social Security and welfare services are now kicking people when they are down. The most sickening aspect of all this is that benefits to the less well off are being cut to fund tax cuts for the better off. Unfair tax cuts are a bigger drain on the public economy than a fair and adequate social security system is.

The Thatcherites imply that there is some sort of vice in social security claimants getting "unearned payments" but there is apparently a virtue in the better off making unearned profits in share values and market speculation. "Sharing no: share owning yes" seems to be the motto. It is too much to hope that the events of the past couple of weeks will lead to a revision of policies which pin our economic prospects so heavily on the unreal and risky machinations of the international stockmarkets.

ion has recently been focussed on education. We are promised
es here too. At secondary level we have already tasted something of the
oice offered by the Baker package. The most recent proposal for school
transfer procedures are a recipe for institutional Darwinism with some
schools growing at inordinate rates while other schools, not least in rural
areas, will find their existence threatened. Grammar schools are to be
allowed to offer more fee paying places but they must charge an "economic"
fee. Bringing in these changes the government insist on keeping selection or
the "11 Plus". We have always said that this procedure is educationally
unsound. The government say otherwise. If they really believe that it is
sound then why is it appropriate for people with money to buy their way
around it? It is particularly untenable to maintain such selection with its
divisive secondary school system where we now have a common exam at 16.

Choice is not the only concept which is being distorted. Community care is
a concept with which we all agree, understanding it to be care in the
community by the community, for those with special needs. The authorities
however have adopted an approach to community care as a cheap option,
allowing them to close hospitals and residential care centres. Their purpose
seems to be to find a comfortable excuse to abandon public responsibility
through the state to provide care. We want to move away from
institutionalisation in order to allow people to be integrated back into the
community, to prevent them becoming depressed and isolated in
helplessness and to ensure that undue burdens do not fall on families who
simply cannot cope with all the required responsibilities. Such
responsibilities cannot be met under social services cutbacks, further
reductions in home provision and shifting more burdens on to the voluntary
sector. Clearly some are more interested in share issues than care issues.

We have made many representations and proposals on all these and other
issues, and, as mandated by this Conference, will continue to do so. In some
we have succeeded in influencing certain changes in government attitude or
performance. But our concern about these issues also motivates our
determination to bring forward improved political structures for our
community. Some of our critics accuse us of pursuing our approach to the
underlying political problem in this society with disregard for social and
economic principles. Like all other democratic socialist parties, however, we
know that there is a primary requirement to ensure stable democratic
consensus if there is to be any prospect of our principles being effectively
reflected in government policy.

The forefathers of the British Labour Party were engaged in the
democratic reforms movements. Our sister parties in Spain and Portugal had
to struggle under dictatorships to help create democracies before they could

truly aspire to pursuing their social and economic agenda. Similarly our
sister parties in developing countries have to work against instability to
forge consensus in states of many divisions as part of the process of
advancing the cause of social justice.

Our commitment to achieving an end to the old prejudices and divisions
here, to creating political equality and to partnership in this community
which can engender consensus in democratic institutions of state, is
therefore wholly consistent with the role played by other democratic socialist
parties. It cannot be denied or denounced as parading an anachronistic or
sectarian nationalism or ignoring bread and butter issues. Rather it must be
recognised as the realistic and responsible work of a socialist party
committed to democratic change to create the prospect of further progress.
This we have done.

The Anglo Irish Agreement has, as we said it would, made a welcome
change in both the political landscape and the political agenda. It is not, as
we have repeatedly said, in itself a solution to the Irish problem. It is not and
never can be the oft mentioned "final settlement". Final settlements rarely
happen among peoples that have been deeply divided for centuries. Those
who encourage people to believe that they do, are in fact part of the problem,
because they are seriously misleading, and misleading young people in
particular, to give the best years of their lives and often their actual lives in
pursuit of a short-cut which is as elusive as it is impossible. Final settlements
rarely happen but healing processes do and this party stands in the historic
tradition of social democratic and labour parties everywhere in believing
that there are no perfect societies and there never will be. Our role is by
democratic and peaceful means to continue to narrow the gap between what
is and what ought to be. Healing processes, so necessary to diminish the
prejudices of centuries, to convert distrust to trust and confidence, to
demonstrate our deep respect for difference are made easier if the framework
within which they take place is the correct framework is strong and solid. A
broken limb will heal only in time and only within a strong and necessary
framework. That is even more true of a broken people.

The Anglo Irish framework, and we must never cease to spell this out till
every man and woman in our society understands clearly the strategy that
we are following, is the correct framework, is the strongest possible
framework for the peaceful resolution of the problems of Ireland. Can there
be a better possible way that the two governments involved, from their
different perspectives, with good will and in spite of inevitable
disagreements from time to time, combine all their resources to bring peace
and stability and to heal our divisions? If there is a better peaceful way could

we hear what it is? It is the correct framework because it encompasses all the conflicting relationships which go to make up our problem. This is even underlined by the main opponents of the agreement within Northern Ireland itself whose sloganised reduction of their opposition to Brits Out or No Dublin Role exemplifies in the clearest possible way the relationships that must be resolved if we are to move forward. It is the correct framework because, and this is already being demonstrated, whatever changes of government may take place in London or Dublin, each can make its own distinctive contribution to the healing and building process and each generation can do likewise. Looking back, after a decade of this approach, will not much more be seen to have been achieved by the steady building process than by the empty rhetoric of the sloganeers, whose slogans have filled our gable walls for most of this century, as if slogans themselves were the answer, or by those who seek the short-cut by means which intensify our differences and divisions and which lead only to more sad and tragic graves and more populated jails.

We in the SDLP have consistently judged the Anglo Irish Agreement at two different levels and it is crucially important to our understanding of the whole process in which we are involved that this be so. At one level the Anglo Irish Conference deals on a regular basis with the day to day grievances, with the symptoms of the deeper problem. At the other and more important level the Agreement addresses the relationships that must be resolved — the disease which is the deeper problem. As we have often said, if all the grievances or symptoms were dealt with adequately tomorrow they would recur in another form if we do not treat the underlying disease — the deep divisions in our population. It is essential that we do not allow our justifiable preoccupations with this or that symptom or difference of opinion on how to treat them to either hinder or obscure the progress that is being made on the deeper and wider issues. The Anglo Irish Conference is a permanent institution, a permanent Council of Ministers that meets daily at official level and occasionally at political level. No one has ever suggested that they will always agree on every single detail or even on every single issue, much less suggest that the Conference itself will cease to exist if there is difference of opinion on this or that issue. Indeed it is totally analogous to the European Council of Ministers which meets daily at official level and occasionally at Ministerial level. They do not always reach agreement on every issue but no one ever suggests that disagreement on an issue means that the Common Market, or the Agreement on which it is based, is going to fall apart and it is crucially important to understand that process. If indeed agreement was reached on every single issue there would be no need for the permanent conference in the first place. Having said that, and it is necessary to say that to understand the process in which we are engaged, it is totally correct that this party conference, just two years after the signing of the

Anglo Irish Agreement, and the setting up of the permanent conference table, that we review the progress or lack of it that has been made on the different fronts and to say that it is both the best and the fairest decision making process that we have had since Northern Ireland came into existence.

In the run up to this year's General Election we listed the areas in which progress had been made, considerable progress on those issues in eighteen months compared with the total lack of it for the many preceding years. We note that Mr. King in his recent Oxford speech set out substantially the same list: there has been the marked improvement in the banning, re-routing and policing of potentially provocative parades; supergrass trials are at an end; in bail applications the onus is no longer on the defence to show that bail is safe but is now on the prosecution to show that it should not be granted; periods on remand are being shortened by the availability of more judges, allowing scheduled cases to be heard outside Belfast and there is now a provision to enable the Secretary of State to set statutory time limits for the period between first remand and trial; there are now statutory guidelines on admissibility of confession evidence which render confessions obtained by the use or threat of violence inadmissible and allows confessions to be excluded in the interests of justice; suspects are now entitled under law to have a person outside informed of their arrest and whereabouts have automatic access to a solicitor after 48 hours; the flags and emblems act has been repealed while the laws on incitement to hatred have been strengthened under the Public Order Order; the decisions to demolish high-rise flats have been delivered as we had predicted would be the case despite the denials by government and our opponents at the time of those predictions.

At the present time two issues continue to dominate public discussion - the question of fair employment and the question of the administration of justice. These are two of the crucial issues that are currently on the table of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The SDLP has been consistent in its two pronged approach to the fair employment issue - the need for strong fair employment legislation and the need for substantial new investment and job creation in areas of high unemployment. The fair employment legislation must be strong and clear. It must involve sanctions against offending employers, including the withdrawal of government grants and laws which make discrimination illegal. But everyone must recognise, as we have consistently done, that fair employment legislation, even if it fulfils our every requirement, will not of itself solve the serious imbalance of employment opportunity between the different sections of our community that is now accepted by everyone

adding government. We could never have solved the serious housing problems of Northern Ireland if we had insisted only on a fair points scheme for the allocation of housing. The desperate housing problems of many areas of Northern Ireland could never have been dealt with unless, in addition to the points system, we also had thousands of additional houses built and the finance made available to construct them. Similarly with employment. The best fair employment laws in the world will not of themselves provide one extra job in Strabane, in Newry, in Derry, in West Belfast or in any other area of high unemployment. There is also need for a substantial and preferential drive led by government to encourage investment in those areas.

The SDLP was the first party, and for a long time the only party, to produce far reaching proposals for a charter of rights in the employment field. (Sinn Féin produced their document only a few weeks ago now that they realise the importance of the issue. I will not dwell on the contradictions of an organisation whose political wing produces documents on fair employment while their military wing blows up the employment which they wish to be fair). The SDLP proposals have been placed before the British Government and placed through the machinery of the Anglo-Irish Conference. The response from the British Government has been a Consultative Document, which for the first time from a Government source, set out the full scale of the discrimination problem to be faced. Other documents from Government appointed bodies and agencies like the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights and the Fair Employment Agency have been equally forthcoming in both statistics and proposals. The extent of the process of discrimination and of the serious imbalance in opportunity for Catholics is now clear to everyone and accepted by Government. I take it that this unprecedented frankness in describing the extent of discrimination in job opportunity against the Catholic population represents a determination by government to deal with it.

In facing up to the problem we must be frank, because we can only make a positive contribution to its resolution if we identify the problems accurately. The unemployment problem, and therefore the employment opportunities for Catholics, are not all to be laid at the door of Government. We should not forget that as far back as 1974, only six years after the beginning of the civil rights movement, this party had for a short period ministerial responsibility for industrial development. By May of 1974 unemployment at 5.8% was at its lowest ever. Fourteen hundred jobs which had been signed up, and a factory allocated in Newry, never came to fruition because of the kidnap and murder by the Provisional IRA of the General Manager of the company in question. Six hundred manufacturing jobs for Strabane were never announced because the UWC strike made the proprietors turn on their heel. Thirty nine thousand jobs were lost directly in manufacturing industry between 1970

and 1980 because of the Provo bombing campaign against economic targets. £11 million worth of damage to both economies North and South resulted from the same campaign. It does not take a genius to recognise that if those jobs and that money were in the economy today the employment opportunities for Catholics would be much greater since we would clearly have a great deal more employment to distribute fairly. The international recession following the oil crisis, and in more recent times monetarist policies, have also made their contribution to longer dole queues and as we do not need reminding dole queues are longer in Catholic areas. In short, if we are to pursue our campaign for fair employment, we should simply be seeking adequate legislation and a policy on job creation from government, we should also be demanding that Sinn Féin prove its commitment to fair employment by securing a declaration from their military wing that places of employment are no longer economic targets.

The MacBride Principles campaign in the United States is also a factor in the whole discussion on fair employment. I have already on a number of occasions set out my views on this campaign. We have no quarrel with the principles. Indeed our own proposals to government are much stronger.

Our concern is based on the fact that certain aspects of the campaign may tend to discourage investment and would much prefer if our friends in the US encouraged industrialists to come to areas of high unemployment. I have had discussions in the United States with many of the leaders of the Irish American Labour coalition which has been to the forefront in this campaign. Let me make clear that neither I nor anyone else in this party has any doubt about the integrity of the intentions of that coalition in relation to fair employment in Northern Ireland, an integrity that was clearly demonstrated to me by their willingness to seek ways for some of the substantial pension funds that their unions control to be invested in areas of high unemployment in order to counter any suggestion of disinvestment. The same cannot be said of certain other individuals and organisations like Sinn Féin and their American allies with whom the American-Irish Labour coalition has no connection whatsoever. In fact I am quite certain that if adequate fair employment legislation is introduced in Northern Ireland by Government that the American labour union movement would throw its substantial weight behind a drive to end the scourge of unemployment in our hardest hit areas by supporting a campaign of inward investment.

The other immediate grievance or symptom related to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which has dominated public discussion of late, has been the whole question of the administration of justice and its linkage to the question of extradition.

Our position as a party on this matter has been set out with total clarity by Séamus Mallon, the Party Spokesman on Justice and Deputy Leader. This Party accepts as a matter of common sense, as do most reasonable people, the view of Government that in the current atmosphere jury trials are not very likely to produce a high quality of justice. Given the depth of prejudice in this society, together with the fear of intimidation, this is a case which hardly needs arguing. They said however, we should not forget the Birmingham Guildford and Maguire cases were all tried by juries in highly emotional circumstances. In the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland, however, it is at least arguable that the responsibility and burden for conducting trials should not be left to one person, however eminent that person may be. At the same time, the issue is not, as this Party has repeatedly said, three judge courts. The issue is public confidence in the administration of justice. This is agreed by both governments in Article 8 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Three judge courts is a proposal put forward by the Irish government to try to respond to the problem, a proposal supported not alone by the SDLP but put forward in the past by the DUP as well. If the British government disagreed with the Irish proposal for dealing with this problem then surely the responsibility is on them to propose an alternative for dealing with a difficulty which they admit does exist. Indeed the proposal mentioned in Article 8 - mixed Courts - is a much more far reaching than three judge Courts and if the British Government wish to place that proposal on the table for discussion then there will be no objection from the SDLP.

Extradition, always a highly emotive issue in every country including Britain, as its deep conservatism over the years in developing its own approach to extraditing its own nationals shows, tends inevitably to be linked to the perception of the administration of justice in the area to which the extradition is proposed. This is accepted in article 8 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and even more clearly so in the communique which accompanied it. The other factor, in relation to extradition, is the exaggeration of its value in dealing with crimes committed by paramilitary organisations. In fairness, the Chief Constable of the RUC has never exaggerated its effectiveness. He has on many occasions drawn attention to the fact that the problem of bringing to justice people who have bombed and killed is a question of evidence. If evidence exists people can be brought to trial whether or not there is extradition. This gives the lie to those who would emotively describe the Republic as a haven for terrorists, giving the impression that large numbers of known wanted people are there simply awaiting an extradition order. The British and Irish Governments over a decade ago, as part of the Sunningdale Agreement, indeed the only part of that agreement that is still in existence, agreed in both parliaments for the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act to provide for the extra-territorial trial of any suspect. In short there is no hiding place for anyone who commits a crime in the

Republic or anywhere else in these islands and its about time that the propagandists on this issue, whether in the North or in Britain, were firmly put in their place. Secondly, the courts in the Republic by their judgements in cases for extradition like the McGlinchy case, have considerably narrowed the interpretation of the political exemption. What is at issue at the moment therefore between the Irish and British governments is not the willingness of anyone to remove hiding places or havens for those guilty of serious offences because that has already been dealt with, but the question of the attitude of the Dail to the administration of justice in other jurisdictions. In its approach to this matter, the Irish Government and the Dail are behaving no differently from any other democratic parliaments and definitely no different from the British Parliament, which has been one of the most conservative and most cautious of all in its attitude to extradition, both in relation to the prima facie requirement and the fact that under its own ratification of the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism the Home Secretary retains a residual power to refuse extradition in individual cases.

It goes without saying that we would like to see a situation in which all civilised countries would sign the Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism but the fact that to date in addition to the British and Irish caution, democracies like Sweden and Italy have entered substantial reservations, and France has only ratified recently, is evidence of the international sensitivity of the issue. In short, this is a complicated matter which has always been approached with caution particularly by Britain and is not the single black and white law and order issued that Unionist politicians would have us believe.

The whole issue of course must be considered in the context of the real problem which is more political than legal. In any society where democratic consensus is absent, where there is division and where there is identification of one side or another with the institutions of state, then there will always be problems about public confidence in the administration of justice. It is a symptom of a deeper problem.

I believe that the Anglo-Irish process had made significant progress in facing up to some of the fundamental obstacles that have stood in the way of normal democratic relationships both within this island and between both islands. This has been its most significant achievement to date and it should not be set at risk by disagreements on matters which are secondary to the fundamental question of accommodating the differences on this island as the basis for permanent peace and stability. To do otherwise, would be to allow the political agenda to be set by those same undemocratic forces on both sides who have to date paralysed political progress on this island and between both islands.

Can the rest of the people of this island and agree for the very first time how we are to live together, fortified by the knowledge that any agreement to live together must have their hallmark on it?

In addition the problem is also a consequence of the methods used by some sections of the community to achieve in their own words - justice and peace. The Emergency powers, extra jails, the end of juries, armed police, special courts are all direct consequences of the existence of organisations whose methods involve the most serious infringements of human rights that this community has seen. Is there anyone who doubts that if those methods ceased that it would be a short time indeed till jury trials would return, till police would be unarmed, till emergency provisions would be abandoned and till there would be widespread community consent for the emptying of our jails and a new beginning? In short, do not let us even forget that the greatest enemies of human rights in our society today in 1987 are paramilitary organisations who execute without trial, who run kangaroo courts who kneecap, who invade and seize peoples homes without their consent, who blow up places of employment, who deny the right to freedom of choice of work as well as the right to work. These infringements of fundamental human rights are a direct cause of the inevitable reaction of Government, as it seeks to protect people against them, inevitably this leads to a limitation of the rights of the Community as a whole.

What I am saying is that this issue of the difference of opinion over the implementation of Article 8 of the Agreement, important though it is, is but a symptom that will continually recur unless that deeper problem is addressed. Therefore, it is not a difference of opinion that should either hinder or obscure what in my opinion has been historic and significant movement in dealing with the deeper political problem. Might I also add that deadlines are rarely a good thing for Governments in dealing with matters of dispute or difference and, in this case, the particular deadline of 1st December, when agreed on over a year ago, did not foresee that five months of that time, so necessary for agreement to be secured would be lost by two general elections from February to July in both Ireland and Britain. In short, I am confident that the good will that has been clearly demonstrated by both governments will produce the common sense to ensure that their difference of opinion about treating symptoms will not at all affect the progress that they are making, and must build upon, in treating the disease.

All the challenges that arise from present opportunities do not rest at the door of Unionism. Realities have to be faced on all sides. Our experience as a people on this island can admit no rigid or exclusive doctrine of nationhood. This island has accommodated many different cultures and people in its long history, a history which in addition has been one of fragmentation and

dispersal. We are a wandering people, both Catholic and Protestant, and is revealed by the origins of the populations of so many lands, our nation is greater than our territory. Those who seek to base our future on some purist and selective interpretation of race, limit our potential as a people and do serious injustice to our history and to the history of the Irish diaspora. Today we are a divided people precisely because we did not accept our differences and have pushed them to the point of division. We are becoming more divided because there is amongst us a section who do have a purist and selective definition of Irishness which they wish to impose on the rest of us by force of arms. They too will fail for they are swimming against the tide of a very powerful history of diversity and diverse roots in Ireland.

They too like the Unionist people can recognise that past attitudes have failed us including their own. The right of the Irish people to self determination is what they say they seek or as it is put by the more immotive verbal republicans "the indefeasable right of the Irish people to sovereignty". Few of us would quarrel with the objective contained in either statement other than to pose the most simple question "How?" and to ask whether those who wage armed struggle to achieve that objective accept that the Irish people are divided on how that right to self determination or to sovereignty should be exercised. The search for agreement on the exercise of that right is the real search for peace and stability. The agreement of all the sections of the people of Ireland, particularly the Protestant people of the North is necessary if we are ever to achieve that goal. If they do accept that if they make that clear then the atmosphere for dialogue on this island will be transformed.

The Anglo Irish Agreement in Article 1, an article that has received very little real attention or analysis, is the most significant article of the entire agreement in the political sense and in the long term. In it the British government are saying that Irish unity is a matter for those who want it persuading those who don't. It is a matter for Irish people alone. They are in effect challenging those who seek to exercise the right to self-determination to seek the necessary agreement of all the people on this island in order to exercise it and if successful in that search the only British interference will be to facilitate it. That is a clear shift of the British into a neutral position.

In the light of that would the IRA and Sinn Fein please tell us what is the possible justification for the use of violence? Do they not have the self confidence or indeed the real belief in their own vision of Ireland to persuade other people without resorting to the ultimate admission of defeat which is the use of force?

The search for agreement among the divided people of this island on how we live together or how we exercise our self-determination has never been seriously undertaken. Have those who are engaged in what they call an armed struggle the self-confidence to lay down their arms and join the rest of us in that search? Can they sit round a table relying like the rest of us on our convictions and abilities? As a people, because of our diverse origins over the centuries we have never had a rigid doctrine of nationhood. We have yet to find that new doctrine of nationhood around which we can construct, for the very first time, a new society on this island founded on reconciliation, based on genuine mutual respect, built by agreement between our different traditions and taking account of our wider relationships - that is the challenge.

We are approaching yet again emotional anniversaries. We are approaching the 300th anniversary of the siege of Derry and then the Battle of the Boyne. We also approach the 200th anniversary of the French revolution whose ideas led to the foundation of the Irish Republican Movement. One set of anniversaries was about the achievement of civil and religious liberty for all. The other was about replacing Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter with the common name of Irishman, another way of saying the same thing. Would it not be a fitting commemoration of those anniversaries, if, on this island, this generation of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter were to finally lay to rest our ancient quarrels, to accept that challenge, to construct that agreement and as a result to create for the first time in every corner of this island civil and religious liberty?