

NORTHERN IRELAND FORUM FOR POLITICAL DIALOGUE

Friday 29 November 1996

The meeting was called to order at 10.00 am (Mr J R Gorman in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

FORUM: CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

The Chairman: As many Members will know, I have been hoping that after our last meeting before Christmas, which will be on Friday 13 December, we might have some food and refreshments together. I saw this as providing a useful opportunity to invite some guests with whom we could network — in that great phrase — and also to meet spouses or partners who might be free to join us. I am pleased to say that, after discussion in the Business Committee yesterday, it has been agreed how we might pay for the event — as I am often told, there is no such thing as a free lunch — but some more work will have to be done on this. I hope to let Members have a detailed note next week. In the meantime, may I ask them and their spouses to keep the afternoon of the 13th free.

BEEF INDUSTRY CRISIS (BSE)

The Chairman: I understand that representatives of the Agriculture Committee, including Mr Campbell and Edwin Poots, whom some Members will have heard speaking very well on 'Farm Gate' early this morning, met yesterday, among others, Mr Douglas Hogg, the Secretary of State for Agriculture. Perhaps Mr Campbell would like to update us later.

FORUM: BUSINESS

The Chairman: In order this week to be absolutely sure of finishing the special debate, we should aim to conclude debate on the United Kingdom Unionist Party's motion by 3.00 pm at the latest.

ALL-IRELAND HARMONIZATION

Mr McCartney: I beg to move the following motion:

This Forum, while approving of co-operation with the Irish Republic on matters of mutual interest and benefit, deprecates the attempt to bring about all-Ireland harmonization as a step towards the creation of all-Ireland executive structures.

I would like to demonstrate that the opposition of the pro-Union parties generally to the framework proposals of both Governments is not some narrow, insular, local rejection of ideas that are generally accepted throughout Western Europe, that the pro-Union rejection has a respectable intellectual and political basis. Some economic and political critics suggest that Germany, after failing in two world wars to achieve political and economic domination of Europe by force of arms, has shifted its methodology but not its objectives, and, by attempting to create a federal political Europe on the basis of an economic union under the political leadership of the Federal Republic, is simply renewing the struggle for supremacy by other means.

Many of the arguments employed in favour of a federal political union, such as bringing a permanent end to antagonisms between France and Germany, which resulted in wars in 1870, 1914 and 1939, and the alleged benefit to all of closer — indeed, merged — economies, seem to be mirror images of arguments propounded on behalf of the framework proposals as a means of settling the Irish question.

Twenty-five years of terror — indeed, 27 years: since 1969 — with intermittent periods before that, appear to have made it percolate through to the minds of constitutional Nationalists that, like Germany's unsuccessful attempts to dominate Europe by force of arms, the IRA's attempts to dominate and unify Ireland by force of arms are not having as quick a result as they would like. So they are resorting to the other means.

The concept of functionalism provided the most comprehensive theoretical approach to the issue of European integration. The belief was that international functional agencies would eventually erode the role of national Governments and states. The whole process, though apparently economic in form, was and is inherently political. The power of national Governments was to be progressively eroded because

“political actors in several distinct national settings were persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new and larger centre whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over pre-existing national states.”

That declaration of principle must strike a chord in all pro-Union hearts. Brigid Laffan, a distinguished academic, in her book ‘Integration and Co-operation in Europe’, brilliantly expounds this, and she does so in terms which dramatically highlight the process in operation under the Anglo-Irish Agreement — a process which will be accelerated if the framework proposals are put into effect. Her language, if you did not know what it was about, would be absolutely appropriate to what you find in Ireland. This is what she says:

“But how are national actors persuaded to shift their loyalty? Co-operation on low-key, relatively non-controversial issues generates demands and pressures for co-operation on related policy areas (the

inexorable logic of functional spill-over), and as the actors involved in the process deal successfully with technical issues, they enhance their capacity to deal with" —

guess what —

more politically sensitive policy areas. National politicians, officials and interest-group elites are gradually socialized by their participation in central institutions and joint decision-making structures. The supra-national commission is endowed with a key role in the development of functional co-operation. It represents the common interest and can build up coalitions with trans-national organised interests to overcome the resistance of national Governments to further co-operation."

Is it not amazing that the author was talking not about Ireland but about Europe? She rightly points out that

"Scholars of the realist or traditional [or even the pro-Union] school of international relations" —

the "pro-union" bit, by the way, is mine —

"have always been uneasy with integration by stealth, stressing the role of national governments as the main determinant of the pace of integration."

Many of these functional principles are rejected by the United Kingdom in relation to its own position in Europe. The whole Euro-sceptic wing, not only of the Tory Party but of the Labour Party too, rejects being part of a process which, if continued to its logical conclusion, will result in the total erosion of the United Kingdom's national identity and in its incorporation within a politically federated Europe. Yet such is the utter hypocrisy of the Conservative Government that they are prepared, in their own interests, to expose Northern Ireland to a process for Irish unity that they find repugnant, as a means of ensuring the political union of Europe. The principles and methodology inherent in the framework proposals are entirely similar to those to which the British Government object when employed against the United Kingdom by Brussels.

At the very centre of functionalism as a means of integrating states is the idea or concept known to academics as functional spill-over. According to this idea, if states were persuaded to integrate one sector of their economies, technical pressures would push them to integrate other sectors. It is against this background that we could all profit from rereading the framework proposals. For example, any attempt to rationalize coal production would necessitate the bringing of other forms of energy, such as oil, natural gas and nuclear fuel, into effective planning for the demand and use of energy by industry. In similar circumstances, a common agricultural policy required an end to fluctuating national currencies, so agricultural policy is complemented by the tying together of exchange rates. From this point the logic of functional spill-over proceeds in just the same way — from monetary union to economic union to common regional policy.

10.15 am

Functional spill-over leads to political spill-over, with the result that politicians, businessmen and elite groups, instead of lobbying their national Governments, move to the higher authority. In no time at all the people of Northern Ireland, if these principles were applied, would be lobbied not in Belfast, not in London, but in Dublin.

The essence of the framework document is a new North/South all-Ireland institution with executive powers. This central dynamo will be surrounded by a number of satellite organizations with executive powers, but the central body will oversee or discharge all delegated executive, harmonizing or consultative functions as appropriate. And remember that the framework provides that you go from consultative to harmonizing to executive. It is a process of death by a number of cuts. This body will assume immediate executive responsibility for sectors involving a natural physical all-Ireland framework, to include transport, communications and mineral resources. It will also assume control of relations with Brussels. If that is not a derogation of national sovereignty it is difficult to imagine what could be. This body will have the added function of

“encouraging harmonization between North and South in most policy areas, from agriculture to education.”

Education, of course, is the area most critical for the preservation of a people's identity and heritage, and it will become, under the framework document, a matter that is subject to a foreign ethos. Of even greater importance will be the future role designated for this institution. Its remit will be dynamic, enabling progressive extension of its functions to new areas. From where will this dynamic come? Not from Britain, which has declared that it has no interest of any specific kind in Northern Ireland, but from the Republic, which has never concealed its open and unashamed support for Irish unity. Indeed, Governments of the Republic are specifically so charged under a constitutional imperative set by articles 2 and 3 — the origin of the framework document, which is still central to all plans for a future settlement, as evidenced by its incorporation into the groundwork document of 16 April 1996 setting up the Stormont talks.

I listen with interest to those who suggest that if Sinn Féin does not come in we will go on without them. Go on to where? To the framework proposals — that is where we will be going. Those are the parameters within which any future settlement will be decided. Just as much of the language and ideas in the Anglo-Irish Agreement were culled from the Irish Forum, so the present document owes its origin to Irish policy documents. Some parties may have a copy of the Republic's submission of September 1992 to the Brooke talks, which contains principles and language uncannily similar to those of the framework document.

The European element and functionalist approach undoubtedly owe much to John Hume, and the unrevealed Hume-Adams document might well provide a prototype of what is currently being offered under the guise of a discussion document. Indeed, some Members may recall that a few weeks ago Mr Hume, at the SDLP conference, claimed that the framework document was really a by-product of his discussions with Mr Adams.

The British Government have, at the very least, offered a conditional surrender to the IRA in terms of the framework proposals. They are going to get, according to Mr Major yesterday, inclusive and comprehensive talks. The Union is going to be on the table. The bait to get them in is to say that everything is up for discussion, including the Union. Where, in those circumstances, do we hear about the principle of consent, which is much bandied about? In the interim, the dead have died in vain, and the maimed remain mutilated for nothing. In an attempt to stand truth upon its head, the Unionist people, who have suffered largely in silence, will be castigated by the propaganda machines of both Governments as

negative obstacles to peace. Those who have bombed, murdered and maimed will be presented as peacemakers, while the victims will be blackmailed with the threat of a resumption of violence if they do not acquiesce in the destruction of the Union.

The peace talks at Stormont are not only not the only show in town: they are a farce. The real show in town is now revealed. The big show has been going on from July of this year right up to the present. The players in that show are Mr John Hume, as message-boy for Sinn Féin/IRA, and the British Government and, sad to say, latterly representatives of the Ulster Unionist Party, in the form of Mr Trimble —

Mr Jim Rodgers: Rubbish.

Mr McCartney: I hear a nay from Mr Rodgers, which I will ignore.

On Monday of this week, before Mr Major made his announcement, it was possible for the entire pro-Union people to subscribe to a set of six principles for the future of these talks (principles that could have been agreed by everyone), but that was not to be. The Ulster Unionist Party would not vote for its own proposals. Its Leader was off at the real show in town — a show in which there had appeared, as bit players, representatives of the Loyalist fringe parties. In any event, there is absolutely no doubt that the great and the good, both lay and clerical, will be called in aid by the British political establishment to lend their voices to what can be described only as a constitutional conspiracy.

Those who believe in the Union must stand firm by their own convictions and conscience, for one thing is clear: one simply cannot be a Unionist of any description and negotiate within the terms or parameters of the framework proposals. Good-neighbourliness and co-operation for the mutual benefit of all people, whether in the Republic of Ireland or in Northern Ireland, are goals that any reasonable democrat would be willing to support, but such objectives require none of the political institutions and provisions for harmonization of the respective economies. Nor do they require the theories of an island economy or the Belfast-Dublin corridor for which many of our captains of industry currently appear misguidedly to proselytize. If half the energy devoted to these topics were put into trade between Northern Ireland and Great Britain and Europe, which accounts for over 90% of our exports, even greater prosperity might be the lot of the Ulster people.

I welcome increased trade with the Republic, I welcome good-neighbourliness, I welcome any arrangements between any bodies North and South based on pragmatic self-interest, but I am totally opposed to any harmonization that would create political institutions which would merely provide an expensive and unnecessary level of bureaucracy and would, indeed, by the very suspicion engendered as to their true purpose, totally frustrate the real, pragmatic economic and other benefits that might ensue from good-neighbourliness.

I therefore ask all parties in the Forum to support the motion.

Mr Donaldson: I rise on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party to indicate support for the motion. We will not accept proposals for the future of Northern Ireland which seek to harmonize the province with the Irish Republic.

It is important, in looking at where the Government are coming from with the proposals that they, along with the Government of the Irish Republic, set out in the framework document, to understand exactly the strategy behind this objective. I take Members back to 1984 and the New Ireland Forum report, which, in many ways, set out the strategy that has been followed by Irish Nationalism since. The design was to bring the Government along with and alongside the proposals set out in the Forum report, which points up three options for the future of the island of Ireland — as they called it — and uses terminology with which we are now familiar, such as references to the concept of a new Ireland. Irish Nationalism, in envisaging a new Ireland, made it clear that what it wanted was dynamic change — a process that could bring about constitutional change over a period without requiring the consent of the people of Northern Ireland. And that is fundamental.

Very often Nationalist leaders — the SDLP in particular — pay lip-service to the principle of consent, yet by their actions they continuously ride roughshod over the consent of the people of Northern Ireland. They did so in the case of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 — the consent of the people to that instrument was not and has never been sought, and has never been given — and in the Hume-Adams process that developed following the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr Hume tells us continuously that agreement threatens no one — that what he is talking about is peace on the streets — but he is not prepared to come out and say “These are our proposals. These are our demands.” Why the secrecy if they do not threaten anyone? It is important that Mr Hume be honest with the people of Northern Ireland and publish his proposals so that we may judge exactly whom they do and whom they do not threaten.

Harmonization was defined in the framework document as bringing together the formulation of policies and obliging both sides — that, I suppose, is Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic — to use their best endeavours to reach agreement on common policies and to make determined efforts to overcome any obstacles to that objective, even though its implementation might be undertaken by the two administrations separately. “Harmonization” is a key word that is going to feature very highly on the political landscape of Northern Ireland in the months and years ahead.

It is a European word — a word that those who support a federal Europe have used, a strategy that they have developed to bring about European integration. Harmonize the economies of the various member states of the European Community and eventually you will bring about economic integration. Economic integration is the key to political integration. The European federalists realize that they must first integrate the European member states economically if they are to have the power to bring about political integration. That is what the proposal for a European single currency is all about. By harmonizing the currencies of the European Community, people would create at the centre the economic power by which to achieve political integration.

So it is in Northern Ireland. This vision of a new Ireland, this idea of harmonizing our economies, is designed to bring about political integration. That is the real objective. Those who foolishly believe that economic integration and harmonization is for the good of all and fail to recognize the hidden political agenda delude themselves. But they do not delude the people of Northern Ireland, who realize what the game is.

10.30 am

Mr McCartney has referred to the framework document. Let me make it absolutely clear that the Ulster Unionist Party will not negotiate within the terms of that document, which is a recipe for the end of the Union. We are in no doubt about that. We have made it absolutely clear from the beginning that we reject the framework document as a basis for negotiation.

Let us understand the dangers here. The Government — our own Government — say in paragraph 28, in respect of North-South bodies, that they have no limits of their own

“to impose on the nature and extent of functions which could be agreed for designation to a North-South body.”

That, of course, is perfectly in line with Mr Brooke’s assertion that they have no strategic economic interest in Northern Ireland. They have no limits to place on the functions that could be given to a North-South body.

Harmonization is referred to in paragraph 38:

“The remit of this North-South body should be dynamic, enabling progressive extension, by agreement, of its functions to new areas. Its role should develop to keep pace with the growth of harmonization and with greater integration between the two economies.”

Going back to the New Ireland Forum and looking at the options — which I believe are not options but stages on the road to a united Ireland — one can see clearly how Irish Nationalism has managed to bamboozle (if “bamboozle” is the word) the Government into going down the road of harmonizing and integrating economies, with the objective of creating one political unit.

Some Nationalist politicians are less reticent, perhaps, when it comes to setting out what this is intended to achieve. In our debate on the Anglo-Irish Agreement I referred to an interview with Mr Reynolds — these days somewhat out of pocket. Mr Reynolds, in an interview for ‘The Observer’, said

“We are all sharing sovereignty in Europe as of now. Is it unreasonable to think that we should be sharing executive functions in an island the size of Ireland?”

And what does he go on to say?

“Take, just as an example, tourism. Surely we can do a better job internationally on a 32-county basis, with less overheads.”

As I said on the last occasion, I have heard it argued that Northern Ireland can benefit from joint promotion of tourism on an all-island basis. But that is not the true objective. The true objective is to pave the way for the creation of an executive body to deal with tourism on an all-Ireland basis — harmonizing, integrating. That is the hidden objective of those in the Maryfield secretariat who are pushing these things on the people of Northern Ireland.

Let me quote what Mr Peter Temple-Morris and Mr Dermot Ahern said recently in a document called 'Integrated Development Framework for the North-East Border Region':

"We are working at integrated regional development through our own projects. We are requesting the regional social and economic structures that will enhance the capacity of this region to develop as one unit."

That is the objective — to create on this island one unit, one economy. I have to say that it is nonsense. Northern Ireland does far more trade with Great Britain than with the Irish Republic. Why, therefore, should we be harmonizing our economy with that of the Republic? Ought not our economy to be harmonized with that of Scotland, England and Wales? We are a part of the United Kingdom, and we demand to be treated as a part of the United Kingdom. If there is to be harmonization, we ask that it take place on a United Kingdom basis.

As a pro-Union party, we have that as our objective, which is why we support the motion. Let me make it clear that the Ulster Unionist Party will not negotiate on the basis of harmonizing or integrating the economy of Northern Ireland with that of the Irish Republic. We will not negotiate on the basis of the framework document. As far as we are concerned, it is a recipe to end the Union. We support the Union, and we believe that, economically, it provides the best future for all the people of Northern Ireland.

Rev Dr Ian Paisley: In the British House of Commons yesterday the Government used a ploy so that the representatives from Northern Ireland could not discuss a statement by the Prime Minister. Their message-boy to Dick Spring — one Andrew Hunter — put a planted question. The Prime Minister got up and made a statement — not a full statement — and referred Members to the Library of the House for the purpose of getting what was in his mind.

We have just heard strong words from Mr Donaldson about what he will not negotiate, but yesterday, in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister made it clear, as never before, that the Union is going to be on the table. I faced him afterwards in his room, and he admitted that the Union would be on the table and that there would be no predetermined outcome. Negotiation would not be limited by anything other than the need for agreement. So the Union is not predetermined at the talks. It can be violated. The law of the land, which says that the people of this country have the right to vote in a referendum on the matter, is set aside. For what purpose? To appease the IRA gunmen, whom the Prime Minister seems intent on having at the table.

I noticed in the 'News Letter' this morning the heading "Trimble Glad, but Paisley Unhappy". Why wouldn't I be unhappy about the points set out by IRA/Sinn Féin? Can Mr Donaldson tell me why the Prime Minister does not let us know what Hume and Adams are about? We asked him yesterday, but he said that it was confidential. Hume/Adams mark one was also confidential. We have never seen it, and now we are not going to see Adams/Hume mark two.

What did they ask for? If one reads the 'Irish News' one will see that they asked for three things. They asked, first, that Sinn Féin be brought in at all levels to talk to the Governments. Here is what the Prime Minister says in his paper:

"We envisage that the process would involve" —

before agreement on a so-called cease-fire —

"meetings with Sinn Fein at various levels to explore with them what assurances could be given and what confidence-building measures established."

So the first thing that they asked for they are going to get.

Secondly, they asked for a meeting with both Governments. Gerry Adams demanded that the two Governments meet them.

"The British and Irish Governments would invite Sinn Fein to meet them together for the purpose of making an early total and absolute commitment to the Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence."

I thought that it was in a plenary session that they were to make this declaration, but now the real show is to take place out of town, with the Irish Government and the British Government sitting down with Sinn Fein and discussing something that is the prerogative of a plenary session. The two Governments would forget about the talks and

"would set up their own bilateral and other consultation" —

note the words "other consultation" —

"with all parties to seek to determine how, if this process were successfully concluded, the negotiations could most constructively be advanced, including an agreed indicative time frame."

Thirdly, they asked for a time frame, and later in this document they say

"We have already proposed that a plenary meeting be held in December to take stock of progress in the negotiations as a whole."

We have never heard of that. When I asked the Prime Minister when a plenary meeting had made such a decision he could not tell me. They go on to say that they will review the situation by the end of May 1997.

So everything that was asked for is going to be given. What is more, the independent Chairman will be expected by the two Governments to call a meeting to rubber-stamp the decision. This paper is a movement by the Government towards a sell-out on the basis of appeasement.

Today's 'Daily Telegraph' — not a paper which supports the policies of the Democratic Unionist Party — carries an editorial that I commend to the Forum:

"However, at the moment, under the Government, a cease-fire will no longer be required to be permanent."

We know why: because the constitution of the IRA precludes such an undertaking.

"Instead, it must be convincingly unequivocal" —

convincingly unequivocal —

“and intended to be lasting.”

Intended to be lasting.

“Once the Government believes that this is so, IRA/Sinn Fein looks to be admitted into talks swiftly. There is unlikely to be a satisfactory quarantine period or a thorough testing of the Republicans’ bona fides. After the events of the past nine months, these terms are dangerously indulgent.”

That is what the ‘Daily Telegraph’ says, and it makes the point that if the SDLP knew where its own best interests lay, it would agree. But the editorial goes on to say

“The irony of this whole saga is that it is the SDLP, even more than the Government, that IRA/Sinn Fein has in its sights. The Republicans want a cease-fire before the general election as a prelude to an electoral pact with the SDLP. A united Nationalist front might then unseat both Rev William McCrea in Mid-Ulster and Ken Maginnis in Fermanagh and South Tyrone. If all that were to happen, Nationalists would hold seven of the 18 seats from Northern Ireland in the next Parliament. Such a manoeuvre would give a massive boost to Sinn Fein’s ambition. Mr Hume’s actions are based on the assumption that the Republicans must be appeased. We are not convinced, after yesterday’s events, that the Government has entirely rejected that assumption either, and it is the Government’s policy to appease the IRA.”

I want to finish by saying that I utterly deplore the action of the UVF and the Red Hand Commandos in spawning their insult to the memory of the founding father of our province, Lord Carson, by pretending that he would have been associated in any way with the skullduggery of murders, drug-pushing and the other activities of those organizations. It is a disgrace that the leader of the UVF or the PUP in that area of Antrim should describe what has happened as just regrettable. He did not have the decency to deplore what had taken place in the city. No participants should have guns behind them at this table — whether they be IRA men or call themselves Loyalists. This is a Forum for democracy, and the talks are about democracy. No one has a right to hold on to his murder weapons, his arsenal for blood-letting, and denounce those who want democracy. My party stands for democracy, and I throw back in the teeth of these people their insult to Lord Carson and the noble UVF of which my father was proud to be a member, which gave great service to this country, giving it on a basis of democracy, decency, purity and integrity.

10.45 am

Mr Trimble: Although the statement issued by the Prime Minister yesterday is not relevant to our proceedings, I want to touch on it very briefly. One of the things that everyone should welcome with regard to that statement is the fact that it was published. I consider that very important because it was clear from statements and actions of Irish Nationalists in preceding days that they were going to regard the statement drafted by the Prime Minister not as a final document but merely as a stage in a continuing process. It was clear also that efforts would be made to change the statement to make it more closely accord with demands of Sinn Fein/IRA.

Indeed, one could see a rather gruesome procedure being set up, whereby the IRA, in the shape of Adams and Mitchel McLaughlin, were threatening violence. We were told that

there would be lethal consequences. The hard men were going to be balanced by the soft men — the allegedly soft men, Hume and Spring — who would come in and try to move the Government further towards the demands of Sinn Féin/IRA. That process has been to a certain extent obstructed by publication of the document. Members will notice that I am cautious in my use of language. I say merely “to a certain extent obstructed” because I am quite certain that Spring and Hume will resume their distasteful task of acting as the agents of Sinn Féin/IRA by trying to get the Government to further water down their stance. Vigilance will be necessary. But I respectfully suggest to the Forum that vigilance in defence of the Union should not be confused with overstatement of the case in terms that can only give comfort to the enemies of the Union. There is a distinction to be drawn.

Turning to the matter for debate this morning, I am very glad that the motion puts its focus on the term “all-Ireland” with regard to harmonization and structures. That is the important point. No Unionist, to my knowledge, has ever been opposed to co-operation with our neighbours, provided that it is undertaken on a pragmatic basis where there is genuine benefit to be obtained and on a basis of mutual respect. Of course, any formalized relationship, whatever form it took, would have to operate on a basis of mutual respect. But mutual respect means more than just repeal of articles 2 and 3. Respecting a person’s views means accepting his views. Respecting the views of the people of Northern Ireland necessarily involves not just acknowledging the fact that those people wish to be a part of the United Kingdom but accepting that situation and not constantly trying, through moral and political pressure and violence, to make them change their views.

If someone repeats politely and firmly that he does not want to do something, the normal response is to accept that and stop trying to persuade him or push him in a particular direction. So we must insist that our neighbour to the south not just accept our views but also respect them.

The other factor is that co-operation must be for mutual benefit. If you look back over the years since the Twenty-six Counties seceded from the United Kingdom you will find numerous occasions on which Unionists were prepared to enter into arrangements for mutual benefit. The most striking was that agreed to by the man who was the real father of Northern Ireland — Sir James Craig. Anyone who has studied the history of that time knows that it was Craig who designed the strategy and executed it. He had a brilliant advocate in the shape of Edward Carson, but it is the Ulsterman Craig who is entitled to the credit for what happened.

In 1925 the Governments in Belfast, Dublin and London were agreeing to wind up the Council of Ireland — a body that had not come into existence, because, having been designed to deal with co-operation between two devolved administrations, it could not cope with co-operation between a devolved administration and the Government of a dominion. That is a fact that one should bear in mind in this context. Unionists could accept that agreement because it involved recognition by the Free State Government of the existence of Northern Ireland and its boundaries. Indeed, it went on to provide for joint meetings between the Government of Northern Ireland and the Government of the Irish Free State to consider matters of mutual benefit. Sir James Craig, the founder of Northern Ireland, agreed that the Northern Ireland Cabinet would meet in joint session with the Cabinet of the Irish Republic.

If any Unionist today should dare to make such a suggestion, he might hear a few words of criticism from certain quarters.

It is interesting to see what happened in 1925, after James Craig agreed to this arrangement. Two meetings took place — not at Cabinet level but at ministerial level. These contacts stopped because the Irish Government were embarrassed at having to meet their Northern counterparts. Cosgrave, the Irish Prime Minister, said that it would be much better if things were done quietly, and so the arrangement fell through. That is ironic in the context of the situation today. It is right that the motion should focus on the term “all-Ireland” because we do not want all-Ireland political bodies. We do not want anything that looks as though it is a third centre of government in the island of Ireland, anything that looks as though it might be an embryonic Government of a united Ireland. That is the key point. Excessive focus on the word “executive” could lead people astray.

There are a number of cross-border executive bodies already. Let us take the most trivial — actually not trivial but fairly significant, though I am not sure exactly how it operates. Upper Lough Erne and Lower Lough Erne are very important to Fermanagh in terms of psychology and of the economy. The locks which control the level of the lakes are located in Donegal, so decisions as to level are taken in the Republic. Economically, this is vitally important to County Fermanagh. Determining the level of the water is an executive function in respect of something that is of considerable benefit to Fermanagh people.

The point I am making is that, while we must be vigilant to ensure that no all-Ireland political institutions come into existence — and I take the word “executive”, as used in the motion, to refer to major governmental functions — no one is going to object to cross-border treatment of minor functions of a genuinely cross-border nature. It is important to remember that there is a distinction between “cross-border” and “all-Ireland”. These functions must involve mutual benefit. This is a distinction that past Unionist administrations and the Ulster Unionist Party have drawn.

I refer here to a document at which some criticism has been directed from time to time. The furthest that we went, in terms of considering any form of executive authority, was expressly stated to be the delegation of functions to an autonomous agency on a basis similar to that of the Foyle Fisheries Commission. There are arguments about how effective the Foyle Fisheries Commission is. Indeed, there are powerful criticisms that it has not realized the objectives that were set for it. It was established in the belief that it would be of benefit to people in Northern Ireland, and its limited executive and judicial functions have to be seen in that light. Unionists, above all other parties, have conceded that in certain circumstances there can be co-operation but have insisted that a firm distinction be drawn between cross-border arrangements, entered into purely for mutual benefit, and all-Ireland political institutions. Of the latter we would not be part.

It is important to define the terms, which is what I have tried to do. There is a regrettable tendency on the part of some not to define terms. Indeed, some have a tendency, for party political advantage, to make statements which, I am afraid, go outside the strict purview of accuracy. Here I am thinking of comments made a fortnight ago by Mr Peter Robinson. I am sorry to have to make these remarks in his absence. In the debate

on the Anglo-Irish Agreement he said, with reference to the Ulster Unionist Party, that during the discussions in Dublin

“they made a great offer to the Dublin Government and to the SDLP. They agreed to the setting up of a plethora of all-Ireland executive bodies, one after another. When they came back to Northern Ireland we asked for a copy of the document. They refused. We asked officially for a copy. They refused. I have a copy here — this bundle of shredded paper.”

Members will remember those words:

“I have a copy here — this bundle of shredded paper.”

Mr Robinson left the shredded paper behind, and I have the bundle here. Two pages consist of — *[Interruption]* Wait for it. *[Interruption]*

The Chairman: Order.

Mr Trimble: Let me read this, starting at the top. It is obviously a page taken from a large document because at the top left-hand corner we have the number 3.3. Here is part of that third paragraph:

“The Order empowers the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, on the application of the health and social services board, to fluoridate the water supplied within the area or part of the area of that board.”

Another page clearly labels this “Labour Party Proposals for Fluoridation — Paper by Dr Alan Evans”. Now, let us go back — *[Interruption]*

Rev Dr Ian Paisley *rose.*

The Chairman: One minute, Mr Paisley.

Mr Trimble: Let us go back to what Mr Robinson said. *[Interruption]*

The Chairman: Order.

Mr Trimble: Gentlemen opposite should bear in mind that there is a word which describes a person who deliberately makes statements that are false. The statement that we had delivered a paper in Dublin was false, as was the statement that we had offered all-Ireland executive bodies.

The Chairman: You are out of time, Mr Trimble.

Mr Trimble: I have here a DUP paper — a genuine DUP paper — referring to cross-border bodies. Let us see what it says. It says, with regard to proposals for the involvement of the Republic in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland, that the DUP proposals were framed in full recognition that they must be more attractive to the SDLP than the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Chairman: Mr Trimble, you are out of time.

11.00 am

Mr Trimble: Two proposals — *[Interruption]* It is a tall order. It is a tall paper. We see here the people who cannot face the truth of their own propositions — *[Interruption]*

The Chairman: I am very relieved. I was convinced that the bundle of shredded papers was the head of a beheaded grey-haired man. Guess who I thought it was.

Mr Cedric Wilson: On a point of order, Mr Chairman. May I say to Mr Trimble that I have a document here — not the shredded document.

The Chairman: This is not a point of order. Please sit down.

Mr Cedric Wilson: It is the outcome of deliberations —

The Chairman: Please sit down.

Mr McMichael: I am quite reluctant to intervene.

Several Members: Sit down then.

Mr McMichael: I will not sit down, but, unlike some Members, I will restrict myself to the content of the motion.

Many people will identify North-South relationships automatically with the framework documents produced by the Governments of the United Kingdom and of the Irish Republic on 23 February 1995. These documents are flawed. They are asymmetrical. All pro-Union parties will agree that this framework does not provide the basis for a political settlement for Northern Ireland. John Major, in the foreword, claimed that it would explain how relations in the island of Ireland and between these islands might be based on co-operation and agreement, to the mutual advantage of all. Yet the thrust is centred on North-South economic linkage.

One would have expected a framework for dealing with the totality of relationships to take a broader and more symmetrical view of the issues and to have British-Isles-wide dimensions. If it really were about economic integration — and I will not go into the arguments for and against that — surely the totality of relationships would involve greater integration of the economies of these islands. If joint bodies with consultative, harmonizing and executive roles are required North and South — and we believe that they are not — surely they are required east and west also. In terms of shipping, fishing, the environment, bloodstock, migration, tourism, drugs, agriculture, and so on, relationships must be addressed mainly on a British Isles basis. Clearly, the intention of the framework document is not to deal with the totality of relationships but to centre on purely North-South bodies, encouraging the creation of an Irish economy and then an Irish confederation.

At what point does political and economic integration become counter-productive in the Northern Ireland economy? The deterministic objectives of the British Government and

pressure on members to make the assembly work would ensure further delegation of power to the North-South body. At what point would Unionists be able to say "Enough is enough"? It must be up to the people of Northern Ireland, through an elected Assembly, to determine these matters without the strait-jacket provided in the framework document.

The Unionist community as a whole remain deeply offended that the British Government have allowed a foreign Government a role in the determination of political development in this part of the United Kingdom — a function jealously guarded by Parliament in the rest of the kingdom. It is a clear admission by the British Government that, to gain international legitimacy, they need to have the Irish Government on board, and it is an inclination of British establishment policy to keep Northern Ireland at arm's length lest it poison the body politic of Great Britain.

North-South relationships are important, and it is in the interests of both Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic to co-operate in areas of mutual benefit. But there is no consent for either the Irish Government or the SDLP to circumvent the wishes of the Northern Ireland electorate and pressurize a Northern Ireland Assembly into deeper and greater integration.

Unionism must look at such co-operation in terms of competition also. Northern Ireland should seek to build economies of scale with other United Kingdom regions as a means of maintaining United Kingdom jobs and helping the United Kingdom balance of payments. Jobs created and taxes raised in the Irish Republic will not build houses or open hospital wards in Northern Ireland. Only by coming together can local representatives from all over the British Isles ensure that the many relationships and problems are properly addressed.

With regard to the negotiations that are taking place at this time, we all face many difficulties in the efforts to overcome the mistrust of the past and build fair and equitable structures of government for Northern Ireland. The greatest challenge, however, and the area which has been given the least debate is that of Northern Ireland's external relationships. We believe that the principal relationship that must be addressed is that between the people of Northern Ireland. If sufficient consensus is not found between Ulster Protestants and Ulster Catholics about how our society should be shaped and governed, it is unlikely that any process will succeed. This internal relationship is the corner-stone of the negotiations.

However, we have to recognize that there is also a need for an agreed package which addresses the totality of relationships. There is no consent for the creation of political structures between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic which allow interference in the internal jurisdiction in this part of the United Kingdom, but we do wish to build a friendly and co-operative relationship with the Republic on a basis of mutual advantage and transparency. However, we see this within the confines of a wider relationship between regions of the British Isles.

Any proposals for relationships external to Northern Ireland must be driven by economies and not Nationalism. Loyalists have felt great mistrust of the Republic's political establishment. This is hardly surprising considering that all but one of the current political parties in the Irish Republic have their roots in violent Republicanism. The jealousy with

which the Republic has guarded its illegal territorial claim over Northern Ireland has done nothing to alleviate that mistrust.

The framework proposals are unacceptable because they are undemocratic, asymmetrical and inappropriate to the challenges we face and the relationships that beg to be addressed. In fact, as was true of the 1974 Council of Ireland, they are merely an attempt to create a North-South focus and further dilute Northern Ireland's link with the rest of the United Kingdom. Clearly, what we must develop is an appropriate model of co-operation to deal with Northern Ireland's needs.

Any proposed model must observe several principles. It must observe the principle of subsidiarity. It must not create supranational bodies. There must be consent for bodies and their dynamic. There must be transparency of operation. There must be unanimity in decision-making. Arrangements must reflect the symmetry of relationships, and they must be motivated by the need for real and effective co-operation.

A wide range of issues can be dealt with only on a British Isles basis — for example, the environment, transport, fishing, narcotics, migration, professional standards, tourism, bloodstock and education, some of which I have already mentioned. Education is perhaps an excellent example, as one to which John Major referred in the framework document. He raised the importance of mutual recognition of teacher qualifications, but his vision was limited to North-South recognition, whereas one would have expected him to address the matter as it affects teachers across these islands. Many more teachers from the Republic of Ireland are trained and work in Scotland, Wales and England than in Northern Ireland.

Another example is the need for mutually beneficial co-operation in the field of livestock control. And if there were co-operation on a structural basis throughout the British Isles the current BSE crisis might have been avoided. The advanced regulatory controls employed by Northern Ireland cattle farmers would have set the standards for the other regions, and much damage would have been avoided. Surely this exemplifies the need to look at structures for meaningful co-operation as a way forward.

The United Kingdom is still a major market for the Republic of Ireland, and the vast majority of goods travel east-west. This applies to the migration of people also. Some 800,000 citizens of the Republic reside in Great Britain, where they enjoy common citizenship. Across these islands, we share the same air and seas, we have language, legal systems, education systems and professional institutions in common, and we have overlapping standards. Above all, we share a rich history, and it is towards that that we must look in our efforts to work together. We suggest that the totality of relationships can be addressed only by a council of the British Isles, which would be the opposite of the narrow, confining Nationalist models hitherto chosen by the British and Irish Governments. A Northern Ireland Assembly and the Government of the Republic would co-operate through the council of the British Isles, on an issue-by-issue basis, in respect of matters of mutual concern or benefit.

The format for structures of co-operation must truly address the totality and recognize the symmetry of relationships. This can best be done, as I have said, by a council of the British Isles. The Nordic Council is just one possible model. Such a body, while recognizing

national sovereignty and respecting it as a vital political force, would revitalize these isles, building new friendships north, south, east and west. Rather than being in a place apart, Northern Ireland would fulfil a valuable role in the region.

The Chairman: One more minute.

Mr McMichael: I am concluding.

We must take a broader view. The United Kingdom may change dramatically over the coming years, with devolution in Scotland, Wales and the English regions hastening a written constitution for the United Kingdom and a new settlement. The European Union may change dramatically, towards or away from closer union. We must decide now what is the best way forward for Northern Ireland and for the people of the United Kingdom as a whole. We must recognize the changing needs of people in Northern Ireland as a region on the periphery of the United Kingdom and of the British Isles — itself a region on the periphery of an evolving Europe.

These are challenges which face us as we debate this very serious matter. However, the answer does not lie in the proposals of the framework document. Rather, it lies in developing a model based upon economics, not driven by Nationalism, and arrived at between the people of Northern Ireland. The framework document is nothing more than a Trojan horse for Irish confederation and is therefore unacceptable to us. But we cannot run away from the challenge of dealing with this vital issue in an intelligent and constructive way, and I hope that we have the integrity to do so.

Mr Ken Maginnis: On a point of order, Mr Chairman. I draw your attention to a matter which I suppose could be described as one of courtesy. It is common practice in most forums and assemblies that someone who has just made a speech displays the courtesy of remaining in his place until the next person has completed his contribution to the debate. This is especially important when a personal attack is made on another member. You will have noticed that Mr Paisley Snr, having made his contribution, left the Chamber without displaying that courtesy. Perhaps you would consider this matter and rule on it at some stage.

Mr Morrow: It is ironic that Mr Maginnis did not raise this matter when Dr Paisley was leaving, but there are obvious reasons for that. Dr Paisley had a pressing appointment. It is ironic that the Leader of the Member's own party was not here at the commencement of the debate. I am sure that from time to time he will find himself with a pressing engagement in similar circumstances. No doubt he would not want to deprive anyone else of the courtesy that he himself would expect.

Mr Ken Maginnis: That is indeed often the case. Arriving late, having been delayed on a flight from London, is an entirely different matter. With regard to the original point, may I say that when there is a pressing matter it is normal for the person concerned to have the courtesy to inform the Chamber of his reason for leaving.

The Chairman: I am going to rule on this matter.

Mr Morrow: Has this happened on any other occasion?

The Chairman: Please let me deal with it.

We spent a lot of time working out our Rules.

Mr Hugh Smyth *rose*.

The Chairman: No, Mr Smyth. *[Interruption]* I cannot hear what you are saying, and I am not sure that I want to hear it at the moment as I am trying to make some sense of all this.

We discussed in the Rules Committee the question of a Member's response to what seemed to be an insulting or untruthful statement by another Member. I think that we were wise to do that, but, whether wise or not, we decided to leave the matter to the good sense and good manners of Members. We have heard today a mildly cautionary view from Mr Maginnis, and I think we should heed it. When people are disposed to make what amounts to a pretty strong personal attack on an individual it is good manners to remain to hear what that person has to say.

I would like now to move ahead. We will discuss this matter again at the Rules Committee. *[Interruption]* We will discuss the matter at the Rules Committee next week.

11.15 am

Mr Morrow: Is there a Rules Committee meeting next week?

The Chairman: I am sorry: I mean a Business Committee meeting.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr: I rise to support the motion, following the diversionary tactics of some Members.

The motion goes to the heart of relationships between the two states that share this island, this piece of territory. We have noticed over the last 24 hours how much disharmony there is politically. Last night when the British Government published their statement they indicated that everyone in Northern Ireland (indeed, throughout the British Isles) has to move — except Sinn Féin. We all know that that is a dangerously indulgent way to approach the politics of Northern Ireland at this time. It will create disharmony — not harmony.

Where does harmonization come from? It is the central part of the British and Irish Governments' agenda to achieve implementation of a *de facto* all-Ireland policy. In the framework document, paragraph 29, the Government spell out their strategy as having three phases. Harmonization is one of the main phases. First, there is consultation. Of course, we have had formalized consultation since 1985, through the Anglo-Irish Conference. Then there is harmonization, which we are getting — indeed, to a degree, have — and after that we have the executive ambition. Paragraph 28 spells out that all-Ireland executive powers are the ambition of the policy. It goes on to say that both Governments expect that significant responsibilities, including meaningful functions at executive level, will be a feature of government.

According to other words that we recognize, it may be necessary to consider whether mutual interest requires the delegation of executive authority to an autonomous agency. That is, of course, the mirror image of the Ulster Unionist Party's document of 9 November 1992 — UK T40 — which was intended to clarify and develop issues arising from bilateral discussions with the Irish Republic.

Mr Trimble made a bit of show of himself this morning. Blushing in his normal way, he indicated by his little stunt, his little smoke-screen, that the DUP had a document about harmonization with the Irish Republic. Of course, we have been honourable. We have published our document and have been quite clear about it. If the Ulster Unionists cannot read or have misinterpreted, that is a matter for them. What we say to Mr Trimble today is what we have for almost four years been asking the Ulster Unionist Party to do: publish and be damned. Let them give us sight of the document that was shredded in Dublin. That, we believe, is the genesis of harmonization.

What does harmonization actually mean?

Mr Ken Maginnis *rose.*

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr: No, I will not give way. This Member has already disturbed us. Sit down. You are an idiot.

Mr Ken Maginnis: Lies. Damned lies.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr: In effect, we are obliged — *[Interruption]*

The Chairman: We are getting past the good practice of heckling.

Mr Peter Robinson: On a point of order, Mr Chairman.

The Chairman: Under which Rule?

Mr Peter Robinson: Under the Rule that deals with Members making comments which are unparliamentary. A Member opposite has just said "Lies. Damned lies." That is unparliamentary, and you, Sir, must ask the Member to withdraw the comment or withdraw from the Chamber.

The Chairman: When we discussed all this in the Rules Committee — I have got its name right this time — we decided that "lie" is unparliamentary.

Mr Ken Maginnis: I am quite prepared to withdraw "Damned lies" and to substitute the more acceptable but equally meaningful "terminological inexactitude".

The Chairman: Thank you.

Mr Hugh Smyth: On a point of order, Mr Chairman.

The Chairman: I shall not take another point of order on this matter. It has been dealt with.

Please continue, Mr Paisley.

Mr Hugh Smyth: On a point of order, Mr Chairman.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr: As Mr Maginnis has withdrawn his untruthful comment —

Mr Hugh Smyth: On a point of order, Mr Chairman.

The Chairman: I shall not take another point of order, Mr Smyth. I will call you next. You will have plenty of time then.

Mr Hugh Smyth: I will not sit down.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr: Mr Chairman, can you please make a ruling on this, or else have the Member removed. He is disturbing me and taking up my time.

Mr Hugh Smyth: On a point of order, Mr Chairman.

The Chairman: Please sit down.

Mr Hugh Smyth: No. On a point of order.

The Chairman: Please sit down. *[Interruption]* Mr Smyth, if you do not sit down I will have to take some action.

Mr Hugh Smyth: You made one Member withdraw a remark. This man —

The Chairman: Please sit down.

Mr Hugh Smyth: — called another Member an idiot, and you did not ask him to withdraw the remark.

The Chairman: Sit down, Mr Smyth.

Mr Hugh Smyth: Wait a minute. Do you think you are still in the Army?

The Chairman: Sit down.

Mr Hugh Smyth: You must take a point of order.

The Chairman: I am going to suspend the sitting for two minutes in order that Mr Smyth, who, if he behaves, will speak next, may get himself back on track.

The meeting was suspended at 11.22 am and resumed at 11.26 am.

The Chairman: I believe that Mr Smyth may have quite a good point. What I am trying to do, as Members have probably realized, is to prevent the Forum from becoming a bear-pit, with people using the intimidatory phrase "point of order". What we need is silence to enable Members to make a case, even if sometimes it is not very polite to other people. When somebody gets up and says "On a point of order" I do not want a lot of verbiage as to what the point of order is; I want to hear under what Rule it is being made. After all, we spent a lot of time working out our Rules.

With regard to the point of order that has been raised, let me say that, although this is not a Parliament, we incorporated in our Rules the rather useful idea that unparliamentary expressions, such as "liar" — and we have dealt with that already — should not be used. I understand that Mr Smyth wanted to protest about the use of the word "idiot". I am in some doubt as to whether that is an unparliamentary expression. Many people call me an idiot, and I accept it. If, on reflection, I think that the word is unparliamentary I will so rule. For the moment, what we must do, and what we will do with great happiness, is listen to Mr Ian Paisley Jnr for five minutes and then to Mr Hugh Smyth.

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I am only sorry that the Ulster Unionists have created such a smoke-screen and have brought the Forum into such disrepute. Most people outside will find that disgusting.

What does harmonization mean? In effect, according to the framework document, we are obliged to find a common policy and to overcome obstacles to that objective. Oh, sorry — is that another quotation from the Ulster Unionist Party's document? Ah, well.

Recently, we have seen harmonization in respect of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, but if anyone sits down and studies the framework document carefully he will note that tourism does not fall within the category of harmonization. Dealt with in paragraph 31, it falls within the area of the executive functions of marketing and promotional activities. So harmonization is the vehicle by which to achieve shared executive authority.

Like all other Unionists, I resent the Irish Government's constant involvement in Northern Ireland. They are unworthy to be involved, they are unfit to be involved, and, most important, they are not wanted here. Why should we harmonize with a country that has made no attempt whatsoever to understand its neighbour? I am reminded of what a former Nationalist MP once said:

"Generally, we in the Irish Republic have preferred to practise upon ourselves worse indignities than the British have practised, or are alleged to have practised, upon us since Cromwell or Mountjoy. And now we wonder why the Orangemen are not rushing to be part of our jurisdiction."

If that is what people in the Republic of Ireland say about themselves it is little wonder that Unionists do not want any part of their harmonization.

The Irish Republic has demonstrated that it is a country which is luxuriantly sectarian and anti-Unionist in its attitude and, therefore, works against real harmony. In its constitution it is explicitly anti-Unionist and aggressively anti-British. In its politics it is anti-Protestant. What Protestant since Parnell has had any role in any major party in the Republic of Ireland?

In its ideology it offers Unionists nothing; it simply denigrates their identity while elevating Nationalism. In its education it offers an ethos which inculcates in children an Irish Catholic Gaelic sense of misunderstanding. In its terrorism it has nourished an IRA that is itself a manifestation of convergence of religion and Nationalism into a Catholic-Nationalist offensive against Unionists. In its health provision it offers us a country in which theology, the constitution and obstetrics are as one.

11.30 am

The Republic of Ireland, in the words of D P Moran, is, above all, a Catholic country in which Protestants would be welcome, but only on Catholic terms. Real harmonization can come about only when we have honest politics. The fact that we have a country that wishes to live in a fictional dream of Irish unity, that has an illegal claim over our country and refuses to budge on the key issue of removing that Berlin-wall-like obstacle, is an affront to the Unionist community and to the fundamental principles of democracy. The sole message of articles 2 and 3 to Unionists is that the Irish are intransigent — a nation that does not control its own destiny but is controlled by its constitution. They are hostages of the past and are making themselves victims of the present. We want to see harmonization, but it has to be genuine, and, to date, nothing has emerged from the Irish Republic to show that it is at all interested in genuine harmonization.

Mr Hugh Smyth: Mr Chairman, I am definitely going to be brief. Because you hurt my feelings I do not intend to use the allotted time.

I want, first — and here I have no wish to hurt your feelings — to make it quite clear that you have no authority whatsoever to refuse to take a point of order. You must take a point of order. You might rule that a matter did not amount to a genuine point of order, but you cannot prevent me or anyone else from getting up and making such a point. I want to have that established with the full support of all Members.

I am sorry that Dr Paisley is not present to hear that I agree with what has been said about graffiti on any church. That is utterly wrong. Churches are places of worship, places to which people go to hear the Word of God. I hope that everyone connected with a church will remind himself of that. Occasionally, when I open the 'Telegraph' on a Saturday night and see the adverts for services I wonder what some of the churches are being used for. Some services seem to more political than religious. However, as a person who believes in God I will leave someone else to judge that. I believe in not judging others lest I be judged. I will leave that to those who are good at it.

I am going to do something for which you, Mr Chairman, may rule me out of order and ask me to leave.

The Chairman: Thank you for that advice.

Mr Hugh Smyth: I am going to try to speak to the motion.

The Chairman: That is what I was hoping you would do.

Mr Hugh Smyth: If you feel that I am out of order, you can let me know.

The Chairman: No, no.

Mr Hugh Smyth: I hope that no one here today is saying that we should not have co-operation with Southern Ireland. I know for a fact that, over the past five, six or seven years, many Northern Ireland councils, in particular in the border areas, have begun to realize the great benefits that can be obtained, in both directions, from cross-border co-operation. Going even further back, I know that Castlereagh Council — has Mr Robinson gone? — found that there were great benefits in such co-operation. When trying to prove the need for an ice-rink, that council did a survey in Southern Ireland to establish how many people would come up and use it — and rightly so.

Mrs I Robinson: That is right.

Mr Hugh Smyth: Mrs Robinson agrees. Such co-operation is for the benefit of everyone.

I hope that we will not get caught up in a whole lot of speeches that do not even try to address the motion. I, like everyone else here, would be totally opposed to anything that smelled of an executive structure. That is not what we are about. I remind Members of the 1975-76 Convention that followed the first Northern Ireland Assembly. When those in power tried to push the Council of Ireland the people of Northern Ireland dealt with them. If anyone were again to push such structures too quickly he would be dealt with in the same way. But that does not alter the fact that we must at all times try to create a situation that will benefit us. I think it was Mr McCartney who indicated that it would be foolish not to cash in on energy capable of benefiting both North and South. Similarly, it would be foolish to suggest that there is not potential mutual benefit in the field of tourism.

I do not know about Mr Donaldson, but Mr Taylor accepted that it was right and proper for tourism to be promoted on an all-Ireland basis. Whether we like it or not, 99.9% of Americans who come to Ireland do not come to the North. If there is any way in which we can address that, it would be foolish not to try. We should aim to tap into the enormous American tourist market. For as long as I am on Belfast City Council I will do all I can to encourage American tourists to come north.

There are many fields in which co-operation can work to the advantage of the people of Northern Ireland. Unionists who do their best for Northern Ireland in this way should not be looked upon as less Unionist than some of the “super-Pros” in our midst — those people who will fight to the last drop of our blood. They talk about dealing with the people of Northern Ireland. I saw how they dealt with people during the workers’ strike. For the first seven or eight days they were not about the place, but when it was inevitable that the strike would be successful they all appeared from the woodwork.

Mr McKee: The workers’ strike was not as successful in Belfast as the Member seems to suggest. But there was success in Larne. The Larne people shut the docks and the power-station, and the Paisleyites were in the forefront.

Mr Hugh Smyth: I am sorry that I gave way. The Member has just annoyed me. He tells us that Larne was our saviour. Half a million people live in the Greater Belfast area, and he tells us that the Larne people did it. Of course the people of Larne, like the people of Carrick and the people of Londonderry and of the various other areas, played their part.

Mr McAlister: On a point of order, Mr Chairman. Mr Smyth is misleading us. He is straying from the motion although he said he would stick to it.

Mr Hugh Smyth: That is not a point of order.

The Chairman: I was about to say that I was looking forward — *[Interruption]* You have half a minute left.

Mr Hugh Smyth: Excuse me, Mr Chairman. You were not on the gin and tonic last night, by any chance?

Several Members: Oh!

Mr Hugh Smyth: I withdraw that remark.

The Chairman: Mr Smyth, my patience with you ran out earlier. It is about to run out again. I must insist that you spend your last half minute addressing the motion.

Mr Hugh Smyth: I will be serious in my last half minute, but it seems to me that you pick on these wee things. Not one Member has stuck to the motion. I have at least tried to do so, yet I am being interrupted.

The Chairman: You have only about 30 seconds left.

Mr Hugh Smyth: Mr McCartney, who moved the motion, never mentioned the subject — and he had a five-page prepared statement. Nor did Mr Paisley. Nobody mentioned it. *[Interruption]*

The Chairman: We must have some order. There is a serious motion to be addressed.

Mr Hugh Smyth: In supporting the motion, I believe that, while we must avoid any executive structures, we should bear in mind the great benefits to Northern Ireland in cross-border co-operation.

Mr Cedric Wilson: I fully endorse the motion presented by the United Kingdom Unionist Party.

Members have already heard that the origins of the harmonization that we are opposing are to be found as far back at least as the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Of course, that was followed very closely by the Downing Street declaration, which actually commenced the process and developed the notion of harmonization between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. Further development came with the framework document, where the idea became

part and parcel of what the Government regard as the way forward for a devolved administration in Northern Ireland. I am pleased to hear that there is unanimity among Unionists in opposition to the framework document, and I trust that it will continue.

Some Members fail to understand the difference between co-operation and harmonization. Mr Smyth has mentioned his difficulty in respect of attracting people from the Republic of Ireland, whether for a holiday or to use a sporting or leisure facility. But those things are completely different from any notion of harmonizing very important structural matters. We must highlight the dangers of failing to understand the difference between co-operation and movement towards harmonization and then to executive bodies.

It is on that basis that I want to address my comments particularly to those members of the Ulster Unionist Party who seem to have difficulty in knowing where to draw the line. And there is a line to be drawn. The framework document and the joint declaration which preceded it demonstrate that Unionists need people of ability to differentiate between friendly co-operation with a neighbouring state and executive involvement that is enshrined in legislation.

11.45 am

The reality is that the harmonization mentioned in the framework document comes directly from the Downing Street declaration. The declaration was the forerunner of the framework document. Members will be aware that the joint declaration — the Downing Street declaration, as it is now called — was made by the two Governments following the abortive 1992 talks. The representation that was mentioned earlier by the Ulster Unionist Party formed the basis of the joint declaration.

I appeal to Unionist people to be very cautious about the Ulster Unionist Party's appraisal of anything that the two Governments do concerning our present situation. There is a need for Ulster people to say what they mean and mean what they say. Mr Empey said this morning that, whilst his party now endorsed the Prime Minister's comments of yesterday and fully accepted his plan for the way forward in the peace process, it was necessary to issue a caution concerning the need to be wary of the Northern Ireland Office because its plan is still, of course, to develop the Anglo-Irish process to take us into a 32-county Irish Republic.

It appears that there are great differences between the views of rank-and-file Ulster Unionists and those of the party's current leaders. These take several forms. I bring this into the debate because it is appropriate. The Deputy Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, Mr Taylor, has welcomed the harmonization of Northern Ireland's Tourist Board with that of the Irish Republic. Member after Member, including Mr Donaldson, who made an excellent speech, has condemned any notion of harmonization of our Tourist Board with that of the Irish Republic. People may think that Unionists are a bit paranoid about these things, that we see ghosts and problems everywhere, but there is no doubt — and the case has been made very well by Mr McCartney, my party Leader — that this is the commencement of a process. It will be an ongoing business, like the whole peace and Anglo-Irish process.

Mr Taylor, in welcoming the further co-operation of the Irish Republic, buries his head in the sand and ignores the facts and statistics. Someone has said that people coming to

the Republic do not travel to Northern Ireland (I use the proper term — not “the North”). That is factual. What has Northern Ireland bought into? It may be said that it has got good value. I do not think so. The amount of money that Northern Ireland will get out of this is meagre. The reality is that the Irish Republic wants to promote the Irish Republic, and not Northern Ireland, as a holiday destination. Tourists may get a day’s bus outing on the trail of Saint Patrick or a trip to the Giant’s Causeway, but that will be the sum total. I do not believe that Northern Ireland will benefit.

The devious nature of the whole notion of harmonization is something of which I am aware as a long-standing member of Castlereagh Council’s Arts Committee. For a number of years the council quite rightly and happily co-operated with Bord Fáilte in sponsoring a Northern Ireland artist going to Annagh-ma-Kerrig in County Monaghan to develop his art, whether music, visual art, or whatever. Originally the brochure was printed and endorsed by the Tourist Board of Northern Ireland and Bord Fáilte. In recent years there has been a change. I have strongly objected to sponsorship by the two Tourist Boards in Ireland. These are all very subtle things, but not one Unionist in this Forum or in the community is unaware of the deeper, hidden agenda.

I appeal to Members to show a degree of unity, not just in relation to the issue of harmonization as envisaged in the framework document but also in relation to the much more serious situation that is developing in the province. It is quite clear from statements by the Prime Minister and comments from the Irish Republic that there is going to be an attempt to bring IRA/Sinn Féin into the democratic process, perhaps by the end of January. There are all sorts of hidden messages and signals in the two Governments’ statements to date. Many people here have detected that this is not the end of the story. The folly of falling for the notion that this is some great stand that the Prime Minister is taking against the IRA’s demands was very adequately outlined today by Dr Paisley.

The reality is that unless the Ulster Unionist Party get their act together and stop trying to impress the British Government and acting as poodles, we will end up with Northern Ireland being short-changed once again. But I have news for the Ulster Unionists: if in January Sinn Féin are in the talks, Mr Trimble will be sitting side by side with Gerry Adams, and he can take sole responsibility for what will happen to this province in the months to come.

Lord Alderdice: Harmonization between different jurisdictions is actually the experience not just in the European Community — now the European Union — but particularly in an area that should be of some interest to ourselves: Scandinavia. For quite a long period there were serious disputes and wars between countries in Scandinavia. Until this century, when people began to sort out where the borders were and to respect them — and there were considerable disputes — *[Interruption]* Perhaps the Member is not respecting my speech and is too ready to intervene.

Countries began to respect each other’s boundaries, and where there were disputes — for example, in respect of the Åland Islands between Sweden and Finland — the matter was sorted out not through joint authority but through a decision as to which country a piece of territory belonged to. If there was a minority it had to be respected and given a place, but it did not move into some form of joint authority.

The people there were able to develop harmonization. They established a Nordic Council and developed all sorts of working arrangements that respected the differences. People respected borders and boundaries. We have a problem here because there is no agreement on the question of the border. That is something on which there must be movement. There must be changes in articles 2 and 3 and proper respect for the position of Northern Ireland. The right of the people of Northern Ireland to determine their own future must be recognized. Let us hope that these are matters on which we will be able to get some kind of agreement. It is going to be very difficult. Maybe we will not be able to get agreement. Well, if there is a limit on agreement, there will be a limit on the extent of co-operation too.

Harmonization and working together, even in the case of executive bodies, are not in themselves matters to which one should necessarily be opposed on grounds of principle if there is reasonable respect and if there are means of operation. Take an issue which is currently very important to our largest industry — agriculture. I refer to the question of animal health — specifically BSE. We do not know all the details. Things may be much worse than we think in respect of CJD — possibly a human form of BSE — or they may not be as bad. Scientifically it is not clear, but it is unlikely that the matter will be resolved in the short term.

Suppose the Government had listened to the parties involved in the talks in 1991-92 — the DUP, the Ulster Unionists, ourselves and others. One of the things that we all asked for was that a Northern Ireland Government would have direct access to Europe, that we would not have to go, for example, through Agriculture Ministers in London on every issue, because sometimes they would not represent our interests in the best possible way. Indeed, various party Leaders have quite rightly chided Mr Douglas Hogg for not always representing the interests of Northern Ireland farmers as we would have liked. If things had gone well and the SDLP and all the other parties had signed up, we would now have a Northern Ireland Government. We would still have the BSE problem, but we could go to Brussels, as the Government of the Republic can. We could demonstrate that Northern Ireland has a very good computer tagging system and that its beef has better quality assurance than beef from England, for example. Scotland's is perhaps quite good, but the tagging system there is not as good as ours. In the South, there is not the evidence of BSE — at least, at an early stage there was not — but it too does not have as good a computer tagging arrangement. The people in Brussels might say "We are aware that there is smuggling of animals across the border from time to time."

A Member: BSE animals.

Lord Alderdice: BSE animals and others. This was happening for a long time before there was BSE. It happened in the case of cattle, pigs and other animals. The Brussels authorities might say "If you are prepared to set up an agency we will recognize beef from Ireland, North or South, as having quality assurance different from that of beef from the rest of the United Kingdom." I am not thinking of an agency that could decide its own policies (those would have to be decided by the Northern Ireland Government and the Government in the Republic) or an agency able to decide what budget it would have (that would have to be decided by the North and by the South) or a body with power in respect of the legislation on

which it was based (indeed, not very different from the Foyle Fisheries Commission, which was established to look at fish culture, not throughout Ireland but in the area of the Foyle, with people appointed by the North and by the South reporting to the North and to the South — actually, more restrictive in that it could not make by-laws in the way that the body set up by the old Unionist Government and the Southern Government could).

If we had a Government run by Northern Ireland people I would be saying “Let us get that signed up.” It is purely to do with animal health, and those involved are accountable to people in the North and people in the South. The South would have to come up to our standard in terms of computer tracing of animals. I would be perfectly prepared to accept that. Such a body would not be able to decide its own law; that would be done by the Northern Ireland Government and the Southern Irish Government. The same would apply to policy, budget and appointments, and the body would have to report back. That is the reality of harmonization, of an executive agency. The motion implies that we should sit it out for another 10 or 15 years, that our farmers should not be given that kind of opportunity.

Or maybe it is an issue of environmental protection. The environmental protection agency that we do not have could have protected us when the Republic's ESB was negotiating with Brussels the production of electricity with more environmental pollutants than are allowed in the North. Because of the winds from the south-west we get all the pollution. It does not stop at the border. You could put up a big sign, but that would not stop it. The Republic can produce its electricity more cheaply, and its pollution is blown north. I accept that there are other things that come north of the border, including hot air of various descriptions.

A Member: Semtex, Kalashnikovs.

Lord Alderdice: I am not arguing about those things. Maybe the Member wants an executive agency of officers, seconded from the RUC and the Garda Síochána, who could travel anywhere on the island to deal with drug abuse, organized crime and paramilitary weapons.

A Member: Let them do that in their own jurisdiction.

Lord Alderdice: Maybe that would be easier if they had officers from the RUC helping them. I would have no problem about that so long as it did not mean diminishing the RUC or its accountability to Northern Ireland people.

With regard to environmental pollution, a monitoring agency would put us in a position to tell the Government in the South that we did not agree to their lower standards and were not prepared to accept acid rain coming up from the South.

There are areas in which I would not accept co-operation. Take, for example, the question of inward investment. I have quite happily made it clear, north and south of the border, that, so far as I am concerned, it does matter whether inward investment comes to Northern Ireland or goes to the Republic. I have to be honest: it matters to me whether it comes to Belfast or goes somewhere else in Northern Ireland, because I have a responsibility to my electors in East Belfast in that respect. But there is an even bigger difference between

its coming to Northern Ireland and its going to the Republic. That is why I do not agree with the idea that there should be some kind of merger between the IDA and the IDB, or an executive agency.

12.00

But there is a danger of cutting off your nose to spite your face. There are things that we can co-operate on and things that it would be perfectly reasonable to harmonize. It would be very much in the interests of our people if the Republic were to change some of its standards, arrangements and laws to bring them into harmony with ours and those of the rest of the United Kingdom. If there are things that we can do to enable that to happen, what is the big sin in our doing them?

I accept that there are those who want to go down this road because they think that it is the way of getting a united Ireland by stealth. Of course there will be people with particular views, some of which will be carried forward in a very malign way. Others will want to advance their Nationalist aspiration. Well, it is their aspiration but not mine. The problem I have with this motion is that we would be denying ourselves opportunity in areas in which we could benefit. Well, I am not prepared to deny our farmers, our environment or our people in that way.

Ms McWilliams: We are very pleased to note that the motion put forward by the United Kingdom Unionists approves of co-operation with the Irish Republic on matters of mutual benefit. We too support close working relationships because these bring real social and economic benefit to people in Northern Ireland, as other parties have said. We have already seen some of these benefits — increasing opportunities for women's groups and community groups as a result of information-sharing and increasing confidence and understanding. Indeed, many of us in the Coalition have been involved in that work. We believe that there are benefits to be had from close co-operation in areas as diverse as trade, tourism, transport, training and education, consumer protection and choice, and health and social care.

I often think that when the Women's Coalition speaks on motions, people expect us to add a "but". Well, we do have a "but" on this one. Our particular opposition is to the fact that it brings in a note of discord. We regret to have to draw attention to this. Mr Trimble reminded us of the importance of defining what we are talking about and of politicians' regrettable habit of making political capital out of confusion. We would like to remind the Forum that harmony concerns the structure of individual words and their relationship one to another. Harmonization — the very word recognizes that there are separate parts — is an attempt to reach agreement, to reach a position, as Lord Alderdice pointed out, of sympathy and congruence.

Clearly, our song is a different one. We do not see harmonization as a plot, and we believe that those who see it as another move in the direction of a united Ireland are taking a step away from reality. As we noted last week, there are several issues in respect of which further co-operation could bring benefit to Northern Ireland. As they have come up in previous debates, I will mention only a few of the areas where greater harmonization would have advantages. Disease knows no borders, and, as Lord Alderdice pointed out, the same

applies to pollution. There would be benefits in the areas of the control of infection, care and welfare of the elderly (a subject on which we had a debate last week), the use of scarce health-service equipment (we wish it were not scarce, and we already have examples of equipment from the Republic being used in Northern Ireland), consumer protection and tourism.

We all remember the time before 1978, when the currencies of Northern Ireland and of the Republic of Ireland had the same value and were interchangeable. It was a simple and straightforward matter of convenience which allowed us to avoid the cost of currency exchange. Indeed, it was a real benefit to businesses on both sides of the border. Sometimes it is difficult to understand the position of those who oppose action which would so clearly bring benefits to the people of Northern Ireland. We understand the position of the parties that stand up for the Union, but we believe that the whole community and cross-community dialogue and understanding are ill-served by the confusion inherent in this motion. There is, we believe, no contradiction whatsoever between supporting Unionism and taking opportunities to work practically with the Irish Republic, including efforts at harmonization.

Mr Ken Maginnis: Ms McWilliams used as an illustration the differential between the punt and the pound sterling. She should remember that it was the Irish Republic that chose to break the harmony between the two currencies. Will she not take a lesson from that? Let her remember that it has always been the intention and aim of the Irish Republic to break any links with the United Kingdom. There is no reason why we should follow it down that isolationist road.

Ms McWilliams: I agree with the first part of Mr Maginnis's point but take issue with the second. We do not enhance this debate by criticizing either the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland where harmonization has been broken. It is to our benefit to work harder towards harmonization.

I am afraid that we will have to oppose the motion because we see in harmonization obvious benefits for the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr McFarland: I found the last two contributions amazing, in that Mr McCartney's motion is crystal clear. It says that co-operation is fine but cross-border bodies with executive powers are not, and to interpret it otherwise is very strange.

With regard to Lord Alderdice's speech, may I say that if over the past 25 years we had had the cross-border co-operation that we currently have in respect of BSE the situation here might be very different.

The topic of cross-border co-operation and cross-border bodies with executive powers is an emotive one, and in view of the obvious confusion following the last two speeches we need to be clear as to exactly what we are talking about. At the moment in many border areas there are councils and community groups that co-operate closely. I would like to take a run round those.

Limavady, Derry, Strabane and Donegal have come together in the North-West Economic Group to further that area, and they are very successful. Mr Gregory Campbell

will no doubt agree that the literature with which they go round the world promoting the area is amazing. Members will be familiar with the Foyle Fisheries Commission — a cross-border body with executive powers that has been in existence since the 1950s. It co-ordinates fishing north and south of the border — with questionable success, I have to say, as in the past it has been a bit of a shambles, though I understand that it is now getting itself sorted out. It is very useful in Lough Foyle and certainly in the rivers up through Tyrone. Then there is the Strabane-Lifford Development Association, formed a couple of years ago to promote that area.

Members from Londonderry, Dungannon and Strabane districts and areas down into Monaghan will be familiar with the north-west passage and the promotion of a fast-track road from the South up to the North. In Fermanagh we have the success of the Erne waterway, opened two years ago but again requiring cross-border co-ordination to work out the rules of navigation. The loughs have already been mentioned. Moving further down, we have Armagh, Down, Monaghan and Dungannon with the Blackwater scheme — trying to turn the Blackwater into a salmon river. It has been fairly diseased for some time, and the idea is that it should be regenerated. Surely nobody could find fault with that. And Newry and Dundalk have been teaming up to create another of these economic-development areas.

The key factor about these groups is that they have developed as a result of local impetus. They are there for practical reasons, not for political gain. Harmonization, however, is a different issue. In the framework document there is a list of areas suggested for harmonization. In essence, there is nothing wrong with harmonization, provided that it is arranged for mutual benefit and is not threatening. In the case of agriculture, for example, who can doubt that we should benefit from trying to solve problems in a cross-border way? As Lord Alderdice has said, the air does not change when it crosses the border, and people smuggling cows back and forth are quite important to ending the BSE crisis.

Health, however, may be a problem. Over the last few years there has been a difficulty about maternity provision in Tyrone. Facilities have been moved from Omagh to the Erne Hospital in Enniskillen, and my friends from Fermanagh think that that is a good idea. Shortly no Tyrone couple will be able to have their children born in Tyrone. The reason for locating the facility in Enniskillen is not practical; it has to do with a part of Sligo/ Donegal which can be a catchment area for the Erne Hospital.

Mr Ken Maginnis: I really cannot allow my Friend to get away with the idea that it will be impossible to have a baby in County Tyrone. I am sure Mr Morrow will agree that the South Tyrone Hospital in Dungannon has one of the best maternity units — if not the best. If my Friend were at any time thinking of enlarging his family I would be more than happy that his wife should come down and join us.

The Chairman: A very good plug.

Mr McFarland: You cannot help feeling that decisions about health services are made for political rather than practical reasons.

Tourism can be a hot topic. Every summer American tourists land at Shannon, get on buses, tour for a week around the Republic and then come north to see the Giant's Causeway

and various other places. We cannot complain about that as it brings in quite a lot of money. Indeed, joint marketing with the South could be a good idea, but why not without executive bodies? Certainly, marketing the province under the tricolour, as if the entire tourist industry came under that thing, is totally unacceptable. They have gone way over the top with the current marketing plan.

The framework document sets out what the Nationalists would like to see as the future for Northern Ireland. The key is that co-operation and harmonization should be for practical purposes only and in our mutual interests. Any attempt to set us on the slope to joint authority will be vigorously challenged.

I support the motion.

Mr McAlister: Like Mr McFarland, I was amazed at the comments of the Members from the Alliance Party and the Women's Coalition. They have failed to read properly and get into the spirit of this very worthwhile motion, on whose introduction I congratulate Mr McCartney and his Colleagues.

I am always concerned about the written word. I am conscious of the importance of words. Any motions that I have tabled have been worded very carefully. The same can be said of this motion:

"This Forum, while approving of co-operation with the Irish Republic on matters of mutual interest and benefit"

That is very broad and very fair. No one has problems about interrelationships or mutual trade. Those things are a part of the economy not just of this country but of countries throughout the world. Man has always traded one thing for another, and there is nothing wrong with that. We as a party have no problem with something that is part of the stuff of life. But we do have a problem when normal trading is hijacked.

12.15 pm

We have an "H" word here — "harmonization". But another "H" word is "hijacking". That is what the Southern Irish Government, the pan-Nationalist front and all the parties in Northern Ireland that are co-players in the process — we all know who they are — are doing. What I call the greening of Ulster is taking place. As I have said, under normal circumstances no one has any problem with interrelationships or mutual trading, but what have the hijackers done? First of all, they hijacked the economy. We were told that if we did not go down this road our economy would suffer and the pound in our pocket would not be worth the same. One is forced into a situation: an economy is hijacked.

A few weeks ago my party, during discussions with the CBI, received a report which includes the following:

"Growing the economy of the whole of Ireland is in everyone's interest, and the CBI (Northern Ireland) will work together with anyone towards achieving this aim. Where an all-Ireland context is seen to be the most effective approach, then the CBI (Northern Ireland) will support it. Where it delivers more jobs, more wealth, a more competitive infrastructure, or greater social benefits, the CBI (Northern Ireland) will support it."

I asked CBI people about this. They said that it was a pragmatic approach. They considered themselves to be a part of Northern Ireland and a part of the United Kingdom but were adopting a pragmatic approach. Of course, they were annoyed that the Southern Ireland Government, particularly Mr Dick Spring, had hijacked it and were using it as a vehicle to further Nationalist aims.

The other thing that has been hijacked is economic and monetary union. We are told that this is another vehicle that we have got to get on because it is going to the only show in town. Of course, it too is being used by Nationalists.

This morning we have had mention of tourism — another area that has been hijacked by the pan-Nationalist front. Harmony in tourism is a wonderful thing. I have to admit that there are areas where inter-tourism arrangements can be of benefit, but not when they are hijacked to further a political aim.

Then, of course, these things are ably supported by individuals as well as Governments. We have the “Queen of Ireland”, Mary Robinson. Part of what she is doing is harmonizing. Anyone watching the programme on her during the week will have found the changes — non-political to political to non-political — very interesting. One wonders where she is coming from or going to. It is all part of the understanding, the harmonizing, this greening of the whole country — hijacked again for the benefit of pan-Nationalism.

It is interesting that Mr John Bruton was very angry this morning. He was angry with the other John. I sometimes wonder, as they are both called John, what the conversation is like: “Hello John.” “Hello John. How you doing?” “Not too bad, John.” “Well, what will we do this week, John?” “I don’t know, John. What do you think?” I sometimes think that each is talking not to the other but to himself. For all they have brought forward, they might as well be talking to themselves.

Anyway, John — Bruton, that is — was very angry because John Major had made a statement without approaching the Southern Irish Government. In fact, it should have been a joint statement. Why? Because it lacked authority. Here again is the interference of the Southern Ireland Government in our affairs — the harmonizing. “There would be more harmony if we had made a joint statement.”

I had much to say about this subject, but it has been covered by other Members. I support the motion in its entirety. It leaves freedom for proper interrelationships. I totally support its deprecation of the attempt to have all-Ireland harmonies and structures to bring about executive powers.

My sister — sadly, no longer with us — and I, when we were children, would go every week to the library. Unfortunately, not many children do that today. We were avid readers. My sister had the habit of going to the end of the book first. I used to say to her “Ann, why do you do that?”, and she would reply “I want to see how things are going to turn out.” We have heard this morning about time-scales. Nationalism does not move in days or weeks. It will take years or hundreds of years. This is the old Jesuit thing — long-term policy.

What will this harmonizing lead to? Consider the depletion of the Protestant people in Southern Ireland — down to a meagre 2% or 3% or 4%. We are going to have harmonization and then patronization. That will lead to marginalization and, finally, to neutralization. In other words, in the end it will be death. That is the policy — harmonization now, but ending up with neutralization, with the Protestant ethos and way of life obliterated for ever. It is a long-term policy. We must, like my sister, go to the end of the book today to see where this process is leading us.

I support the motion.

Mr Weir: I am glad to support this motion. A couple of Members made reference to the currency situation. Anyone reading the papers this week will have noticed reports of a very significant speech by that great soldier of destiny, Bertie Ahern, on the question of a single currency. Bertie had a vision of a single currency for Ireland. Unfortunately, he was not thinking of the pre-1978 situation, to which Ms McWilliams referred. There was no question of a return to the pound sterling. Rather, that quaint little currency of the South — the punt, with lovely farm animals on the coins — was to be given up for the single European currency. Bertie Ahern said that even if the United Kingdom were not involved Northern Ireland would be welcome to join. We would then have the ridiculous situation of one region of a modern European state having a currency different from that of the rest of the country. This, I think, was driven partly by the realization that going into a single currency on its own, with the United Kingdom staying out, would be economically disastrous for the Republic, as was pointed out a few weeks ago by Michael Smurfit. However, I think that there was a much greater incentive. This was a cheeky and bold bid for harmonization.

“Harmonization” is like so many other political euphemisms. Such words were beloved of both Nazi Germany and Communist Russia. The *anschluss* that the Republic of Ireland plans for Northern Ireland is not the *anschluss* of invasion but the *anschluss* of harmonization. Harmonization is not co-operation with the Republic of Ireland; it is death of the Union by a thousand cuts. That is why we must resist it.

Although harmonization is not acceptable, we do want to see some degree of co-operation with the Republic. But we have to be careful about the form it takes. Quite clearly, there cannot be co-operation with a country which has a territorial claim on this part of the United Kingdom. That is not the way to build friendly relations. I suggest that if there is to be any form of co-operation between North and South it has to involve not just removal of articles 2 and 3 but a change in the mentality and thinking behind them. Nor can co-operation be used as a vehicle for interference in the internal affairs of the United Kingdom.

We have seen how harmonization would have disastrous economic and administrative consequences for Northern Ireland. Think about the effect the framework document, if ever imposed, would have on the day-to-day life of Northern Ireland. Every aspect of life would be considered for harmonization in terms of policy, legislation and administration. That would leave Northern Ireland disjointed from the United Kingdom and would lead to economic ruin. Therefore we have vigorously to oppose it.

The kind of co-operation with the Republic of Ireland that we want would not be politically driven, because that would be disastrous for all the people. It would have to be based on the idea of mutual benefit — co-operation of an external nature, of the type that I am happy to say Northern Ireland has with France or Germany. Only on that basis can we have acceptable co-operation. We must at times look outward. There is no point in our harmonizing with a market of 3.5 million down South if that would take us out of a market of 50 million to the east. Northern Ireland must constantly look outward, avoiding the parochial attitude of Irish Nationalism, which is insular and exclusivist. We must look toward the rest of the United Kingdom and towards Europe. That is the way forward for Northern Ireland — not harmonization but co-operation, and not just with the Republic but with countries outside the United Kingdom as well.

The debate stood adjourned.

The Chairman: I beg Members to be back at 1.45 pm in order that we may hear from Mr David Campbell and possibly another member of the Agriculture Committee about the meeting yesterday with the Secretary of State for Agriculture.

The meeting was suspended at 12.27 pm and resumed at 1.49 pm.

The Chairman: About six more Members want to speak on the harmonization motion, as well as a number whom I hope to call to complete the five-minute-speech debate, but first I invite Mr David Campbell and Mr Shannon to update us briefly on the agriculture and fisheries matters that their Committee has been handling.

BEEF INDUSTRY CRISIS (BSE)

Mr David Campbell: Thank you for this opportunity, Mr Chairman. I also wish to thank Mr McCartney for allowing us to interrupt his debate.

Yesterday Mr Poots and I attended a number of meetings in London. First, we met Dr Gavin Strang, the shadow Agriculture Secretary, and Mr Eric Illsley, the Labour spokesman on Northern Ireland agriculture. We outlined our recommendations, which were received sympathetically. The two spokesmen then explained what Labour strategy with regard to the BSE crisis would be if they were in office.

At half past two — through the good offices of Mr Trimble — we were able to see Douglas Hogg, the Secretary of State for Agriculture. We presented our report to him, and he indicated that a collective Cabinet decision on implementation of the Florence Agreement would be taken within a fortnight. He would not be drawn but said that, in essence, the decision would be either to implement or not to implement the selective cull in the United Kingdom. It will be a collective decision, and it is therefore vital that Members of Parliament lobby effectively over the next two weeks to ensure that the cull is implemented. Implementation of the certified herd scheme would follow, and Northern Ireland, being one of the regions of the United Kingdom that could react positively in a very short time, should

be able to take best advantage of this and lead the United Kingdom back into the export of beef in world markets.

Mr Hogg was pressed on specific compensation measures that we are proposing to alleviate the additional distress of farmers whose holdings are flagged. He undertook to look at those issues, at the compensation arrangements that are currently in place and at some disparities in those arrangements to which we drew his attention.

I thank Mr Poots for accompanying me and for his valuable contribution, and I am grateful to the Forum's Deputy Secretary and Mr Trimble for making the necessary arrangements.

The Chairman: I think everybody here feels very proud of the initiative you have shown.

FISHERIES ISSUES

The Chairman: Mr Shannon, as you are next on my list for the harmonization debate, you may roll the two subjects into one speech. I will give you an extra two minutes.

Mr Shannon: I appreciate your offer, Mr Chairman, and will take advantage of it.

I was a member of the delegation from Ards Borough Council which, with delegations from Down Council and Newry and Mourne Council, met the members of the Fisheries Committee in Brussels. I did not get there until Tuesday, but the others arrived on Monday. As I understand it, they had a working dinner on Monday night with members of the Committee. It was a very worthwhile dinner occasion as it gave the members a chance to appreciate the finer points of fishing in Northern Ireland and the concerns of people here.

At the meeting on Tuesday, which our MEPs — Ian Paisley, Jim Nicholson and John Hume — attended, we took the opportunity to talk to the Chef de Cabinet and some of the members of his team. I gave them copies of the Forum's fisheries review, of whose 13 recommendations they were very much in favour. The main point that we tried to make — and it was important to do so — was that, while we have different concerns about individual aspects of fishing, we are all worried about the effect of decommissioning on the socio-economic base of Portavogie, Kilkeel and Ardglass. If 40% of the boats currently fishing from these ports are taken away, the villages will no longer be viable, and there will be a domino effect on their people. This, I believe, the Cabinet and the other people we met took on board. They were certainly most sympathetic.

I was a bit aggrieved that Madame Bonino was unavailable on Tuesday, as we understood that we would meet her, but we spoke to other people and gave them copies of our reports for the Commissioner.

It is always good — I want to underline this — to go to Europe and speak to the people in power about our particular needs and circumstances, in the hope that they will understand better. When it comes to decisions about fishing that will ultimately have a direct

effect on the fishermen of Northern Ireland they should be able to look more sympathetically at the issues involved.

Let me refer to the one negative aspect of the whole matter. The people we met indicated that if Westminster were prepared, for example, to support us in the regionalization of fishing or to provide finance for further processing or to bring young people into fishing as a vocation, the European Union would do likewise. However, Westminster is unwilling to give any support except in respect of such items as petrol, diesel and whiskey. This does not help fishermen in Portavogie directly.

It was good to be in Brussels and have the opportunity to present the case for our fishermen. I believe we were heard sympathetically and honestly. I hope that the seeds that were sown on Monday and Tuesday, when, for the first time ever, a cross-party delegation representing all sides of the community and including people of some standing in the fishing industry was received in Brussels, will bring us fruit.

ALL-IRELAND HARMONIZATION

Debate resumed on motion:

This Forum, while approving of co-operation with the Irish Republic on matters of mutual interest and benefit, deprecates the attempt to bring about all-Ireland harmonization as a step towards the creation of all-Ireland executive structures. — [Mr McCartney].

Mr Shannon: The expression “all-Ireland harmonization” creates in one’s mind an image of everyone and everything working together — no bother, no problems, no arguments: a life of sweetness and honey. In fictional life, very probable; in real life, unobtainable. As I sat here getting a few thoughts together for this contribution and listening to the speeches of other Members, I said to myself “I will be the only one speaking to the motion. Others have digressed.” Or perhaps I am the one who is digressing.

No person is against co-operation so long as it does not interfere with his sovereignty or constitutional position. Many Members have referred to the bodies that will have executive control in respect of cross-border affairs. I believe that these bodies, driven by a Republican Government pushing its own green agenda, will dictate the direction of both strategy and policies. Good neighbours, better trading positions and more trade benefit everyone. They create prosperity for all nations, especially our own.

I should like to look at the method of bringing about what is described as all-Ireland harmonization. There is a distinct programme of events. I will refer to a specific part of it, about which other Members have not spoken. You, Mr Chairman, told a Member the other week not to repeat himself. Well, I shall take a different angle. The distinct programme is intended to make the people of the province forsake — I use that word deliberately — their Britishness or Ulster-Scots ancestry. There is a process that is trying very hard to take away our identity. Part of the all-Ireland harmonization strategy is to tell us that we are Irish. A number of prominent so-called Unionists have embraced their Irishness. Indeed, some of them have taken it so far that they now want to introduce Gaelic sports to our culture. What

those so-called Unionists fail to see is that they have been manipulated to pursue a strategy of all-Ireland harmonization.

Let us take broadcasting as an example. Why has there been an increase in Gaelic-language programmes on radio when over 90% of Nationalists do not speak or understand Gaelic? It could be said — indeed, it has been said — that it is a dead language for dead people.

All-Ireland harmonization also means that there is more Gaelic sport than football, our own game, on television, even though it is followed by a minority and, as we all know, security-force personnel are excluded. Sport is secondary; politics is the primary objective. The political ambition of a united Ireland with Gaelic culture foremost in the proposed way forward.

A television programme that my three children — boys of eight, six and three — watch is 'Thomas the Tank Engine'. For those who have missed that particularly exciting programme, let me say that not long ago it was broadcast in Irish. Now, my boys love the programme, but they could not understand it in Irish. Instead, they watched the news, and for boys of eight, six and three that was quite an achievement. They now understand what is happening in the rest of the world, even if they can no longer follow 'Thomas the Tank Engine'. Is this another instance of all-Ireland harmonization?

2.00 pm

And what about adverts on television? We hear the alien accent of people from the Republic of Ireland. And what are they selling? Soap, coffee and other things. If the same adverts are broadcast on United-Kingdom-wide television, other voices are dubbed. Is this another example of all-Ireland harmonization? Of course, the power base of the retail business is in Dublin, so one should not be surprised that adverts straight from the Republic are part of this harmonization programme.

During the Second World War, Governments took over the media and controlled what people could hear. Today such a process is being led by cross-border bodies. They are introducing an Irish identity and denying us our British background, our Ulster-Scots heritage and our own culture. Their motto is the motto of all-Ireland harmonization. Governments in the Republic and the United Kingdom have set in motion a policy to politicize the Irish language and to use radio and television to make the Irish identity acceptable — all-Ireland harmonization again. This process has been used to make the British Ulsterman deny his British language, his British sporting culture, his British education and his Protestant heritage.

Yes, we can be good neighbours, but we will not be coaxed or nudged or elbowed towards all-Ireland harmonization to the detriment of our own special ethos and our unique Ulster-Scots identity within the United Kingdom.

I support the motion.

Mr Alcock: The phenomenon that we call cross-border or trans-frontier co-operation really began in Western Europe in the 1960s and rapidly gathered strength in the 1970s and 1980s, so if one looks at a map of Europe today, certainly of Common Market Europe, one sees a vast network of interregional agreements underlining those at national level. The philosophy underlying this development — the philosophy of regionalism — was based on three points.

First — and I quote from the 1978 Bordeaux Declaration —

“Regions were seen as heirs to the history of Europe, and the richness of their culture an irreplaceable and incomparable asset of European civilization, the symbol and the guarantor of that diversity which is the pride of the European heritage in the eyes of humanity and to which every European bears witness and contributes. Every European’s right to his region is part of his right to be different. To challenge this right would be to challenge the identity of European man and ultimately of Europe itself.”

Second, there was increasing demand for more popular participation in decision-making and for rejection of the idea that decisions should be made in distant capitals by unrepresentative bureaucrats. The aim was to change the situation in which regions were the object of distant planners to one in which regions administered themselves and made political decisions through a body armed with legislative, administrative and financial powers.

Third, it was clear that not all border problems could, or indeed should, be solved by interstate foreign-policy co-operation. There was a need for a lower level of foreign policy where problems could be discussed and solved by local politicians and civil servants. In May 1980 the Council of Europe adopted the Madrid Outline Convention on trans-frontier co-operation between territorial communities or authorities, in which the participating states agreed to promote cross-border co-operation, including the right of local and regional authorities to make agreements with neighbouring, foreign opposite numbers in the fields of competency laid down by domestic law.

Regional co-operation is usually undertaken by two or more regions, or regions gathered together in a group, in such fields as energy, transport, tourism, the environment, education, trade promotion and cross-border commuting. The point about regions in Europe is that, unlike Northern Ireland, so many of them have assemblies with legislative, administrative and financial powers. So, not only can they take decisions, but they can pay for them and implement them. The drive in Europe today is to have harmonization, in the sense that the regions all have basically the same powers.

So what are the lessons before us? The first and obvious one is that for Northern Ireland to be able to join the Committee of European Regions and participate effectively in cross-border and trans-frontier co-operation, direct rule must be ended and we must be given an Assembly with the necessary power to make it a government responsive to the wishes of its electorate. Second, the European tradition is one of regional agreement through regional equality. No region is told by other regions what to do. If one is in a group of, say, five regions, no majority vote tells the minority region or regions what to do. The groups of regions have no independent bureaucracy other than organizing committees. The annual conference of heads of regional government sets the policy agenda. Implementation of the

agenda and ongoing contact between the regions take place at Civil Service level. For some curious reason common sense seems to operate.

So far as Europe is concerned, the Irish Republic, like Luxembourg, flatters itself when it considers itself a state. It is, in economic and cultural terms, a region. With our own powers, and facing economic and cultural realities, there is no reason at all why there should not be close and warm cross-border co-operation. And I take the opportunity to put this question to anyone from the Irish Republic who may be listening: what is the object of trying to impose such co-operation when it can only result in resentment and in the destruction of friendly relations? It is simply dishonest to say that one accepts the principle of consent in respect of Irish political unification but to reject it in respect of economic and social sectoral co-operation.

I join all Members who have spoken in supporting cross-border relations with the Irish Republic so long as the principle of mutual independence is respected.

I support the motion.

Mr McKee: I have no surprises. Everyone knows where I stand in this debate: I certainly support the motion.

I am opposed to all-Ireland institutions, which have no place in the life of Northern Ireland. Like Mr Shannon, who talked about good neighbours, I do not think the Irish Republic is a good neighbour. It claims jurisdiction over Northern Ireland — the place where I was born and reared, the place to which I owe my allegiance. Articles 2 and 3 say that Northern Ireland has no right to exist, that the Republic is the only true, authoritative body to govern this province. Well, let me tell the Irish Republic that we are British Ulstermen, and proud, and that we have no intention of owing any allegiance to the Irish Republic.

People may ask what could be more innocent than all-Ireland tourist bodies. But they are there to pave the way for executive bodies, and once the executive bodies are in place, there will be talk about a united Ireland. We will probably hear next about all-Ireland courts and all-Ireland police. Where will it end? It is time we as Ulstermen put our foot down and said that enough is enough, that there must be no more compromise.

There are plenty of accolades to be won in this country if you become a yes-man, but we in the DUP are certainly not in the pocket of the Northern Ireland Office. I am not saying this, Mr Chairman, about your becoming Sir John. You have distinguished yourself in many fields. In housing, you made a great contribution and were rightly rewarded. My remarks are about those who are prepared to bow and grovel at the door of the Northern Ireland Office. They will get all the OBEs and knighthoods on offer. There are not many OBEs or knighthoods for the DUP because we believe —

The Chairman: So far, the only person who has given me a knighthood is you, Mr McKee. But thank you very much.

Mr McKee: There are few such honours for the DUP because we are prepared to take our stand for Ulster. We are prepared to say no to the British Government and to those who claim jurisdiction over us. People say "Look at the benefits there are for Northern Ireland. Look at the financial rewards." We all know what happened to a certain person who took 20 pieces of silver: he went out and hanged himself.

We are being bribed to accept the Irish Republic as a good and friendly neighbour, whereas it is nothing of the sort. I want to make it clear that we in the DUP are absolutely opposed to having anything to do with the South or with those who want to bring Northern Ireland into an all-Ireland Republic.

Mr Brewster: One fact that has been identified in this debate is that people, if they are to harmonize, must have to have a common purpose. The problem about Nationalism — not just Irish Nationalism, but all Nationalism — is that it seeks conquest, not co-operation. Irish Nationalism, as we here all know, is in many ways more anti-British than pro-Irish. If they were genuinely seeking harmonization, Irish leaders would accept the irresistible conclusion reached by my Friend Prof Alcock and reintegrate into the United Kingdom, where approximately 20% of their people permanently live and work.

But the Establishment in the Irish Republic, being perhaps third- and fourth-generation descendants of those who broke away on the back of IRA violence in the 1920s, are unable to do that. Experience post-1921 is of an Ireland drunk on Nationalist rhetoric similar, perhaps, to the rhetoric of an alcoholic. As in the case of an alcoholic after his night of over-indulgence, there was a terrible hangover. The Irish Republic's hangover went on for many years, and — to extend the analogy — like many an alcoholic, it sought a top-up (of Nationalism, in its case). In 1970 members of Fianna Fail and officials conspired to create the provisional IRA — not so much heir of the dog as heir to the dogma!

Irish Nationalists tell us that they believe in co-operation when it is in the context of Europe. In fact, they are very keen on Europe and the Buggins's-turn meritocracy which allows Dick Spring and John Bruton to parade as if they were statesmen, once every seven years. Yet when they had the opportunity of full integration in a British Union which gave them political equality and economic subvention they were anxious to be rid of it.

When we are told that the Irish wish to co-operate with us we have to ask ourselves who will benefit and how. There are many benefits for the Irish. The number of Irish students in our universities who are taking training courses in nursing and other disciplines is well known, and the number of Irish people in jobs, not least in the BBC, is also a cause of concern. Benefits to us, on the other hand, are very few and far between. Discrimination, contrary to the requirements of EC law, remains, in that ability to speak the Irish language is a requirement for Irish Civil Service appointees. I well recall hearing of a former Chief Justice in Ireland who attended the swearing-in of new solicitors from this jurisdiction and from England who wished to practise in the Irish Republic. He welcomed those from England and Scotland, and he welcomed the people from this part of the United Kingdom by saying that he would not use the words "Northern Ireland" as he had never used them and never would. So much for equality. So much for the parity of esteem that we are told about.

2.15 pm

When it comes to the question of co-operation and harmonization, the Irish Government still seem to believe that my tradition is not one that can be afforded respect. We are cherished but wayward children of the nation, who have been duped or have sold our birthright for economic benefits. Mr Ervine referred to an occasion on which Gerry Adams could describe him as his Protestant brother but could not call him his British brother.

The Constitution of Ireland is no different as it cannot recognize the British-Irish tradition — a tradition which, if I may say so, in many ways you, Mr Chairman, and your family know perhaps better than many of us here. It is a tradition which predates the border. When I was looking through my library last night I found the Unionist Convention document from 1892. Many of us are familiar with the Convention in Belfast, but this was the Convention in Dublin, which took place a few weeks later. It is interesting that there are some with the name Gorman. There are also people named Coulter, Maginnis, Brewster, Robinson. There is a McCrea from Wexford, and there is even a Paisley from Offaly, or somewhere like that. This shows that the Unionist tradition is not just the Ulster-Scots tradition — one I am proud to share — but is broader than that.

We believe in good neighbours and good neighbourliness. We have often heard it said that good fences make good neighbours. I go beyond that. Suppose there is a good fence between myself and my neighbour. I see him maltreating his children. I may have no right to interfere, but the fence hardly makes me inclined to be on good terms with him. There are those of the British-Irish tradition who have suffered and continue to suffer from official neglect, from gerrymandering and from victimization. My Friend Mr Campbell will recall the treatment of Unionists — “Orangemen” is perhaps more accurate — from east Donegal over the last few months. In fact, on days when their elected representatives should have been ensuring that their right to freedom of expression was being protected, Senators and TDs were lecturing Mr Campbell and me on how we should behave in Londonderry.

I come back to the point that, whilst we have no right to interfere, we can look very closely at the treatment of the British-Irish culture in the Irish Republic. Other Members know as well as I do that only recently was Islandbridge, that great memorial to the Irish dead of the First World War — men from all traditions — restored. There are still many areas in which that tradition is frowned upon, officially neglected and, in some ways, spurned.

We in the Ulster Unionist Party are very keen to have co-operation. In some cases, where there may be benefits, we will work in harmony. Unless and until we see respect for the British-Irish tradition as a perfectly valid and independent tradition — I do not want to use the phrase “parity of esteem” as it has been so debased — any attempt to force harmonization down our throats can only be seen as a Trojan horse, and this party will resist it.

The Ulster Unionists support the motion.

Mr Gregory Campbell: I too support the motion.

Many Members, particularly this afternoon — unlike this morning, when many did not address the motion — have spoken in quite eloquent terms of the benefits of pure co-operation. We can all join them in saying that there is much benefit to be had from close co-operation with the Irish Republic. We have an example in the Nordic Council, and there are other European examples. All of them are based to a large degree on the principle of mutual respect.

There is no evidence, to my knowledge, of any co-operation between countries with a land border where there is a total lack of mutual respect, let alone any examples of co-operation between countries with a land border where one state actually claims the territory of the other. There are no such examples because that is contrary to the very basis upon which any co-operation must exist. If there is to be co-operation you need to recognize the right of your neighbour to exist and to award him the degree of integrity that you expect from him.

Mr McFarland made some helpful remarks regarding examples of co-operation. He mentioned the Foyle Fisheries Commission, which is now held up as almost the paragon of cross-border virtue. During the 1991-92 talks it almost became the *raison d'être* for cross-border co-operation, but in recent weeks — and Members may not know this — it has come in for severe criticism, not from Unionists, or even from people who live in Northern Ireland, but from the fishermen of the Irish Republic who fish the Foyle. In recent months they have been the chief critics of the Foyle Fisheries Commission, yet their political spokespersons and representatives are the main advocates of the existence of such a body. Then, of course, we have the Erne-Shannon waterway and the other organizations that have been mentioned.

What concerns me about further development of those bodies is that we are told that if only we had them enshrined, enlarged and given some executive function, the constitutional log-jam could be broken, and Nationalists brought in from the cold. Yet I have heard John Hume say on many occasions "In the 1990s, borders and national identities are fast disappearing. We are all Europeans." Why is there a need to promote small local, parochial cross-border institutions if those institutions are but relics of the nineteenth century or the early twentieth century and are disappearing? How can you ask for something to be built on for the twenty-first century if, in other speeches, you deride it as a throw-back to a previous century?

I have no difficulty whatsoever in approving of co-operation, and I could support the motion entirely on that basis. But we have to put down a marker: we do not want any of these institutions under the concept of harmonization. This is being used as a smoke-screen to build executive bodies which, at a future date, can be incorporated into some form of united or — to use "Humespeak" — agreed Ireland.

Mr King: In a display of cross-party harmony, I too support the motion.

There should be no doubt at all in anyone's mind where the Ulster Unionist Party stands on this issue. Members on these Benches strongly support all trade and economic co-operation that is beneficial to our citizens. We are, after all, the Ulster Unionist Party and will firmly advocate anything that might benefit the province. What a pity, then, that

perfectly good notions of good-neighbourliness have been hijacked by those with a narrow, irredentist Nationalist line. Co-operation is a natural, evolutionary process, inevitable where human beings live in proximity to each other — neighbour with neighbour, farm with farm, town with town, county with county, and like with like — surviving and, all being well, thriving in an atmosphere of mutual respect and total trust.

Harmonization, on the other hand, is a totally different sort of beast. Politically inspired, disguised as an aid to co-operation, this is the vehicle of preference for today's Nationalists. To harmonize, there has to be a harmonizing body. Once things have been harmonized, there has to be a harmonized authority to police the harmony, and, naturally, there have to be harmonized powers of an executive nature on an all-Ireland basis. That is the Trojan horse that Unionists face today.

In the early 1990s the SDLP told the one forum they deemed fit to be attended that high-profile bodies of just that nature were required for the agreed Ireland that Hume et al strive for. The genesis of that party — 'Towards a New Ireland', its conceptual document of 1972 — pledged to aim for joint authority as a stepping-stone to a united Ireland. Is it any wonder then that Unionists suspect its motives? Those motives are clearly political rather than economic and, therefore, deserve all the suspicion we have heard being heaped upon them this day.

From all the hype given by Nationalists to this subject, one would think there was a 50-foot fence around Northern Ireland separating us from the Irish Republic, that there were no cross-border linkages between North and South, that there was no interaction between Northern Ireland and the Republic. This is obviously not the case. Anybody who knows the dairy-production market in Northern Ireland knows exactly the high level of Irish economic activity in that sector. Anybody who is involved in the retail trade in Northern Ireland knows exactly the level of Irish economic interest within the North. Currently, Northern Ireland exports twice as much to the Irish Republic, in monetary terms, as Scotland does to England. So to say that British rule, 50 years of Stormont maladministration, has created false barriers denying the geographical realities of this island and has acted as an impediment to economic co-operation is false. But that is the lie which we have been asked to swallow.

All the economic activity I have just outlined happens in the absence of forced, imposed, unnatural, unconstitutional bodies exercising executive powers. There is no need for such bodies, which would just hide the agenda of unity by stealth.

Perhaps we should look closer at the process of harmonization — that process of unity by stealth. In Northern Ireland, per capita spending is one third higher than in the Irish Republic. Our living standards are between 25% and 30% higher. Are the proponents of the dreaded "H" words suggesting that the Republic harmonize up to our standards of public service? Are they seriously suggesting that the Republic could? Harmonizing health, social and education sectors is clearly impossible. There cannot be a harmonized health service on this island. The Irish Exchequer could not afford it. The same goes for all aspects of public service. Is it seriously suggested that we commence harmonization by trading down to the standard seen in the Irish Republic? That is not only bad politics; it is bad economics.

The best example of politically driven bad economics is the Never Never Land suggestion of Bertie Ahern, which my Friend Mr Weir mentioned earlier, that Northern Ireland should join with the Irish Republic, even if the rest of the United Kingdom does not, in some form of European monetary union. Bertie Ahern is a potential Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, and if he is around long enough he may be President of the European Union one day, yet he is the one who is advocating this nonsense. The Irish say "There would be a one-island economy", but they are missing the point. Yes, there would be a one-island economy, but there would be two United Kingdom currencies. This is the best example of the blinkered North-South vision of Nationalists. They ignore, or they choose to ignore, the east-west axis, which is of far more importance to the lifestyle, prosperity and future of all of us on this island. In their blinkered Nationalism those devotees of harmonization have forgotten the essence of the driving force of prosperity in these islands. That essence is the east-west axis.

An island economy? No, let us have an islands economy. A Belfast-Dublin economic core? No, let us have a British Isles trading area. If only Nationalists would realize that harmonization on the level that they are proposing can occur only between sovereign states, and not between a sovereign state (the Irish Republic) and a region of another sovereign estate (ourselves), these islands and our peoples could then progress, on a British Isles basis, to the agreed prosperity that we all hope for.

The vast majority of these arguments have been gone over very eloquently all day, and I appreciate that there is another debate for this afternoon, so I will conclude. Let the message from these Ulster Unionist Benches be that Ulster is open for business, but let the message also be that we are wise to any attempt to salami-slice the Britishness of Northern Ireland by economic stealth and with bogus economic arguments. Let this be the message: co-operation yes, coercion no. That has to be the way forward for the people not only of this island but of these islands. The British Isles is the power structure for prosperity for us all. Let not narrow, irredentist, historically blinkered economists ignore the fact.

I support the motion.

2.30 pm

Mr Peter Robinson: I welcome the opportunity that this motion from the United Kingdom Unionist Party gives us to address a very important issue. It is very timely that it should be considered at this juncture. Of course, one of the issues central to the motion is approval of co-operation. Would it not be very insular if this province were to say "We are not going to co-operate with anybody. We will live unto ourselves."? When one shares a land mass with others it seems to make good, sound trading sense, if nothing else, that there should be co-operation with one's neighbour. It is just sad that our neighbour still does not want to encourage full co-operation. If it wanted to encourage full co-operation it would remove that claim in its constitution to our territory, in this part of the United Kingdom, which has been, for so long, a barrier to a proper friendly, neighbourly relationship. But in the absence of that, Unionists have shown that they are prepared to go the second mile. They have recognized that there should be co-operation where it is in the mutual interests and to the mutual benefit of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. That is the first element of the motion, which I gladly endorse.

The second central issue is the concern that is expressed about a process which commences with the innocent prospect of co-operation and moves on to harmonization to try to bring the two ways of living in the one island into one, as a precursor to having a one-island state. It is very clear that that is a process which is politically intended by the Government of the Irish Republic and, sadly, under the framework document, is intended by Her Majesty's Government also. In the document it is very clear that the United Kingdom Government are part of the process. You harmonize, you get the executive bodies set up, and around them you build your all-Ireland structures. Very rightly, the United Kingdom Unionists have differentiated between co-operation, which is beneficial to the people of Northern Ireland, and incorporation, which is, of course, to their detriment.

It would be improper if I were not to return to the issue of tourism. I enter again the caveat that I entered when I last spoke about this: I have worked very closely with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board over a number of months and have been delighted at the degree of professionalism and enthusiasm in that organization to bring people into Northern Ireland, to keep them here and to make sure that they go away having enjoyed their time. I believe that the Tourist Board is capable of doing that. But it should recognize that Northern Ireland is capable of being a single destination and that, to a large extent, the Republic of Ireland, rather than being a partner, is a competitor. I wonder, therefore, what are the real advantages of joint promotion.

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board was never keen on the idea of "branding" Ireland. It did not initiate the concept or give its blessing in the early stages. Only later, when politicians started to get involved, did it put up the money and incorporate itself into the team. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board, as everyone will recognize, is right to take all possible steps to increase the number of tourists coming to Northern Ireland. That is why it was set up. But I rather suspect that this whole exercise is more to do with politics than with tourism.

It is very easy to say that anything that helps to encourage tourism must be good. By and large, most people would nod their heads in the right direction, but when one reads the speeches that were made at that the opening of Brand Ireland the antennae start to perk up. The director-general of Bord Fáilte indicated first of all that it was a process — "a very important stone in the building". So there is an ongoing process of building the Irish tourism industry's future. The director-general is looking to the future and how they might build the industry in Ireland. What did the Minister, Enda Kennedy, have to say? This is what he said:

"The concept of marketing the country in a fully integrated way, as a brand, is challenging."

He went on to indicate how beneficial it is that the whole of this island is one country — which we very well know, and he should know, it is not. He went on — and Members should mark these words very carefully —

"The island of Ireland has everything to gain from promoting itself as a collective entity, in brand-marketing terms, around the world. I believe that Tourism Brand Ireland has the potential to make an enormous contribution to the ongoing search for a lasting peace on this island of ours, and I know that all of us will continue to work together to ensure that everything we do as a collective industry is geared towards enhancing that process."

What process? The one he has already outlined — the one of bringing lasting peace on the island. Then he said

“This is an historic day for the island of Ireland. I genuinely believe that in years to come we will look back on this occasion and reflect that it marked a turning-point in the development not only of Irish tourism but of the island as a whole.”

Clearly, it was recognized by the Minister who was promoting it, who launched it, that this was not simply something that would assist tourism on the island of Ireland, but something that was going to help the island as a whole (in terms of his perception of what might help the island as a whole).

A document with the heading ‘Ireland’ and a logo which shows two people embracing while one hands the other a shamrock was also released. Inside, there are illustrations of what the literature will look like. Every item shown has on the front cover ‘Irish Tourist Board/Bord Fáilte’ with the heading ‘Ireland’. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board is not mentioned at all. Clearly, the promoter is the Irish Tourist Board. It will be the body promoting this project throughout the world.

We have some experience of what such promotion does. The advert “Ireland, the Anglers’ Island” invited people to come to the island of Ireland for fishing, and it was under the brand of both the Irish Tourist Board and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. A constituent of mine sent off for the documentation. He received a very large publication which did not show one part of Northern Ireland, in spite of the fact that the Northern Ireland Tourist Board’s logo was on it. Given all these circumstances, it is sad that the Deputy Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party sought to support this proposition. I hope that he is out of step with the rest of the party. I suspect that he is not in agreement with his colleagues, as is quite often the case.

A Member: I am not sure.

Mr Peter Robinson: Well, let us test it. Would the Ulster Unionists like to help me with a survey? Those who support John Taylor please stand up. Not one of them, not one of them, is prepared to stand up in support of John Taylor. That is a fairly clear indication. The Member for Strangford, who was seen around the corridors, has not, for some reason, ventured in to take part in the debate.

The Chairman: Mr Robinson, if you do not look out, Mr Taylor will have to be given a right of reply — something for which you were calling earlier.

Mr Peter Robinson: I would be delighted to encourage him to come in and take part in the debate.

Mr Ken Maginnis: Will the Member give way?

Mr Peter Robinson: This is going to be a new experience: the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone supporting the Member for Strangford.

Mr Ken Maginnis: Since we are asking for volunteers and head counts, I wonder if members of the Gentleman's party would like to stand up. Would those who believe that his contribution, in sterling, to the Irish Exchequer after Clontibret was a good idea like to stand up?

Mr Peter Robinson: Education will help the Member considerably. Half the lies he hears are not the truth! What he would find out if he were to study the matter more closely — I have heard this lie often but have never troubled myself to answer it — is that the money was not handed over, as he has suggested, to the Irish Exchequer. The Exchequer already had it in bail bond. It took the money from the bail bond. Let the Member get the facts right the next time.

The Chairman: Now may we get on with the subject under debate?

Mr Peter Robinson: Last week I was making my own efforts to help tourism in Northern Ireland, bringing people from 71 countries to the province for a sporting event. At a social occasion in the Europa Hotel I noticed that the lights of Glengall Street were on very late at night. I thought that maybe Dick Spring had left them on, but it appears that there were people beavering away inside. What were they doing in those late hours of the night and early hours of the morning? Were they devising a new plan to defeat the IRA? Were they working out a strategy to beat the pan-Nationalist front? No, they were not. What were they doing? The officer corps of the Ulster Unionist Party were down on their hunkers with a pile of shredded paper, trying to sellotape it all together.

The Chairman: Mr Robinson, we have had shredded paper up to the neck today. You have only a few seconds left.

Mr Peter Robinson: I will, perhaps, present them with a whole bagfull, so that they can have a good time over Christmas.

At any rate, I am delighted to support the motion. I believe very strongly that we must continue to support co-operation but to oppose incorporation.

Mr McCartney: This has been an interesting debate, and I am happy to say that there appears to be broad agreement from most parties — at least the parties of significant numbers — to the terms of the motion. I hear, of course, murmurings of discontent from my Friend on the right. It would have been helpful if Lord Alderdice and Ms McWilliams had been present when the debate was opened. It would have saved them from making many a foolish error in their speeches as to what the debate was about. They did not appear to comprehend that none of the parties supporting the motion are in any way opposed to co-operation. What they are opposed to is incorporation. But, for the benefit of Ms McWilliams, I shall read again very briefly from Brigid Laffan, a noted academic in the Republic of Ireland, on what is actually afoot:

"Co-operation on low-key, relatively non-controversial issues generates demands and pressures for co-operation on related policy areas (the inexorable logic of functional spill-over), and as the actors involved in the process deal successfully with technical issues, they enhance their capacity to deal with more politically sensitive policy areas. National politicians, officials and interest-group elites are gradually socialized by their participation in central institutions".

Ms McWilliams: Will Mr McCartney give way?

Mr McCartney: No, I will not give way.

That is exactly what the framework document is about, and I am glad that almost every Member speaking has endorsed the principle. Indeed, I was happy to listen to the very valuable contributions from Mr King, Mr McFarland and Prof Alcock on the Ulster Unionist side, as well as to those from Mr Robinson, Mr McAlister and others, who all clearly appreciate the fact, which has apparently escaped not only Lord Alderdice but also Ms McWilliams, that we are entirely in favour of co-operation but not of absorption.

As the purpose of a winding-up speech is to comment on the contributions that have been made, let me take up the matter of hijacking, which was so eloquently raised by Mr McAlister. Hijacking of ideas created essentially by Ulster Unionists is an ancient art-form of Nationalists. We start off with the Irish language. People forget that the renaissance of Irish and Celtic language and literature was really energized by Protestants — by people like Sir Samuel Ferguson and Douglas Hyde. Why did they abandon the Gaelic League? Why did Douglas Hyde abandon the Gaelic League? Because the Irish language and culture were hijacked by people like Padraig Pearse and others to serve Irish Nationalism politically. Now we are asked to harmonize with all these Gaelic and Celtic things — harmonize with that to which we really gave birth, with that which we proselytized but which was hijacked and debased for political purposes. Exactly the same thing will happen in many areas in which we are asked to harmonize, because ultimately they are all driven politically.

2.45 pm

Let me show the historical continuity of Nationalist thinking. Mr Peter Robinson made a very valuable contribution to this debate, particularly with his announcement about the tourism matter and what is behind it. I believe that tourism is being hijacked. John Bowman, at the beginning of his book 'De Valera and the Ulster Question', puts the greatest possible emphasis on the importance to those of the Irish Nationalist tradition of the discrete map-image of Ireland as a single geographical entity. That is the very concept which is being incorporated into the proposals for tourism because modern tourism, with the money that is poured into it in advertising, is one of the most effective means of propaganda. And Irish Nationalists have been experts at that. This is what Bowman has to say:

"This constant exposure to the map shape is particularly prevalent in Ireland, whose external morphology, being an island, is sharply delineated."

With constant repetition in all the ways mentioned by Bowman, the Irish map is recognized as a symbol of the nation, being commonly incorporated into the mast-heads of national newspapers and, notably, used in the design for most common postage stamps in the first half century following independence. Given that the state occupies such a large part of the island, it is scarcely exceptional that the map used is that of Ireland — not the Twenty-six Counties, but the entirety of the island. What may have significance, especially in the context of the South's irredentist claim to reintegrated national territory, is the constant omission of the boundary line, particularly in maps symbolizing the state.

That was the position in 1921: constant emphasis on Ireland as a single geographical unit, a single state, a single political entity — Irish unity. It is no surprise that the Republic is prepared to spend £19.5 million out of the £20 million on conning the Northern Ireland Tourist Board into lending itself to such pervasive all-Ireland propaganda.

Of course, we have the political simpletons who do not go beyond what appears to be “a nice little deal”. Perhaps it was the entrepreneur in Mr Taylor that persuaded him that paying only half a million in a £20-million project was good business. But good business for whom? Extraordinarily good business for the Republic of Ireland.

I would like to wind up by dealing briefly with some of the comments made by Lord Alderdice. If Lord Alderdice had been here he would have listened to a careful, analytical presentation of the whole process of functional spill-over as it is applied both in Europe and under the principles of the framework document. He would have realized, of course, that this position is accentuated when it is not a sovereign state that is resisting such pressure, but a region without any representative government, without any real democracy and without the ability really to influence national policy. Northern Ireland is being squeezed in situations which no one in the rest of Europe would tolerate.

I return to something that Mr Peter Robinson said earlier: that everything about Northern Ireland is being directed, through the framework document and the Anglo-Irish Agreement, towards Irish unity. It is an ongoing, unending process, and the SDLP, Sinn Féin, the IRA and the Irish Government have a common objective: not only ultimately to obtain Irish unity, but to keep Northern Ireland in a state of permanent political instability so that the only conceivable option, the only means of ending the instability, is Irish unity. That is what the British Government have bought into, and the medium, since they cannot achieve it by war or terrorism, is a process of gradualism and functionalism eventually to integrate Northern Ireland and every aspect of it. The best way of beginning is to say “Och now, aren’t you awful people, you terrible, negative, insular Unionists? You are not willing to embrace an all-island strategy with all of us decent people, getting together, sharing this island, being happy with each other, talking “Humespeak” to each other, and getting together on tourism.” That is what this is all about — the soft sell for the very hard political objective.

I hope that everyone here today will endorse the motion.

The Chairman: We have to decide whether to take a vote on this by going through the procedure with the three-minute delay, or just take a show of hands. I am quite open to doing either. If you are all happy, let us proceed with a show of hands.

Question put.

The Ayes and Noes having been registered by show of hands, the Chairman declared the Ayes to be in excess of the required majority.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved (resolution subsequently negated in accordance with Rule 13(1)):

This Forum, while approving of co-operation with the Irish Republic on matters of mutual interest and benefit, deprecates the attempt to bring about all-Ireland harmonization as a step towards the creation of all-Ireland executive structures.

The Chairman: I now have a very awkward duty to perform, as Members will know from what I said two weeks ago. I have to consider — and I have been doing so not just today but all week — whether I can, in conscience, say that the resolution can reasonably be deemed to command support across the various traditions in Northern Ireland. A small number of Members have put their hands up in opposition to it, but I have to decide whether it may command my support on the basis that I have mentioned. I have listened, as indeed most people have, to debates year upon year about a united Ireland and about the structures and procedures which might come about because of that — for better or for worse. I could hardly claim that I am not aware that all-Ireland executive structures are dear to the hearts of a number of people and parties in the province. Regrettably, I must be mindful of the responsibility placed on me by Rule 13(1), and I have to tell the Forum that I cannot record my opinion as being that this resolution would command support among the various traditions in Northern Ireland.

The Chairman, pursuant to Rule 13(1), declared the resolution negated.

The Chairman: You are all very tolerant. I expected uproar.

Mr McCartney: I should like very briefly to make a point as the motion was moved on behalf of my party. Does not the situation in which you, Mr Chairman, find yourself highlight the fact that the SDLP, by not turning up here, actually controls the business of the Forum to a very large extent? We constantly hear screams from its members about the negative behaviour of the pro-Union parties. We hear Mr Hume talking about the veto, as he calls it. Is that not just what they are doing? They prattle about democracy, but they, in some senses, are no better than Sinn Féin, in that they will not participate in democratic procedures unless it suits them. We are being treated in exactly the same way as they treated the Assembly in the period 1982-86. If it does not suit them, they do not participate.

Ms McWilliams: On a point of order, Mr Chairman. We respect your decision and, unlike Mr McCartney, see it in terms of protecting the Forum.

Mr Peter Robinson: I recognize the difficult position that you, Mr Chairman, are in because of the Rule, which flows directly from the legislation, and I do not seek to take any advantage. I ask you, however, to consider one matter. There is a general principle, both in politics and in law, that the person who is presiding is entitled to take only the evidence that is placed before him or her. I doubt that the Speaker of the House of Commons could make any assumptions about what people outside the House might think or believe about a matter. I put it to you that you are not required — indeed, you are not entitled — to consider what people who do not come here, even though they are entitled to do so, might have said had they been here. I think that you are entitled only to take the views that are expressed in the debate and the voting and make your determination on that basis. I recognize that if you were to use your wider knowledge you would reach the conclusion that you have reached, and few

of us would doubt that that was the correct conclusion. But I suggest that in the role you perform here your outlook should perhaps be limited to the views expressed here and the votes cast here.

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr Robinson. I hope that what you have said will be promulgated widely outside this Chamber. It is not really fair to those people who moved and debated the motion. Never mind me, it is not fair to them.

While we are talking about the media, I have a bit of good news. The media took care to report fully the efforts of the Health Committee — I am sorry that its Chairman has departed the scene at the moment — to save Belvoir Hospital. That is good. At last we are getting some recognition.

Thank you all very much for what you have said. I hope that we will not go on like this every week. Perhaps when you are drawing up or considering motions you will remember what the consequence might be.

SPECIAL DEBATE (RULE 10(5))

The Chairman: Let us get on with the long-delayed five-minute speeches.

Mr Eric Smyth: Is it worthwhile making any speeches?

The Chairman: Just so long as we have a quorum.

Mr Eric Smyth: That is not what I mean. We have debated here all day, and the rights we have as British citizens are denied because a minority of people refuse to attend. I am not going to make any comment. I just feel disgusted about the outcome of the debate on **all-Ireland harmonization**. I want to make a protest. The Secretary of State and all the rest of them are rotten to the core to allow this to happen. We have elections and parties. People pay money to fight elections to come here and speak for those they represent. I may not like the Women's Coalition or Alliance, but at least they come and say their piece.

3.00 pm

I will never have any time for John Hume again. The man is a liar. I do not care if that remark is out of line. He tells the world that he will talk to anybody, that he is there for the good of the people. We meet here every Friday, and in Committees, for the good of all the people of Northern Ireland, but the SDLP would deprive us of our right to express our opinions and the opinions of the people we represent. I am finished. I am going home because I am disgusted, and I think that everybody else should do the same.

This should go back to the Secretary of State. So far as I am concerned, it is about time all Members pulled out and let the whole lot go to hell. That is how I feel.

The Chairman: You did not quite take your five minutes, Mr Smyth, but you made a very forceful speech.

Mr Tom Robinson: Yesterday the Health Committee took evidence from representatives of the Northern Ireland Hospice and of Belvoir Park. It is quite clear to me that there is a major cash crisis in the **health service**. My Colleague from East Antrim raised this matter the last time we debated the subject. We currently have the BSE crisis in the farming industry, but we have also what I believe is an equally major crisis in the health service. A few weeks ago I heard the announcement that £500 million emergency cash was to be injected into the health service, but only in Great Britain. As one who represents Northern Ireland, I regard that decision as disgraceful, and I hope that, somehow, it can be changed.

Many of us remember that a few years ago, when Nigel Lawson was Chancellor of the Exchequer, the pound was devalued. The United Kingdom Government lost billions upon billions of pounds, while currency speculators made millions within a few days. Yet there is not adequate funding for the health service.

A few weeks ago the 'Belfast Telegraph' reported that a gentleman had spent £10,000 out of his own pocket to have a heart by-pass operation — a procedure for which he had been waiting more than a year. That is disgraceful. I hope that we will be given an opportunity in the not-too-distant future for a proper debate on the state of the health service in Northern Ireland, for I have no doubt that lives will be lost if the service is not given a major cash injection.

There is no question that we shall soon have a two-tier health service. There will be those who are able to get treatment, and those who are not. If there is not a major cash injection, people had better make arrangements for private medical care. That, it seems to me, is the only way forward. Maybe it is what the Government actually want, but it will be a sad day if we have to go down that road.

The Minister, Mr Moss, has said that there is no crisis, absolutely no crisis, in Northern Ireland's health service. I challenge him if he really believes that, let him resign his seat and stand for election in Northern Ireland. One of the great advantages of being a Minister here is that you can come out with whatever pronouncements or statements you want, but you do not have to face the Northern Ireland electorate.

We in Larne lost our acute hospital services. We know what that means for people who now have to travel to Antrim or Whiteabbey. We were promised a better service and major improvements to the **roads** infrastructure. We were promised that in the case of the A8 there would be an extension of the dual carriageway. We were promised that that would be in the five-year programme. We were also promised that there would be major improvements to the A2 — the road from Carrickfergus to Belfast. Because of the traffic congestion, people in Carrickfergus have to leave home as early as six o'clock in the morning to get to work in Belfast. We were promised better roads but have now been told that the A8 will be in the five-to-15-year programme. That is disgraceful inasmuch as Larne is one of the largest ports in the United Kingdom and handles all the heavy traffic from F G Wilson.

More recently we have been told that roads in rural areas, such as East Antrim — I am thinking of the area around Larne — are no longer to be gritted. I shudder to think what they will be like in the middle of the winter, especially for ambulances.

I hope that we can have a proper debate on the health service in the not-too-distant future.

The Chairman: An interesting thing has happened. I had several Members on my list, but they do not seem to be in the Chamber, and I am afraid that we are going to be deprived of the one who is left — Mr Shannon — because we are now inquorate. I am sorry, Mr Shannon.

Mr Sammy Wilson: May we not call for other Members who are in the building?

Mr Poots: My name was not put forward, but I understood that I was to be allowed to speak.

The Chairman: If we get a quorum, you will certainly get your five minutes.

Forum counted, and not fewer than 22 Members being present —

Mr Shannon: I wish to speak about the **proposed firearms legislation** resulting from the Cullen Report. The Government chose to ignore the recommendations in that report and brought in their own proposals with regard to the possession and use of hand-guns. The proposed legislation is born out of tragedy and pain. No one could have failed to be moved by the slaughter of the innocents at Dunblane Primary School by a madman. The question that must be asked is “Will the new law prevent a repeat of that atrocity?” That is the issue that we must try to address in a very short time.

A fairy-tale can be used as an analogy. Most Members will know the story of Sleeping Beauty. The king did not invite the wicked fairy to his daughter’s christening, and, for revenge, she put a curse on the child, saying that she would prick her finger on a spindle and die. In response to this threat, a good fairy cast a spell: instead of dying, the princess would sleep for 100 years. The king did what an authoritarian can do (in this case the Government have the power to do what they want): he banned all spinning-wheels. Of course, it was easy to collect and destroy the legally held spinning-wheels, but, as happens in real life, the princess found an illegal spinning-wheel and pricked her finger on the spindle. The king’s ban had not worked.

The comparison with the new hand-gun legislation is obvious. You can control all the legal hand-guns, but will you ever be able to prevent a tragedy similar to that of Dunblane? “Ban all hand-guns,” the Government said, “and it will never happen again.” Does anyone here really believe that?

Most of those whose chosen sport is shooting would agree to hand over their guns if that could prevent a tragedy. But we have to be realistic. We are all too old and too wise to believe in fairy-tales. Most shooters would be more likely to support the Government’s proposals if they thought that there was a chance that the new law would work. The people

who shoot for sport know enough about guns to realize that any sort of ban would affect the law-abiding but not the evil-doers. Northern Ireland has the toughest legislation in the whole of Europe. To get a licence, a person must be of sound character and have no record of mental illness or criminal activity. The regulations here could be a model for any country. I suggest that this is the way forward.

I recall a statement that I read in Canada, as an immigrant, many years ago:

"When all weapons are outlawed, the only people who will have weapons will be the outlaws."

Nowhere is that more evident than in this province, where over 3,000 people have died at the hands of terrorists — those with no licence, but with a vast arsenal of destruction.

I received a letter from a shooting organization that thought there was a gun lobby. Well, there is now. These are the people who hold weapons legally, under licence, with the agreement of the state. It is tragic that they should be deprived of the right to take part in leisure activity that they enjoy. They are the people who are really suffering.

Deep in our hearts we know that a ban cannot work. It is just a response to a call for action. Why should the law-abiding suffer for the wrongs of a lunatic, a madman? The new legislation is based on emotion — not on facts, statistics or reality. It will not ensure that such a tragedy can never happen again. That is its most worrying aspect.

I ask for Members' support.

Mr Poots: I will be very brief as everybody seems to want to go home. I read in the 'News Letter' — or maybe it was the 'Telegraph' — that, according to Mr Taylor, the DUP is looking for a way out of the talks. It seems that Mr Taylor and many of his Colleagues found a way out of the Forum while we were looking for a way out of the talks.

3.15 pm

I would like to address the question of the budget, **roads** and the hard-pressed motorist. This week Chancellor Kenneth Clarke decided to put 13.5p on the price of a gallon of petrol. He likes to talk about 3p a litre, but, being a bit old-fashioned, I prefer to stick to gallons. The increase puts the rate of tax up to 80%. With petrol at over £3 a gallon, we are now paying more than £2.40 to the Exchequer. Fuel tax is costing most motorists about £24 a week. This, together with road tax, amounts to about £1,400 a year.

What is the motorist getting for his £1,400? Let us take a motorway, for example. More than 20,000 cars use motorways every day. If we multiply the £1,400 by 20,000 we are talking about £28 million. Speaking in the Forum one day, I asked for a new lane to be added to the motorway from Black's Road down to the city centre. Apparently it would take about £1 million per lane mile to do that. Given that the length of road is about three miles and that there would be an additional lane on each side, the cost would come to about £6 million. Clearly, motorists are not getting value for money.

Between 5,000 and 10,000 cars use the Hillhall Road every day, yet the Roads Service is spending a mere £100,000 on a few minor works. A small road in my constituency — the Magheradartin Road — is used by some 20 cars. There was a serious accident lately. A young girl and her father had to be admitted to hospital for treatment. We got the Roads Service out to look at the sight-lines. All that was being asked was that a hedge be topped. The first excuse was that the Roads Service had been taken to court twice for topping hedges and was not prepared to do this without the owner's permission. When that had been sorted out, the Roads Service could not afford to do the job. The local residents did it, and it cost them about £50. Twenty cars at £1,400 each bring in £28,000, yet the Roads Service could not afford to spend £50 on road safety. Motorists are not getting value for money.

The other matter that I want to raise is gritting. At present, all roads carrying more than 1,500 cars per day are gritted, and in special cases others carrying more than 1,000 cars will be included. Surely all roads that are used by buses should be gritted. It is not good enough that buses are lifting school children on ungritted roads. Indeed, some bus drivers have refused to go out on certain roads. The Department has undertaken to leave salt bags along the side, for people to do the job themselves. How is a bus driver supposed to get children to school on time if he has to stop every 150 yards and spread salt with a shovel? Anyway, there is not always salt in the boxes, as I found the other day on a hill that was a sheet of ice. Fortunately, I have a four-wheel drive vehicle. Otherwise I could not have got up the hill. This is another example of how the Department is behind the times.

I hope that these points will be taken on board.

The Chairman: Congratulations to you, Mr Poots, and to Mr David Campbell, for having represented us to the Secretary of State yesterday.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.19 pm.