

## **Professor Jennifer Todd**

On behalf of the Institute of British Irish Studies I am very happy to welcome you all here and to this joint event organised by ourselves. And at this stage I want to pass over to the chair immediately to Tim O'Connor Secretary General of the Office of the President.

## **Tim O'Connor**

First of all, I'd like to welcome you all this evening and thanks very much for making it along on a tough February day it's great to see so many people here who are interested in North/South relations. And also on your behalf, our thanks to our host this evening, the Institute for British-Irish Studies at UCD and the British Embassy. And also of course, gathered in this lovely hall in the Royal Irish Academy.

So, my name is Tim O'Connor. I'm a civil servant. Hal Roche used to say 'I have three brothers, two still living and one in the civil service.' So, sometimes it's not the easiest. But I'm in a hall with many fellow civil servants so I feel good. I've been about 37 years in the public sector. Most of it, working in the Department of Foreign Affairs. Where I've been privileged to work in the peace process including five or six years in Armagh in the North-South Ministerial Council, a neighbour of my good friend Lord Maginnis here and I was Consul General in New York for a couple of years. From 2005 - 2007 and for the last three years I've been privileged to work with President McAleese and to see at first hand the extraordinary contribution she makes every day. Including the peace and reconciliation at where she's ably assisted by her great husband Martin.

So Jennifer Todd - she who must be obeyed - told me I could tell one story and it's actually a business story. Baron Rothschild the famous business man and financial wizard was being interviewed by a young business journalist, a young Sean O'Rourke one day. And the journalist said to him "Tell me Baron how did it all start? How did you begin making money?" And he said "Well, one day when I was a boy in school I brought an apple to school and I sold it for sixpence. And that evening with the sixpence I bought two apples at three pence each and then I brought them to school the next day and I sold them. And then the following week I added bananas and then the week after that I added oranges. And then one day when I was 15 years old my Grandfather died and left me 500 million pounds."

The theme of our event this evening is North/South Business Relations, What Works and What Doesn't Work. And the context is a research project which is being conducted by IBIS at UCD entitled 'Breaking the Patterns of Conflict, the Irish State, the British Connection and the Northern Ireland Conflict.' And the project is funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences. And the sub theme of the project is entitled The Private Sector and Cross Border Cooperation of the Northern Ireland Peace Process since the 1980s and the 1990s. At that is the space in which this round table sits. So, I presume you got all that. Good.

Just a quick overview, in terms of the evening. My brief, apart from being brief is to chair our discussion and in these first few minutes is to give you a quick overview in

terms of setting the scene. And Professor John Coakley is here to provide us with a summary of recent academic research in the area. And this will be followed by contributions from our distinguished members of the round table here. And I will introduce you to them as we come to them. And then we will throw the discussion open to the house and then matters will close with a few words from our distinguished host His Excellency Mr Julian King.

So, in terms of setting the scene I think it's fair to say that North/South business relations as a phenomenon ... it's a phenomenon whose best days we hope lie ahead of us. Because as a sector I think it's been a difficult space and of course it's intimately tied in to the wider picture in terms of North/South divisions more broadly. And whatever the political persuasion I think we can all agree that North/South relations from 1922 to the late 1990s were pretty fraught. I'm not suggesting that they weren't positive during that time and Ken Maginnis here wearing his other hat as the rugby man knows that during all that period for instance the Irish rugby team was an all-Ireland body and enjoyed a lot of success throughout those years. But in general terms the politics of the situation in all fairness was, to quote and paraphrase there David Trimble from another context "a cold house". And indeed many would argue the straw that broke the camel's back at the Sunningdale Agreement in 1973 was the Council of Ireland Concept. The sense that this was a bridge too far in the context at the time.

And how did business fair through all of this? And the answer is not terribly well at all. Although during the years of the frost there were all these companies and individuals who swam against the tide and did business across the border. And we'll be hearing later from one of those companies, Glen Dimplex who were established in the height of the troubles on a cross border basis in the early '70s. But they were exceptions. And at the same time business was always being identified by commentators as an obvious place where we should be doing more. And of course in the Lemass-O'Neill outreach in the '60s promoting better business links was an obvious kind of common ground to be aimed at.

And then in the 1980s an important new player on the scene with the arrival of the International Fund for Ireland which did significant work in terms of economic regeneration at that time with a cross boarder dimension. And we're delighted that this evening we have the chairman, Denis Rooney with us. And also the joint directors, David Barry and Sandy Smith are in the audience with us.

And so on then into the early 1990s when some really significant shoots began to be seen and be sewn in the North-South business field and one of the principal sources sitting in the audience this evening, the legend himself Sir George Quigley who in 1991 gave a ground breaking speech in which he first unveiled to the world the concept of the island economy. And that was certainly a huge trail blazer in it's time.

It was around this time also that CBI and IBEC began to come together as the Joint Business Council which does fine work to this very day was formed. And speaking of Sir George's pathfinder I think it's an appropriate moment to pay tribute to two other people like him who blazed a trail in bleaker times and pointed to the rich harvest that could be yielded from North-South economic cooperation. And people like Liam Connellan and John Kenna and others. And their voices were critical in

terms of the business and beginning to say to political leaders on both parts of the island that we were ... both parts were losing out by not being able to do more and better business together across the border.

I'll fast forward then to Good Friday in 1998 and all that was about to change. And there's no doubt that the Good Friday Agreement was the catalyst for a seed change in North/South relations. From a position where there was practically no institutional connections between North and South an entirely new framework of cooperation was created in 1998, bringing in to play the North/South Ministerial Council and the set of North/South bodies. And that framework heralded a whole new era of more positive relations between North and South which has lasted right to this day.

And what was the main difference between 1973 and 1998? I think again to quote David Trimble in the Good Friday Agreement we got the North-South architecture right. And so today ministers in Belfast and Dublin meet routinely to take forward practically cooperation between the two jurisdictions. And the North-South Ministerial Council has now met over 100 times since conception since over ten years ago. And similarly the North-South bodies which now employ close to 1000 people between them go about their invaluable work on a daily basis effectively and professionally. And a significant slice of the new activities and economic and business space, Niall Gibbons is here for instance the CEO of Tourism Ireland, Tourism Ireland do great work ensuring that, especially in this difficult climate that our tourism industry in the island gets the very best bag for the book, in terms of promoting and marketing the island overseas.

Another of the new cross border bodies Intertrade Ireland based in Newry has been doing great work these last 10 years promoting closer business and trade links. And I pay tribute to the board and the executives of Intertrade. And there are many other instances of enhanced cooperation, economic cooperation for both of them. And John Coakley will be talking a bit more about that in his remarks.

And yet the story, to borrow a phrase from the political scene is also one though where you could genuinely say "A lot done, a lot more to do." And the reality is that the barriers to greater cooperation are still formidable because the reality is that the mould of 70 years of back-to-back development is not easily broken even the will is there to do so. And the amount of trade between the two jurisdictions is still well down on comparable regions, you know border regions elsewhere around Europe.

But overall there's no doubt that we're going in the right direction and last week's Hillsborough Agreement means that the big picture is now on a positive trend. And history has shown how important the big picture is. And the biggest picture still, the global one is even more compelling in terms of our rationale for more North-South business. The last 18 months have shown how brutally our world has become and decisively become globalised. And this is the terrain in which we are going to have to play, like it or not. And that being so, business borders and barriers on this island don't make any sense. On the contrary what does make sense is to see the global economy actually beginning on this island for both jurisdictions.

So, I think our challenge is to get more people into the North-South space. And when we can do that the results are very good. I know of a renewable energy company, a

small renewable energy company down in West Limerick where I come from which has formed a great alliance with a family business in Sandholes County Tyrone who do the engineering. And these two family companies are very excited about the work they are now doing together. And that's a living example from right now of how the potential that's actually out there.

Of course the good thing about that is putting a Munster accent into cross border relations. And I know I'm biased here, as a Limerick person. But I think that cross border cooperation has tended to be the preserve of the Belfast/Dublin corridor or the immediate border area. But I think if it is to be meaningful we need to hear Ballymena accents in Clare and Cork accents in Coleraine. And hopefully and I'm sure we'd all agree with that.

So, I think we need to be getting our heads together to take on this global work together. We've some huge advantages to explore if we do that. And there's no time to go into it here but for instance where the Irish are a global tribe as they say – the Irish are a global tribe in a global world and the Ulster Scots are a huge piece of all of that. Well there's an enormous advantage for us. We're also brokers; we've a lot of skills in terms of bringing diverse people and complex processes together to make exciting things happen. For instance, in the technology space. We also have the capacity here in the island to be a lab for the world. You know modelling up things which can be rolled out. And finally we have an enormously deep and rich well of Irish heritage and culture to draw from in taking on that world. As I discovered when I was Consul General in New York from 2005 to 2007, that in fact it's our culture that really puts us on the map in that city more than anything else. And we need to get our heads around the potential of that in business terms.

And finally I want to mention the Titanic. This time 100 years ago they were planning the building of the Titanic in Belfast. And at the time it was probably the largest infrastructure project the world had ever seen. Now some people say now well that's not a great success model, but as the Belfast people rightly said there was nothing wrong with that ship when it left Belfast. And I think the point though is that 100 years ago Belfast was a global economic centre. And over the last 10 years the South has been such a global economic centre. And so the reality is that success is in the DNA of both parts of this island. We've never actually managed to get it together at the same time. And I think that's the opportunity that's there now on the back of a growing solidity of the political process, to make this a really global, economic space. And that's only something that can be achieved by harnessing all of the strengths in both jurisdictions. And that's the challenge now before us.

So, I think that's why this round table is hugely timely and I look forward to its liberations. And without further ado now I want to introduce Professor John Coakley who is going to give us a bit of an overview on the research that's happening. John is a very distinguished academic in his own right. I also want to commend the very... you know he's one of those academics who's been fairly active in the North/South space and has done some very interesting work. Professor John Coakley.

[Applause]

**Professor John Coakley**

That's some very kind remarks Tim. I'm afraid my review of recent academic research has been transmuted in part into some observations about the historical background to North/South business cooperation. So, business cooperation between North and South looks very different in 2010 than it did in 1910. The Irish border has now acquired a reality that few could have imagined 100 years ago. At that time a network of railways and roads radiated out from Dublin, helping to create a common communications system. Dublin was also headquarters for a set of civil service departments which managed on a 32 county basis, such sectors as health, poor relief, local government, agriculture, education and many other areas.

The writ of the police service, The Royal Irish Constabulary ran almost everywhere in Ireland but the excluded zone was not Belfast, or northern counties but Dublin, managed by the Dublin Metropolitan Police. That's not, of course the full story. Profound political strains that were in the northern counties and the rest of the island had been obvious since at least the 1880s. And these crystallised as the prospect of Irish Home Rule grew. We may gain an impression of them from a report of Prime Minister Asquith to the King in a private audience on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1916 following the Prime Minister's visit to Ireland.

He summarised the objections of what he described as representative Ulstermen under three headings in order of priority. First business, in the years of the Home Rule debate and I quote "The credit of Belfast has gone. And the trade and commerce in the city have been seriously affected. 2. religion - Ulster admits that they are bigoted protestants with an undying hatred and contempt for the Roman Catholic south of Ireland man regarding them as 'Useless, uncomfortable, un-enterprising, idle and reactionary'." These were Asquith's words to the King.

3. Politics, things will be worse than ever after the war. The best of Ulster men had gone to the front leading to the province exposed to its southern enemies. And a quote "We shall be at their mercy when the war is over, our country will be devastated, burnt, pillaged, our women ravaged, our position will be intolerable. We shall have to fight for our women and our homes."

Asquith's informants assured him that even if they did not believe this themselves it is the absolute conviction of the people and I am quoting him. It's not then surprising that Northern Ireland took refuge behind a line of partition that appeared in 1921 and was reinforced in the years that followed. It's not surprising either that the newly created Irish Free State in its desire to distance itself from the United Kingdom, created barriers in the 1920s to labour, mobility and trade that not only made the Free State more independent of the UK, but further deepened the border between North and South.

Southern Ireland's pursuit of independence was inextricably linked to the reinforcement of the partition. In the context of a divided island independence and unity the twin goals of Irish nationalism were mutually incompatible. Southern leaders, such as Cosgrave and de Valera pretty unhesitatingly chose the former over the latter: Better a free 26 counties than a united 32. New political realities widens the gaps that already existed between the two parts of Ireland as each looked to Great Britain rather than the other part for trade and employment opportunities.

Government documents in the Irish National Archives and the Public Records of Northern Ireland illustrate just how little contact there was between the jurisdictions in the decades after Partition. Dr Michael Kennedy's definitive study of cross border relations over the period 1925 to 1969 makes this point forcefully. There was cooperation only in those areas where it was practically unavoidable. For example the Ballyshannon Power Station in the Foyle Fisheries, a very, very small number of other areas.

More recent research conducted jointly by UCD and Queens University and sponsored by the special EU programmes funding through the HEA, show that a new era began in the early 1970s. And this seems to have been driven by two major sets of institutional change. First the outbreak of civil unrest in Northern Ireland after 1968 as the political instability that resulted in the collapse of Northern Ireland's original devolved institutions of 1972 created space for a new set of geo-political relations in these islands. The Irish government's interest in the affairs of Northern Ireland was acknowledged in three major agreements as we know. The Sunningdale Agreement of 1973: though it failed. The Anglo Irish Agreement of 1985 that was only partially implemented and the Belfast Agreement of 1998 which again we are aware is not without its problems.

Whether they liked it or not British and Irish politicians were forced to become more deeply involved in the management of Northern Ireland. The politics of two increasingly neighbourly sovereign states replaced the rhetoric of the North/South Cold War.

The second major change was that in 1973 accession of Ireland and the UK towards what is now the European Union began a process of dissolving or at least weakening borders. Greatly facilitating North/South labour mobility and trade. While the EU deepening process has caused further erosion of the border as the Eoin Tannam research shows progress has not been unproblematic. In particular the break of parity between sterling and the Irish pound in 1979 and the subsequent adoption of the Euro by the Republic of Ireland as its currency, deliberate to develop trade and business relations between the two parts of the island.

So where are we now? The bleak picture of prejudice painted by Asquith in 1916 has certainly fallen victim to change over the decades. This is not to say that the prejudice was entirely without foundation. Early in the twentieth century Southern Ireland was indeed pretty backward economically. And was characterised by strong deference to the leadership of the Catholic Church and was prepared to ride roughshod over the political objections of northern Protestants.

Although these economic, religious and political realities have changed and perhaps have changed fundamentally, attitudes towards North/South cooperation in certain quarters, not just on the northern side of the border by any means continue to be cautious. Yet committed efforts have been made at a number of levels to counteract the more negative consequences of partitioning. Some bodies were established with a specific focus on cross border relations and without attempting any kind of exhaustive list I draw attention to three of them which are still active.

First, the Irish Association. Established long ago in 1938 and still active – largely at the missive of Northern Unionists - who were dismayed that Partition had become much deeper than was desirable or necessary. Second, Cooperation Ireland established in 1979, as Cooperation North to promote contact between the two parts of the island. And third the IBEC-CBI Joint Business Council established in 1991 to stimulate cross border trade and business cooperation. Lists are always very risky in linking presentation of this kind because obviously certain other organisations have been omitted from this list.

These initiatives took place in the context of a pattern of considerable North-South contact at the level of civil society. Here, the Trade Union movement continues to play a self consciously bridge building role. As it has been playing for many decades. But there are many other organisations which take the island of Ireland rather than as two jurisdictions as their operational area. Major churches for example, sporting organisations, professional associations, cultural bodies and other structures such as Universities Ireland which are organised on a 32 county basis, not on a state wide basis.

In addition, recent state initiatives have sought to improve the quality of North-South relations. Early examples include the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Fund set up in 1982 and the International Fund for Ireland as Tim mentioned dating from 1986. Later the network of North-South Implementation Bodies, established in 1999 provided a more substantial institutional framework for cooperation. Even if these were in relatively limited areas and of these, three have obvious implications for business cooperation, at least three. Intertrade Ireland, the Special EU Programmes body and Tourism Ireland. Though, in itself it's not technically speaking an implementation body.

As we know institutional architecture may facilitate contact but it will not guarantee cooperation. For this we have to turn to the level of individual and collective experiences of collaboration across the border of a kind particularly well represented in this evening's panel. We look forward to hearing the panel's views which hopefully will confirm that the tense cross border stand offs of the past are now no more than a memory. It may indeed be the case that explicit recognition of the legitimacy of the Irish border under the Belfast Agreement has done more to undermine the border than the decades of angry Nationalist denunciations of Partition that preceded this. As in so many other areas of business, political stability and mutual respect are important preconditions for progress.

Thank you. Thank you Tim.

*[Applause]*

**Tim O'Connor**

Thanks very much John. A very interesting overview and putting our discussions in the wider political context. Could I move on now to our round table this evening and our opening speaker is Stephen Kingon. Stephen is a very active man of the island. He's from East Belfast himself and he previously was managing partner of Price Waterhouse Coopers and is currently the chairman of Invest Northern Ireland and I

think about eleven other organisations as well. He's a busy man, he's a great guy and he's a true, as I say figure of the new times that we're in. And I'm very honoured to ask him to say a few words just now. Stephen.

### **Stephen Kingon**

Thanks Tim. Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I think mentioned in Tim's remarks was a sort of historical development of the business bodies and their cooperation. I think that really came from a realisation that the competitive threat wasn't on an all-Ireland basis from either bits of the island, it was global in nature. And so the joint working and the approach of the business bodies, particularly George Quigley in the economic corridor work and the IBEC-CBI get together and the Chambers North and South coming together laid a foundation that removed some of the political barriers to increase trade and business interactions. So much so, that we see improved collaboration between the government departments North and South and the Economic Development Agency. For example, we meet Enterprise Ireland, IDA and Invest – the chairman and chief executive meet regularly to look at what are the areas of collaboration where we can act jointly. While recognising there are some areas where we're in a competitive position but we think that the bits where it can collaborate outnumber.

And I'll go over some of the things that we're doing in that area. Tim's already mentioned the cross border bodies. And we've already had some success in there. Intertrade Ireland has increased the all Ireland trade, particularly between the SMEs. As Tim mentioned there's still a long way to go to come up to other regions. And if you look at Tourism Ireland we had a situation in Northern Ireland in 1972, our holiday visitors dropped to something like 400,000. By 2007 that was restored to 2 million. So, while it's a partial success, a partial recovery, we've seen a slight drop off obviously with global recession. Nevertheless it shows the impact that cooperation on an all-island basis can make.

Going back to the development agencies the successes and the areas we think can work for us is we see joint trade missions. Increasing exports is a key to both parts of the island. So, we've now got a situation where Enterprise Ireland, Invest Northern Ireland will run a trade mission. Those trade missions and the eligibility to attend those is on an all Ireland basis. It makes total sense, you don't want to duplicate effort but equally two plus two gives us five in that equation.

Also, there's been increased collaboration and cooperation in respect of innovation. Particularly joint participation of the North and South in the Ireland US R&D partnership. On top of that we've shared experiences. Enterprise Ireland looked at a Dutch scheme of innovation vouchers. Piloted it, shared the experience with us and we've now introduced those on an all-island basis. Not only can any SME acquire up to 5,000 Euros of support on a voucher but those can be cashed in on any institution, North or South where the best expertise is in universities, FE colleges, research centres. So, again that joint collaboration I think is something we can build on. And innovation and R&D is going to drive the future agenda. So, I think it's very, very important that we do that.

We've also had collaborations seeing can we look at creating innovation centres of excellence on the island. Where you build a cluster, even a virtual cluster around the experience we have. And we're looking particularly at life sciences at the moment.

We've also recognised that on the island, the SME is the main constituent in our business portfolio. And one of the big issues that we're facing North and South is that in terms of management development and leadership we need to get the SME to step up a gear. And so we're looking jointly and again Enterprise Ireland have piloted in Stanford a scheme delivered at leadership and management development. They're sharing that experience with us. That's open to all to companies now on the island. And again linked to that both of us are looking at sharing our experiences where we're trying to scale SMEs up. Because, if we don't get growth from those indigenous SMEs and make them internationally competitive, then we're going to fail. And particularly in the current economic climate which is quite difficult. So, that's another area where we've gone in.

I think there's also been a recognition when we sit around that table that infrastructure problems on the island are an impediment to our global competitiveness and need to be tackled on a joint basis. Consequently, we've tried to influence to make sure that the National Development Plan and the infrastructure strategy for Northern Ireland people actually talk. And we make sure that they're linked as best as can happen.

Also a big issue on the island, energy costs. And again looking at the creation, the introduction of the single energy market, marked progress again on joint collaboration. We can do more in that area. When we talk to indigenous and foreign direct investment, our energy costs are, on a global basis, too high on both parts of the island. So, we've got to be smarter there in what we can do to get that down. And renewables offers an opportunity.

We also see that on the telecoms area, and again business bodies put some pressure on there, again telecommunications on the island we're going to see Project Kelvin coming in, linking the US into Coleraine. And that's going to be remarkable for the whole island. And we're the first port of call outside the States. So, as an island there are great opportunities. I have worked with the Council for Competitiveness in the US and they've been tasked with looking at sort of fall back plans for America in terms of post 9/11 what would happen if another attack hit. And the island of Ireland and New Zealand are seen as the two friendly areas where if you wanted to put a back up, now with the Kelvin Connection we can do an awful lot on this island to support the US. And it's something we need to lift to a different basis.

So, those for me are the areas of success, the areas where we can improve where two plus two, as I say can give us five. On the down side I think one of the challenges is that we recognise that in foreign direct investment we may be competing head to head at times. But that's fine. In some of the FDI we can actually be complementary. You know, you've got a nice corporate tax regime that suits some FDI, sometimes on a cost centre basis our Northern economy could suit. So, sometimes even a joint presentation where you can put revenue generating activities in the South and some of the cost centre basis in the North. Particularly for financial services, that's an area we can look at.

So, even on the areas where there is challenge of the FDI we could do something. I think the worries I have is that both parts of the island have to be globally competitive and we've a real wake up call in our competitiveness to address jointly. And the halcyon days are past for both of us. We've got, in the North an economy propped up by public expenditure. You had the Celtic Tiger which has certainly been undermined in the current downturn. So, together we've got to really tackle global competitiveness.

And the other thing is we shouldn't let complacency get in the way of progress. And what has been achieved, successes to date. There are some real challenges out there and the global economic environment is one of those. So, I'm relatively hopeful that the island of Ireland can recover. We are well placed, we can work jointly and as I say we can export from here. We can be home to a lot of foreign direct investment as well as encourage our indigenous businesses to grow.

*[Applause]*

**Tim O'Connor.**

Thank you very much Stephen. Moving on then, our next speaker is Denis Rooney. Denis is Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland. In his own business life he's set up his own company, DRA. He's a chartered surveyor, it was an all-island company from the word go and with offices in Dublin and Belfast and also London and Bristol. And this practice was then acquired by White, Young and Green in 2004 and Dennis became CEO of White, Young and Green which then rapidly grew to become one of the largest consultancy practices in Ireland. So, he has a lot of experience of daily working in the island economy. And as I say in his role as Chairman in International Fund for Ireland he's played a leading role in the evolution of that and the development of that very important organisation. And we thank him for that contribution. So, without further ado, Mr Denis Rooney.

**Denis Rooney.**

Thanks Tim. Could I first of all just say thanks Tim also for the acknowledgement and for being among the first in the space I would say that was the International Fund for Ireland. Certainly it did a lot of work and very important work at a very critical time in improving and fostering North/South business relations. Projects like the Erne-Shannon Waterway, the Cavan-Fermanagh Enterprises and the Armagh-Monaghan hub just as some of the examples of that work.

But I suppose really I'm here to more to tell about my personal experience as a businessman. And certainly the reason we set up an office in Dublin with a Belfast base, it wasn't for any great desire to play our part in North-South relations but it was purely wanting to get a little bit of the action from the Celtic Tiger. And it certainly, we had set up offices in the UK but Dublin was much easier to run from Belfast logistically. And the given contact which arose from it was much closer than we had for example with the UK offices. White, Young and Green whenever I took over its Irish operation we immediately viewed Ireland as a single market. And we ran it administratively as a single business. And it was the most profitable and successful business in the whole group until the recent crash. So, it's so easy to operate and I

found that there to be an enriching experience for everybody. And there's a great positivity about taking that approach, taking it as a single all-island business.

Just generally, a few observations. I mean there are legal complications trying to run a North-South business. And they're just the same as any other cross border venture. But they're not major barriers, they are more costly, at times costly irritants I would describe them. I would make that point perhaps to politicians, I think there is not enough thought to parity in legislation, particularly employment legislation. And that's something that I think has been missing far too much. And it is so easy just to consider parity when you think of choices in legislation.

And I do think also that I notice certainly a difference, and this probably comes in the education system, I notice a difference between the human resources in the South and the North. Certainly in the younger people particularly. We've got, in our Dublin office they are more articulate and confident but they had certainly an exaggerated view of their worth. In the North they were less articulate and confident and had probably a diminished view of their worth ironically enough. So, I think that goes down a bit to the education system, maybe we could learn a bit more from each other. Though education's not a good subject in the North at the moment...

The other thing is I think the international connections. I think the one thing I learnt certainly was the South is internationally connected; the North is a regional economy and is not really internationally connected. And I never understood why Northern business didn't see this and see the opportunities from it more often.

So, just coming to the primary role of business really and it's there to create profit for itself. The government's attitude to business is that it's there to create to tax revenue and employment for its own state, its own homeland. So, a business is not going to do business with anybody outside unless it meets the criteria, the pure business criteria of making a profit however much it desires to support the political objective of doing so.

Some of the key ways I think we can still do, and Stephen has already touched on things being done in some of them to increase North-South business cooperation. Logistical barriers should be removed. There are some remaining. The infrastructure certainly has improved dramatically but telecoms, is certainly one. And air travel for example is not encouraged hopping around Ireland at all. So, that obviously I think doesn't help business cooperation. I think we should harmonise much more legal employment, fiscal regulations etc. We should organise much more collaborations which facilitate cross border business such as research centres and business clusters as Stephen mentioned.

The one area which is, I think the trick that's been missed is in the media. I mean there's very little all-island business media activity really, I think. They operate distinctly; I mean it's not an all-island business programme. And business feeds on information. I mean business is very promiscuous; it will get together if there's contact basically. And I think we've missed a trick in trying to encourage much more media recognition of that need. And there would be more business if there was more media activity over the all-island opportunity. I think the basic old chestnut of incentivisation is very, very important. And it hasn't really been used, maybe

Intertrade Ireland and a few others. But I think they always use more incentivisation. I think we could certainly broaden the number of all-island bodies with a sectoral interest like the Tourist Board model. And I certainly think we could create and reinforce more all-island representative bodies such as IBEC-CBI.

One area I think also is venture capital. I mean venture capital operates distinctly; a couple of the ones operate in the all-island basis. But I think we should work to try to create an all-island venture capital provision and try and think of it that way. And the final thing I would say is the EU is focusing more and more as we all know on cross border development. So, there's certainly a trick not to miss in taking advantage of that increased focus.

So, just to maybe summarise I think that business people are not going to invest North or South for lesser profit. And even countries - Diaspora countries like the US may swear on their Irish Grandmothers' graves that they will do anything for the old sod. But they will always get a bang for their buck whenever they do invest here. And the political collaboration, trying to drive cross border business cooperation I think has been in the past focused a little bit about talking about institutions and mechanisms as such. I would rather see that energy focused on just getting businesses together and finding the mechanisms that actually get the action to happen.

In the IFI I think the one thing we learnt is there's nothing better than having people working together on a project if you want to really bring them together over a period of time. So, that's my thing is really action.

*[Applause]*

**Tim O'Connor.**

Thank you Denis and thanks for your continued contribution to the International Fund. I think one of the important things as well about the International Fund is the way that it involves the United States so directly in our affairs here. And it gives a role to the US and of course some of the other countries involved as well. Thank you, Denis.

Our next speaker is probably under the rubric of needing no introduction. Senator Fergal Quinn, a legend in Irish business life and the founder of Superquinn. He's also made many a rich contribution to Irish public life and he's been a senator for many years now as chairman of An Post for 10 years. He was also perhaps lesser known but I like to remember because I remember working with him, he was a member of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation which the Irish government introduced after the IRA ceasefire in 1994. And he played a very distinguished part in that important organisation as well. So, without further ado we look forward to the energy of Senator Fergal Quinn. Thank you, Fergal.

**Senator Fergal Quinn**

My wife would not recognise me from that nice introduction. May I just say, I was preparing some thoughts the other day for today. I wasn't quite sure, I treat you as the customers and I was trying to think what do you want, what do you expect to get from

today. And my daughter said to me “Dad make sure you stick to a script, don’t be speaking ad lib.” And I said “What do you mean?” And she says “Remember what happened when Orla was born?” her most recent baby. And I said “Yes, what do you mean?” Apparently I phoned the hospital to know, I’d heard she’d gone in to have her baby, this is our daughter and was told the great news that a little baby girl had been born about 15 minutes earlier and I was delighted to hear the news. And I asked were they both well and the nurse said “Yes the baby is very well, the little girl is very well and your wife is well too.” And I said to her “That’s good news but I said I should explain I’m not actually the husband, I’m just the father.” So, you can see why Gillian said stick to the script Dad.

Let me tell you one story. I’d been running a supermarket company called Superquinn, 24 stores and I’m still the non-executive president of the company from that point of view but we stepped out of the company four years ago. And other Irish investors have invested in the company. We’re very confident that it’s going to continue and to continue with success as an independent Irish company.

But back in 1991, and there was a crisis, the unemployment crisis. The employment wasn’t good. Everything was difficult in Ireland. And we decided we were going to encourage a ‘Buy Irish’ campaign. And the way we did that was we put a little shamrock in front of every Irish product on the supermarket shelves. And we created a very interesting [piece of] software that enabled the checkout receipt to show each product, a little shamrock on it that was Irish. And at the bottom of your receipt it said you spent 100 Euro, 86 Euro of that was Irish. Now, it was very worthy and as you left the supermarket you would see in this shop last week there was 86% of the products sold Irish or whatever it was.

But what stunned me, were the number of questions that came to me from our people in the company who said “What will do with products from Northern Ireland?” I said “What do you mean?” And they said “Well do we put a shamrock on those?” And I said “But yes of course, I mean you can’t ... don’t tell me you’re...” “Well yes but they’re not really...” I found the further away you went from the border the more partitionist the people on the South of the border became. And I said “I don’t understand you. My Mother came from North County Armagh; my Father came from South County Down. And are you trying to tell me that they’re not Irish?” And it really took quite some... the fact that I was even asked the question stunned me. And it surprised me as well from that point of view. But it took a little bit of convincing even to do that.

I remember around about that time going to buy a wedding present with my personal assistant who’s from Limerick. And we went in to buy a wedding present and this was about 1991 or something like that. And we went in to Kilkenny Design and I said “Oh look that would be very suitable, some great Irish linen.” But she said “Should we not be supporting our own?” And I said “What do you mean?” And she had to back track very much. And I have teased her about that in many times since.

But there really is a huge need for us in the Republic and in the North to recognise the benefit of cooperating together. And we really can do an awful lot of individual things. It’s interesting to see that the water we have here today, and I’m sure it’s not organised, I’m sure it just wasn’t thought out is French water. It’s not Rockwell from

Tyrone; it's not Ballygowan from Limerick or anything else. There are little things we can do, if only to encourage the development there. Because the argument I would like to leave in your mind is that the best and most important way of fostering North/South relations, valuable and all as Sunningdale might have been had it worked, as the Anglo Irish Agreement had achieved everything it wanted, had the Good Friday Agreement hopefully achieved, valuable and all as they are they don't touch the ordinary people as much as commerce, as much as shopping. And what's happened in the last six months, in the last two years I suppose with the amount of southerners going across the border to Northern Ireland for many of them very often for the first time. In fact one of the papers carried a story there some time back that they counted, in one of the car parks in Newry they were able to see the identification, the registration plates on the cars every one of the 26 counties were included on that day, in the car parks on that day in that...

And it seemed to me that for very many people the first time they travelled north of the border was for shopping. And I say this because I really believe that its things like shopping that put us much closer together. Much more so, than some of the other alternatives that we've had in the past such as those. I went to Russia - to Leningrad in 1989. Some years later, and we'd a smashing guide, her name was Ludmilla and she showed us round and I remember asking when we'd seen all of the wonderful museums and all of the wonderful cathedrals and all of the wonderful art galleries. And I said "Is it possible to see a grocery store?" And we were very disappointed with the grocery store they took us to. It just wasn't worth seeing, and I won't go in to that it's a different story. But when we went back some years later, not to Leningrad but to St Petersburg, same city, but we again had a guide. I don't think it was the same Ludmila] but her name was Ludmila as well. And in talking to Ludmila and I said "Tell me, what happened in 1991 when communism was swept away? Tell me the changes that occurred. How did this change your life?"

"Oh" she said "There was one thing changed more than anything else, the one change that affected me more than anything else was shopping. When I worked before, as I finished work it would take me hours to do my shopping. I'd have to queue up here, queue up there, queue up somewhere else. Once the new system came in I could have a choice of which shop I went to and what I could get." And I remember being in Russia again just last year in Katerinburg and I asked to go downtown. And a dramatic change had taken place.

So, I mention it because I really believe it's essential we do these other things. It's essential we get international agreements. It's essential we get agreements between North and South. But it's even more valuable to the general citizen North and South to be able to cross the border. To be able to experience the other side. And I have a concern that we're not doing nearly enough in this area. If you look, what you should do is have a look at the website for rail travel in Ireland. Have a look at it tonight and see, and you'll see there are fifteen trains between Dublin and Cork every day. But there are only eight between Dublin and Belfast. Now Dublin and Cork is a three hour journey and Belfast is less than two hours. And yet the situation is such that we really have to encourage people to travel much more. And I think that's going to happen with commerce. I think it's going to happen with a recognition that we are one island. And that we can benefit to a very large extent by cooperating on that basis. Whether, we are purchasing products from the North or whether the North are

purchasing products from us down here. But there are opportunities to cooperate. There are opportunities that will give, as Denis has spoken about, will give us profit.

But even more so there are benefits in that that will give us an awareness of the opportunities that the people north of the border, the people south of the border, those of us the more we can get together we realise that neither side have horns and tails and are people that we should be scared of. That, it seems to me is something we can encourage to a very large extent. And we can do it, and Denis touched on it again. You touched on two things, legislation. I hadn't thought of it until you said it. But, we see legislation going through the Seanad and I see Senator Cecilia Keaveney here today from Donegal. And she's one of the few who brings up the question of the operations that we can do. But it hadn't dawned on me that each time we pass a piece of legislation that it's different from the North, we're creating a barrier that makes it less easy to be able to together.

**Tim O'Connor.**

Thank you very much indeed Feargal for those very interesting words. And your experience of course on the ground being incredibly invaluable from that point of view. I'm going to leave Lord Maginnis as the anchor man and next up if I could call on my fellow Munster men, another Munster accent in the process, Sean O'Driscoll.

Sean is the group chief executive of Glen Dimplex. And as I mentioned earlier Glen Dimplex is one of those companies that from the word go has been organised on a North-South, a cross border basis and Sean is a Cork man. He's an accountant by profession and he's been with Glen Dimplex now I think for over 20 years, if I'm right Sean, and has done a great job there. And of course Glen Dimplex has also made it's contribution to the wider process through it's chairman and founder, Martin Naughton who is the first chairman of Intertrade Ireland, our cross border trade body. And I see one of the board members Hugh Logue is here with us this evening. So, I think everybody is agreed that Martin Naughton has made a great contribution as well. So, without further ado if I can call on Sean O'Driscoll please. Thank you Sean.

**Sean O'Driscoll**

Thank you, Tim. Good evening everybody. I'd like to cover five topics this evening. And let me start by just giving you some background and some history around Glen Dimplex.

Martin Naughton who was the founder and chairman of Glen Dimplex was a plant manager for a factory in Dunleer which is South of the border. And that plant was in some difficulty and the principal finance was provided by what was then Foir Teoranta the state agency. And Martin and a number of his colleagues came up with a plan to restructure the company which wasn't accepted. And Martin decided to leave with a group of four people. And he couldn't get any support in the Republic of Ireland at the time because the development agency wouldn't give it because it was seen as competition against his former employer.

So, he went North, he got support from the development board of Northern Ireland and set up in Newry in 1973, which wasn't exactly an easy time with the troubles. But it was also at the time of the oil crisis. And they travelled across the border, the five of them every day. And the business became very successful. And the principal market for the output was in to the United Kingdom itself. And two of the customers that Martin started to do business with, Argos and Curries are still two of the largest customers which our group have today.

So, the business started out in Northern Ireland and in 1979 the company that Martin had worked for in Dunleer went into receivership and Martin ended up acquiring it. And that became the cross border business of Glen Dimplex. And today the group, the way we like to describe ourselves is we like to describe ourselves as an Irish group. We don't distinguish between the North of Ireland and the South of Ireland. And we tell everybody across the world, we're an Irish group and we're an international group. But making a point of saying but we're not a multinational. And we have a turnover of 2 billion Euro. We operate across the world with about 12,000 people employed.

And the second topic I'd like to cover is operating across the border in the businesses which we had in the past. And as Tim has said at the outset I joined the group 20 years ago so I wasn't there through the 1970s or the 1980s. But I've heard the stories of the troubles in the North. And particularly in the Newry area of what was Glen Electric prior to becoming Glen Dimplex, where Glen Electrics was based. But the one thing that my colleagues would say to me as they would be telling me those stories was there was never any disruption to the production or the factory in Newry.

Martin tells a story himself, he was in Belfast on one occasion on business and his car was flagged down, there was trouble in the streets on Belfast and he was appealed to, to bring three young boys south of the border to get them away from trouble. And that would have been in the mid 1970s. And one of those young lads stayed with Martin south of the border and, with Martin and his wife for 8 weeks. And his parents would ring maybe once a week to see how he was. And that was the type of environment that was there.

My own experience of it really started in 1990. And I suppose my images of Northern Ireland would be going to the army checkpoint in Newry. And you felt intimidated. You were innocent, you were going about your business - you actually felt intimidated. And when you got through it the second thing that would strike you is the roads were always better. The infrastructure was better. And in all the time that I travelled into Northern Ireland I never saw trouble. And yet when I got back over the border the first thing that I was under penalty of death from my wife to do was - and this was before mobile phones, was to find a phone to ring to say I was back in safe territory. You know that was the type of tension that was there.

It was also a time where as you crossed the world, people perpetually asked you. The first question was, when you mentioned Ireland was Northern Ireland and what they saw on television. And it actually influenced the whole conversation. And I would make the point then that I never saw trouble but then I never went to look for trouble. And a similar theme that came up earlier, it was always in the back of my mind. And as a consequence it wasn't until about 10 years ago that my wife and my children

went to Northern Ireland with me. I was just influenced by the images. And in 1994 we acquired another business in Northern Ireland which was in Portadown. And again I recall going there with apprehension. And the Union Jack flying in the factory and we were wondering how we were going to be taken, this southern company coming in to a pretty hot area of Northern Ireland. We never, ever, ever in the last 16 years had an issue in Portadown. And all we got was cooperation between our plant in Newry and our plant in Portadown.

I remember being in the UK with a very significant customer just after the Dockland bombings. And again it was never used against us, never raised. We were very careful about our management structures originally. It would have been very easy to put the businesses together. But Newry and Portadown wasn't exactly a marriage made in heaven. So we were very careful about the way we went about that. And today if I can move on to operating across the border today, there is no issue. Our Newry facility was first put under the management of Portadown management 5 years ago. It wasn't an issue. And our Dunleer operation south of the border today is under the management of the Northern Ireland team, again no issue. And remember we would have a lot of people in Dunleer who would come from Dundalk. So, that is how far we have moved in a very short period of time.

And doing our business across the border is pretty seamless. Yes, they're different jurisdictions we've different tax rates, we've different laws. But we have a very real issue in the Republic of Ireland. And that is about our lack of competitiveness. And we have two facilities in Dunleer, one in Newry, one in Portadown and our Dunleer facilities. The pay structures there today are 30% higher than our rates of pay in Northern Ireland.

Now we will be told that's because of exchange. But one of the things that we haven't recognised in the south of Ireland was that there was a 30% devaluation of the Irish Pound initially and subsequently the Euro against Sterling though the 1990s. And we've blown that. And that is why we're uncompetitive today.

The fourth area I'd like to just touch on is just our own attitude to contributing to society. And we have a policy of wanting to contribute to society. And as part of that as Tim referred to earlier, Martin Naughton has played a very significant role on cross border activity. Prior to him being Stephen's predecessor as chairman of Invest Northern Ireland he was a director, sorry Intertrade Ireland, he was a director of Invest Northern Ireland for 5 years. And he's also been very involved with Queens University. So, it's very much part of what we are about.

And then looking to the future, I would say that there are very good business people in Northern Ireland. People that I would have great admiration for. Two issues though, one there aren't enough of them. And the public sector plays too significant a role in the Northern Ireland economy. And the second one is that those good business people that are there, we don't hear a lot of them. And I suspect that's going back to a point of earlier that it still sees itself as a regional economy. The issue of the all Ireland economy, the all Ireland energy market, we as a group are very committed to renewable energy technologies and green technologies. And that for us is now about a 500 million Euro business. And we see a significant opportunity on the island of Ireland to recreate employment in this area.

And last May I set up a group of, with four of my colleagues and I call it the Green Jersey Team, two of those are from Northern Ireland, two are from the Republic of Ireland. And we have invested a huge amount of time in getting around governments, politicians, regulators, the utility companies. And I just want to acknowledge Stephen's contribution to us this evening. He's just been phenomenal in making contacts for us. And we are, next week we will be signing off an investment in one of our facilities in Dunleer, the one we have in Newry and the one in Portadown, all in the renewable energy space. There's a real, real opportunity. There's a lot of talk about it in Ireland. We launched the green economy in the Republic of Ireland. We've got to start doing something about it. It's an island, there's a lot of cooperation on both sides and it can be done. And we have a huge amount in common. And our attitude is just let's get on with it.

### **Tim O'Connor**

Thank you, Sean. Very interesting and I think your highlighting of the energy sector is very interesting there at the end. And I think that probably there is where a lot of progress has been made and as you are making clear there is huge potential ahead there. Our last speaker of the evening is really, you'd call it good wine by any standards certainly a legend in his own life time and in his own rugby pitch, and on many other pitches that he has played with the great distinction on, Lord Maginnis of Drumglass.

I think the thing I have to say about Ken Maginnis as well is long before it was profitable or popular for Unionist politicians to be cavorting around Dublin, Ken Maginnis was never afraid. And back in the days which were much bleaker and darker than today Ken blazed a trail as somebody who was prepared to come to Dublin, come on to our TV studios and radio studios and present a very rational case for his Unionism which he'd never apologise for. But he managed to do it in a way that was, for me anyway was somebody that brought an accessibility to a world that wasn't previously accessible for a lot of us. And of course he's a great rugby man, he's president of his beloved Dungannon. He would have stood in many a rugby ground around all parts of Ireland. And was a very popular man in all of those club houses.

So, Ken you were a pathfinder in the true sense of the word and you've made an enormous contribution over the years. And if we're in better times today, which we are hopefully, I think a lot of credit can go to the kind of inspiration that you gave as I say in a much darker time. So we're deeply honoured to have you with us here this evening and to hear your words. Lord Maginnis of Drumglass.

### **Lord Ken Maginnis**

Thank you very much Tim, you'll excuse me if I stand up. It's not that I'm intimidated by the wealth and economic prowess of the people with whom I share this platform. It's - well forget about a physical reason why I need to stand up but I'd say it's because an old village school master liked to see what was going on in the back row.

So, if I may can I start by perhaps saying that it is interesting, particularly interesting to hear what Feargal had to say. Indeed what all my colleagues on the platform had to say. But I think Feargal touched on an area that appealed to me because he talked about, he didn't quite get into it but he talked about, or hinted at service delivery. And one of the great problems that we have, and I'm not sure the extent to which you have it in the Republic but certainly in Northern Ireland one of the problems we have today, of course we deny it but one of the problems we have is that we have a stratified society. The Stephen Kingon's and people of that ilk who do so much, the Sean's and people like that and Denis, they don't actually outside the business world interface with those who are given the responsibility to run the country, Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland which as you have heard is public sector heavy. Far too many people employed in the public service, far too many people in the public service who are not accountable the way your work force is accountable on the factory floor. And I suspect that if you admitted it you would find that the same happens here in the Republic. As I said I was a village school master for 23 years. And it surprised me in my public life to discover the extent to which we've been unable to move forward logically and constructively in terms of running services for people. And this has a North-South connotation.

In 1943 Leo Kanner defined something called autism, ASD. Autism Spectrum Disorder. 66 years later, 67 years later we have not, on this island despite all the wealth that we've had during the last two decades, we have not channelled our resources towards dealing with special education needs. And when we do attempt something, it's a head banger's idea, there's an empty convent in South Armagh would be a grand place for a cross border body. Yes I've no problem with that. It was bought in 1992 for 3 million pounds, a snip at that sort of money. And then people looked round doing something they wouldn't do in business, they said "Could we stick a label on this?" And somebody had the bright idea they'd a label called the Middletown Centre of Excellence for Autism. As though, somehow you could cut a centre of excellence out of the hedge. But you can't do it. We didn't even apply; in that instance we didn't even apply ordinary business common sense to what was required. And to a means of ensuring that ordinary people were able to benefit from the wealth that we have enjoyed over the last two, two and half decades.

If I can take a minute let me deal with that because I think it illustrates what is missing in terms of cooperation. Why would we have a centre of excellence in terms of special educational needs sited almost 100, certainly over 50 miles from any teacher training college. And in my work with autism I visited St Mary's and Stranmillis in Belfast, I've visited St Mary's and St Pat's Drumcondra. I've been around the various teacher training colleges that have given Irish education an identity that I don't believe any other country has. We don't simply take people, give them a degree and then say well you're not fit to fly an aeroplane for Aer Lingus and you know nothing about building bridges well maybe you can try teaching. We bring people into the teaching profession, we train them to be teachers and they're dedicated.

Now, I'm not sure that this is something that is fully appreciated amongst the business community. And it's why I choose to raise this subject tonight - 50 miles from each

teacher training college, from each university and from every medical school. And we call it a centre of excellence. And the one thing we know about autistic children is, that you build them by special interventions within the territory, within the environment that they understand. You build from the bottom up. They know their home. You don't have some madcap idea that you take them from the ring of Kerry, from the north coast, from the Wicklow Hills, from Galway and plonk them for five weeks in a convent in South Armagh and believe that you're doing good.

The point I wanted to make is this, when we were moving forward to resolving - and Tim is right and I'm proud that I was in the vanguard of those who came south and tried to create a relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic. But when I was coming south in those days everybody wanted to see me, Garrett wanted to see me, Tim wanted to see me, Dermot Gallagher wanted to see me, they never were away from me. The reality is that now that we've got the Belfast Agreement nobody talks to me anymore. [Laughed] And I'm quite seriously miffed, seriously.

So, I come down and I see Bertie and I see Brian and Brian Lenihan comes in to Westminster seeing me on this subject. I hope that Brian Lenihan, I wish him well and I'm sure we all do, I know he has a health problem at the moment. And I go to see Batt O'Keefe and I say "For God's sake don't put 7 million pounds, it's over 7 million pounds been spent in Middletown when in fact you should be concentrating on one-to-one assistance in your classrooms, in your ordinary schools." And in fair play, they withdrew the funding. Without any further consultation, without coming back they restored it there about a month ago, an absolute waste, an absolute scandal. If in fact we are going to treat other professional areas, business is so important I agree. But if we're going to treat other professional areas with that sort of glibness then in fact society is going to be the loser.

During the troubles we had to, sorry I don't want to go over my time. During the troubles we had to remove some bridges along the Blackwater in Armagh and South Tyrone. And there were little bridges where the people walked across to their farms on either side of the border and so on. But the roads leading to those bridges were tiny little roads. As a political gesture without any economic benefit whatsoever Monaghan County Council is rebuilding those bridges. There'll be no money to build the roads to lead to the bridges but at least the bridges will be back. We've had a political gesture.

And today what I want to say is I enjoyed all the work, I didn't enjoy it all but most of it Tim, I enjoyed the work that we did leading up to 1998. And now I see gesture politics which says we don't care about the 40%, the middle ground any longer. We'll deal with that 20% and that 20% or whatever that is, sure that doesn't add up to 100 but there you are. We'll deal with that and we have Brian Cowen, coming up involving himself in Strand One of our business which never happened before. And which had no justification and then we go back out and we say "We got a Hillsborough Agreement." You didn't get an agreement, an agreement that does not have ownership, an agreement that does not have a signature is not an agreement, it might be a private arrangement.

Why do I raise this in a debate on economic issues? For the simple reason that I believe that if you want to hinder the coming together which some of us worked

bloody hard to get, if you want to hinder the coming together of our two economies, of our social services, then you'll tinker with the Belfast Agreement at St Andrews. You'll put the power into the hands of political people who know nothing about the economy. And I'm not going to embarrass my friends around this table by saying when did you ever get any help from anybody at the Assembly? Well I think the smile tells it all...

But the reality is that if we are going to resolve our problems then we've got to get rid of this stratified society. We can do it on our own as business. Let them mess about with politics. Let them mess about with the vital services whether that's health or education, and education is dear to me.

I'll finish with this; I chaired the Independent Review of Autism Services in Northern Ireland. We have a plan, a coherent plan, a plan that will work. I now chair the Northern Ireland Regional Reference Group on Autism. And there's a lot of good people putting a lot of work in to that. Can I get doors in one or two other departments, I think you mentioned it. Can we get the doors knocked down? No. Because people are not being encouraged, I believe by the powerful people, the business people to demand a delivery of services. Ladies and gentlemen I'm not going to teach you a lesson about what happens down here. All I know is that you had your class sizes down to 27 during the good times. And you've already put them up to 31.

If the economy is going to benefit then it must benefit the people. It must benefit in terms of the services it delivers. And we must make the public sector accountable for delivering those services. Thank you.

#### **Tim O'Connor.**

Thank you, Ken. You can see now why Ken has been such a voice of influence all over the years. And I pay tribute to the contribution that he made to Good Friday as well. I should have mentioned that specifically because he was a tower in those critical days. And you can see that the passion that drove him then drives him still - a lot of food for thought there Ken and thank you for that.

It's time for you to have your say now. I think we can agree it's been a very interesting contribution from a variety of perspectives and it's your turn now. So, I think Dara is coming around with the microphone. If you'd just put your hand up and maybe introduce yourself. Thanks very much. Cecilia I think.

#### **Senator Cecilia Keavney**

I suppose I will introduce myself as Senator Cecilia Keavney from North of the North and my *raison d'etre* for being here today was to fight the corner for the North of the North because sometimes we have been the victims of the success of the peace process. I look to the Tourism Ireland and the All Ireland Tourism Body and for all those northerners who used to come further north to Donegal when times were bad they go further south now because they feel safe to explore further south. But for all the southerners that come in they feel safe to go to the north and say we don't want to go to Donegal, we want to see the Glens of Antrim and the Giants Causeway.

I jest partially but I also say that I'm only rushing in to speak first only on the basis that I'm very, very interested in this area. My life, I was born in Derry, lived all my life in Donegal, did all my university 7 years in Jordanstown. My interaction with all northern politicians has always been that the better in the north, it was better for us in the northwest and north of the north. And I commend all those who were involved both politically but in business senses in reaching across and trying to find solutions. I was gently going to back at Feargal when he talked about the train, anybody uses the Belfast train and they pay in Euros they will be done, 69p exchange rate. So, if you want to put your comments to Translink I will be more than happy for you to join my cause. And I think if you buy your coffee at 1.60 Sterling it should not be 2.40 Euros.

**Ken Maginnis**

Get one of those! [Laughter]

**Senator Cecilia Keavney**

I tell you, you don't need to teach the hen to suck eggs, I am just saying it for other people that might be in the room. But for me it's around what you're talking about Ken, it's the idea that when you have good cross border projects that they need to be cross border projects. And that's a joint funded, European funded, train service. That it shouldn't be one rule for those that buy their tickets in Dublin and a completely different rule for those who buy it in Belfast. The ins and outs of the autism service I would think that there could be a lot of money spent for example on 2½ year olds all being health tested. And start from there and then see what solutions we need afterwards. But I do think that there's an all-island dimension to autism. There's an all-island sensibility in a lot of health services. We know that in the northwest. We rely on Altnagelvin for some things. And they rely on Letterkenny for other things. And the mutual working together and getting over health politics can be as difficult as getting politics politics. And I'm sure business politics; there must be politics in business as well.

The other issue I just want to say is I agree with you in relation to gestures. You know it is very easy to go up and cut a ribbon and get a lovely photograph. But I just wonder, is there a time and a place for gesture politics? Did it have to happen? But yes it's now the time to move on. And there's issues for example like the Foyle-Carlingford lights. I believe that the Foyle should have one management structure that embraces all aspects of development. Planning development, all sorts of developments. And yet if I raise that as a politician I'm told 'Sshh you'll annoy the Unionists.'

So, what I'm saying is we have to be brave enough at this point in time not to worry about annoying each other. We have to sit down as businessmen and politicians vice versa and take on the difficult issues because the difficult issues are the real issues to the people. Be it cross border shopping. Cross border shopping had only become a problem since it hit the Dublin economy about 2 years ago. It has always been an issue for Ireland. We've always battled the battle that Derry is 18 miles from me and Letterkenny is 37. I can now go across in the car ferry and I want to thank the British Embassy for the help that they've given at various times in relation to issues over that.

Probably the only reason I contributed is there's a lot of people on wheels at the moment. And they're all doing very, very good work. Sometimes I think we need more fora like this to get people together to realise what each other are doing. And I found that the Good Friday Agreement already has been very helpful in that we've been able to bring in ministers from North and South, ask them what they're doing and also discover that a lot of the issues cannot be resolved at a North/South level, but also the East/West dimension. Your energy issue cannot be solved North/South if in Westminster there's legislation going through about what happens in terms of connectors and other grids.

So, there's issues North, South, East and West. And I think we've to be all man enough to realise that we're big enough to take on even more difficult things really. Which are the things that actually affect the people. And I'm sorry there's probably not a question amongst that at all but hopefully it is of some benefit. *Go raibh maith agat.*

**Tim O'Connor**

Thank you very much Senator. Thank you Senator very much. I'd like to call down Liam Connellan

**Liam Connellan.**

Thank you very much chairman. Liam Connellan from the Irish Academy of Engineering. It seems to me, and I think the contributions this evening have been fantastic and very, very interesting. I think our challenge is to have a vision for global competitiveness for the island. And challenges to create economies of scale on the island to enable us to do things that we haven't done. For example you mentioned the railway. We need a faster, more frequent railway between the two major cities on the island. That's about connectivity, it's about contact between people and it will happen if we take on board the fact that there are an awful lot of people along that corridor that we can serve.

The second in the transport area is we need a very strong international airport on the island. So, that we can link directly with the BRICs, with India, China, Russia, Brazil. That demands that we develop economies of scale and feed into a hub, we can debate where we need it but we need it on the island and we need it readily accessible to businesses on the island.

In the area of research and development, research and development is a very important part, and innovation is an extremely important part of the development of industry and business on the island for the next ... for the decades ahead. And if you look at where research and development movements establish on this island at the moment they tend to be within striking distance of a major university. And the universities which have strong research and development activities. Now, we have only two universities on the island that are within the top 200 universities in the world. Let's aspire to at least try to get to have something that might be comparable with Cambridge or an MIT on the island. That's economies of scale.

And two other very quick points, one is on Broadband. On this island only 5% of the people can access at speeds of 10 megabytes per second. Only 5%. The United Kingdom isn't much better. But Japan and South Korea are now achieving 1000 - 1000 megabytes per second. Not universities but businesses in Japan and South Korea have that. We've got to sort that out, that's a big challenge and it's a challenge that becomes scary. We might have some chance of achieving the challenges if we have go at it together.

And finally we talked a bit about energy. There's one area in energy where we're actually quite vulnerable. You know for natural gas supplies on this island we have only 4% of annual consumption in storage at any time. Now most European countries are up over 20% and we happen to be an island off the coast of Europe. The Western most point. That's something that is very important for all businesses on the island. So, in conclusion Chairman, I think there are an awful lot of things that we can do to improve the growing competitiveness of business on this island. By taking on board of all that Sean O'Driscoll has said that we have individual problems ourselves. But we can work together and develop in an infrastructure which is an awful, awful lot better than what we have at the moment. Thank you very much.

**Tim O'Connor.**

Thank you Liam and thank you for your own continued passion for North/South. At the back...

**Catherine Morris**

Thank you my name's Catherine Morris of the John Hume Global Irish Institute. I was just really interested Tim at the beginning when you were making your opening remarks. You talked about the importance of the economic benefit of heritage and culture. And one document that I've been reading recently which might in fact help towards developing a debate about the economic importance and benefits of culture is the assessment of economic impact of the arts in Ireland which was commissioned by the Arts Council from Indecon economic consultants. And I think it's a document worth looking at, it's online on the Arts Council website. And just because this survey really is a very in-depth economic insight into the benefits of that.

But in a way, while we can say that a theatre or a theatre company or exhibitions are important because of the economic benefits that they bring in, in terms of how many carpenters they hire or how many people they employ. And I think it's also really important to recognise that culture is important in our society and within this cross border development. Not simply because of those economic business immediate outcomes. But also because of the role that culture can play in the development of a different civic society and a different civic cultural debate.

But of course Irish culture is deeply political and I don't think it should necessarily be essentially ideological. And I wonder is there anything the panel have to say about any insight that they have about how culture can play a really integral part in cross border developments and any insights they have in to how that's already happening on the ground.

I'm developing a National Library exhibition about Alice Milligan and I'm hoping that exhibition will travel to many of the libraries and cultural centres, not only across the Republic of Ireland but also in the South. And I think that as a very positive development. But I wonder if there is anything within the world of business in which you are interacting that you can give some insight in to further developments on cultural projects.

**Tim O'Connor.**

Thanks very much. There's just one very brief comment back on that since I mentioned the point. I suppose that had come from my own experience in New York where I saw that in fact I'd not really prepared myself as a civil servant with no real background in the arts. I discovered after a few weeks in New York that that is actually what puts Ireland on the map in that city. In fact the peace process happily wasn't figuring in the pages of the New York Times, certainly the Celtic Tiger wasn't getting much inch coverage. But we were getting a half page reviewing the latest Brian Friel play on Broadway or the latest book by Colm Toibin or whatever. And I think that when you look at the rich culture and heritage in Northern Ireland, which is absolutely all Ireland in terms of the outcomes of it, I think there's something really, really powerful there for us to explore. And I think we're just at the beginning of that.

And I think you're right, we haven't really explored, I'm talking about the cultural power overseas. But in terms of our own interaction on the island I think the role of the cultural space, given that ultimately culture touches the soul, I think there's real... maybe it's a space we've been afraid to in to until now. But Ken is saying that we have to tackle all of the issues. And I think there is a great richness and I'm really pleased you asked that question.

**Senator Fergal Quinn**

Tim may I just come in on one thing. I know when you talk about culture, the one example that affects or seems to influence people to a very large extent is sport. And it's just interesting listening to Ken there. Look at the nationalism that is joined together as a nation in those sports that are able to play as one team. Whether it's rugby, whether it's boxing, whether it's swimming, whether it's hockey I think and golf. And it seems to me that that isn't, one could say it's not quite art but it is culture and it does have an affect on people. And watching at the rugby match the other day, watching them sing. Okay they sing the Italian national anthem; they sing the Irish national anthem but then when they sing an anthem that you can see that is so supportive and being able to sing from all sides. That puts them together. So it seems to me that you're talking about art but I think you include sport as part of that culture as well.

**Tim O'Connor**

I'm conscious of the time, yes Ken absolutely.

**Ken Maginnis**

May I come in there very briefly because you might find a wee protestant boy as I was, strange that he says when I grew up in the war time years I remember the nuns in my district. They took an interest in peoples' health; they took an interest in the welfare of old people, they took an interest in education. They delivered a voluntary service and there were similar examples in terms of culture within the protestant tradition.

Now what has happened they've virtually disappeared from our society. We have a voluntary sector, and I'm very critical. I don't diminish what the voluntary sector does voluntarily. But the voluntary sector has now moved from a cultural point of view to being a service deliverer. Unaccountable 19 times out of 20, they excuse the statutory responsibility that should lie with the departments and they're in the voluntary sector for the financial gain. They're actually, there's a confusion now between voluntary sector and service deliverers. And it's something I hope both our governments can look at and perhaps take a lesson from the past. I think you raise a very important point.

**Tim O'Connor**

Thanks Ken. I'm conscious of the time now because we still ... I'm sorry I see three more hands up so if I can just take those please. Gentleman here about four rows down with his hand up thanks.

**Reg McCabe from IBEC CBI**

We had a session here before Christmas and I think I mentioned this back then but maybe no harm to mention it again because it has come up earlier on. And that relates to the higher education sector. The figures we've been looking at in recent days suggest that of the under graduate population in the South that just 1% are from Northern Ireland. And the reverse figure is about 3% in the Northern Ireland – this is at under-graduate level in the Northern Ireland students who are from the Republic. I don't think we should be happy with that state of affairs. I think that's the issue. The issues there are around access but also around really getting, Liam mentioned critical mass. It's around really getting the full benefit from the higher education capacity that's available on the island.

I think there are a few artificial factors at work. One of them being the lack of joined up thinking between the A-level system and the Leaving Cert points system which actually discriminates very actively against students in the A-level system. So, I think that needs to be looked at. And if you like that's a supply side issue. But also on the demand side, again Liam was talking about critical mass. If one university on the island was seen to be the centre of excellence in veterinary studies or in pharmaceuticals or pharmacology it's more likely that students from all over the island would flock to that place if that's their particular level of interest. And in a way Peter Sutherland mentioned this issue recently that for many of the universities on the island it's not that they're too big or too small it's that they lack this sense of specialisation. And maybe that's something we should be working towards as well.

**Tim O'Connor**

Thank you very much Reg. Niall Gibbons please at the back.

### **Niall Gibbons**

Niall Gibbons, Tourism Ireland. Thanks very much chairman and a very enlightening discussion this evening. The good news is that we've made great progress on the Northern Ireland Fund from a tourism perspective. And in 2001 we had 6.7 million people visited the island of Ireland. And by 2007 that had risen to 9 million. Now that has tapered off obviously with the current economic climate which is quite difficult for all destinations. But moving forward I think what we have done is we have established a very solid basis on which to build in terms of partnership with our colleagues in Northern Ireland. And I'm glad the issue of culture has come up because the whole sphere of sport and culture is absolutely vital to our success. Because, at the end of the day the expression of ourselves overseas really equals our culture.

And there are a number of projects which people have come together on that probably couldn't have happened before. The Scots/Irish is one example, which there wouldn't be a lot of awareness down here that I would have come across. But in the 2000 census in the United States 4 ½ million people ticked the box that their ancestry had been that of Scots/Irish. And it's a great sort of untold story that if I ask my Mother how many Irish presidents there were she'd say one, John F Kennedy. But there's actually been 19 of Scots/Irish descent. And there's a great genealogical story that is yet to be told that can create itself into a tourism opportunity in years to come. And hopefully we will see the benefits of that in the next decade as we move forward.

I'm glad you mentioned the Titanic at the start as well which is probably one of the few icons that we have in a very competitive world. And there's investment just started now, 100 million pounds on the building of the new Titanic signature project on the old site of where the ship was launched for April 2012. And it's a great all-island story and it's a great story obviously for Belfast. But the good news is we'll have a Titanic exhibition in the World Expo in Shanghai this coming year which is a great iconic global story.

I think the other thing as well, we've measured the image of Ireland every year overseas and the image of Northern Ireland and it tells a very interesting story. And the good news is that we're still very fashionable despite the crisis of confidence that we're having within ourselves I think at the moment from an economic perspective. But the great news is that the perceptions of safety and security that were a key barrier in terms of people travelling, especially to Northern Ireland have actually closed an awful lot in the last 7 years, every time we have carried out this survey. It is carried out by TMS and Landsdowne market research. Now there's still a gap to go but it's certainly become less of a factor than it has been in the past.

And I think that in the next decade from a cultural perspective, and I've said this quite a bit now Northern Ireland and I'm afraid to say as it annoyed people in the past, the big thing that we need to grapple with is the month of July. Which unfortunately sends out many of the signals in the international media but there is a very cultural story to be told there as well. And it has been dialogued ongoing for the last 5 years and hopefully in the new set up more confidence will emerge to perhaps look on the

12<sup>th</sup> July as a festival and try and create something good out of what has been very difficult for the last number of decades and creates a great difficulty for what should be our busiest month of the tourism season. And 10 years old in Tourism Ireland was here and hope that maybe in 10 years time we might have been able to turn the tides. We have all the marketing techniques to do it so to speak but the one thing that we need to work on is this issue of silly pride. Because we can make all the promises that we want in the market place but at the end of the day the experience has to be delivered on the ground. And if by working on this cultural arts and sports sphere we really can bring people together and develop a sense of civic pride which makes the product much easier to sell in an international market place. Thank you.

### **Tim O'Connor**

Thanks for that. And I'd just like to compliment the work that Niall and his predecessor Paul O'Toole and their colleagues have done. I think just the statistics that he just gave there are very powerful indicators of the changes that have been made and the new dynamic and the new dispensation is making a real difference in hard economic terms, so well done. I'm very conscious of time so just one quick... Jennifer Todd is going to be looking at me very...

### **Sean O'Driscoll**

The one thing that we all own on the island and yet we don't own individually and nobody else owns is St Patrick's Day. And certainly in the Republic of Ireland it has become a political football. And it's like groundhog between the media and the politicians as to who's going where. And yet it's the one day that everybody recognises Ireland with. And it's something that should be depoliticised and that we should use. And if we could buy St Patrick's Day in our group we would pay the crown jewels for it, so why don't we use it?

### **Tim O'Connor**

Very interesting. A very good point. Thank you there Sean. There was somebody...

### **Conor McGuichey**

My name is Conor McGuichey and I'm originally from Belfast but I study in UCD. I just have one question for Lord Maginnis to do with Corporation Tax which Mr Kingon referred to. You may not have time to answer this but I'm just wondering to what extent that the inability of the North to gain an island wide Corporation Tax similar to that of the South is on track with private investment and does he think that under a conservative government there's an opportunity there to at least reduce it?

### **Tim O'Connor**

Thanks. Ken...

**Ken Maginnis**

The answer to that is quite simple. We've had a promise from the conservatives that if they win the election they will look at Northern Ireland as a whole in terms of the development region. What's the term they used for it?

**Tim O'Connor**

Enterprise Zone.

**Ken Maginnis**

An Enterprise Zone. So, I think that... Stephen you'd know more about it than I would.

**Stephen Kingon**

Yes well I mean historically we had Enterprise Zones in the past but it was only dealing with rates and as we had industrial de-rating it really wasn't of any benefit. But if they designate the whole of Northern Ireland as an Enterprise Zone they might play. And I know George Quigley here has campaigned for the all-island tax rate.

**Tim O'Connor**

Thanks very much. And last I've got the last question to come from Hugh Logue who himself has made a great contribution to cross border cooperation in many guises over many years. Thank you, Hugh.

**Hugh Logue**

Thank you, chairman. I'm Hugh Logue, I'm on the board of Intertrade Ireland now but I was involved with the chairman at the office of the First and Deputy First when the institutions were being set up. And just on your point Sean I remember when I was working in Brussels people saying to me there on St Patrick's day that St Patrick's birth place was to them what Mecca, you know should be to us but Mecca was to the entire Muslim community. And why we hadn't taken advantage of it to the same extent.

But chairman recently I was in your old haunt of New York and, as one does get to a number of things in New York. And I got to the Comedy Club and it was packed out and the MC asked "How many black people are in the audience?" And there was only four. And he turned around and says "I understand, too busy loving their country." And it met with a crack of laughter much better than it did here but maybe it was his delivery. [Laughter] And I've a sense of the same here tonight. I don't want you to ask how many Sinn Fein or DUP people are in the room. But I think to some extent we are talking to the converted. And we have to get back to those who are in charge. And I see Ken nodding his head. And I do think that you've become engaged again in the redelivery or the reenergising of North-South in a way that hasn't been really part of the Hillsborough Agreement or the St Andrew's Agreement.

Now there are many, as you are very well aware chairman, there were very many straight jackets at the time. There were political straight jackets and there also were I think straight jackets from the likes of Invest Northern Ireland and the people that are here and the departments. In that they weren't quite sure how much cooperation that they wanted to see or how much of it was truth. But the question I'd like to ask is it maybe time, you mentioned the architecture was right then, is it time 12 years on to revisit the architecture? Because some of the bodies that were then set up like the European Body, the Irish Language Bodies, they have fulfilled whatever function they were going to do.

The second question I would ask is if we are going to have cooperation should it be institutionalised, as it was in that case where you had Intertrade Ireland, where you had various bodies? Or should it be free flowing. Unionism didn't like the institutionalisation of it but at the same level it didn't or it wasn't institutionalised [114m 05s] cooperation.

However some of the best areas have been. Say for example the energy, the gas pipeline. Some of the other things have come out of pure initiatives. Stephen mentioned the trade unions. But that again came not from Invest Northern Ireland or from IBEC or from anything like that. It came from our President saying and her husband saying if Northern Irish companies want to join us, I'm going abroad to represent the country then they're very welcome to.

Those kinds of initiatives are important. But we do need to move on in to some new eras. Twelve years on climate change, environment is much more important. Renewables is a huge area. We are on the same island with the same shore whether the energy is coming from Wales or from wherever it's coming from we're facing the same wind, we're facing... is that an area that we should now be dealing with? Should we now be looking at that?

And IBIS have done some very good work but one area that they have not gone near and Liam mentioned it, Reg mentioned it and Ken mentioned it, education. There are universities on this side of the border, on both sides of the border that are virtually, entirely populated on their governing boards by people of one jurisdiction. There is no cross-fertilisation between the university boards. Now, what's happening there is that people protecting vested interests, it is time if we're going to get the level of R&D that people are talking about and share a North-South fusion programme where you would place young graduates between Northern and Southern companies. But is it now time that we were demanding that legislatively it is required or otherwise to be able to give the universities to loosen up their grip and to help people from the other jurisdictions sitting on their boards as a matter of right.

These are just some of the questions I think is it not time that we re-visited some of the areas that we did 12 years ago? Because there's an awful lot of it that now makes a great deal more sense than it did then. Thank you, chairman.

**Tim O'Connor**

Thank you very much. In fact those are big questions actually and very interesting and thought provoking. I hope you don't mind if we maybe leave them actually out

there for a bit because I think they're things that we really have to take away and I think reflect on, and make sure that they're getting into the right channels. I'm just very conscious of time and people have other things to do this evening. And we've already gone a bit over time. So, without further, thanking everybody for their very interesting contributions from the floor could I now ask our final speaker and indeed our co-host for the evening, the British Ambassador to come forward.

The Ambassador is Julian King; he presented his credentials to the President in September 2009. He's already got - even though a young man still he's a very distinguished career under his belt. Most recently in Europe, where he was the Chef de Cabinet of the British Commissioner, first of all Peter Mandelson and then Baroness Ashton. So, without further ado I'd like to welcome to the podium please the British Ambassador, Julian King.

[Applause]

### **Julian King**

Thank you very much. And I'm acutely conscious that I'm all that stands between you and a glass of wine and that's why I shall be brief.

I'm humbled at these kinds of events by the breadth and depth of experience that we've heard from. But I'm also encouraged, I'm very encouraged that we have these opportunities and the opportunity today to talk about the economy and economic links. I see an increasingly vigorous agenda of North/South cooperation as key to the future of prosperity and success in both parts of the island. In meeting common challenges, like promoting economic recovery, dealing with the effects of climate change, guaranteeing our energy security, developing our skills, research and development base with the growing recognition that we're the strongest when we're together and weakest when we work alone. Not my words. Brian Cowen in the Dail, yesterday. And he's right. And I think we've heard today, from the different experienced voices that we've been listening to evidence of that. I was - I have to say surprised to discover the sheer scale of the economic links between the UK and Ireland. I come from an organisation that spends a lot of time thinking about globalisation, thinking about China. It says that there's been a big shift in power and influence, not least economic power and influence to the East. Right now today the two way trade links between the UK and Ireland are the same, the same scale, the same value as the UK trade links with China, 1.3 billion Chinese. Which I think just serves to show how absolutely vital and crucial the trade links between the UK and Ireland are and will remain. And the scale is enormous; it's 22 billion Euros worth. And within that the all island trade links are very significant as well. About 4 billion worth. And it's not just beyond the figures, it's not just the flows it's the concrete links and experiences some of which we've heard about, of the companies. Glen Dimplex, not to embarrass anybody, CRH, Kerry, Glanbia are very well established across the island. They employ across the island, they share experience all across the island.

And there are new cutting edge Irish technology companies like Softedge, Intune Networks, Movideas that are in the process right now of setting up in the North. So this isn't a fixed picture. It's developing, it's a moving picture. It's very lively and I

think it's very, very important for the future. And government can help - government agencies can help. And we've heard a little bit about that. I think it is very encouraging that Enterprise Ireland helps Northern Irish firms. I think it's very good that Invest Northern Ireland helps Irish companies. And I'm proud to say that the Embassy and the organisation I work for has been able to help some companies, some Irish companies elsewhere in the world. Again not to embarrass anybody but we've been able to help Glen Dimplex in some markets, importing markets like Chile.

We are here to try and offer that kind of that service, and if I can do a tiny bit of self promotion and self publicity for the Embassy, we're here to work on behalf of investors from companies in the North who want to find opportunities here. As well as very actively for companies from the Republic who want to find opportunities and install themselves either in the North or elsewhere in the UK. And we're committed to taking that work forward.

I just want to say a quick word of thanks. I want to say thanks to IBIS UCD for bringing all these... bringing us all together today on this theme, I think it's very, very important theme, bringing us together in these wonderful surroundings in the RIA. Particular word of thanks to our panel, incredibly distinguished, experienced panel. And a last word of thanks to our chair, Tim who was too modest to say it himself so I'll say it on his behalf. He has made a very significant personal contribution to some of the issues that we have been talking about both politically and economically.

[Applause]

And there's also an opportunity also to wish him all the best for what comes next as I'm sure he's going to continue to make an excellent contribution. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

**Tim O'Connor**

Thank you very much Julian I really appreciate those kind words. Okay that's it this evening; I'd just like to join Julian in thanking everybody. We've some great contribution of experience and wisdom from everybody. Thank you for being here. By your presence you show your interest because as Hugh says we need people more involved and thank you very, very much indeed. And we look forward to IBIS taking forward the work of this evening into the future.

Thank you very much indeed.

END SESSION 124 MINUTES