

SUB 115

Roy Garland

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Northern Ireland

November 27, 1994

Tel No [REDACTED]

The Secretary General  
Forum for Peace and Reconciliation  
Dublin Castle  
Dublin 2

Dear Sir

I am an officer in my local Branch of the Ulster Unionist Party and I am a delegate to the Ulster Unionist Council. However I am forwarding the enclosed Submission as a private individual.

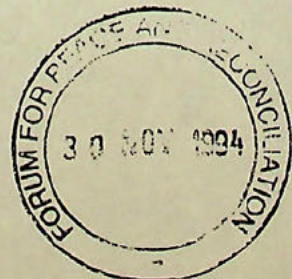
I am a Further Education Lecturer in Sociology, Religion and Ulster politics. In 1991 I completed a Dissertation entitled, "The Ulster Volunteer Force Negotiation History". A copy of this is in the National Library of Ireland and in Trinity College Dublin. This could be of some use to you as it deals with aspects of the Northern Ireland situation which are largely unknown outside a relatively small circle.

I wish you every success in your deliberations and am willing to help you in whatever way I can.

Yours sincerely

*Roy Garland*

Roy Garland





SWB 115

Submission by Roy Garland  
to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation  
established by the Irish Government in 1994

I would like to express my thanks to the Irish Government for taking the initiative in setting up the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation and inviting submissions from people throughout this island. I would also like to pay tribute to all of those who have contributed to making the recent cease-fires from Loyalist and Republican paramilitary organisations possible.

In my view we owe particular thanks to those organisations themselves and to certain members of those organisations who are unlikely ever to be placed in a position to receive the recognition they deserve for bringing us this far. Some, within and without those organisations, have worked unceasingly for many years with scant support or recognition to find a more humane and constructive way forward for our diverse peoples.

All of us on the island of Ireland have a vested interest in surmounting the remaining obstacles to the establishment of wholesome political structures and a viable pluralist and accommodationist democracy within Northern Ireland. In this process I believe that means can be found to engage the talents and ingenuity of all our peoples to heal the wounds of centuries of conflict. It is clear to me that we must accept our collective guilt in sustaining, in one way or another, the enmity upon which the violence has thrived. In consequence we share a responsibility to find ways to heal the wounds.

At the base of our problems, in my view, lies the remnants of sectarian rivalry which we have inherited from the past and which has been sustained by new experiences in each generation. Both communities have maintained their "historic mythic consciousness" which may have been



essential to survival in a past characterised by violent instability. Each generation has selectively interpreted its present experience in such a way that the past has continued to live on in the present.

In my view the time to sustain selective histories in order to survive, is long past. Within the Loyalist paramilitaries for a long time there has been a recognition that sectarianism, in its various forms, is counterproductive to the creation of a viable future. There has also been clear signs that Republicans have also, over a number of years, recognised the negative effect of violence, ancient sectarian rhetoric and tribalism.

I believe that because of this recognition we are already moving down the road to a new Northern Ireland in which our sectarian past will only be of historical, albeit vital historical, interest. I do not believe that it is an illusion to say that already those who have eyes to see, can grasp glimpses of a new world of peace and cooperation. Many people in Northern Ireland are now reaching out, tentatively at present, to each other as they look towards the future.

The old sectarianism is not, and perhaps never will be, completely dead. The hidden rhetoric of sectarianism remains not only within the political and paramilitary movements of this island, but in the often muted and discrete words of sophisticated middle class society. Regrettably it is also found, in a way which is inimical to the teaching of Jesus, within the churches themselves.

I have great hope for the future based upon the acceptance by the Irish Government of a non-coercive approach which is expressed in the terms of reference of this Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. This states that the Forum accepts as:

"a fundamental guiding principle" that "all differences relating to the exercise of the right of



self-determination .. and .. all other matters, will be resolved exclusively by peaceful and democratic means".

This, together with the acceptance of the principle of consent by the people of Northern Ireland to constitutional change, is a vital ingredient on the road to real peace. Northern Protestant intransigence has been, to a large extent, a reflection of nationalist attempts by political and/or military methods, to coerce them into structures which they reject. The southern Irish authorities, by their acceptance of this peaceful guiding principle, are helping to set the scene for the psychological liberation of the people of Ulster.

The adoption of a positively non-coercive approach has been a courageous and, in some respects, risky principle for the Irish government to adopt. In my view it entails the acceptance that a united Ireland may never be achieved. However by helping to lift the threat of coercion from the Ulster people, you are setting us free to decide the kind of future we want and it is my considered view that we will never go back to any form of abusive majoritarianism.

In so far as Protestant ascendancy was a reality in Northern Ireland, it was a creation and reflection of our historical struggles and of the sectarian nature of the southern state itself. Coercion, or even perceived coercion, was a major part of the problem. The threat of coercion could feed the dark sectarian undertones of our peoples and this could be exploited by unscrupulous politicians and churchmen of different persuasions.

We must develop trust in each other and that trust cannot be blind faith. We must proceed cautiously while reaching out to each other in faith. We must recognise the humanity in each other and refuse to compare the best in our own group with the worst in the other group.



Unionists have been hostile to any input by the southern authorities into the affairs of Northern Ireland. In my view, the fears underlying that hostility are understandable. However, I believe that provided such influence is non-constitutional, neighbourly and well meaning, it is acceptable in view of the sensitivities and experiences of our nationalist friends in Northern Ireland.

However in the longer term the need for any such intervention will rapidly decline. In that context I believe that a new community Assembly within Northern Ireland should have considerable powers, limited primarily, only by considerations of equity and justice. Internal reconciliation and integration is of vital significance if Northern Ireland is to move into a new interdependence and to develop positive relationships with all the other parts of these islands. A new united Northern Ireland can then become the basis for a new, non-coercive and hopeful, relationship between all the peoples of these islands.

Northern Ireland is an overt expression of the political social and cultural links between all parts of these islands. These relationships in the past have often been exploitive and antagonistic. The resulting wounds remain buried in the minds of our peoples and these hurts are in need of healing. Such hurtful memories and wounds are hopefully beginning to be addressed.

There is no longer any room for hypocritical declarations of innocence on the part of British or Irish Governments. Nor should either party be allowed to offload their guilt onto the people of Northern Ireland who have borne the brunt of violence, as well as bearing a share of the responsibility.

In the past Ulster Protestants, with some justification saw the southern Irish establishment as one which was, to varying degrees over time, under the undue influence of the Catholic Church. The Church in the past appeared to show



more concern for its own welfare than for the welfare of the people of this island. Other churches have been similarly guilty but, as the most powerful religious institution on this island, that church must bear a particular burden of the responsibility for the situation.

The Catholic Church within the Northern Irish state has its own peculiar responsibilities. The divisive education system is clearly a symptom, if not a contributory factor to the sectarianism which has flourished. Catholic attitudes throughout Ireland on, for example, issues relating to mixed marriages, divorce and contraception have not been helpful. The attitudes of some of the Protestant church spokesmen have also been unhelpful, but it is of singular importance that it is recognised that grievances have not been the sole prerogative of Catholics and nationalists. For too long the unionist people have been convenient scapegoats for a complex struggle in which they were as much victims as perpetrators.

Hopefully much of this historical baggage is now of declining significance. However our shared, and to some extent mythical past, may continue to haunt us. It is therefore incumbent upon us all to play a real part in receiving and giving forgiveness, and in building a new future. The southern state must be especially sensitive to the views of unionists that they harbour religious and political designs on Northern Ireland. In this context I welcome the positive noises which have recently come from the Dail regarding changes in Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution.

The Roman Catholic Bishops at the New Ireland Forum stated that they did not seek any special place in the state and that politicians must address issues in the light of their own conscience. This was a positive move and the Irish people and government must be congratulated on the removal in 1974 of the "special position" which had formerly been enjoyed by the Catholic Church and reflected in the Irish



Constitution. This has not been adequately noted by Ulster Protestants and perhaps this fact indicates something of the diverse nature of our two states and the need for more effective dialogue at all levels.

Some unionists however believe that what goes on within the southern state is no concern of theirs. In a sense this reflects a commendable reluctance to interfere in another jurisdiction. However it ignores the reality that events in one part of the island often have an impact upon the other part. It also ignores past centuries in which the relationships between both parts of Ireland and between this island and Britain have persisted throughout the years of turmoil and violence.

I welcome the contribution by those members of the Catholic Church, including some of the clergy, who see the way forward as involving a more secular society north and south. That the close liaison between the church and the southern state in the past was detrimental to real Christian life, seems obvious. We all, in the north and in the south, must firmly reject all ascendancy and seek to build pluralist structures within our respective political jurisdictions, so that all members can identify, and none need feel excluded. The creation of such an entity in Northern Ireland could perhaps become a model for other nations riven by historical, ethnic or sectarian struggles.

In my view there is a great need for a fuller recognition of the positive value and significance of Protestant, British and unionist culture and tradition, alongside Irish culture and tradition on this island. We have proud traditions which have at times been besmirched by petty bickering and squalid sectarianism. We must now seek to help each other to grow within a new Ireland and a new Ulster, living in harmony with each other.

Before the start of the recent "troubles" in Northern Ireland, some Protestants and unionists were beginning to

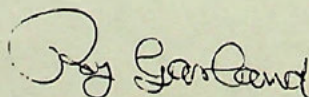


seek to express a sense of Irishness, alongside their British identity. It is my firm hope that with the lifting of the threat of violence, which was partly designed to enforce upon unionists a particular version of Irishness, we will at last be able to express and develop our sense of identity in whichever form we wish.

For me Irishness remains a central part of my identity. However to seek to impose such an identity upon any group, Protestant, Catholic or dissenter, to the exclusion of other identities, is to denigrate the more inclusive and international aspects of Irishness down the centuries.

There remains a role for us all which is in line with the best in our historical traditions. This involves helping in the development of means to deal with the massive problems of our world related to issues of war, hunger, deprivation in all its forms, pollution and related ecological issues, and the need to seek to build a sustainable and meaningful future for all mankind.

Perhaps the fact that there has been limited industrial development in both parts of this island gives us an opportunity to find new and more humane ways of living in harmony with each other and with our world. Such means clearly should not depend upon the cultural and economic degradation and poverty of our fellow human beings at home or abroad. It may mean developing new and simpler ways of living. By adopting new and non-destructive lifestyles, we may contribute to the preservation of life on this planet, for future generations.



Roy Garland

27 November 1994