

IN MY VIEW

By John Hume

VIOLENCE IS OUT

THE MESSAGE from the Falls Road this week was loud and clear that violence is out. We don't want guns. We don't want bombs, we don't want bodies, we don't want stones. What's more we don't want anything to do with people who advocate their use.

That is a clear conclusion to be drawn from the detailed and forthright statement of the Central Citizens Defence Committee in Belfast earlier this week. This is a body of people elected at street level throughout the Falls Road area, and as representative a body of the Falls Road as can be had.

I hope that everyone whether in places high or low North or South is listening and that we will at last see an end to the activities of those who would play politics with people's lives who would pretend to do so in the name of the people, or worse — in the name of patriotism.

Violence and men of violence and those who assisted them, either overtly or covertly, have done immense harm to the cause of those opposed to Unionism in the North, for among other things they have made it easy for Unionists to distract attention from the underlying causes of grievance and by attacking suppression and violence for them to give the impression to the world that all opposition to Unionism is violent and suppressive.

When is everyone going to learn that Unionism needs bodies like the I.R.A. for survival. It needs bogymen. Why else, when their backs are to the wall do they always draw attention to it. Why else has there been a manufactured I.R.A. scare before practically every Northern election?

Why else, indeed, when the Civil Rights Movement was at its height and when it was clear that there was no I.R.A. involvement in it, did so many serious explosions take place in the Silent Valley and elsewhere, obviously the work of Unionist extremists, yet designed to give the impression that it was the work of the I.R.A.?

The best service indeed that the I.R.A. could give the cause of Irish Unity would be to disband, for Irish unity will never be achieved by violence. Violence and the threat of it only strengthens Unionism, it only deepens and heightens the sectarian division within the North of Ireland, and it is those divisions which represent the real border in our country.

As long as sectarian feeling is strong in the North of Ireland the Unionist party will be impregnable, for they depend on sectarianism for their very existence, and they are secretly delighted when violence erupts against them, for it heightens sectarian feeling, drives people into their trenches and absolves Unionism from having to win support by serious political action.

Note how much stronger the Unionist Party has become since the outbreak of senseless street violence began. Note how more and more cocky are their spokesmen becoming.

Sympathy

This is a far cry from the days when thousands of people marched through the streets in

peaceful protest, with an unanswerable case against the Unionist administration. However hard they tried, Unionists could not point a finger against the Civil Rights Movement, and world sympathy was solidly on our side.

The Unionist Party was in total disarray for the first time in 50 years. The monolith was split because they had no easy answer, they could summon up no bogymen since there was no evidence of the existence of any. Not so today, as they grow stronger and more united with the growth of senseless violence.

There are those, of course, who will say that nothing was gained in the North except by violence. This is nonsense. The Central Citizens' Defence Committee answered that in one important sentence: "The struggle for Civil Rights was assured of success when violence was used against it."

It was because violence was used against us in the streets by both the police force of the State and the cudgel-bearing supporters of Unionism that we won widespread public sympathy and support. Contrary to what some people argued, it takes far more courage and discipline to remain non-violent and to refuse to retaliate when attacked than to throw stones, bottles or bombs.

If we understand clearly why we are refusing to retaliate when attacked, and if we keep our minds fixed on the reasons for our struggle, we can overcome. One thing is certain, non-violence requires much more courage than stone-throwing.

Weapon

The non-violent street protest has been the strongest weapon that has ever been used against Unionism in the North of Ireland. That weapon has been seriously blunted and even destroyed by both its overuse and by undisciplined and disorganised efforts that erupted into violence.

Here we are facing the most crucial and most important reform of all. Local Government, and our best weapon has been ruined, for it would be the height of irresponsibility to take people to the streets at the present time unless they could be assured of outstanding self-discipline and organisation.

Violence is today drawing attention away from essential reforms, for press and television no longer carry evidence of the social injustices that afflict Northern society. They carry instead reports of violent action that are both sickening and senseless.

It would appear from all this that I oppose violence as a political weapon and its perpetrators bitterly and totally and that I feel that they have prevented us from achieving much more. They have done

a monumental dis-service to the Irish people.

Yet the events of the last few months, the arms trial in the South, the stupid violence in the streets, the bomb outrages and the murders, can at last bring us to our senses and purge the body politic in Ireland of violence as a political weapon. Then we will have reached our historic turning point, and we can claim to have really achieved something.

To have done so will be to have laid at last the first real foundation of Irish unity since 1921 for such unity can only be achieved by agreement, mutual respect and prosperity in both parts of Ireland.

The struggle

Let us try to understand what the struggle against partition is all about. It is not as the struggle for independence was, a struggle against a foreign and occupying power. It is a struggle to bring together two sections of the Irish people, and how can anyone with the slightest grain of intelligence imagine that violence by one section against the other can unite them. Reform and reconciliation are the only way. It may be slow, it may have very little glamour, it may be undramatic, but it will succeed. Again the Central Citizens Defence Com-

mittee put their finger on it: "Community harmony is the real enemy of Unionism."

Unionism cannot survive harmony and good relations because Unionism means sectarian domination. We are faced with a major task of rebuilding community trust and good feeling in the North and at the same time pursuing the pressure for reform.

We can only do so if we are quite firm and unflinching in our resolve to promote our end only by peaceful and non-sectarian means.

Courageous

Perhaps the most courageous example of all was that given earlier in the week by my colleague, Paddy Devlin, M.P. for Falls, before the Scarman Tribunal. He admitted openly that he had once been a very active member of the I.R.A. but he had left it in the 30's because he decided that the problems of the Irish people could not be solved by looking down the barrel of a gun.

This is a piece of advice that many people might usefully take today. They might also take the advice of the C.C.D.C. speaking on behalf of the people of the Falls who have suffered more than any other section of the Irish people for their political beliefs. Their message is clean, simple, and clear—violence is out.

Unionists face a showdown

By VINCENT BROWNE

A SHOWDOWN between the two sections of the Unionist Party is expected on December 7 when a Standing Committee meeting will discuss the West Ulster Unionist Council. This was learned in Belfast yesterday when notice of the meeting was received by the committee's members.

Mr. Stratton Mills, M.P. will raise the matter and question the activities of the Right-wing pressure group which has been focal point of the dissent within the Unionist Party in the last six months.

Mr. Harry West, president of the West Ulster Unionist Council, said last night that if the Standing Committee voted to abolish the council then the Unionist Party would split.

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