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The Minister for Health in addressing the House basically agrees with the Bill and has some reservations one of which is ridiculous and which could be very adequately dealt with on Committee Stage. The Minister expressed concern at the fact that the Bill does not deal with the adoption of married children under the age of 18 years of age. That is a very weak argument on which to reject the Bill before the House.

An Ceann Comhairle: I hesitate to interrupt the Deputy but would the Deputy please move the adjournment of the debate.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE.

SHOOTING IN LOUGHGALL.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Peter Barry has given notice of his intention to raise on the Adjournment the subject matter of the circumstances surrounding the shooting and loss of life in Loughgall Friday last.

Mr. P. Barry: The men who died in Loughgall last Friday night were members of ~~the~~ ~~an~~ ~~organisation~~ which is the great enemy of Irish nationalism, an organisation that has robbed, plundered and murdered indiscriminately for 18 years and which has sought to divide the people of the North and indeed the people of this whole island. Only a fortnight ago they murdered a judge of the Northern Ireland court and his wife, two people who were innocently driving home from this part of the country. I did not agree with many of the judgments of Judge Gibson but the idea that that gives me the right to wipe him out could only be conceived by members of the IRA Provisional IRA. They have adopted precisely the same tactics with people who they call informers, in their own organisation. They act as prosecutor, judge, jury and ultimately executioner of these people in the name of the Irish people without a mandate. That was clearly demonstrated in the election here only three months ago and it has been demonstrated clearly in elections for a long time now. They have no right to speak or act on our behalf or on behalf of the Northern Nationalists. The people with the right to speak for nationalism on this island are the elected representatives of this House and the elected representatives of Northern Ireland who came together to draw up the Forum report out of which came the Anglo-Irish Agreement which now gives the right to a Minister of this Government to raise

matters through the Anglo-Irish conference in relation to security and other matters of that type. They are the legitimate voice of Irish nationalism, and not the Provisional IRA.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement set out as one of its objectives to improve the relationship between the two communities in the North and between North and South and to bring an end to violence. All of this is anathema to the Provisional IRA. They do not want to achieve any of those aims and their purpose is to destroy the democratic institutions of this State and of the North of Ireland and to continue to drive a wedge between the two traditions here. That is something which the Forum report and every Member of this House will abhor. The Anglo-Irish Agreement seeks to achieve trust between the two communities in the North of Ireland and that trust can only be built when the minority community see themselves as having equal rights with the majority community in the North. The Anglo-Irish Agreement gives them that statute and ~~therefore~~ through its operation looks after their interests. A part of that trust must be the relationship with the security forces. One of the objectives of the agreement is to improve the relationship of the security forces with the community. That trust had been growing since Portadown in 1985 and particularly in the last 18 months to the extent that I felt I could say to Nationalists in Northern Ireland at the end of last year that I thought it was time for them to consider joining the RUC. It is extremely important part of building a democracy that the minority and the majority see the security forces as being there for their protection. The security forces in the North have had an extremely difficult job in the last 18 years. Nobody could deny that. It is essential that they too must work to attain and maintain the confidence of the minority and not just of the majority. The minority must see them as their security force as well as the security force of the majority, because the people who will defeat the IRA in the North of Ireland are the minority Nationalist community who do not want violence. They are the people who most benefit from the defeat of the IRA in that they will be able to live their lives in peace as equal citizens which again is something that the Anglo-Irish Agreement seeks to do for them. For too long they have been caught between an unsympathetic State and those men of violence who feed from their miseries. They want to get them off their backs. They see in the Anglo-Irish Agreement a chance of doing that.

I do not know what happened on Friday night in Loughgall. It is alleged in the papers that the security forces had prior knowledge either through infiltration, a mole or by some other detection means. It is important that the minority should see that the security

forces had no other option than to act in the way in which they did on Friday night. It is important because eight men are dead, eight men whom I would have preferred to see arrested, unarmed, tried and imprisoned. There are examples in the past when even the most vicious of paramilitaries from either side of the divide have during their terms of imprisonment changed their minds about violence. I would have preferred to see that than to see those dead men who might be guilty of the most horrendous crimes and who are members of an organisation which is the enemy of all people. I would have preferred to see them arrested, tried and imprisoned than dead. It is important that it is established that the security forces have no other choice than to behave in the way they did. I do not know if that is so, but the Minister has the means of finding out. It is also important to recognise that one innocent man lost his life on Friday night and I would extend my sympathy and I am sure the sympathy of everyone in this House to his relations and to his brother who was severely injured. I know that it is extremely difficult for the security forces in Northern Ireland ~~then~~ when the IRA continually and deliberately try to create divisions between them and the minority and between the minority and the majority.

Section NN follows.

All politicians, North and South, whether Unionist, Nationalist or any Member of this House must continue what we have been trying to do for so many years now on this island, which is to establish through dialogue and politics rather than through violence a system of government in the North of Ireland to which the minority can give their allegiance and support. The Nationalists must be given an opportunity to show, as many of them have so bravely done over the last 18 years that, given a fair deal, equal rights and opportunities, they will isolate the men of violence. I am afraid there will be suspicions well fed by Sinn Fein and IRA propaganda that there is a shot to kill policy.

The Minister, in his role as co-Chairman of the Anglo Irish Conference, must let Nationalists see that he is vigilant on their behalf, that he will use his position as co-Chairman of that conference to establish precisely what happened on Friday evening last, and to build on that growing confidence among the Nationalist security forces in the future. It is essential that the trust that had begun to develop in the last 18 months continues to grow. The Minister can do so under the provisions of Article 7 of the Anglo-Irish agreement where it is said:

(b) The Conference shall consider

(i) security policy;

(ii) relations between the security forces and the community:.....

(b) The Conference shall consider the security situation at its regular meetings and thus provide an opportunity to address policy issues, serious incidences and forthcoming events.

The Nationalist community in the North of Ireland must see the co-Chairman of the Conference acting on their behalf, to satisfy himself as their and our representative at that conference that the security forces acted as they did last Friday evening because they had no other choice. I do not pretend that the job of being a member of the security forces in the North of Ireland is easy. I do not pretend that the decisions they have to take, some times on the spot, are always right. I have

absolutely no sympathy for any member of the IRA. Frequently I have a lot of sympathy for the security forces in the very difficult position in which they find themselves.

There is something much bigger, much more important at stake here. We are fighting for the confidence, trust and faith of the Nationalists in the North of Ireland within the democratic institutions of all this island. The Minister sitting opposite in his role as co-Chairman has the obligation now to ensure that that confidence built up so painstakingly over the last 18 months is not diluted as a result of what happened last Friday evening. In that time a lot of Nationalists in the North of Ireland have come to recognise that the gun is not the answer to their problems, that through patient and painstaking application of dialogue, the use of politics success on their behalf can be achieved. That must now be built on.

I do not want to put the Minister in a difficult position; I am not even asking him to reveal the full details of what happened to this House. But the Nationalists in the North of Ireland must be assured that he is, on their behalf, establishing precisely what happened last Friday evening and that the security forces had no option but to behave in the way they did.

There will be a general election next month in the North of Ireland. We must be seen down here to give every possible support and absolutely no succour to the men of violence but rather every possible support to those who want to see progress in the North of Ireland through politics and dialogue. In this very sensitive, difficult time the Minister has a particularly difficult and sensitive job to do. I am asking him here this evening to do that as quickly as possible through the Anglo-Irish Conference to regain the confidence of the Nationalists and of the security forces I am afraid may have been damaged by the events of the last 72 hours.

Miss Kennedy; I had tabled a Private Notice Question today which was disallowed asking the Minister for Foreign Affairs to outline the circumstances surrounding the ambush at Loughgall last Friday evening. I should like to be associated with Deputy Barry's questions to the Minister.

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Lenehan): I appreciate the tenor and content of Deputies Barry and Kennedy's remarks because they showed an appreciation of the sensitivity involved here. As far as all the parties in this House are concerned we are committed to a united Ireland. We are committed to peace and

reconciliation in the whole island to be achieved by democratic, political means. In the interim period we want to secure better community relations in Northern Ireland, a better society in Northern Ireland so that there is equal opportunity for all people in the North of Ireland, particularly the minority population, in regard to vital areas such as employment. As a result of the New Ireland Forum process that has evolved in a continuing way, there being a serious sense of responsibility on the part of all political parties here in their view of the Northern Ireland problem, an understanding that basically what we have to do is seek to get the two communities closer together in Northern Ireland, get the Northern Ireland community and the Republic closer together, to allow for an improved inter-community relations in Northern Ireland, ensuring that we have an all-island approach to the problem, at the same time ensuring what one might call an east/west dimension between Great Britain and Ireland as a whole.

Coming to the events at Loughgall last Friday evening, I should say I am glad I have been given an opportunity to comment on them. I should like to give the House a brief outline of what happened. When I got news of the happening through the Anglo-Irish Secretariat I kept in touch all through Saturday. I was given information as it came through from the excellent staff we have in the Anglo-Irish Secretariat as part of their ongoing work. Information was provided at the time, further information has come in since and is continuing to come in. I have been following the matter very closely and have maintained close contact also with the British authorities in relation to the matter.

As the House will be aware, I issued a statement on Saturday in which I described the attack on the RUC station in Loughgall as a further example of the futile acts of violence of the Provisional IRA. I emphasised the words "futile acts" because it is the futility of the cycle of violence that is so horrible and only exacerbates the situation further from wherever the violence comes and, on this occasion, the initial violence did come from the ^{Provisional} IRA. Of course it was met with further violence. Therefore what might be described as the cycle of violence is the horrible situation to which actions of the kind attempted by the Provisional IRA led in Loughgall. It is utterly futile. The loss of young lives is a futile act in itself. The contribution towards the sort of Ireland we are seeking and sought to achieve by way of the New Ireland Forum Report recommendations makes it more difficult to achieve when

emotions are exacerbated by futile acts of violence of that and other kinds.

Section 00 follows

