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## UNIONISM, AN ANALYSIS OF OUR IDENTITY

The Unionist identity is essentially an expression of our BRITISHNESS, the ethos which exists in Ulster is not the same as that found elsewhere in the United Kingdom but neither is the Scots identity found other than in Scotland or the Welsh other than in Wales. The Union was intended to draw together the four diverse sections of the British people, that Union did not dilute each particular identity, Englishmen remain English and are no less so because of the Union, similarly Ulstermen (and women). The Unionist identity can be shown to be essentially British by analysing the various manifestations of Unionism, whether it is affinity to the Royal Family, close proximity and kinship particularly to the lowland Scots people or interest and participation in sports enjoyed by other Britons, Unionism can be said to be grounded in the work ethic which was a product of the Protestant Reformation which encompassed England Scotland Wales and the Northern part of Ireland.

Unionists then do not merely see themselves as British but every fibre of their being is so, the fact that many Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland see themselves as sharing that particular identity without wishing to align themselves with the more Political manifestations of Unionism is something which has not been given sufficient attention. If progress is to be made in creating a Northern Ireland where the advocate of any particular identity can be free to pursue and promote that identity we are not likely to have much success while there are attempts made to subsume our Unionism within some form of agreed or new Ireland. Making the Republic of Ireland more like Britain will not ensure that Unionists are less disinclined to join that Republic.

Unionism is in conflict with Nationalism in Northern Ireland, our task is to develop our identity in such a way that Nationalists do not feel threatened by our Unionism. We are at a loss many times to understand why they should feel threatened by the manifestation of our identity but that is not as important as the fact that they do.

Unionism is strengthened in its resolve to remain distinctly British by the ongoing terrorist campaign, the more attempts there are to dislodge us from the Union the more intensely will burn the flame of resistance to that campaign. A people kept continuously under siege for decades can be forgiven if they tread warily when the enemy offers consultation rather than confrontation. English people are sometimes unfairly trademarked by a "stiff upper lip" image, the Ulster distinctiveness is supposedly that of a "rugged dour unyielding" individual, the Ulster identity has fashioned a very robust image due to the circumstances in which it has found itself but that has never prevented the genuine attributes of that identity from being made obvious to those who care to look e.g. hardworking, sincere, humorous, caring and holding deep convictions. Because of these attributes Unionism confidently asserts that it wishes to be seen for what it is, the identity common to almost all of the Protestant population in Northern Ireland as well as not a few Roman Catholics.