

# DÁIL ÉIREANN

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## ROGHCHOISTE SPEISIALTA AN TSEANAID UM AN RÍOCHT AONTAITHE DO THARRAINGT SIAR AS AN AONTACH EORPACH

## SEANAD SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE UNITED KINGDOM FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION

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*Déardaoin, 22 Meitheamh 2017*

*Thursday, 22 June 2017*

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Tháinig an Roghchoiste le chéile ag 2.30 p.m.

The Select Committee met at 2.30 p.m.

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Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

Seanadóirí / Senators	Seanadóirí / Senators
Victor Boyhan,*	Gabrielle McFadden,*
Colm Burke,*	Gerald Nash,
Paul Daly,	Pádraig Ó Céidigh.*
Gerry Horkan.*	

\* In éagmais / In the absence of Senators Gerard P. Craughwell, Mark Daly, Michael McDowell, Michelle Mulherin and Joe O'Reilly.

Seanadóir / Senator Neale Richmond sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

## **Engagement with Lord Alderdice, Former Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly**

**Chairman:** Apologies have been received from Senators Black, Craughwell, Mark Daly, McDowell, Mulherin and O'Reilly. The majority of the Senators have been substituted. I remind Members to turn off their mobile phones or switch them to airplane mode.

I am very happy to welcome everyone to our final public session of this committee. I am delighted to welcome our final witness, Lord Alderdice, to speak on a range of topics. We have covered everything from transport to agriculture, economics, the future of Europe, Northern Ireland, the common travel area, citizenship and so much more. I never thought I would have such an in-depth knowledge of dairy farming on the Border region. Many of my friends never thought I would know so much on a Saturday night when I start talking about the real issues, but I have been very much enlightened in the past number of weeks. We have all been enlightened and we have engaged in some very good discussions.

We are delighted to have Lord Alderdice here to finish this bit of work. The report will be laid before the Seanad tomorrow week. A great deal of effort has gone into it. As a committee, we will meet twice more in private session. However, this is the last hurrah, but before I invite Lord Alderdice to speak, I will read the standard note on privilege, if he will bear with me. Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable. By virtue of section 17(2) (I) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to this committee. However, if they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise nor make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. I open the floor to Lord Alderdice.

**Lord Alderdice:** I thank the Chairman for his kind welcome and also the staff of the Seanad who have been very helpful in making arrangements for today from my point of view. I bring the Members greetings from the House of Lords, their sister chamber on the other side of the water. I especially appreciate being here not just because of the subject, but I understand the Members will be moving out of this Chamber in the near future to allow for renovations. That is also planned for the Parliament in Westminster once the complicated and very expensive business of contracts and where to put us during the work on the building is sorted out. It is a delight to be here again in this building.

I am very grateful to the Members for facilitating the sitting today because I was in Colombia on peace process business; I came back yesterday. I mention that because one of the things that has struck me in being involved in the Colombian process is their failure to understand the importance of something we learned in the Irish peace process, that is, the fundamental significance of the relationships between various important groups. The Members will recall that in our process North, South, east and west, we identified three key sets of relationships between unionists and nationalists in the North, between people in the North and in the South and between Britain and Ireland. Of course, the relationship with the United States was important and, particularly as we are thinking about it today, the relationship with Europe, but the three key sets of relationships in our process were the three that I have mentioned. We established the

process in three strands, each mirroring in its content and membership those who represented those relationships. The form of the process followed the function of addressing those relationships rather than the reverse.

In Colombia, they worked extremely hard. They have gone around the world trying to identify all sorts of useful processes, but they have not understood the significance of these historic disturbed relationships. That is a problem in the European Union itself. The EU was a peace process. The purpose of the whole European project was to ensure there would never again be a terrible war in Europe so all the instruments with which we have become familiar - freedom to travel, to trade across borders, the development of the euro - were instruments to the purpose of relationships which would not break down into war. As time has gone on, people have forgotten about the purpose and focused more on the instruments to deliver the purpose. That is one of the reasons the project has got itself into some difficulty and it may well be one of the important reasons we are having to address, unfortunately, the question of Brexit.

I will not focus on all three sets of relationships. The committee has had many sittings to address a number of them. In particular, I will not focus on the relationship between the rest of the United Kingdom and Ireland because although it is very important - economically, it may be more substantial than the relationships between North and South and in some ways more complex to address - I will focus more on the relationship between North and South and also the relationships within Northern Ireland. I will explain the reason I believe that is relevant shortly.

Unfortunately, the North-South relationship is less of an issue in economic terms than we would wish. I would rather there was a great deal more economic to and fro between North and South, but in percentage issues, with the exception of agriculture and agrifood business, and possibly of electricity and energy, we would like to grow the economy and the economic relationship between North and South much more. There is, however, an issue of individual people moving backwards and forwards, many of them every day, living on one side of the Border and working on the other side. As we all know, in the past few years that has been a great deal easier for many people in practical terms. I find it very encouraging that none of the political parties, North or South, wants a hard Border. That would not have been the case a number of years ago. Some political parties in the North would have been very keen to emphasise the Border and to make it a very hard Border. The consequence of the peace process, working together over a period of time and appreciating the value of that, means that nobody, including now the largest party in Northern Ireland, the DUP, wants a hard Border. It is very positive that among all the parties now there is an attitude that we want to make sure that as little harm as possible comes from the consequences of Brexit. However, there is less free movement than we would sometimes like to believe. When I was working as a doctor and psychiatrist, I was keen to encourage the secondment of doctors, particularly young doctors in training, to the South and from the South to the North. I also talked to some people in the police because I thought it would be good if we could have some secondment backwards and forwards between the police services. It is funny what really gets in the way. It was not professional recognition or salaries, but pensions. There was a huge problem about making sure that if somebody went North or South, they did not lose out on pension contributions. When I spoke to some colleagues in a couple of other countries about this, they said it was the same with them. Freedom of movement is one thing and professional recognition is another, but sometimes it is these practical national issues that get in the way.

When we think about the question of the free movement of people and what they can do, there are other places to which we can look to see the consequences, positive and negative,

helpful and otherwise, not only with the movement of people, but also other things. We think very much about the freedom of movement between countries in the European Union and I mentioned, for example, professional recognition. If one goes to work in the United States or Canada as a doctor, one will get one's professional recognition in one province in Canada or in one state in the United States but one will not be able to simply move and work in another part of the United States or another part of Canada. It would be much easier for one to move in Europe than it would be within the United States or in Canada. On the other hand, there are some quite positive aspects of the relationship between Canada and the United States. As in so many other areas, it is valuable for us to look and see what things we can learn from the experiences of others, and I will return to that, particularly in regard to the EEA, in a few minutes.

There is the importance of the North-South relationship. While it is the case that the British and Irish Governments, the United Kingdom Government and Brussels will have to do much of the heavy lifting in connection with the Brexit negotiations, it is important that there are open and constructive North-South channels. That is one of the reasons in a number of debates, particularly before the Westminster election, in March and April that I and others in the House of Lords, perhaps most notably Lord Trimble, suggested that in the event that it is not possible to get the Executive re-established in Northern Ireland - we hope this will not be the case - before the end of this month or at whatever point is necessary, that any change, and the legislation which would be necessary for any change, would keep the Assembly in business in order that it might be possible to have an elected body that could relate North-South on issues particularly related to Brexit. It is important that the people of Northern Ireland, through their elected representatives, engage with the people of the rest of the island through their representatives in order that we can address this North-South relationship. It is important to point out that it would not be satisfactory if the two major parties in the North, the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin, which will obviously have the most to say about this, were to leave the heavy lifting on these difficult issues to the Government in Dublin and the Government in London to address. It is too easy to leave these responsibilities to others and then sometimes criticise others for the outcome. It is important that we all take up our responsibilities to address these issues. I hope it is the case that the Executive will be in place soon but if it is not, I would again say in this Chamber today that it is very important to maintain the elected body of the Assembly in order that there are those within Northern Ireland with whom to engage, people who are elected to serve and represent the people.

That means there would also be the possibility of a serious engagement within Northern Ireland about these questions. When the issue of the referendum arose, knowing that I was a very committed remainer, as people describe it now, some of my colleagues in the Liberal Democrats asked me: "Are you going to run a campaign for remain in Northern Ireland?" I said, "No, I am not". They said, "Why, do you not believe in it?", and I said, "Absolutely, I do." However, if we were to run an effective campaign to remain, I know what would happen. The community would split down all the old usual dividing lines and Sinn Féin, the SDLP and Alliance would also say "remain" and the two main unionist parties would say "Brexit". All we would have done would be to deepen the division in the community on yet another issues. Those colleagues asked me: "What are you going to do? Are you going to ignore it?" I said: "No, on the contrary, we are going to be very active about it. We are going to have a community initiative and we are going to create a public conversation in which we address all of these issues." The young man who is accompanying me today, Mr. Conor Houston, was responsible together with my colleague, Eva Grosman, in the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building in Belfast, for creating what was the only significant public initiative in the run up to the referendum and since then, called "EU Debate NI". That brought on to platforms in meetings of people from the

Border areas, including lawyers, farmers, business people, students and others, people across the range of views on the remain side and the Brexit side to have a serious conversation about the implications. It was extremely successful not only because it enabled people to talk about it, but because there was not the polarisation and the vitriol that there was in England over the question. People were able to have a good conversation about it and the Ulster Unionist Party in the end took a position that it would vote to remain. The Democratic Unionist Party said that it had discussed and thought about it but, on balance, it would vote for Brexit, but they also decided that, on balance, it was not a question of splitting in a partisan way. That is important when we examine these questions in Northern Ireland, where it is so easy for us to fall into divisions, that we find it possible to explore the practicalities we face, and there are some real practical difficulties that we face.

What are these practicalities? It is not too difficult to identify what the problems might be, but it is quite difficult to be clear on what size they will be. For example, in terms of getting facts, some estimates of the Northern Ireland balance of payments with other parts of the EU have suggested there may be a surplus of some hundreds of millions of sterling but a more recent Northern Ireland Assembly research paper suggested a deficit of about £2 billion. The facts are quite difficult to come to grips with and in many ways we will have to wait and see whether all the problems we expect are as great as we fear or whether they are even worse than we imagine. There are some benefits, for example, to being in the European Union, which we do not need to lose. I cite the simple example of mobile phones. As Members of Seanad, the Senators undoubtedly travel a good deal not only within Ireland, but beyond it, and they will know that excessive roaming charges have now been reduced by the European Union, which is of great benefit. This was a problem not only when we went to other parts of Europe, but in Northern Ireland if one used one's phone not even near the Border, but in Portrush or Portstewart, one was often caught with having to pay international roaming charges because the nearest mast was in Donegal. Some people have suggested there will be a return to roaming charges, but there is no need for that if, for example, the UK Government were to say to the telephone companies that it would only give them a licence if they were to continue to address roaming charges in the way that they do with the rest of the EU, and they would not be given a licence unless they did that and could be held to that.

There may be some issues that do not have to be as bad and there may be some that will be worse. It will be difficult to be sure what the result will be in advance. We have to explore all the questions and perhaps examine the possibility of having more information technology for traceability of people and movements between Britain and Ireland. On that point, I should point out that things are not actually frightfully consistent, even at present. When I came over from London this morning, I showed my passport. I will travel to Belfast on the train this evening and may or may not use my passport. When I return to Britain on the ferry, I will not use my passport at all, but if I travel on some flights, I will have to use my passport as photo ID. There is an idea that there is complete consistency and that problems will be created because of inconsistencies due to Brexit, but the truth is that we are not as consistent as we might like to believe we are. If we think about and discuss the issue more and come to an agreement, we may find ourselves being able to be more consistent and provide for better traceability. In Ireland we are very used to the traceability of animals but less so of people. Perhaps we might be more able to trace the movements of people in a way that is accepting of their privacy and does not intrude excessively into it. Where, for example, we need customs checks and checks on the movement of goods and services, it may not necessarily always be the case that they need to be made at the Border. It would be quite possible to create authorised economic operator status, as already happens, for some companies. It is a little excessive for small or medium-sized enterprises, but

something of that nature could be done to enable some companies to address these issues more easily.

In many ways, the perceptions of a hard Border, checkpoints, watchtowers and so on were security-related rather than related to customs. I see no evidence of a serious threat of a return to that security problem. I say that because, although some dissidents remain, one of the things the last Assembly elections and, to some extent, the Westminster elections showed was that the political project of the leadership of Sinn Féin and the success it had achieved demonstrated that democratic politics was the way forward, whatever one's political vision. The use of violence does not help that vision; rather, it detracts from it. The success of Sinn Féin, often at the expense of others - that is democracy, as we all know - has demonstrated to its own satisfaction and that of many of those who follow it that democratic and peaceful politics rather than the use of violence is the way forward. When people think of the problems of Brexit and a hard border as something that threatens the peace process, as distinct from the political process or economic relations, it is not as great a danger as some might have perhaps feared.

We need to be aware that moving from the current arrangements to the new dispensation does not have to happen overnight. In a very useful paper, Professor David Phinnemore from Queen's University, with a number of colleagues, explored the question of the European economic area, EEA. I pay tribute to the professor and Ms Katy Hayward, with whom we have co-operated quite a lot in the past couple of years when they sought expertise in these areas. I am sure many colleagues will know of the paper he, with a number of colleagues, produced which explores the question of the European economic area. Even in the paper, it tends to be seen as the alternative to the current arrangement or a complete separation. That may very well be a possibility. It would certainly maintain the free movement of people, goods, capital and services while remaining outside the European Union.

There is, however, another possibility, namely, making an agreement that by the end of the two-year period starting from the invoking of Article 50 there would be a transition period for Northern Ireland, during which it would be within the EEA but outside the European Union, which would smooth the way for an ultimate Brexit. This would make it clear that there was time to explore the practicalities, that is, all of the things members and I have mentioned, without necessarily trying to find a resolution for all of them within the two-year period and at the same time making it clear that the people had made a determination on Brexit and that that, therefore, was what would happen. There would be an interim period to make it easier to address some of the economic questions, in particular. The costs are significant. It is not clear to us how great they will be, but if there was a transitional arrangement, they might be lower for us in the short term. One of the criticisms of EEA status has been that a country pays the money but has little say on the rules. That would probably be less of an issue if it was a short-term transitional rather than a permanent arrangement in which, over many years, a country had little or no say on any rule change.

As a Northern Ireland politician, the committee knows that I could speak at considerable length about almost anything at all, particularly when I have a captive audience, but it would be much wiser for me to finish there and take the opportunity, if colleagues wish and with the permission of the Chairman, to have questions and answers. I again thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to speak to it.

**Chairman:** I thank Lord Alderdice for his opening remarks which were very thought-provoking and appreciated. There were a couple of very imaginative solutions proposed that had not been brought to our attention, especially on the cross-Border aspect. I envisage including

them in our report when we publish it next week.

**Senator Victor Boyhan:** I warmly welcome Lord Alderdice to the Seanad. We go back a long time and were members of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party, ELDR, when I was a member of the Progressive Democrats Party which was affiliated to the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party. I am also a member of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly and have the opportunity to be in the House of Commons from time to time where I want to acknowledge we are always warmly received.

Lord Alderdice mentioned a number of very interesting issues. He also referred to the North, South, east and west. Any politician from the Republic and, possibly, the island of Ireland would ask about the opportunities to achieve a better deal for the island of Ireland within the European Union. That is an objective for us and it is a reasonable aspiration.

I was in Balmoral recently to attend an agricultural show at which I met someone from the Ulster Farmers Union. He said he had looked at the issue and that although things had moved on, he was loyal to the Crown but perhaps more loyal to the half crown. That touched a nerve because he was talking about economics. Money in people's pockets and for their families, the economy and the great agricultural trade links between the North and the South all unite people.

Agriculture and the food sector generally are key trade areas. Products which originated in the Republic of Ireland are processed in the North and then brought back across the Border. Some large co-ops have merged. There are many synergies in the agrifood sector, North and South. As we know, it is a very successful sector in economic terms.

I know about the immense record of Lord Alderdice in the context of the Good Friday Agreement and achieving peace on the island of Ireland. I acknowledge the significant role he played in that regard. He mentioned Sinn Féin, one of the few parties which published a proposal. I am disappointed, therefore, that Sinn Féin Senators are not present. On the two occasions I have attended the committee I have not met a Sinn Féin Member in the Chamber. Sinn Féin drew up a document on seeking special designated status for Northern Ireland within the European Union. It is worth looking at the broader picture. Mrs. Theresa May is involved in ongoing discussions with the DUP which are critical for her very survival. Unfortunately, we fall in with all of that. Is there now some sort of political will that could see a greater synergy, union or advocacy for the issue of special designated status within the EU for the island of Ireland, not specifically Northern Ireland, although that is the piece we are talking about? Of course, we have concerns about the need to protect the peace process, retain access to the Single Market, remain part of the common travel area, to which Lord Alderdice referred, and maintain EU funding streams. When we get down to the nuts and bolts, it is about money, funding, economics and prosperity, all of which underpin and sustain peace. How do we protect the existing unfettered cross-border and EU-wide access to employment, social welfare, security and health care? There are a lot of things which are of mutual benefit to us. For example, how do we retain, maintain and grow agriculture and trade links, North and South?

I travel to Northern Ireland very often as I have family and connections up there. The one thing that is clear now is that people are facing real choices. Without dwelling too much on agriculture, it is clearly a very successful area and people see the importance of the links and the markets for all of that. I have two questions. First, does Lord Alderdice feel such a special status can be achieved through flexible and pragmatic negotiations? Is there the possibility, be it through a bilateral arrangement or an international arrangement, of a negotiation for this special designated status for Northern Ireland within the EU? Second, what is Lord Alderdice's

view of the argument for that special designated status? Can it be done with the DUP, given Sinn Féin has clearly indicated some support for it? I would like some feedback and comments based on Lord Alderdice's experience both as a committed European and as a very successful politician in Northern Ireland. I thank him for his time.

**Senator Paul Daly:** I welcome Lord Alderdice. His comments were very enlightening and his vast experience is evident from his words. I would like to get his opinion on the current political status following the Westminster election. If he had been here three weeks ago, would any of his contribution have been different? Does the current political situation determine his outlook in a way that is different from his outlook before the election? I assume he is no different from ourselves, in that we did not see the result we were handed coming down the line. In view of the ongoing negotiations between the DUP and the Conservatives, and given Lord Alderdice pointed to the possibility of a worst-case scenario if the Assembly cannot be re-formed, what effect would that have for the island from a Brexit perspective? I hope it does not happen but we have to ask the question as to whether Northern Ireland might revert to direct rule, while the DUP is part of supporting the minority Conservative Government during that situation of direct rule. To use an old phrase, where would the tail stop wagging the dog in that situation? I can imagine it would have terrible consequences for the Good Friday Agreement and it certainly would not help our collective wish for a soft Brexit for the island. Perhaps Lord Alderdice can tease that out.

Before the election result, from an Irish point of view and in hoping for the best from the Brexit negotiation, I would have seen "no deal is better than a bad deal" and a Conservative Government with an overall majority as being our worst-case scenario. Now, given Theresa May's overall majority never happened and she is weakened to a certain extent, many are saying that this has to work to Ireland's advantage. However, I have a fear that the enemy in the room under those circumstances could be our colleagues within the 27, in that they now see the UK in a weaker position and they see an opportunity to teach a lesson to somebody who wants to leave the classroom before the bell goes. Therefore, they could go for an even harder Brexit than had been anticipated, now they have the opportunity, and we could be the big losers.

While we are only one of 27, we have had kind words from everybody who speaks in any position of authority or otherwise, but kind words do not wash when it gets down to the nitty-gritty. We have no commitment from anybody, despite what they have said about what we deserve and should get. I would like to hear Lord Alderdice's opinion on my fear that our worst enemy may be our own side, in the sense that they may go for the jugular by virtue of the fact the UK is in a weakened position.

**Chairman:** I have a question that builds on a point made by Senator Daly. It goes back to Lord Alderdice's previous role in Stormont rather than his current role in Westminster, and concerns the position of the devolved administrations and the role they are playing in the negotiations within the UK. How does Lord Alderdice feel their voices can be heard best by Westminster and by the UK Government in particular, and are they being heard? I met this week a delegation from the Welsh Assembly and two weeks ago I visited Edinburgh and met a number of MSPs. To be frank, part of the feeling there was party-political as opposed to relating to the devolved administrations, in that they were to an extent being frozen out. Obviously, the current impasse in Northern Ireland does not help that situation. In future, as Senator Daly noted, Ireland will be engaging in serious internal negotiations with the other 26 remaining states at Council of Ministers level and beyond. However, we will also wonder what is the negotiation in the UK. Is it solely a London-led deal and how are they going to incorporate the devolved

administrations in the negotiations and in the Great Repeal Bill, whenever it comes? Moreover, are they going to be able to properly implement whatever deal comes to pass?

**Lord Alderdice:** I thank the Chairman and his colleagues for their thoughtful questions and interventions. First, on the questions raised by Senator Boyhan about the island of Ireland and the question of special status for Northern Ireland, I think there will be a degree of resistance to the notion of a special status for Northern Ireland, particularly if it gives Northern Ireland itself a different relationship with the EU than the rest of the United Kingdom. I think there would be an instinctive difficulty about that, especially if one speaks about it in broad terms. One of the lessons from the negotiations on the Good Friday Agreement was that when people talked in terms of broad principles, they tended to divide. When they talked about practicalities, however, very often it was possible to get an understanding.

I remember when we were talking, for example, about issues like animal health, where we recognised the island as a whole is a kind of natural quarantine, there was very little resistance from the DUP. Indeed, I remember someone asking Dr. Paisley, on the question of European funding for farming and so on, how he squared the fact that, on the one hand, he was very anti-EU but, on the other, he was quite happy to engage when it concerned agriculture. To which his characteristic response was that the people are British but the cows are Irish. I think there is something interesting there because he recognised, as Senator Boyhan did, how important agriculture is for the island and how we have a natural quarantine. It may be worth exploring whether the island as a whole would have some special context within Europe. For example, Senator Boyhan said that animals and food products move around within the island and we are all very aware that if it comes to something like BSE or foot and mouth disease, the island as a whole has to take action, not just the North or the South. We are separated by the water that protects us as well as sometimes isolates us. There could be mileage in looking to the EU for some special arrangement on specific areas, such as agriculture and agribusiness, and to ask the EU if it would accept, for practical reasons such as disease control and the economy, that the entire island of Ireland would have a special status, not in every area but in this area. There could be other areas as well, but if we look at the specifics and the practicalities, and the fact our island status has sometimes created problems for us but also has advantages, maybe there is something that can be done.

Can this be done with the DUP? I think it can. There is a much greater openness to these things now than there was before. We should not underestimate the effect of the changed security situation and the changed attitudes in the country. There has been a liberalisation of the economy and of many attitudes, North and South, which means many people not only in the younger generation but in the older generation feel less anxiety and antipathy. Senator Boyhan asked how attitudes in the North might have changed or be changing and he linked it to the importance of finance and the economy. He is right about this, but it is not just this. Attitudes have eased up and loosened up.

For many years, many of us said those who wanted to bring people together with the use of violence were on the wrong track altogether. One does not bring people together with the use of violence. One brings people together when they can relate without anxieties and concerns and they get to know each other, and I think this has happened. It is the case that many people in the unionist community are looking at the prospects for the future in a different way and with a different set of attitudes than would have been the case even ten years ago and certainly 20 or 30 years ago. If we can continue working together more and more on things, the future will decide itself, and do so peacefully and democratically, through people building relationships

with each other. Agriculture is one place and there are many other places. Sport is a place for competition, but it is also a place where we can have common identity with each other. I am not negative about this, on the contrary.

In a sense this leads us to Senator Paul Daly's questions on the current political situation. Sometimes I joke when people ask me what I think will happen that I am the son of Presbyterian Minister and not the son of a prophet. I had absolutely no idea what the outcome of the election would be and I was no better than anybody else in working that out. However, it seems to me that some important things have changed. There has been a lot of talk, in particular perhaps in England, about the potential negative nature of the dependence of Prime Minister Theresa May on DUP votes and I understand this. However, one of the concerns might have been that the Prime Minister might not have been paying attention to the relationship with Ireland, North and South, and I remember in April when we had a debate on this question I noted the Prime Minister had not always paid attention. When she was Home Secretary she did not pay attention in the creation of the National Crime Agency to the fact there was a land border for which it would be responsible. When I asked whether there had been discussions with the Minister for Justice and Equality in Ireland there was no thought of it. It was not that there was an intention to snub, it just had not been thought about. She will not be able not to think about Ireland, North and South, because of the DUP, ironically perhaps. Do I think that will be negative? Not necessarily. When it comes to questions such as agriculture and animal health, and issues such as the air passenger duty for flights, the need to ensure energy co-operation and the electricity interconnector, I think we will find the DUP is much more concerned about some of these economic concerns now than it is about issues of social legislation being expanded to the rest of the United Kingdom. The DUP will keep Ireland, North and South, on the agenda and that will be helpful.

When people talk, as some have, with a good deal of anxiety about the consequences for the Good Friday Agreement of the DUP being involved, not in coalition but in a confidence and supply arrangement, I have said to them they are complaining about that degree of co-operation but they were telling us what a wonderful thing it was when some of our parties went into government with it in Northern Ireland. Although it may or may not please everybody in the Chamber, it is not unlikely that at some point in the future there will be a coalition government here in the rest of the Ireland in which Sinn Féin will play a part. Will people say that is the end of the Good Friday Agreement? I do not think so. I do not think even the DUP will say it is an end of it. On the contrary, it will say it is an outcome of democracy and we have to find a way of working with it.

I am much less anxious and concerned than some. I understand the concerns but, for example, the Chairman asked about devolved administrations being heard and one of the problems for Wales and Scotland is they have Governments of a different political complexion from the Government in London and, therefore, there is not an immediate set of relationships, whereas the situation for Northern Ireland is there will have to be constant conversations between the leaders and chief whips. Scotland and Wales will have their difficulties but, having said that, my impression is the Prime Minister understands and is committed to trying to keep the United Kingdom and relationships in these islands together rather than them going apart under her watch. There will be moves, but especially in Northern Ireland.

Paradoxically, the dependence on the DUP may be a helpful thing. Is it possible the big enemy may be the other Twenty-six Counties? I would not like to speak about it being an enemy, but it is a challenge and we need to recognise that it is a challenge. This is a good reason

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for working together. I very much hope that colleagues here will see the opportunities and imperative of ensuring good relationships between this House and its Members and colleagues in all the political parties in Northern Ireland as well as with the Government in London. I am anxious, as everyone is, but I am not as pessimistic as some are if we work together on it.

**Chairman:** I thank Lord Alderdice. There is much to think about, a lot to feed in and, I hope, a lot of imaginative solutions will be produced by the committee and submitted to the relevant people in due course. I thank the witnesses for travelling quite a distance to come here. We really appreciate being able to end our public hearings on such an uplifting and thoughtful address, and I thank Lord Alderdice for that.

As this is our last public meeting I wish to put on record my gratitude to all members of the committee for their hard work over recent months. I also thank all the witnesses who have appeared and testified. On my behalf and that of the committee, I express my gratitude to the secretariat for everything it has done and is doing for the committee. It often goes unsaid and I might not get a chance to say it again.

The select committee adjourned at 3.20 p.m. until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 28 June 2017.