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# I see no benefit in the UK link says ex-Unionist

MR. ESMOND Thompson, the former Convention member for Mid-Ulster, has said that to maintain the link with Britain is to actively assist in the downfall of Northern Ireland.

"After 20 years of active membership of the official Unionist Party, I can see no benefit in the Union," he said.

Also speaking in Mid-Ulster, Mr. Ivan Cooper, the SDLP member, said the British were slowly extracting themselves from Northern Ireland.

Mr. Thompson claimed at a meeting in Cookstown that the only political method left open to Unionist politicians was to confront Westminster with a demand for implementation of the UUUC Convention report, or to negotiate independence. There was no other way in which the Protestants of Ulster could maintain their identity and culture.

Independence, he said, would give them the right to decide their own destiny; to defend themselves

## By our Political Staff

as a people and a nation by their own efforts and restore respect for the law; to decide their own taxes and rates; to work where and with whom they pleased within the Province; to elect those they trusted; to have a full franchise; to use their financial resources for the benefit of all; and to practice the religion of one's choice, or none at all.

He added: "In our own hands we could stop the campaign by the IRA and lay again the foundations on which we could invite investment."

In the transitional period there would be bloodshed and belt-tightening, but the time of drift and indecision would be over. There would be no looking over their shoulders to see who was coming to help — it would

be a matter of standing together against whatever enemies might come.

According to Mr. Cooper, who spoke in Strabane, the British withdrawal would not happen dramatically or with a declaration of intent — but the slow process of withdrawal was already under way.

The recent announcement of an expanded role for the RUC in parts of Belfast, coupled with the increased use of the UDR was tangible evidence, he said, even though the British would insist, as it had done in other colonial situations, that it was not withdrawing.

And he claimed very few tears would be shed on either side of the Northern community once the process of extraction became apparent. But politicians should be prepared to discuss the consequences, and consider if a formula for living together could be created in a post-withdrawal situation.

## Security policy attacked

The present British security policy of seeking to achieve the primacy of the police, in the absence of the necessary political progress, was likely to lead only to confrontation in Northern Ireland, Mr. Michael Canavan, the SDLP spokesman on law and order, said last night.

The policy, he said, was described publicly as a policing one, although it was really intended to drastically reduce British military involvement.

Official sources quoted the rising number of people charged as an

indication of a return to normality. Surely crime was rising too, he said, and in many cases charges were subsequently dropped or reduced.

"The vital figures are of those convicted. These have, however, never been released," he said.

Mr. Canavan challenged the Government to deny that 95 pc of the RUC was drawn from the majority and was totally unrepresentative of the community at large. He was not encouraging violence against the RUC, which his party condemned, but in-

dicating real difficulties which must be faced and not ignored.

Continued pursuit of the policy without political progress was likely to lead to maximum confrontation here with the minimum risk to British personnel, he said.

## Rail link inquiry

A PUBLIC inquiry is to be held in Lisburn next month following an application by Northern Ireland Railways for planning permission to lay a new



# Rees in Sinn Fein talks row

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BY NEWS LETTER REPORTER

are being murdered by the Provisional IRA, and while the terrorist bombing campaign is still going on.

Mr Airey Neave, Conservative spokesman on Northern Ireland affairs, and his deputy, Mr John Biggs-Davison, had a 45-minute meeting in London yesterday with Mr Merlyn Rees, Secretary of State.

Later, Mr Neave said: "During the meeting we received no assurance from Mr Rees that talks with Provisional Sinn Fein will cease. We regard this as extremely serious, as it gives the impression that, in its turn, the Government is really determined on this action."

"We propose to question

him in the House of Commons on this, and press him to confirm or deny whether these talks are taking place. These talks are resented not only here, but in Dublin."

"We are now at a stage where we are deeply dissatisfied with what is being done."

In a recent attack on Mrs Maire Drumm, the vice-president of Provisional Sinn Fein, Mr Rees accused her of acting like one of the women who sat beside the guillotine during the French

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INSIDE

A major row is expected to blow up at Westminster on the continuing talks between the Government and Provisional Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Provisional IRA.

MPs are likely to express anger at contacts being maintained at a time when RUC and Army personnel