

IBIS NEWSLETTER

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IBIS CONFERENCE

A major conference on the theme *Old structures, new beliefs: religion, community and politics in contemporary Ireland* was organised by the Institute with the support of Diageo Ireland. The academic convenor was Dr Claire Mitchell, Guinness Newman Scholar in British-Irish Studies. The conference took place on 15 May 2003 in the University Industry Centre, UCD, and brought together eight speakers and an audience of about 55, drawn from the public service, the diplomatic corps, voluntary and other bodies, and the academic community.

The proceedings were divided into four sessions. Two papers were presented at each. Presentations were structured to allow time for discussion initiated by a pre-designated discussant.

Protestantism and the union

The first session was chaired by Rev Brian Kennaway, former convenor, Education Committee, Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, with Jennifer Todd, UCD, as discussant.

The session opened with a paper by **Dominic Bryan** of Queen's University Belfast, who suggested that there was strong evidence that the Orange Order is in rapid decline. He argued that the Orange Institution has failed to adapt to social, political and economic changes.

The second paper, by **John Brewer**, also of Queen's University Belfast, explored current trends in belief and practice in Ulster Protestantism. He concluded that there are strong elements of continuity and change, but argued that Protestant religiosity has not altered to the point that it constitutes secu-



Claire Mitchell, Tom Inglis and Mary Harris at the conference



Guinness Newman Scholar Dr Claire Mitchell chats to Pat Barry, Director, Corporate Affairs, Diageo Ireland

larisation, nor are trends in religiosity weakening ethno-national identities in Northern Ireland.

Catholicism and the nation

The second session was chaired by Tom Inglis, UCD, with Rev Tim Bartlett, St Mary's University College, Belfast, as discussant.

This session opened with a paper by **Claire Mitchell**, UCD, who drew attention to a common misconception that religion in Northern Ireland is politically important only for Protestants, whereas for Catholics the causes of conflict are social, economic and political. Her paper challenged the assumption of the purely social significance of Catholicism and urged re-examination of how relationships between religion and politics are conceived and measured for this group.

Mary Harris, National University of Ireland, Galway, examined nationalist discourse in nineteenth-century Ireland, which, she argued drew on both religious and political grievances. After independence, the Church's involvement in formal politics was no longer necessary, but successive governments promoted Catholic values and relied on the Church to address most social problems. The more recent challenges to the Catholic world-

view were not, she argued, incompatible with an ongoing interest in religion.

Alternative formulations of religion and politics

The third session was chaired by Dr Kenneth Milne, historiographer of the Church of Ireland, with Dr Geraldine Smyth, Irish School of Ecumenics, as discussant.

The first paper, by **Gladys Ganiel**, UCD, began by noting that historically the politics of dissent have been associated with Presbyterian participation in the United Irish movement. She examined the reasons why the United Irish and labour movements failed to transcend sectarianism, and concluded with an analysis of the potential of the peace movement to do so.

The second paper, by **Rev Terence McCaughey**, Trinity College Dublin, noted that Irish Christianity, like much of Christianity in the Northwest, has been losing adherents at an alarming rate and is seeking popularity and "relevance". Religion in various forms first promoted the idea of the oneness of humankind, and he argued for the peculiar obligation of the faith communities to discuss the full implications of this.

The future of religion and politics in Ireland

The last session was chaired by John Coakley, Director of the Institute for British-Irish Studies, UCD, with Stephen Mennell, UCD, as discussant.

A paper by **Bernadette Hayes**, Queen's University Belfast, and **Ian McAllister**, Australian National University, began by noting that the Northern Ireland conflict has traditionally been characterised as a sectarian conflict between two monolithic religious communities. Using the 2001 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, they challenged this conventional wisdom, identifying a small but significant group of religiously unattached people who are more open to endorsing a political accommodation

between the two opposing constitutional positions.

Finally, **Alice Feldman**, UCD, explored the challenges posed by the ethnic diversification of contemporary Irish society for conventional issues of religion, community and politics. She discussed the nature of religious identity and its relationship with ethnicity within broader cultural and political fields, and their implications for the "new" (multicultural) Ireland.

LECTURE SERIES

A further lecture in the series organised in association with Co-Operation Ireland took place on 12 December 2002, and focused on the Irish government and the peace process. It was chaired by Jennifer Todd, UCD, and the speakers were Albert Reynolds, former Taoiseach, and Kevin Rafter, RTÉ.

Kevin Rafter provided an introduction to the topic by exploring the role Albert Reynolds played as Taoiseach during the peace process. He identified a number of factors that had been helpful, including Mr Reynolds's commitment to resolving the issue, his role in obtaining a US visa for Gerry Adams, and the fruitful consequences of his contacts with the republican movement. He also drew attention to the central role of Fr Alex Reid as an intermediary linking the Dublin government with the republican leadership.

Albert Reynolds reflected on his time in office. On coming into office, he had seen several factors that were conducive to progress, including a growing willingness in the republican movement to try a new strategy, the Hume-Adams talks, and a positive relationship with John Major and Bill Clinton.

Mr Reynolds was convinced that a ceasefire was a prerequisite to talks, and he helped to persuade the republican movement of the value of this by means of confidence building measures, including an end to the broadcasting ban on Sinn Féin and the issue of prisoners. These resulted ultimately in

the IRA ceasefire on August 31 and the loyalist paramilitary ceasefire six weeks later.

The former taoiseach underlined his belief in the peace process and in the agreement, stressing the strong democratic mandate it had received in the referenda, but he pointed out that its advantages had not been sold vigorously in all quarters. He looked forward with some optimism to the agreement's successful implementation.

IBIS NEWS

New working papers

The IBIS pre-publication working paper series is based on work in progress. Individual papers are available free of charge from IBIS (though a small charge applies to orders of several copies). All but the last of these are based on the proceedings of the conference "Renovation or Revolution? New territorial politics in Ireland and the United Kingdom." organised by the Institute in April 2002. The most recent additions are:

23. John Osmond, *Nation building: implementing devolution in the United Kingdom—the Welsh experience*

This paper explores the Welsh experience of devolution through contrasting it with the Scottish experience. It discusses the role of a number of key characters and agencies in redefining the nature of the National Assembly. The author also tracks the development of a new civic culture in Wales, and concludes by examining the broader impact of the Welsh experience of devolution on territorial politics within the British Isles, and Welsh engagement with a network of European regions.

24. David McCrone, *Marking the card: The Scottish Parliament at 1000 days*

This paper assesses the achievements and prospects of the Scottish parliament halfway through its first term. The paper reviews the outcomes of the parliament in the context of people's expectations,

and argues, using recent surveys, that while home rule has become the prevailing consensus in contemporary Scotland, people are by no means averse to a parliament with extended powers and responsibilities.

25. Arthur Aughey, *Territory and politics in Ireland and Great Britain after devolution*
Simon Partridge, *Implications of devolution for England*

Arthur Aughey's paper focuses primarily on the experience of devolution in the United Kingdom, pointing to the political need to achieve a sense of cohesion, in order to secure the existence of a British identity. Simon Partridge outlines devolutionary moves within England itself, concluding that a quasi federal England could fit quite well into a broadened British-Irish Council.

26. Jennifer Todd, *The changing structure of conflict in Northern Ireland and the Good Friday agreement*

This paper argues that until the early twenty-first century the Northern Ireland conflict retained an unstable triangular form, where the British state was inextricably imbricated in a communal conflict. By its very structures and modes of statecraft it reproduced the conflict which, by its policies, it attempted to ameliorate and manage. The Good Friday agreement changed all that. It did not resolve the conflict, although it began to create the conditions whereby this might be possible. In effect, the conflict moved from an unstable triangular to a stable symmetrical form of conflict management. Although the provisions of the agreement appeared to mark radical change, aspects of the older form of conflict management returned in its implementation, suggesting that the triangular structure of conflict is not yet gone. Rather than a move towards stable binationalism, we may be seeing an uneven move towards an unstable multi-variable form of conflict, where the communities compete for alliances and

resources in a context of a multiplicity of power centres. In this respect globalisation and the changes in forms of territorial management in the archipelago may be less conducive to stability in Northern Ireland than was initially hoped.

27. Brigid Laffan, *Ireland, Britain, Northern Ireland and the European dimension*

This paper analyses the European dimension of British-Irish relations and the EU's role in altering the environment within which relations between these islands are played out. The paper examines relations between the two states in the context of EU membership and proceeds to an analysis of the evolution of an EU role under four headings: the EU as an arena, EU policies and reports, the EU as a model and the EU in Northern Ireland. The paper then assesses the EU dimension of the Good Friday Agreement in all three strands and finishes with a brief analysis of the longer-term contribution of the EU.

28. Claire Mitchell, *Is religion in Northern Ireland politically significant?*

Reducing religion to theological fundamentalism has stifled the debate about its political significance in Northern Ireland. This paper develops an integrated theoretical conception of religion as the key to illuminating the multi-dimensional role it plays in social relationships. Based on analysis of interviews conducted in 2000, it finds four main ways in which religion is socially and politically significant in Northern Ireland—as a communal marker, as a community-builder, as ideology and as theology. These roles differ amongst believers and non-believers, churchgoers and non-churchgoers and amongst Catholics and Protestants. Through exploration of religion as a fluid dimension of personal and group identity, the paper concludes that religion does not simply mark out the communal boundary, but often gives it meaning as well.

BRITISH-IRISH DEVELOPMENTS

Chronology

This continues the chronology last updated in Issue 5 of the *Newsletter*.

2002

- Nov 7** Taoiseach Bertie Ahern announces plan to restore the cross-border Forum for Peace and Reconciliation
- Nov 21** Multiparty talks commenced at Parliament Buildings, Stormont
- Nov 22** Fourth summit of the British-Irish Council, New Lanark, Scotland
- Nov 25** 25th plenary conference British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body opens in Manchester
- Nov 27** Reconvened Forum for Peace and Reconciliation holds first meeting in Dublin Castle
- Dec 13** British and Irish governments complete separate meetings with parties involved in round table talks

2003

- Jan 17** Ulster Volunteer Force and Red Hand Commandos break off contact with the international decommissioning body
- Jan 29** Derry City Council votes in favour of beginning a process which would change the official name of the city from Londonderry to Derry
- Jan 30** Main Unionist parties boycott round-table talks, chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Northern Secretary, at Stormont
- Feb 22** Ulster Defence Association announces it has begun 12 months of "military inactivity", and states that it will appoint a new representative to the international arms decommissioning body
- Mar 1** David Trimble unanimously re-elected as leader of the Ulster Unionist party at the party's annual general meeting in Belfast
- Mar 4** David Trimble leaves talks at Hillsborough Castle, aimed at restoring the North's power-sharing institutions, citing urgent business in London
- Mar 7** Taoiseach says that proposals to introduce a mechanism to impose sanctions on parties which contravene the Good Friday Agreement are fully consistent with the Agreement
- Mar 19** New District Policing Boards officially launched in Belfast
- Mar 24** 26th plenary conference British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body opens in Kilkenny

Mar 29 Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams says he can foresee a future without the IRA, and that the party could eventually join the NI Policing Board

Apr 7 US President George W Bush arrives for short visit to Northern Ireland

Apr 8 President Bush, Prime Minister Blair and Taoiseach Ahern issue joint statement in Hillsborough calling for progress to implement agreement

Apr 12 Brian Nelson, British agent at centre of alleged security force collusion with loyalist paramilitary killers, dies of natural causes

Apr 13 British and Irish governments receive a statement from the IRA setting out its position on recent developments and outlining future intentions

Apr 17 Further report from Sir John Stevens on his investigation into the murder of solicitor Pat Finucane in 1989

Apr 23 Prime Minister Blair states that the IRA has failed to provide a clear and unambiguous commitment to the peace process

Apr 27 Sinn Féin leader, Gerry Adams, says the IRA could disarm further if there is a positive response to its proposals to break the deadlock in the peace process

Apr 30 Sinn Féin chairman Mitchel McLaughlin says the party will be answering no more questions on the peace process

May 1 Secretary of State Paul Murphy announces postponement of Northern Ireland Assembly Elections

May 1 British and Irish governments publish text of joint declaration and release details of proposals for monitoring breaches of agreement and further confidence building measures

May 6 IRA issues statement on the current impasse in the northern peace process, saying that the IRA leadership is committed to making the peace process work

May 11 Alleged identity of "Stakeknife", said to be a long-standing, high-level British intelligence informer in IRA, revealed in Sunday newspapers

May 20 Meeting of British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, London, reviews political developments

June 17 Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble narrowly wins backing of party for proposals linked to the British and Irish Governments' joint declaration

Jun 25 UUP MPs Jeffrey Donaldson, David Burnside and the Reverend Martin Smyth resign the party whip at Westminster

IBIS WEB SITE

The Institute's web site contains an extensive links page, which continues to be a significant resource for anyone working in the field of British-Irish political and constitutional research. Links fall into six main categories:

- Official information
- Political activism
- Education
- Irish political documents
- Guide to periodicals
- Miscellaneous

The current and back issues of the IBIS Newsletter are also available on the website.

Consult the site at:

www.ucd.ie/~ibis.

Mailing list

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