

# **Legacies and Memories of the 'Peace Train' (1989-1995)**

*a 'Witness Seminar' organised by*

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*and*

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Published May 2023 by  
**Island Publications**  
132 Serpentine Road, Newtownabbey

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<http://cain.ulster.ac.uk/islandpublications>

*The organisers wish to thank*

the panel speakers:

**Proinsias de Rossa**

**Eileen Bell**

**Gary Kent**

**Chris Hudson**

**Bernard C. Byrne**

and

**Liz McManus** for chairing

And also the **ICTU** for the use of their premises on Donegal Street, Belfast  
and **The Fellowship of Messines Association** for their assistance

Thanks also to Bernard C. Byrne for the cover photograph of the Enterprise

*The event, and this publication, received financial support from*

**The Irish Government's  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
Reconciliation Fund**



**An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha**  
Department of Foreign Affairs

## Legacies and Memories of the ‘Peace Train’ (1989-1995)

While much of the work in the lead up to the Good Friday agreement has been attributed to politicians, academics **Dr Connal Parr** and **Dr Stephen Hopkins** believe grassroots groups were also key to bringing about an end to The Troubles. Accordingly, they were awarded funding through the Irish Government’s Reconciliation Fund to investigate the true extent of the impact of civil society groups.

Dr Parr said: “The conventional view has always been that it was Prime Ministers and other politicians who brought about peace – but we know there was a lot of work going on at a grassroots level which has been mostly overlooked up until now. The aim of this project is to shine a light on those people and groups and record their stories and experiences.”

As a first step, their research project, *Paving the Path to Peace: Civil Society and the Northern Ireland Peace Process, 1989-1998*, decided to hear from members of the campaign group, the **Peace Train Organisation**.

A ‘Witness Seminar’ event was held on 30 March 2023 in Belfast, during which members of the Peace Train Organisation, along with other invited guests, many of whom had been direct participants, discussed their work in bridging social and cultural movements during that time.

Speaking about the timing of the project, Dr Parr said: “In the context of strained British-Irish official relationships since 2016, this project will underline the importance of open dialogue and peace-making, with a focus upon the significance of creative inputs from civil society across these islands.”

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**Dr Stephen Hopkins** is Lecturer in Politics in the School of History, Politics and International Relations at the University of Leicester, UK.

## **Welcome and Introduction**

Hello everyone; a warm welcome to you all today to this ‘Witness Seminar’ on the Peace Train Organisation. I want to say a few words of thanks. Firstly, to the Fellowship of Messines Association, and especially to Harry Donaghy who has helped to bring this event together. And also the Irish Government’s Reconciliation Fund, which is the main sponsor of this event. We are uniquely placed to have in this room today many of those who were involved in the Peace Train movement. And some of them will be given an opportunity to contribute after we have heard from the panel speakers.

For those unaware of the history, the Peace Train was a fascinating movement which organised seven trains between 1989 and 1995. And the main core campaign ethos of the Peace Train was to protest against the Provisional IRA’s bombing of the railway line between Belfast to Dublin, and Dublin to Belfast, which was quite a regular feature for those of us who used that service over the years. There was also an interesting anti-paramilitarism element which many people in the group had.

And the people were involved from different areas: it was genuinely cross-community, and cross-border. Committees were formed in Belfast, Dublin and London, and, indeed, there was one in Glasgow. There were many diverse organisations and projects involved. And also representatives from different political parties: the Ulster Unionists, the SDLP, the Workers’ Party, Alliance, the Greens; indeed, most political parties in the North and South of Ireland were represented in the Peace Train movement, which was a very unique thing. And it enabled ordinary people, across the island of Ireland, to say that they wished to live their day-to-day lives free from political violence.

Given the approaching twenty-fifth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, we are also interested in the grassroots peace process. We know that the Clintons and current U.S. President Joe Biden will be jetting in shortly, and while we recognise

that political leaders like Albert Reynolds and John Major, and indeed other Prime Ministers and Taoisigh, played important roles, at the same time, although it was not always in the headlines, there were grassroots peace processes at work on the ground which were also significant, and I think the Peace Train is one I would put in this category.

Some people who couldn't make it today, but who should be mentioned, include: John Alderdice, Harry Barnes, Joan Burton and Pat Carroll, John Cushnahan, Eamon Gilmore, Seamus Lynch, Ken McCue, and Philip McGarry.

I will hand over now to Liz McManus who is going to chair this event today.

**Connal Parr**

**Liz McManus** First of all I would like to thank Connal Parr and Stephen Hopkins for organising this event, and to all of you for being here. I would like to pay tribute to those who are no longer with us, but who played such an important part: Sam McAughtry, Paddy Devlin, Seamus Close, Seán Ó Cionnaith, John de Courcy Ireland, Stephen Hilliard, Austin Currie, Terry Carlin, Anne Holliday, Bert Ward, Tom French, Pete St John, and Noel Playfair. And I would just like to also mention the women who appear in the 1992 film of the Peace Train, who danced outside City Hall and will be forever remembered. I would also like to pay tribute to the courage of the railway workers who kept the line open despite intimidation and the constant dangers that they endured. Every one of us here is aware of the fact that the 'peace process' did not begin with secret talks and politicians' meetings; it began with the actions of brave people who stepped outside their comfort zones in order to seek it out, and today we can salute all of them.

So I am going to ask the first panel member to speak – and the person who had the idea in the first place – Proinsias de Rossa, former leader of the Workers' Party, and MEP for the Labour Party [Ireland], Minister for Social Welfare... and a great comrade of mine.

**Proinsias de Rossa** It is a pleasure to be here and it is great that this event has been organised. I do not have any proprietorial claims to the Peace Train. I had an idea which I am sure others would have come up with eventually. Back in April 1989 I was quite angry at the way the train was being disrupted. My daughter was travelling on it every week, going to college in Northern Ireland, so I had a personal concern about it, just as much as I had a political concern. Immediately I got the idea I spoke to a number of people in the Workers' Party and we formed a kind of ad-hoc committee. It was never a Workers' Party decision to organise a Peace Train, and the idea that in some way it was a 'front' for the Workers' Party was nonsensical.

The person who I spoke to initially was Seán Ó Cionnaith, who was one of those people who had an enormous capacity to gain media attention and to organise. We discussed who we should invite to this, because I felt that it needed to be a non-party political event, although you couldn't exclude parties from it. But while it needed to have broad political support, it was important that it had broad community support. And so we tried to think of suitable names and one of the first people we asked if he might chair it was Sam McAughtry, who readily agreed. We talked to various other people, some of whom are here today, such as the McGimpsey brothers, all of whom played an ongoing role in the process of organising the Peace Train.

The first train which was organised was on 28th October 1989. We got as far as Newry; there was a bit of a protest there, some Sinn Féin people protested. Not against the Peace Train incidentally, they were calling for 'Troops Out'. We got as far as Portadown and were stopped because there was a bomb on the tracks. There was a discussion among those of us on the train and there was a broad consensus that we would stay put, we weren't going to be driven off the train; we would sit it out and wait for the line to be cleared and we would then continue our journey to Belfast and make the point that we had set out to make. If the bomb scare was intended as a way of aborting the process it was a very poor calculation, because it of course lent huge publicity to the Peace Train. And it went from strength to strength after that. I have to say that because I was very conscious of the fact that I didn't want it to be identified as a Workers' Party front or anything else, I stepped back from the front

line organisation of it. I continued to participate in it as far as I could, but others took over who were broadly non-party political.

Apart from my personal interest in it, the reason I was angry about the frequent bombs and bomb threats was because it just seemed so counter-intuitive that an organisation which was arguing for a United Ireland was destroying the only rail link between North and South, interfering with people's capacity to socialise between North and South, to move around the island, to work, to talk politics . . . it just did not make sense. And I was just re-reading the Dáil debate – we had an all-party motion the following March, and all of the parties in the Dáil signed it, a common motion calling for the campaign to close the line to stop. And two speakers in that debate, Ruairí Quinn and Mickey Bell argued very strongly that there was a kind of mafia-style connection with the bombing of the train lines: that it wasn't just political but was to do with money, and there were commercial interests involved. I don't know, I never had any evidence for that. But politically it seemed to me to be incomprehensible. And the bombing and the bomb scares continued for some time after the Peace Train got under way. In fact, some people were critical of me because they felt that we were undermining the Republican movement's efforts to unite Ireland by having the Peace Train organisation, which I felt was quite ironic.

And I feel that the Peace Train, in both its initial form and eventually as the Peace Train Organisation, had a significant effect on people's thinking, both within the broad popular arena but also within the Republican movement itself. I have no doubt that it made a contribution to the re-thinking that eventually got underway when the Provisional IRA realised that in fact there was no support for the campaign they were engaged in. In 1989 I was elected to the Dáil and the European Parliament at the same time, but I was just looking at the figures and Sinn Féin in that election had something less than 2% of the vote, and I have no doubt that that was because of the way in which they were being associated with the Provisional IRA's campaign of violence. Thank you.

**Liz McManus** The next speaker is Eileen Bell, former Alliance MLA, deputy leader of the Alliance Party and Stormont Speaker. And she was the Peace Train’s coordinator in Belfast.

**Eileen Bell** It is a pleasure to be here today, to talk about the Peace Train. And to see people who had worked together on it. And that was one of the things about the Peace Train: it was a coming together of everybody for the one aim. I first heard of the Peace Train Organisation soon after it was formed and I had immediately joined as a supporter although at that time I was starting my political career as well. I was involved at that time in the council elections and got a seat in North Down. I also was an Alliance delegate in the talks chaired by Sir Ninian Stephen†, so I was quite busy. Being on the Peace Train was actually a wonderful experience for me, because it was bringing together people who were from different backgrounds, different everything . . . but the one thing we all agreed on was that we had to stop this attempt to ruin the rail service between Belfast and Dublin. We didn’t want to see that happen, and it turned out that a lot of people in Ireland, North and South, didn’t want that either.

Every Peace Train was difficult to organise, mainly because of the huge interest and support we got from the public across the island, due to the good work done by Proinsias and others. In the end he had realised that we had one aim, and we wanted to achieve that aim, and the best way to do so it was getting the ordinary people to support us. As a peace activist I had attended many Peace People rallies, and trade union rallies, etc, but sadly we didn’t have the effect on the men and women of violence, we didn’t have that. But I have to say that the Peace Train *did* have an effect. We also had support right from the beginning from overseas – in the USA and around Britain – and from every political party across Ireland – bar one, of course. Like Topsy it grew and grew as the bombing went on. And every year that we decided to have it we nearly had to add on another train, such was the support from all round.

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† *Editor’s note:* Sir Ninian Stephen [1923-2017] was an Australian judge and former Governor-General who chaired inter-party talks in Northern Ireland in 1992.

I personally loved to walk through all the train carriages and talk to the passengers; everyone had a different story but everyone was fulsome in their support. And the people were from everywhere. I met quite a number of people from Germany, so the word had got round. My lasting memory of the trains was of the unity of aim and purpose that every person who travelled on the trains or helped organise them showed, and I think we all had a great sense of success when the bombing actually stopped. We had had many rallies throughout our Troubles, but the Peace Train did hit the mark and its enormous and open success was clearly felt by many.

I must include the Peace Train in 1993, which had been arranged one week before the tragedy of the Shankill Bomb happened. I was extremely concerned. We were going to cancel but I contacted the group in the Shankill Road who were dealing with those who were directly affected by the bomb – people like Mina Wardle – and I asked them to ask the people did they want the Train to go ahead, and Mina said: “Come and talk to them yourself.” So I explained what we did, and they asked me: “Are you sure that the people of the South will come up?” I said, “Yes I am, for they have been queuing up for tickets.” And I was told that they wanted the Peace Train to run; it would be a show of complete support from the whole island against what had happened on the Shankill Road.

And that is in my memory and will be there always. We had at least two trains from Dublin and the passengers arrived with thousands of flowers and bouquets of every description as evidence of support. As was our usual programme we walked from the station to the City Hall. It was a magnificent sight of thousands of placards, flowers and supporters. The then current Lord Mayor, now Sir Reg Empey, opened the City Hall and its grounds to everyone – saying ‘bring them all in’ – and in no time the whole of the City Hall’s grounds were covered with these flowers. A memorable event that I will always remember with pride. The Lord Mayor of Dublin was also on the train and he went up, with a few people from the Shankill, to what is now the Garden of Remembrance on the Shankill, and they went up with a wreath and a placard to show their support. Everybody who was on

that train had brought something to show their support, and that was magnificent.

I will finish by remembering Paddy Devlin and Sam McAughtry, two men who were to me the best people to have on the committee. They were beacons of hope and resilience to me and many others. They were men who were popular and whose reputation went before them. They don't make them like that anymore. I also would like to remember June McClung who worked with me, a dependable and very pleasant woman. The Peace Train to me was a light to everybody and I don't just mean in the UK or Ireland alone. My thanks also goes to all those who were there in the great days of the Peace Trains, and all those who travelled on the trains. We all worked together for the common purpose of ending violence. I am so grateful that we have been given this opportunity today to be here to meet together and remember what happened. It was a wonderful time in my life and I will never forget it. And we didn't know then we were going to have the success that we did. Thank you.

**Liz McManus** The next speaker is Gary Kent, [British] Labour Party member, international relations expert. He worked in Parliament for 34 years and was one of the advocates for New Dialogue and New Consensus.

**Gary Kent** Thanks very much; it's nice to be back – I haven't been here for a few years – and to see some old friends. I'm sort of bringing an additional perspective to this event, which is from England. And which will relate to the impact that this activity had on the Left in Great Britain. I mean, if you'd told me, when I was a teenage leftist, that I would be working here with bedfellows in many parties on both sides of the Irish Sea to defeat the IRA, I'd have been a little surprised.

When I joined Labour in 1976, I swallowed the default position of many on the Left that the root cause of the Troubles was Partition, and that Irish unification was the solution. It was quite widespread within the Left. I remember in 1979, when Airey Neave had just been blown up in the Commons, I spoke to a guy who responded to my doubts about 'Troops Out' by saying "There's a bloodbath going on now, let's get it over and done with." The idea of fighting to the last drop of someone else's

blood started to turn me, and I realised that I was wrong in my assumptions.

Then in 1987 I started work in the Commons for Harry Barnes, who went on to play a very prominent role in Northern Ireland matters, and we were both heavily influenced by the pioneering work of the ILP, Independent Labour Publications, of which we were active members. The main initiatives from the late 1980s on were the New Consensus and then New Dialogue group, Families Against Intimidation and Terror, and the Peace Train. And we were quite tough-minded about the stances we took. For instance, there was a big campaign around Bloody Sunday, so we took it on. I remember that we organised what we called a ‘Presence for Peace’, near a Troops Out march in Islington. And we stood at the roadside with placards saying: ‘No more Bloody Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays . . .’ A republican flute band regaled us with a drumbeat and chants of ‘I-I-IRA!’ They weren’t very keen on our presence for some reason; I guess we had stolen their thunder! We also supported the Newry Hostage campaign. And our outrage at the IRA murder of Tom Oliver† was also prominent.

Now, it has been said that there were seven trains, and there certainly were seven trains North-South. But there were eight trains overall, the eighth being the Belfast-Dublin-London Peace Train. We had set up a London-based organisation with people from various parties and none. The Belfast-Dublin-London Peace Train arrived in London in June 1991; I was the London organiser. It took months of work and was supported by Jimmy Knapp††, the main rail union leader and his assistant Keith Hill.

The train arrived at Euston Station. Proinsias de Rossa, Seamus Lynch, Maurice Healy – who had been tortured by the IRA – Harry Barnes, and Kevin McNamara

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† *Editor’s note:* Thomas Oliver was a 43-year-old Irish farmer and father of seven children. In the course of drainage work on his farm he uncovered a barrel. Totally unaware of its contents he had reported the find to the Garda Síochána. It actually contained IRA guns hidden on his land without his knowledge. In 1991, the Provisional IRA abducted and then murdered him. His body showed signs of extensive torture. The *Irish Times* reported: “Tom Oliver has become a symbol of every family on this island whose lives have been shattered by the men of violence.”

†† *Editor’s note:* Jimmy Knapp [1940-2001] was General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen [1983-1990] and then the merged Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers [1990-2001]

all spoke at a rally outside the station. It was delightful because the Troops Out movement picketed us; I mean, how stupid can you get! It was hilarious; they only shot themselves in the foot and boosted our publicity. We then took buses provided by another union, the Transport Workers, to the Commons where Harry had secured a debate with the minister Brian Mawhinney.

The process was not smooth. Money was always tight. A proposed ‘peace plane’ to America never took off. No groups in Great Britain received state funding though that didn’t stop Ken Livingstone and Jeremy Corbyn tabling a hostile amendment to a Commons motion by Harry Barnes demanding to know how much New Consensus received from the Northern Ireland Office and what were the strings attached. There was neither: there was no money, and no strings!

This coming together of Irish and British people from all walks of life made it crystal clear that the IRA had no mandate from the Irish people. The work of the peace organisations also created an informed network of people. Some of us in the Labour Party actively challenged its anti-partitionist sentiment, which seemed initially solid but was mostly due to romanticism and inertia. It needed a nudge. That parts of the Irish left were less nationalistic than some on the British left counted considerably.

Labour’s position of unity by consent was ambiguous – some stressed unity, others emphasised consent. But it made Labour a difficult partner for unionists. Some of us started to engage with unionists, not easy at first. The McGimpsey brothers, Chris and Michael, were very important influencers. They had an important impact, they changed the way people thought about unionists, who were seen as rather dour people who didn’t really feel the need to network. Chris addressed a big Tribune rally at the Labour conference in 1998 alongside Gerry Adams. Chris deployed a topical joke: “What’s the difference between Gerry Adams and Geri Halliwell? Answer: Geri *really has left* the Spice Girls.” There was a sharp intake of breath and then laughter. Adams was completely flustered by the mockery.

This varied work impacted on opinion-formers and resulted in positive editorials in the *New Statesman*, and the *Mirror* dropping its ‘troops out’ stance, as well as regular letters and columns contesting the old approach. My piece in *Tribune* in 1994

– during the Labour leadership contest after John Smith’s death – said “Labour must now reassess its Northern Ireland policy and listen to the Irish left. It could better promote peace and reconciliation in Ireland if neutrality on the border was combined with a comprehensive peace package that addressed all the causes of the conflict.”

Seismic changes followed the election of Tony Blair as Labour leader in 1994. Blair, whose Irish mother and summer holidays in the South gave him a vital hinterland, quickly replaced the principal keeper of the anti-partitionist faith and Labour’s veteran Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Kevin McNamara, with Mo Mowlam. Her first public speech was to the cross-party New Dialogue peace group, which I helped found. The Northern Ireland political minister, Michael Ancram, also addressed the group.

Why I am saying this, is that this isn’t just an arcane political matter, it had an impact. The defeat of anti-partition sentiment in Labour proved essential in bolstering bipartisan support for Sir John Major and then the Belfast Agreement, most elements of which were already being advocated by different peace groups: devolution, a bill of rights, integrated education, Anglo/Irish co-operation. And if Labour had not been trusted by the Unionists there would not have been any continuation of the process.

In conclusion, it wasn’t easy, especially here, to take the Peace Train or to defy or picket war-mongers. But it was a source of strength that it was bi-partisan, indeed multi-partisan, and thanks to the work of the peace groups and many others, mindsets *were* changed. The atmosphere at early British-Irish inter-parliamentary meetings was acrid but over time this talking shop produced dialogue and understanding as well as some odd alliances for good purposes. The Irish Embassy was a regular meeting place for different factions. It was comforting when the basic mantra many of us used popped up in the Ambassador’s speech when he said that the priority was a stable Northern Ireland. It was a source of strength that it was a bi-partisan effort that caused no problems as there was much continuity between the Major and Blair governments.

It should be a source of pride and satisfaction that so many ordinary people from

Northern Ireland, Ireland, and Great Britain – North/South and East/West – added their voices to complement the rich mix of measures taken by British and Irish governments, and others, that ended the Troubles. The statesmen and women who concluded the deal stood on the shoulders of giants who said ‘No, no, no, to terror!’ and were vindicated. They helped defeat paramilitarism and should never be forgotten. That unity of British and Irish people made it crystal clear that the IRA had no mandate from the Irish people, and the same applied to the so-called Loyalists. And it was a great honour to have been involved so many years in this, with so many of you. Thank you very much.

**Liz McManus** The next speaker is a North-South cross-border body in himself: Reverend Chris Hudson, Unitarian minister, trade union activist for the postal union. He was also an intermediary between Loyalist groups and the Irish government during the early 1990s.

**Chris Hudson** It really is great to be here today and to see Eileen and Proinsias and so many other people that I haven’t seen for a long time. I think the most important thing to say about the Peace Train was that, irrespective of any of our political views, or any position we might take on the national question, the Peace Train meant nothing without the ordinary people who got on the Peace Train. Sometimes we forget that, that it was the hundreds of ordinary folk who climbed on board those Peace Trains between Dublin and Belfast that put meaning into the Peace Train. And why I say that: I remember in particular one Peace Train and *Morning Ireland* did a little piece before we left the station, and one Dublin woman actually said she had written out her will that morning before getting on the train; she had left it on the kitchen table. And they were the sort of people who were the backbone of the Peace Train, the hundreds, indeed thousands, of ordinary working-class people from Dublin and from Belfast.

And there was other thing that was important. There had been a manifestation at different times of different peace groups and they all got caught on the one bugbear,

which was that all the Provisional IRA would say to them was: “Are you against *all* violence?”, and they would reply, “Oh yes, we are against all violence”, and they would then get cornered into spending the rest of the time being asked to condemn security force violence. We were a little bit smarter than that. We said: “Yes, we are against all violence, but we are *particularly against yours* on the railway line, because we, like you, are a single issue campaign. This is about the train, this is about the Peace Train.” So then we had the ability to get off the train and talk on every issue and then when they came at us with other questions we got back on the train and said, “Sorry, we’re a single issue campaign now, and we’re only talking about the Peace Train.”

So there are a number of people I would like to say thank you to. First of all my own union at the time, the Communication Workers’ Union, because without the unions there was no Peace Train. The CWU – David Baker was General Secretary and then Con Scanlon – basically allowed me to use the CWU headquarters to be essentially the headquarters in Dublin of the Peace Train, where we had administration assistance through the union staff. And we took stick for that from some of our own members who objected to what we were doing. So there were lots of other people like that who gave their support. And I’m looking at Henry Robinson who is sitting there, and how we linked up with Families Against Intimidation and Terror, and Michael Nugent from New Consensus, and sadly Anne is not with us today. And it was so important that all those groups came together. And one group which should never be forgotten was the Families of the Disappeared. The Peace Train were the first people to give a platform to the Families of the Disappeared, in Buswells Hotel in Dublin. And then myself and Sam brought the families to the Peace and Reconciliation Forum in Dublin Castle and challenged Sinn Féin there with members of the Families of the Disappeared.

So all those groups were able to climb aboard the Peace Train, make their point and actually advance with us. And I’m looking at Fergus [Whelan] and Sheila [Hanley] there as well; again trade union people, because to a large extent it was union members, like Tom Carew, who were the backbone of the Peace Train. And

I am looking at the flags displayed here on the table in front of me, and all the tickets that were produced, because people paid a fiver to go on the Peace Train and we had to print tickets. And Isabella did all that printing, and making these flags; my home was a silk-screening industry during the years of the Peace Train! And one person who is sadly not with us today, Seán Ó Cionnaith, and Proinsias mentioned Seán of the Workers Party. He was one of the most able people you could have on board, the work that he did, the way he was able to gladhandle everybody at Connolly station. And not only that, but Seán – and I still miss him to this day – became one of my closest friends. Ni bheidh a leithead aris ann: ‘We shall never see his like again’.

And Gary mentioned the Peace Train to London, and it was somewhat ironic that the Troops Out movement picked everybody, including the Irish Countrywomen’s Association who were with us on that day! Proinsias, you touched on something and it is very important, about more sinister elements who were trying to get rid of the railway line. Tony Tobin, branch secretary of SIPTU, in an interview for the RTÉ Archives, talks about the Enterprise train being down to fifty people a day travelling on the Enterprise, from 350. Now, I have learned recently, from an historian, the intention was to close down the railway line, to get rid of the Belfast-Dublin link. Now, I don’t have evidence of that, but I did a radio programme with Chris Conway, who was the Chief Executive of Translink, and it was the anniversary of the Enterprise train, and there is evidence there for some investigative journalist, that the point was to close down the railway line and to force freight off the railway. So there was something sinister happening there.

I just want to finish up by mentioning two things. Hughie Jordan has forgotten the song that he sang at Connolly station, but I think he is going to sing another one today. And I have a recording of Peter St John’s ‘I took the train to Belfast’. And one thing somebody said: we can’t allow them to have all the best music, and we can’t allow them to have all the best poems. That’s why we got Hughie Jordan and Pete St John, and Paul Durcan. So we managed to pull in people from the arts and music, to be symbols of the Peace Train, and to be the artistic wing of the Peace Train. I also want to mention some ordinary folk, people like Joe Heaps, who was a cleaner in the GPO,

who manned every Peace Train; Alice Lee, a little Dublin woman from Ballyfermot; Michael Rice who was a trade unionist; Rhonda Donaghey. And also I want to reference Chris McGimpsey; the reason I sat down with the UVF was thanks to Chris. And it resulted with the link which saw the Dublin government speaking to the UVF, and it was thanks to that that David Ervine eventually sat down with me and we were able to work towards the loyalist ceasefire. And if you look at one of the Peace Train posters, we always claim that we had no paramilitaries on the Peace Train posters, but Gusty Spence assured me that his name *is* on one of the posters – not as commander of the UVF, but just as Gusty Spence. And yes, there was a Glasgow Peace Train and we did meet in Glasgow and the Peace Train held an event in Glasgow.

Now, the greatest compliment paid to us . . . I was at a reception in Iveagh House, Dublin (seat of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs) with Eamon Gilmore, when he was Minister for Foreign Affairs. And Gerry Adams was sitting in front of me, and Gerry turned around and said to me: “Ah, Chris Hudson of the Peace Train. You know, you guys were a fecking pain in the arse.” And I replied: “Thank you, Gerry, that will do me fine!”

**Liz McManus** Last but not least, Bernard C. Byrne, former Enterprise train driver and trade union member, and he was also one of the first drivers to drive the DART trains.

**Bernard C. Byrne** I am really pleased to be here today, to say to you that the times of the operation of the Enterprise over those years – and I might add of the freight trains out of Dundalk – were extremely difficult. I would say to you that the northern line, Dublin-Belfast, and indeed you could go all the way down to Wexford, must be one of the loveliest stretches of railway line not only in Europe but in the world. And indeed as you go north and you cross the various rivers you come to Dundalk and then head up . . . I’m talking about on a lovely summer’s day . . . and you have the Mourne on the right and Slieve Gullion on your left as you go through like a valley. The

scenery is beautiful. But I have to tell you: leaving Dundalk on a winter's afternoon with the Enterprise – and you left at about 3.30 and were heading into the mountains – you were heading into the mist, and you were heading virtually into the unknown. And the local driver travels on his own, drives on his own, except when you would have your supervisor with you. But especially during the times that the IRA sought to bomb or disrupt the railway line, driving north or south on a winter's evening was foreboding in its own way. It wasn't that you were on the verge of fear, but you were always conscious of the fact that anybody who was opposed to the railway line and the service being provided could literally be an enemy who could take your life. I am thinking also of the Dundalk drivers because they did all of the freight, and quite a number of the freight trains were hijacked and blown up.

And the impact on a member of the crew of a locomotive with a bomb going off underneath you, some of them never worked again. And today helps in many ways to acknowledge that their contribution to the freedom of movement was paramount to the railway line's continued operation, and our continued opportunity to be able to travel – even if at times with great difficulty – between Dublin and Belfast and vice versa. And I would have known drivers, and indeed train guards, who were traumatised by that experience. I will just give you a quote which was made to me. Now, this wasn't on the Enterprise but on another train, when the train was stopped and was being hijacked. And this individual got up and said to the driver, "I want the train moved back!" And the driver replied, "I don't have the authority to do that." And this individual said, "I have the authority" – and put a gun to the driver's head! Now, that's just an example of what you could be confronted with. But the point is that the line as such was almost in some cases being attacked on a daily basis, and these attacks would have involved both freight trains and passenger trains. I worked on the Enterprise out of Connolly station for a long number of years, and would always have been conscious of the threats that existed. And I have to tell you that my own record for disruption was *three bomb scares on the one trip*.

Indeed, in the early seventies there was a big question mark over whether the service should be operated at all, with the crews putting themselves in such danger.

In 1973 I had become the branch secretary for all of the locomotive drivers in our union, for the Dublin area, which amounted to about 120 people and some other ancillary staff. And the challenge put to our members was that we shouldn't participate in the service because of the constant risks to our lives. And in the debate I had to put it to people that we were not just providing a train service, we were giving people the right to freedom of movement. And that to me, and I assume to everybody here today, is a basic human right. And had our union members relinquished our contribution to that service there would have been *no* service. And in case anyone might think that the drivers were paid some kind of 'danger money' or 'responsibility money', the drivers got nothing beyond our basic rate of pay. With one exception: the company gave them a daily meal allowance, and that was two pounds and five shillings. The reason being that, depending on the circumstances, you mightn't get home until two or three in the morning, and that payment was purely made for food, and no other reason.

Now, I would say to you that in the sense of the contribution of the railway workers – and I go for all grades and I also include management – I would say in all honesty never was there such a show of solidarity as far as the workers were concerned, the whole idea of providing a service was of paramount importance.

Chris, you make a point about the future of the Belfast line. Well, I can tell you today that as a member of the Board of CIÉ in 1987 – elected by the workforce I might add – the issue of the northern line came up, and the first suggestion was to single the line from Portadown to Dundalk. And I was totally opposed to this, because if you single the line – instead of having a two-way line – you will destroy it, despite the fact that the line itself had a tremendous future. I was also a delegate to the International Transport Federation in Florence in 1990 and Jimmy Knapp was the chairperson for NUR and I said to Jimmy: "Would you allocate in one of the sessions an opportunity for me to speak on the future of the northern line." And he did. There were 2,500 delegates present from all over the world, and I was able to tell them what was happening on the northern line, of the dangers that existed for the railway workers, which was unprecedented for railway workers across Europe, and it was

important that the railway and transport community worldwide would be made aware that we wanted the survival of the line. And I have to say, and it comes down now to the Peace Train movement of which I was a great supporter, but in December 1989 a peace rally was held in Dundalk and the railway workers from Belfast, and Dublin, and members of the public came together, had a protest march to Oriel Park and the whole question of the future of the line, and I might add the Peace Train movement, was again being made known to the public.

(**Hughie Jordan**, who had entertained passengers on the Peace Train with his music, now regaled the audience with a song which he felt was appropriate for the occasion.)

**Liz McManus** I am going to open it up now for discussion. We have certainly had a wonderful array of reminiscences and contributions from the panel. The first people who I would like to ask for a comment, are Chris and Michael McGimpsey.

**Chris McGimpsey** I have enjoyed this; it has brought back happy memories, I'm sure for all of us. Seamus Lynch rang me one day and said to me, "We have been discussing with Proinsias de Rossa about the Peace Train, and we are going to have a meeting; would you and Michael come down?" And so we went down to a meeting in the Gresham, and it was very positive. Everybody thought we were going to have to do something, this can't be left to go on, and I went away . . . and never heard another dickie-bird! After about two weeks I rang Seamus up and said, "Seamus, that was a tremendous idea, but what's happened about it?" And he said, "Oh, everybody has been very busy." I said, "I think we should get a committee set up and get started." He rang me back about half an hour later and said, "I was talking to Proinsias and he says he agrees entirely that you're the man to organise the committee"!

That then got me into a job, with Michael and I, so that first committee were basically friends of ours, friends of mine. I remember ringing Liam Kennedy from Queen's and we moved on with other people and it built up. And the rest, as they say, is history. But one thing that I remember, and Chris has referred to it, and so too has

Gary, there were a number of groups had been set up at that time and, like me, people were probably involved in many of them. And it was surprising how small the number of people were. You could have taken four from the Peace Train and four from FAIT and four from New Consensus, and four from somewhere else. It really was a small group who were all wearing different hats, but all selling the same message, and that was important, and that is still important today.

A J P Taylor, when he was asked about oral history, said: “Oral history? Old men drooling about their past? Nah. It will never catch on.” And that was A J P Taylor! There is an element of that here, in that we are old men and old women, and some of us are perhaps drooling and some of us aren’t, but it is because the message and the philosophy of the Peace Train is still important. And that’s why I think it is important that we are here today.

I will give you one story. You might remember – and God forbid she was murdered by Loyalists – Máire Drumm. Máire Drumm was vice-president of Sinn Féin; the Drumm family were icons in West Belfast. And she once spoke at a republican rally and said, “We will take Belfast apart BRICK BY BRICK!” And somebody came up with the idea that that’s what we will do for the next Peace Train: *we will build peace brick by brick*. And I thought that was a great idea. So we needed bricks and there were two guys, I think they were from Tallaght, and they got a load of bricks, and we got them all decorated, with ‘Peace Train’ on them. And we were going to stop at every station and were going to present a brick to the mayor of each town. And we would say to them: “You are helping us build peace brick by brick, and there’s *your* brick.” And anyway the two guys had to get a taxi and one gets in the front, and one in the back with the big bag of bricks. And the taxi driver said, “Where are you going today, boys?” And one said “We’re taking the Peace Train up to Belfast,” and the taxi driver said, “Oh yes, I heard about that; it’s a good idea.” Then one of the guys said, “When we get there we’re going to a peace rally.” And the driver said, “But tell me, what are the bricks for?” And the guy replied, “As we told you, we’re going to a peace rally.” And the driver turned round and said, “Christ, they do things differently in the North!”

And I think that is right: we did do things differently in the North and we did them differently in Dublin as well. And because we did things differently Sam McAughtry said: “We’re the only group that took the Provisional IRA on. They used gelignite; we used brain matter, and we won. And we’re the only group in Ireland that can achieve that.” Now, I don’t know how true that is, but the message is quite clear there, that that is what we achieved. And the trains kept running.

One last point. Bernard there mentioned the chance of the trains being closed. I was told by one of the guys in NIR (Northern Ireland Railways) at that time that they reckoned they could sustain the train service for about another three weeks before we went and met them. He told me that day they thought they had three weeks left. And of course we changed that. Thank you.

**Michael McGimpsey** I was involved at the beginning with Proinsias’ meeting in Dublin in O’Connell Street and very enthusiastically supported the proposition. I think there were several key things that were involved. Chris has talked about the ‘single issue’ approach, and taking on the absurdity of an organisation seeking to unite Ireland by dividing it. And another important thing for us, and for me, was nominating Sam McAughtry and Paddy Devlin to lead the committee. Their choice was an inspired choice, as far as Sam was concerned selling the whole message, and then Paddy as well. I must say I was warned to watch what you said to Paddy, for if you were cheeky to him he could hit you a thump! So I was always very polite to Paddy Devlin!

I think we did make a difference. I understood from that first meeting with Proinsias that several thousand jobs were involved, which were actually in jeopardy because of these attacks, and it was an issue therefore that was able to unite large numbers of people. And I remember the trains coming to Belfast and the passengers marching from Central Station around the City Hall. A thousand people set out, maybe three or four hundred reached the City Hall – and Marks & Spencers and C&A did real good business! But that was just a by-product. The key element of this was Peace, and that was what we were working for. And it is *still* the key element, and

it is by no means a certainty that it is something you can take for granted in Northern Ireland at the minute with its particular difficulties. So it is always important that we campaign for peace and think about peace, for that's about reconciliation and tolerance and so on. And we were able to show, working across the border, without threatening anybody about the political situation, we were able to work together for the common good. And as Sam used to say, we actually delivered, with regard to stopping the attacks on the railway line.

**Alban Magennis** First of all, could I thank Connal for his wonderful work in organising this event today, it has been marvellous. And it brings back wonderful memories of the Peace Train and the various journeys that we made, and the wonderful conversations that we had in terms of politics. That's one of the by-products of the Peace Train, that people of different, and *very* different, political points of view were able to discuss issues and find a consensus in relation to those issues. So it was a great experience for me, a great experience for my colleagues, people like Sean Farren, Alasdair McDonnell, Alex Attwood. And of course Paddy Devlin was very much someone who we admired and respected, even though he had left the SDLP. But none the less his presence was important and it was again part and parcel of that discussion. In a way it prefigured the peace process here in Northern Ireland.

Michael has referred to the absurdity of the Provisional IRA campaign: in order to *unite* Ireland you *divide* the people of Ireland with bullets, and guns and explosives! And I suppose this is the most absurd example on the part of the IRA of dividing people: here's a railway line that connects the two major cities in Ireland, and they seek to destroy it! Absolutely absurd! It is something out of the 'Theatre of the Absurd' – you couldn't really make it up! But that's what we were fighting against, and I reflect on what's happening at the moment, where there's a lot of discussion in the post-Brexit period about 'hard borders'. *Well, this was the hardest border, and the people who invented that hard border were the Provisional IRA!* And we should always remember that, and we should be saying to them, whenever they,

fraudulently in my opinion, go on about hard borders: *you* were the people who invented the hard border!

**Michael Nugent** I was involved in the Peace Train and also New Consensus. Proinsias, you were the person who made this happen, and it wasn't just the idea, you were one of the few leading politicians who were prepared to put aside party political advantage. I remember Eamon [Gilmore] came down to one of our New Consensus meetings and saying, "Can you help with this?" And specifically saying: "We don't want to get any party-political advantage from this, we want this to be a people's movement." And there were very few politicians prepared to do that.

There are just two anecdotes I want to share. Once when we were coming back to Dublin the train was stopped in Newry because of a bomb scare, And the usual procedure was you would get on the bus and be bussed to Dundalk. And we said, no we are going to be staying here. And this being Ireland, a lot of the people up from Dublin went down to the pubs in Newry, so we had to try and find them. And while we were trying to do that, Chris [Hudson] and I were waiting in the car park, and the police were kind of freaking us out, saying, "Look, we need to move you all back to Portadown, because this is a republican area and might be dangerous." Anyway, the police moved on and we were left standing there. And suddenly this car – like something out of a movie – came screeching over to a halt, two guys jumped out, and came hurrying towards us. Chris and I glanced at each other anxiously, only to find it was two members of the Workers' Party checking that we were okay!

We spent all night in the train in Portadown, and people who didn't know each other were there talking politics, and there were so many friendships forged on that particular night. But the big thing was that the various groups that Chris mentioned; and there were two different dynamics. The dynamic in Northern Ireland of actually challenging the paramilitaries on their doorsteps. The dynamic in the Republic was making them realise that they couldn't achieve political success in the republic while there was an ongoing armed campaign. And that really made a difference in the Republic; they didn't know how to react to it. I remember one time we were picketing

the Sinn Féin offices in Parnell Square; this was after yet another of their atrocities. We chained ourselves across the gates and one of them arrived and threatened us to move. And there was a policeman standing across the road, and this guy said that he was going to ask him to move us because we were trespassing. And as he was walking across the road to the policeman, I think it was Brian Brown shouted after him: ‘Informer! Collaborator!’ And he stopped in the middle of the road and immediately headed off somewhere else!

I think that the dynamic of these . . . it was really a small number of people, wearing different hats in different groups, but I think it was because the public were with us; it captured the public imagination, and even the Shinnners had to recognise that that dynamic was happening.

**Liz McManus** Chris mentioned ‘old men drooling’. There are a few old ladies here and maybe one of them – or a young woman, indeed – would like to comment?

**Sheila Hanley** I was just an ordinary trade union activist, sort of lured into the Peace Train due to my friendship with Chris [Hudson] and Isabella [Evangelisti], and as our colleague from Great Britain said, the majority view among many in the union movement was essentially unthinking republicanism and even a sneaking regard for violent republicanism. I went on all of these trains; I was heavily pregnant on one of them, on another I was with that baby in arms. And my trade union colleagues would say to me: “Are you not afraid?” And I would say: “But surely the question is that if I was to be afraid it is because of the antics of your so-called mates. So the question is not ‘why am I not afraid?’, it is ‘why are *you* not ashamed?’ ”

**Gerry Grainger** I was lucky to be able to participate on a minor level in the Peace Train as a member of the Workers’ Party. I am very glad to be able to be here today, and listen to people and make a contribution, because it is very important that the narrative of the Peace Train is kept and preserved. Unfortunately in Northern Ireland . . . we see it for example in relation to the Civil Rights movement, there are

attempts by people, particularly Sinn Féin supporters, to completely change the narrative of what the Civil Rights movement was all about. And I think they would like to forget that there was a Peace Train Organisation. And I think it is a testament to the reality of the Peace Train Organisation, the great work that the Peace Train Organisation, and the fact that people are still proud to have been participants in that organisation.

**Eileen Bell** Going on from what Gerry said there. The IRA were . . . I wouldn't say they were scared of us, but they were certainly aware of us, and the work that was done, and the number of people that were on the trains and the support that we had from everybody. And of course they were also worried about the union support we got. Chris touched on it, that we wouldn't have been able to get the Peace Train off, from the start, if we hadn't had that union support. One of the things I will say on a personal level: my previous job was in the Peace People, and what I did was on a Tuesday/Wednesday I went with the Peace People bus to collect families of the people who were jailed; we were bringing families up who couldn't afford the price of a taxi from the Lisburn station. I went round the Falls, up the Whiterock, over to Cairnmartin and up the Shankill Road, right across. And when John Alderdice asked me to be a delegate at the peace talks, which started in 1990 in Stormont, I asked these families if they would want me to go there, and they said, "Yes, go and tell them what we are going through." Anyway, I got phone calls from certain people from both 'sides', because I was transporting some of *their* 'passengers' around on my bus, which seemed to annoy them, and they even threatened me, and I was told I was 'on a list'. Then when I came into the Peace Train I happened to meet Martin McGuinness one day, and he was going around – something like what Gerry Adams has done – saying that he really wasn't a part of the IRA any more. And I said, "How can you say that, Martin, because I went up to a meeting in Derry and you were the chair of it?" And he said, "Oh, that is different, that is community work." I got a phone call when I went into the Peace Train office the next day from a certain person who told me: "You're not allowed to say things like that to Martin. You know, we can put you

on a list.” And I said, “Well, I am *already* on your list, so maybe you could check that list to see if it is still current!” He answered me with an expletive, and you can imagine what that was. So I would just let you know they *were* concerned about us.

**Declan Lagan** I am also with the Workers’ Party. I worked with Tom French and was at his funeral. And even if you were talking to him in recent times, he would still talk about the Peace Train. I have a daughter who teaches; she has actually been talking about the Peace Train in her school, to try and get the students talking about it. She was on the Peace Train, so it did have an effect on younger people. She is bringing that into the next generation. I think it is also important that we remember Sam and Pat, both from good working-class backgrounds, and I think it was working people who made that Peace Train work, not only for peace in general but for the sake of the workers on those trains and their jobs.

**Fergus Whelan** I was involved in the trade union movement at the time, and one of the things which struck me was the Peace Train was a great draw for young trade unionists, they got the message easy and they came onto the Peace Train in their hundreds. It was great for their development as well. At the time there was a lot of nonsense being talked in the trade union movement about the Troubles in the North. Now, I don’t know if this is true or not, but I was told that Rhonda Donaghey, who was mentioned earlier on, once went as part of a Peace Train delegation to meet Jean Kennedy Smith, and Jean Kennedy asked, “Where do you park the Peace Train when you are not using it?”

**Henry Robinson** I am one of the founding members of FAIT. I see Jeff Maxwell here, another founder member [and Peace Train committee member]. I was really delighted when Gary invited me to this event. I think there is a serious case of whitewashing going on at the minute and people like the Peace Train gave cover to Families Against Intimidation and Terror. And essentially the Provisionals were the white heat of sectarianism in Northern Ireland – and I endorse what was said that we

were opposed to *all* paramilitaries in that campaign. But the thing that we have to remember is those victims, such as the Families of the Disappeared. Also, you remember Maurice Healy from Newry. Maurice was tortured, nearly murdered, by the IRA, and then he was banned from his own country. But Maurice rode the Peace Train north and south surrounded by the Peace Train people, to the point where his illegal banning was removed.

It wasn't so much that we rode up and down on the Peace Train, we were showing up a contradiction in the IRA's actions. They perhaps didn't mind that we were showing them up locally, but when it got international attention then they got upset about it, they got really upset when it became an international story. But looking back in time I didn't think that we made a huge contribution, because we were all too close to the violence, but absolutely this group was the building block, along with other groups of peace people, in forcing the Provisionals to the talks. It really was not some guy and MI5 agent who told Adams or McGuinness a lie [to get them to enter talks, as was claimed in a recent newspaper article], I think it is crucially important that we have a look at ourselves, particularly in the new peace and reconciliation process. Sinn Féin don't want to remember this organisation; they don't want to remember what they did. Ironically, when I heard them recently condemn, correctly, the attempted murder of the police officer some months ago, I thought: you are sounding just like the Workers' Party! Only they have been slow learners, it took them so long, and with all the destruction they wreaked along the way. So I think it is really important that a group like this actually has a voice moving forward and to tell our young people exactly what happened.

**Liam Kennedy** Obviously as a historian I would heavily underline the points made by Gerry and Henry and others, about the rewriting of the past. And it has proceeded incredibly successfully. One opinion survey suggested that around 70% of nationalists believed the armed struggle was necessary, and that there was no alternative. And that's an incredible distortion, and corruption of the historical truths of the last fifty years or so.

I remember Paddy Devlin wrote an article for one of the Sunday newspapers, in which he drew a parallel between the Peace Train and the Freedom train in the United States in 1947 and the Freedom rides in the early 1960s. And if you went back into the nineteenth century and Parnellite campaigns and so on, trains were hugely important in terms of mobilising popular support for the National Land League. So in terms of Irish history perhaps a longer historical view in a comparative frame, in terms of trains, is worth bearing in mind.

**Connal Parr** Liam's mention of the train in Irish cultural history reminded me of Louis MacNeice's poem 'Train to Dublin'. And the 'contraceptive train' in the early seventies is also part of the history, and it has been utilised as a progressive force.

**Chris Hudson** Just a point of information. One of the trains has now been restored and features in Downpatrick Transport Museum. They have a small line there which runs for about two miles, and this engine pulls two carriages. And on the engine they have 'Peace Train', so that is there as a symbol of the Peace Train, and they have a display of photographs alongside it.

**Tony McMullan** I was chair of ICTU Youth at the time and we were very inspired by what was going on with the Peace Train. We had our own campaign against violence and sectarianism called 'Hands off my Mate', which went very well. The only slight problem was when we were just about to have the press launch the late Frank Bunting, who was our secretary at the time and worked for Congress, brought the badges for us. The badges had 'Hands off my Mate' on them and Frank had printed all the badges in red so the *Newsletter* praised our campaign because we had adopted the red hand of Ulster and youth were now supporting Unionism!

**Edna Longley** One reason why the Peace Train organisation commanded such support, apart from reasons such as your daughter needing that train, Proinsias, was that the train had played a part in a lot of family history, with both north-south

dimensions. My husband's best-known poem 'Ceasefire', which he is being asked to read at the Abbey on Sunday [2 April 2023], he actually wrote that on the train. My own family history as a Dubliner, although I have lived in the North for a long time now, I was regularly on that train. And I think that the link with pre-Partition Ireland – and there are various organisations throughout the land which reflect that, such as the Royal Irish Academy – should be more built on when thinking about future unity, of whatever kind.

**Mary McMahon** I was involved with the Peace Train. And the thing which made the Peace Train for me was the ordinary women who boarded it. It wasn't the organisers – and that's not taking away from the concept and the actual running of it – it was the fact that ordinary women in their droves turned up at Connolly station and Belfast Central and got on that train. At that time we had the Pound and we had the Punt, and women knew best where they got value for money! I think it was a powerful confluence of good political ideas, good politics in terms of the running of the organisation, and the common sense of ordinary people to do the right thing at the right time, for the right reasons.

**Gary Kent** Somebody had mentioned Jimmy Knapp and he was also vital when the Peace Train came to London, for he was the head of the Railway Workers. They were in the middle of a strike but they said 'no, we will help you', and they eased the way with British Rail. Now, we've come back together here today, rescuing this moment which affected quite a lot of people and had quite a big impact, and essentially we've got to make sure that we're not written out of history. If we have done it once, we can do it again. Different circumstances, of course, but we mustn't allow this to deter us.

**Proinsias de Rossa** I think strongly that the Peace Train helped to save lives, I have no doubt about that because eventually the IRA stopped. And, as one driver said, he avoided death by a few seconds. I think too it saved the line, it helped defend democracy, certainly in the Republic of Ireland, and it helped to demonstrate that the

people in Northern Ireland also wanted democracy, and didn't want people to be killing in their name. And going by conversations I have had since, it fed into thinking within the republican movement itself. And I think therefore that everybody who was involved in the process, including all the women who will never turn up at meetings like this, played a major role in that process.

But I want to re-echo something that was said: peace is still in a very delicate place. I am always struck by the fact that when I think about the Civil Rights campaign and the Civil Rights movement in Northern Ireland, that when I was promoting that idea within the republican movement at the time in the 1960s never once did I think that it might eventually lead to a situation where it would create such divisions, and it would create tensions to the point where the Provisional IRA would emerge and you would have a sectarian war for thirty years. So I think we have to think very carefully about the initiatives we take, and I am saying this because there is a push at the moment for a referendum, a border poll. In my view that would be disastrous, it would destabilise the island, not just Northern Ireland but it would destabilise the island. And I think that insofar as we have any influence we need to push back against that idea, and that's certainly one thing I would like to say today.

One of the things that influenced me in terms of the idea of the Peace Train was that I had attended the British-Irish Association at Cambridge and it always struck me that at these meetings people could discuss things, they could sit around the table, they could argue, they could disagree – and that night they could sing songs together; they could sing each other's rebel songs, or their loyalist songs, whatever, and there was joy. But come Monday morning they were back at each other's throats. And it seemed to me that we needed to find a way where the *people* on the island of Ireland could also exchange their views, could also talk about their differences, and could agree and disagree, but still sing songs together. And I thought that something like the Peace Train would help to do that.

**Michael Nugent** I just wanted to remember my wife Anne Holliday who was on the original Dublin committee. One of the things that Anne brought home to me from

her background, is that she was from the ‘forgotten minority’ of the partitioned Ireland, an Anglo-Irish Protestant in the Republic. And whereas in Northern Ireland there was a large enough minority of Catholics/Nationalists to keep Northern Ireland a competed political space, there were so few Protestants in the Republic that they essentially had to either emigrate or keep their heads down. Anne made such an impact both on me in terms of the whole Irish situation and also her work for the Peace Train.

**Liz McManus** I just want to finish off by thanking our panel for their wonderful presentations. This is living history and no-one can take it away from us. But it is important for this to be recorded, and I would like to thank all of you who have contributed by your presence and by your comments. This is a significant part of Irish history and no matter how effective the rewriting of Irish history is, and we are all conscious of it, there are enough people in this room, and in other rooms, to make sure that truth will out. So thank you all very much indeed.

**Connal Parr** And thanks to Liz for chairing this event today. And a good line to leave you with, moving forward, is from the Peace Train Organisation itself: ‘Keep the lines open.’ Thank you.