

Barron Reports: Statements.

The Taoiseach: The debate we are about to hold in this House is on a matter of the greatest national importance. It is about a series of atrocities perpetrated on innocent people in our country, including the bombings of May 1974 in Dublin and Monaghan, which saw the greatest loss of life on a single day during the Troubles. It is about murder, pure and simple and responsibility for that murder. It is about justice for victims and about how victims and survivors were and are treated. Certainly, it is about the past, but it is also about the future.

To move forward to a better future, we need to understand what happened on this island over nearly 40 years of senseless violence. Today's debate is part of that process. It is, first and foremost, about honouring and remembering those who died in the violence of the Troubles, particularly the victims of the Dublin and Monaghan Bombings and of the attacks in Dundalk and in the Border region in the 1970s which were the subject of Mr. Justice Barron's reports.

As well as remembering the many lives lost, we must reflect on many more victims and survivors who are permanently scarred, both physically and mentally. Many of those people are here today in the Public Gallery. This debate in our national Parliament is about those people. It is about their loved ones and about those issues that matter to them. Over the years, I have met many of the victims and survivors of these atrocities and I know that many others in the House have too. I have listened carefully to their stories and tried to understand their pain as best I can. I have tried, through the office of Taoiseach, and through my colleagues in Government, to do all I can to address all of the issues they have raised.

No two testimonies are the same, but I have always been touched by the depth of feeling and the continuing sense of pain and loss shared by those injured and grieving. Their experiences demand to be heard, recognised and remembered in our wider society. We have an obligation to those who suffered most in the conflict and we have an obligation to our society as a whole. This was recognised a decade ago in the Good Friday Agreement, which affirmed that "it is essential to acknowledge and address the suffering of the victims of violence as a necessary element of reconciliation" and recognised "that victims have a right to remember as well as to contribute to a shared society".

We have to build on the foundations which have now been laid, to ensure a stable, fair, inclusive and peaceful island where our children can look forward to happy and productive lives. We have always acknowledged that this must not and, indeed, cannot be achieved by sidelining victims or by drawing a curtain of silence and secrecy over the events of the past. Most important, it is the victims themselves, their representatives, and the centrality of their experiences, which are crucial to hopes for a better future, by ensuring we do not forget the mistakes and evils of the past.

I would like to acknowledge the work already undertaken in this jurisdiction, including by the Victims Commissioner, the late Mr. John Wilson, by the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation and by the Remembrance Commission and Fund. The commission's term has recently been extended, reflecting the fact that the needs of victims and survivors must continue to be properly met. We had a generation or more

of violence and, as with the broader process of reconciliation and transformation that is under way, these are issues that will have to be properly and actively addressed for many years to come. In so far as we have responsibility in this jurisdiction, the Government will ensure that this will be so.

We will also continue to work on these issues with our colleagues in Northern Ireland. I welcome the appointment by the Northern Ireland Executive of the new team of victims commissioners earlier this week. I recently met Mrs. McDougall, the former interim victims commissioner and I am sure that she and her new colleagues will take up their new task with the energy and sensitivity it requires and deserves. I also welcomed the establishment by the British Government last summer of the consultative group on dealing with the past, headed by Mr. Denis Bradley and Archbishop Robin Eames. I was pleased to meet that group in Dublin in November.

It is appropriate to reflect, in this new context, on what is possible in terms of addressing the legacy of the past and I believe the consultative group can have an important role. At the same time, I do not underestimate the difficulty of the task in a situation where the very definition of the conflict and of the term victim is so contested. I am sure the group will learn much from the work undertaken by Mr. Justice Barron, by the Oireachtas sub-committee and by victims groups in this jurisdiction.

One of the most important issues for victims and survivors is the simple need to know the truth about what happened. For many, the knowledge that a neighbour was involved in the killing of a loved one is an additional burden to bear. For others, the knowledge that members of the security forces were involved adds to their pain. The suspicion that they were somehow involved in the commission of a crime or in ensuring that nobody was brought to justice is often the greatest injustice. It is almost impossible to imagine how that must feel or how to help deal with such appalling situations.

As the House is aware, we have established a number of inquiries into matters that are within this jurisdiction. When we began this process with the appointment of the late Chief Justice, Mr. Justice Liam Hamilton at the beginning of 2000, nobody thought we would be discussing the culmination of this work in 2008. It has taken us eight solid years of detailed work and examination of all of the files that were available in this jurisdiction. Many Departments were involved and the Ceann Comhairle was very helpful at the early stage, assisting us in the gathering and bringing together of the information.

This has been a long and difficult journey. Questions remain unanswered, but much has been achieved. We now have much more information about who was responsible for these attacks than we had at the outset. We know more about the circumstances in which the attacks were carried out and about the investigations of these crimes and where those investigations failed. We must recall that when we revisited this issue, the investigation of these cases, in particular the 1974 bombings, closed up a matter of months after the events, with no further work done until 26 years later. That was probably the most difficult issue, the fact that more than 25 years had elapsed and the files for the biggest atrocities that had happened in the Troubles were closed in August 1974. The Ceann Comhairle will recall that was the position in which we

found ourselves when we started on the road of re-examination. The lapse of time was a considerable disadvantage but it did not stop the enormous amount of work that was undertaken in the last eight years.

In some cases, theories that had been advanced over the years have been tested in a thorough and systematic way to the best extent possible, given the information available.

Thanks to the work of the joint committee, the testimonies and experiences of victims and their families have been heard publicly in an appropriate way. Many of the individuals and groups have interacted with Mr. Justice Hamilton and Mr. Justice Barron and made submissions over the period. Where it was appropriate in the light of those investigations, formal apologies have been made by the Garda Síochána and Ministers. In meetings with victims and survivors, I have offered my apologies on behalf of the Government for mistakes made in the past. I wish to place that once more formally on the record of the House today.

For many families, their pain was heightened by the suspicion or knowledge that perhaps agents of the State, whose duty it is to protect its citizens and promote the rule of law, had played some part in the loss they had suffered. In too many cases, official denials and contested facts made things worse and had a negative impact on confidence in policing and the administration of justice. Of course, the question of collusion between the security forces and terrorists in perpetrating these attacks has always been a central unanswered question. Sadly, in many cases that remains the case to this day. We have consistently called on the British Government to meet its responsibilities to co-operate with inquiries in this State and to help the process of uncovering the truth about what happened. I repeat the call in the House today that I have made many times here and elsewhere.

The willingness of the British authorities to co-operate with the various inquiries has been tested and in many cases found wanting. We tried to address these issues by establishing inquiries in certain important and representative cases in discussions with the British Government at Weston Park in July 2001. For our part, we have abided by the commitment to establish the inquiry into the murders of Harry Breen and Bob Buchanan, which is now proceeding under Judge Smithwick. While inquiries are under way in the cases of Robert Hamill, Rosemary Nelson and Billy Wright, the inquiry into the death of Pat Finucane has not been established by the British Government. The House and the Government have made clear our view that a proper independent inquiry must be established as recommended by Judge Cory. I again repeat that call today. While I regret that all of our efforts to date have not been fully successful for the victims, that does not mean we will give up trying to get those commitments honoured. I know we have the support of the entire House in that regard.

In more recent years, the valuable work of the Police Ombudsman of Northern

Ireland has uncovered further clear evidence of collusion. For example, the detailed report into the killing of Raymond McCord was truly shocking, even for those who had long suspected the level of collusion. It also proved that the issue of collusion matters to all of us and to all communities in Northern Ireland. It is not a purely

Nationalist concern, as has been eloquently demonstrated by Raymond's father's campaign for justice for his son. He has met my officials and in a number of times.

As we speak of dealing with the past, I am acutely conscious that no strategy or formula, however inventive, can diminish that sense of loss or undo the harm that has been done. We need to constantly remember the sheer scale of the horror and loss that was visited on so many families during the Troubles. More than 3,700 people lost their lives during the Troubles, while more than 40,000 suffered injury. We must constantly remind ourselves of the appalling price that many people have paid over these long years - the loss of life, the injury, trauma, psychological damage and lost opportunities suffered and endured by people from all walks of life, of all ages and from all traditions. Nobody has a monopoly on suffering or victimhood, as I have said many times.

When we speak of collusion, it is also essential to remember that many members of the security forces and their families underwent terrible pain and suffering arising from the conflict. When we contemplate the vicious attacks on the Catholic community along the Border, we must also remember the equally vicious attacks on members of the Protestant community in that same area. The families of those who died know better than anyone that pain and despair do not distinguish on the basis of political belief, religion or any other human attribute. The pain is felt by the relatives of the dead in Belfast, Derry, Enniskillen, Omagh, rural County Armagh and so many other places that have become so tragically associated with death and suffering. Many of the people who died in Dublin, Monaghan and Dundalk were from counties all over the South. It pierces the hearts of victims and survivors in those places as much as it does those victims who are with us today and whom I have gotten to know over the years.

The enormous political progress of recent years cannot wipe away our memory of the dreadful consequences of all violence - the loss of trust, the damage done to community relations, the undermining of confidence in the administration of justice and, perhaps the greatest price, the entrenchment and deepening of divisions between the two communities in Northern Ireland and between the two traditions on this island.

We need to understand that collusion occurred. We need to understand how that was allowed to happen so that we can ensure it never happens again. We need to understand why it matters, not just to victims but to all of society, so that we build a sustainable, peaceful future. It is essential that the impressive gains made in policing reform and accountability and the growing cross-community confidence in the transformed policing environment in Northern Ireland are consolidated for the future. The work of the new Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Historical Enquiries Team, the Northern Ireland Policing Board and the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland are all essential to a better future. The completion of British demilitarisation is another tremendous sign of hope. The completion of the devolution project through the transfer of policing and justice powers from Westminster as agreed at St. Andrews will be a further essential step.

We have reached a profoundly positive new stage in the peace process in Northern Ireland. Relationships between Unionism and Nationalism, between North and South

on this island and between these islands have never been better. What drives us all now is the realisation that never again should our people experience and bear witness to a terrible conflict. The work of reconciliation must continue. The victims and survivors must be as much a part of the future as they are of the past.

I promised this debate in the autumn. I promised that, starting on the first day back of this session, we would have an opportunity today and tomorrow for people to air their views. This does not end our work or any of the processes in which we have been involved, but it honours the commitment to bring the issue before the House. It was not possible to do so in the autumn of 2007, but we have the opportunity today.

The ongoing work in handling these issues continues. The Government Whip and the Government will continue to deal with these matters, as the Ministers for Justice, Equality and Law Reform and Foreign Affairs have worked to do. As part of what we are doing, I welcome this debate and the views which will be expressed by Members today and tomorrow. My officials, people in other relevant Departments and I will continue to deal with the issues as we have been doing.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Like the Taoiseach, I raised this matter a number of times and I welcome the debate on this serious matter at the start of the Dáil session. The sad thing is that the families of persons who lost their lives in those tragic circumstances have no closure to the events. Despite some progress being made and, in some cases, the convictions of persons, there are others who believe that the system has not dealt with their loved ones being blown up, murdered or so on during a troubled time in the country's recent history.

As we speak, there are people who know the answers to the questions of who was involved and who gave the orders. There are those who know that collusion took place and those who know who was involved in that collusion. The sad thing is that we as a legislature cannot put a finger on those people and have the arm of the law bring them to justice to deal with their outrageous acts of murder and mayhem.

The debate underlines the strength of feeling in the House about the need to resolve the violent atrocities that were inquired into by Mr. Justice Barron and the great work he did. While we can hope with some confidence that the conflict in which these acts were perpetrated will not exist in the future, we cannot say that what happened in the past can be ignored or left unresolved. That is where the pain still remains for the families. It would be a travesty of justice and inflict more pain and grief on those families whose lives were shattered beyond belief. We owe it to the victims and their families to do everything we can as a legislature and parliament on behalf of the people to see that these crimes are resolved and that closure and some finality is brought to this very sad period in our recent history.

The value of the reports produced by Mr. Justice Barron is that they confirm what we have long suspected, namely, that there is very clear evidence of collusion by the security forces in many of these murders. I accept this conclusion and am sure that all parties in the House do likewise. Knowing that collusion occurred and bringing those responsible to justice are two very different matters. For many years, I have highlighted the persistent refusal of the British government to co-operate properly

with the Barron inquiry. This lack of co-operation is confirmed in these reports by Mr. Justice Barron.

I also understand that former members of the security forces were given not just an instruction but a written instruction not to respond to the inquiry. I find it quite incredible that the British government would so blatantly and brazenly ignore a formal commission of inquiry established by this State. Not even the Taoiseach's special relationship with the former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, was able to break that down.

It is important for us to consider what the sub-committee said. We have had representations from a number of the groups involved. The sub-committee did a very good job of dealing with these matters. I will put some of this on the record in this debate. The sub-committee stated that:

The Sub-Committee is left in no doubt that collusion between the British security forces and terrorists was behind many if not all of the atrocities that are considered in this report. We are horrified that persons who were employed by the British administration to preserve peace and to protect people were engaged in the creation of violence and the butchering of innocent victims.

The Sub-Committee believes that unless the full truth about collusion is established and those involved either admit or are fixed with responsibility then there cannot be closure for the families.

Point taken. It goes on to say that:

The Sub-Committee further believes that unless the full truth about collusion is established and those involved either admit or are fixed with responsibility then there is always the risk of what occurred in the 1970s occurring again some day. We are of the view that these matters cannot be swept under the carpet.

The Sub-Committee is of the view that given that we are dealing with acts of international terrorism that were colluded in by the British security forces, the British Government cannot legitimately refuse to co-operate with investigations and attempts to get to the truth.

The Sub-Committee notes that the British cabinet was aware of the level to which the security forces had been infiltrated by terrorists and we believe that its inadequate response to this knowledge permitted the problem to continue and to grow.

It also states that:

Our experience has been that the British authorities have reacted to the issues that arise from the atrocities in a closed and defensive manner. The natural instinct appears to be to selfishly defend the organisation or administration to which one belongs. The Sub-Committee believes

there is a need for officials to change the manner in which they think and act and for them to be more open about the past.

When the Taoiseach sat down with the former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in whatever discussions they had in private, I am quite sure he put it very clearly to Mr. Blair on behalf of the Irish people and the Irish Government that the papers and evidence, documentary and otherwise, available to the British government should be made available in light of the peace process to bring closure to this. I am sure he did his best.

Deputy Martin Mansergh: He did.

Deputy Enda Kenny: However, the prime minister was not for turning. Maybe Deputy Mansergh was there as well. I do not know. I was not informed of his activities. The fact is that there is still a lack of closure here, there has been a failure to bring the perpetrators of murders to justice and ongoing evidence of collusion.

I do not know whether the Taoiseach has had any contact with the current prime minister, Gordon Brown, whether Mr. Brown has had any contact with the Taoiseach or whether officials from both governments have been in touch with each other. This is a matter which we must continue to attempt to sort out.

In his final report on the Dublin and Monaghan bombings of 1974, Mr. Justice Barron said that the notion that members of the security forces in Northern Ireland could have been involved in the Dublin and Monaghan bombings was “neither fanciful nor absurd”. In his report into the Dublin bombings of 1972 and 1973, Mr. Justice Barron says that it is quite possible that the bombs were planted to influence the debate on that Bill in this House. He also said there were some elements of the attacks that were not characteristic of loyalist subversive groups at that time such as the giving of a warning, the use of hired vehicles, the co-ordinated nature of the blasts and the apparent use of a car stolen four months previously. He went on to say that “these features may be consistent with involvement by the British Army or Intelligence Services in the bombings”.

In respect of the bombing of Kay’s Tavern, the sub-committee said that in some of the incidents in question, collusion was almost beyond question. Justice for the Forgotten, quite rightly, have been very concerned and vocal about these reports and the necessity to bring closure.

The Taoiseach is aware that we have all supported the Good Friday agreement and the peace process and attempted in whatever way we can, in or outside Government, to make an impact for the greater good of our communities and people. I remind the British government that strand three of the agreement concerns the development of the east-west relationship between Great Britain and Ireland. This provides an opportunity and a platform for co-operation to again resurrect the requirement that the documentary evidence and written evidence available to the British government be made available so that some closure can be achieved.

I said earlier in the House today that the atrocious and vicious premeditated murder of Paul Quinn is a litmus test for the peace process. As was the case with the murder of

Robert McCartney, on which there is still no closure three years on, we do not want the Paul Quinn case to drift on into oblivion. It is 30 years on and families whose perfectly innocent loved ones were blown up still do not have closure for this sense of grief, which the Taoiseach rightly articulated here.

I know some of those from the Dublin bombings. As the Taoiseach is aware, they were from all over the country. The next time the Taoiseach meets the Prime Minister Mr. Brown he should suggest that, in the development of all our islands, the First Minister Dr. Paisley and Deputy First Minister Mr. McGuinness are now working together in the interests of the communities in Northern Ireland and it behoves both governments to see that the assembly can function and make decisions about the lives of the people in Northern Ireland, irrespective of the sector of society from which they come. In the sense of a new era and country, the development of the economic progress of the island, North and South, to which the Irish Government is contributing in terms of roads, infrastructure, cross-Border cultural activity, education and health, here is a sore point that has not been sorted out.

As stated at the beginning, there are people who have the answers to questions of the families. There is evidence on files in the archives of Britain that would lead to much greater information being made available in the hope that perpetrators of those murders would be brought to justice. We had a debate in the House last year and called for a full scale public inquiry into the murder of Mr. Pat Finucane. The House adopted that motion unanimously, without disagreement. As the Taoiseach pointed out, it has not yet happened. In many ways, the longer this goes on, the sorer the point becomes. There are those who know the answers to these questions and there is documentary evidence in archived files at some location, the release of which could be ordered by the British Prime Minister. I hope officials in the Taoiseach's Department make contact. Let us renew the call from this parliamentary democracy to see the investigation into a clear case of collusion between security forces and terrorists being sorted out.

I admire the groups and organisation that have displayed commitment and dedication to seeing this matter being resolved. We can give them whatever assistance we can, through the forum of this Parliament and Legislature. This party supports every effort the Government makes to have this information released and archival documents provided. In stating my admiration for the undying commitment of the groups involved, I recognise that they are still pained, that they still grieve, and that the loved ones taken away so cruelly have not had justice done on their behalf. Politics, politicians and Governments can bring closure to this matter. In not having the evidence one needs to bring those involved before the judicial and legal processes, there is an issue that must be resolved. The Taoiseach will have our full support in efforts to revive the matter. I would appreciate if the Taoiseach would instruct his officials to renew contact with officials on the British side and if the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs could re-establish formal links and try to influence the current British Prime Minister to see that this information is released. This is in the interests of dealing with this matter conclusively but principally for the families involved and those whose lives were cruelly ended by bombs and collusion between security forces and terrorists.

Deputy Joe Costello: It is unusual that the first week's business in the Dáil in 2008, apart from private Members' business, is devoted exclusively to statements. There is no more important issue than the one before us today, which must be comprehensively addressed by our Parliament.

A Dáil debate on the recommendations of the reports on the joint committee into the four reports on Judge Barron's inquiry into the violent incidents arising from the conflict in Northern Ireland would be valuable. A Dáil debate on the fourth and final report finding of collusion between the security forces and paramilitaries in carrying out these violent incidents would be even more valuable. However, statements, and only statements, are the worst possible way of addressing the life and death issues involved. Statements are a pretence of dealing seriously with an issue when in reality this method ensures the discussion takes place in a vacuum and that there is no proposal or motion for action emanating from the two days' discussion.

Like every Deputy in Dáil Eireann, I received an e-mail from Margaret Urwin of Justice for the Forgotten a week ago alerting me to the "important upcoming Dáil Debate on collusion. The debate having been promised for over a year is finally happening and the motion which has yet to be decided will be moved by the Taoiseach in the Dáil at 5.00 p.m. The significance of the debate is underlined by the fact that it will be observed by members of the Eames-Bradley Consultative Group on the past, in addition to many of the victims of collusion in this jurisdiction". I wish to acknowledge the presence of the members of the Justice for the Forgotten and the Consultative Group on the Past from Northern Ireland. As Justice for the Forgotten knows by now, its expectations are unfulfilled and no motion and no debate on collusion has been tabled. There is no debate at all - instead we have statements.

As a result, I prepared a comprehensive motion, summarising the recommendations of the various reports and offering a way forward. The Taoiseach has left the Chamber but I intend to send this to him after the debate. Perhaps the Minister of State will bring it to his attention and he will reflect on it overnight, before the debate continues tomorrow, and accept or amend it. It would be a shame if we have a debate over two days without concrete proposals for action emerging at the end.

I was Labour Party spokesperson for justice and a member of the Oireachtas Joint justice sub-committee that conducted the public hearings and compiled three of the four reports on Judge Barron's investigations into the Dublin bombings of 1972 and 1973, the Dublin and Monaghan bombings of 1974, the murder of Seamus Ludlow in 1976 and the bombing of Kay's Tavern, Dundalk. The testimony and witness of the surviving victims and relatives was the most poignant and compelling part of our deliberations. Few members of the sub-committee were left unmoved by the experience. The sense of loss and pain for their loved ones which they experienced thirty years and more after the tragic events was compounded by the insensitive way that many of them were treated by the agents and agencies of the State and by the failure of the State to vindicate their rights as citizens under the Constitution. It seemed the State wished to wipe away the entire series of atrocities as though they had never happened. Only the courageous campaign of Justice for the Forgotten and the turn of events in Northern Ireland eventually shamed the State into activity.

On 10 April 1998, the historic Good Friday Agreement was reached. It recognised the suffering of the victims of violence must be acknowledged and addressed as an essential element of reconciliation. The agreement recognised services would have to be provided to support the needs of victims. Support would also need to be channelled through both statutory and community-based organisations requiring the allocation of sufficient resources, including statutory funding to meet the needs of the victims.

A victims commission was established under the former Tánaiste, Mr. John Wilson, which reported in July 1999. The Ceann Comhairle, then Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, was instrumental in establishing that initiative. Mr. Wilson's recommendations were wide-ranging and humane and dealt in detail with the needs for support and long-term care of traumatised and damaged victims, as well as compensation for the families of those killed and the costs arising from the injuries sustained. He recommended a victim's pension be established for certain categories of victims. Few of his detailed recommendations, however, have been implemented in full.

He also recommended the appointment of a retired Supreme Court judge to conduct an independent inquiry into the Dublin and Monaghan bombings and into the murder of Seamus Ludlow. Mr. Justice Henry Barron was appointed by the Oireachtas and carried out four substantial investigations into the violent incidents which occurred in the Republic in the 1970s.

The sub-committees, established by motions of the Dáil and Seanad to consider each of Mr. Justice Barron's reports, had a positive and challenging remit. They sought in particular to deliver comprehensive recommendations in their first and final reports. Of the three tasks the sub-committee was charged with in relation to Mr. Justice Barron's first report into the Dublin-Monaghan bombings, two were directed towards future actions. The first concerned the lessons to be drawn and any actions to be taken in the light of the report, its findings and conclusions. The second was whether, having regard to the report's findings and following consultations with the inquiry, a further public inquiry into any aspect of the report would be required or fruitful.

In its first set of recommendations, the sub-committee considered a full public inquiry under the Tribunal of Inquiries Act 1921 would have represented the preferred form of inquiry. However, because the perpetrators, information and witnesses were outside the jurisdiction, legal and procedural difficulties would arise from an inquiry initiated in this jurisdiction.

The sub-committee recommended a series of steps to achieve a similar result by a different route. A precedent existed for this approach which drew on the agreement of the British and Irish Governments to appoint Mr. Peter Cory, a Canadian judge, to conduct a thorough investigation of allegations of collusion by the security forces in six specific cases to which the two sovereign Governments committed themselves following discussion with the Northern Ireland parties at Weston Park in 2001. These were the murders of Pat Finucane, Robert Hamill, Rosemary Nelson, Billy Wright, Lord Justice and Lady Gibson, chief superintendent Harry Breen and superintendent Bob Buchanan.

The independent judge would have the same powers the two sovereign Governments conferred on Judge Cory. The judge would have the power to direct witnesses for interview and the power to compel the delivery of documentation in both jurisdictions. In the event that a public inquiry was recommended, the relevant Government would implement that recommendation.

The sub-committee built in a safeguard. It stated:

In the event of the tried and tested Weston Park procedure failing as a consequence of a lack of co-operation from the Government or authorities in Great Britain or Northern Ireland, the sub-committee recommends the Irish Government should consider instituting proceedings in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, pursuant to the European Convention on Human Rights seeking appropriate declaratory relief against the United Kingdom requiring it to put in place an appropriate investigation.

To copperfasten the procedures, the sub-committee proposed its recommendations be endorsed by the Dáil and Seanad and by the United Kingdom Parliament.

Unfortunately, no recommendations were implemented. I have raised them on numerous occasions in the Dáil in the intervening years. To be fair, the Taoiseach has taken up the issues from time to time with the former British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, but was rebuffed and no further action was taken.

The initial important step that could so easily have been taken, namely, the formal adoption of the four reports and their findings by the Dáil and Seanad, never took place nor were the reports ever forwarded to the British House of Commons.

In its fourth and final report in 2007, the sub-committee made its most damning finding. It stated:

The sub-committee is left in no doubt that collusion between the British security forces and terrorists was behind many if not all of the atrocities that are considered in this report. We are horrified that persons who were employed by the British Administration to preserve peace and to protect people were engaged in the creation of violence and the butchering of innocent victims. The sub-committee is of the view that given that we are dealing with acts of international terrorism that were colluded in by the British security forces, the British Government cannot legitimately refuse to co-operate with investigations and attempts to get to the truth.

These trenchant findings on collusion were made in the light of the accumulation of evidence over the four Barron reports and hearings conducted by the sub-committee.

The sub-committee concluded that “the seriousness of this, i.e., collusion, warrants direction from the Oireachtas and we, therefore, recommend that there should be a full debate in both the Dáil and Seanad on the issue of collusion since it is necessary for there to be greater political impetus to highlight the fact that it occurred and the

facts of its scale and to identify measures to bring closure to the victims". The sub-committee proposed the Oireachtas give direction on the way forward to achieve the necessary action concerning collusion.

While the Taoiseach responded positively in subsequent remarks, I propose four courses of action. First, the interim and final reports of the sub-committee of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights on the report of the independent commission of inquiry into the Dublin-Monaghan Bombing are received, endorsed and approved by the Dáil and Seanad.

Second, the Ceann Comhairle is called upon to formally inform the Speaker of the House of Commons of the UK of the passage of the resolution and to send copies of the relevant reports and other documents, with a request that the matter be considered by the members of that House.

Third, the Taoiseach is called upon to renew his efforts to secure the agreement of the British Government to the courses of action recommended by the sub-committee, to report to the Dáil on a regular basis. If he has no progress of substance to report by the end of this year, he should report on the steps taken for the initiation of proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Fourth, the Oireachtas requests the Ceann Comhairle to call upon the British Government, as an initial step and as a sign of good faith in dealing with the legacy of the conflict, to provide access to all the original documents relating to the atrocities that occurred in this jurisdiction, in particular the Dublin-Monaghan Bombing of 1974 which killed 32 Irish citizens, a French and an Italian citizen.

Only when these avenues are explored can the victims and families obtain justice and closure on these terrible events.