

with a reformed state. Their attempts to construct such a scenario are doomed, but the longer they persist in this delusion the more they contribute to the toll of suffering, imprisonment and death.

Instead of trying to square the circle of Irish National aspiration with British rule in Ireland, Republicans and Democrats should work for a way forward as indicated clearly in the EIRE NUA programme; a federation of the four historic provinces of Ireland with maximum devolution of power and decision-making to regional, district and community levels. But we stand most of all, for a settlement, a generous democratic settlement of the Irish problem by constitutional discussion between all the people of Ireland. Britain can have no part in either setting the agenda or devising the constitutional solution. That is a matter for the sovereign Irish people. All Britain can do is to set up a debate to leave Ireland for all time - lock- stock and barrel.

Republicans have no problem with democracy - real democracy. But, Republican Sinn Fein is long enough in the political business to realise that whenever the Brits feel they stand to lose a vote, they simply seek to change the rules.

I will conclude with a quote from a letter Francis Hughes wrote to the people of Derry on March 10, 1981. Francis said:

"I have no prouder boast than to say I am Irish and have been privileged to fight for the Irish people and for Ireland. If I have a duty I will perform it to the full in the unshakeable belief that we are a noble race and that chains and bonds have no part in us, he went on to say - there is no white flag and there will be no surrender."