

WEBVTT

00:00:04.680 --> 00:00:11.020

<v SPEAKER_1>Hello again, and welcome to Global Exchange, part of The Canadian Global Affairs Institute's Podcast Network.

00:00:11.020 --> 00:00:13.020

<v SPEAKER_1>I'm your host Colin Robertson.

00:00:13.020 --> 00:00:26.260

<v SPEAKER_1>On this episode, recorded on October the 22nd, we talk with Ben Collins about his new book, The Irish Unity Dividend, a companion and complement to his earlier book, Irish Unity, Time to Prepare.

00:00:27.140 --> 00:00:33.600

<v SPEAKER_1>Ben is a Belfast-based communications consultant, and we're both contributors to Policy Magazine.

00:00:33.600 --> 00:00:35.180

<v SPEAKER_1>Welcome, Ben.

00:00:35.180 --> 00:00:37.400

<v SPEAKER_2>Thank you, Colin.

00:00:37.400 --> 00:00:49.080

<v SPEAKER_1>For listeners, for nearly a century, the world was accustomed to watching the cause of Irish Unity waged as a war, with guns, bombs and casualty counts.

00:00:49.080 --> 00:01:04.160

<v SPEAKER_1>And after more than a quarter century of elusive peace negotiations, we got the Good Friday Agreement, and Ben now marshals facts and figures to make the Pragmatic Case for Irish Unity.

00:01:04.160 --> 00:01:15.500

<v SPEAKER_1>He argues, especially since Brexit, partition fails to serve Irish interests, no matter which side of the border, but especially those in the north.

00:01:15.500 --> 00:01:28.080

<v SPEAKER_1>With politics, demographics and institutions shifting across both Ireland and in Westminster, Ben argues that the time has finally come for Irish reunification.

00:01:29.320 --> 00:01:46.380

<v SPEAKER_1>This would reunite the 6 counties in the north and the 26 in the south, giving it a combined population of just over 7 million, about a million fewer than in Quebec, and in a landmass slightly smaller than New Brunswick.

00:01:46.380 --> 00:01:55.640

<v SPEAKER_1>According to the most recent Canadian census, over 12% or about 4.5 million Canadians claim Irish descent.

00:01:55.640 --> 00:02:02.120

<v SPEAKER_1>That includes Prime Minister Mark Carney, highlighting the enduring Irish influence in Canada.

00:02:02.120 --> 00:02:03.460

<v SPEAKER_1>So let's begin.

00:02:03.460 --> 00:02:06.200

<v SPEAKER_1>Ben, make the case for Irish reunification.

00:02:07.620 --> 00:02:08.580

<v SPEAKER_2>Thank you, Colin.

00:02:08.580 --> 00:02:11.240

<v SPEAKER_2>Yes, I think the time is nigh.

00:02:11.620 --> 00:02:17.820

<v SPEAKER_2>There are a number of factors which are coming together, as you said in your introduction there, which I think is building momentum.

00:02:18.340 --> 00:02:29.460

<v SPEAKER_2>We have the demographic change that Northern Ireland was created as a region 100 years ago to have a permanent Protestant and pro-British and unionist majority.

00:02:29.460 --> 00:02:31.640

<v SPEAKER_2>At nigh, it has none of those things.

00:02:31.640 --> 00:02:35.760

<v SPEAKER_2>But we also have an increasing middle ground that are open to the idea of Irish Unity.

00:02:35.760 --> 00:02:39.220

<v SPEAKER_2>And one of the main drivers of that is, as you said, Brexit.

00:02:39.220 --> 00:02:46.640

<v SPEAKER_2>And in the nearly decades since Brexit, the dissatisfaction with that decision has only increased.

00:02:47.120 --> 00:02:53.120

<v SPEAKER_2>And we are seeing increasing dynamics of North-South trade between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

00:02:53.120 --> 00:02:57.860

<v SPEAKER_2>And we are seeing a weathering of trade between Britain and Northern Ireland.

00:02:57.860 --> 00:03:04.020

<v SPEAKER_2>And we also see significant political turmoil and economic challenges in Britain.

00:03:04.020 --> 00:03:06.500

<v SPEAKER_2>And that is not going to be reversed anytime soon.

00:03:06.500 --> 00:03:11.460

<v SPEAKER_2>Not least because the main political parties are not willing to reverse Brexit itself.

00:03:11.460 --> 00:03:15.240

<v SPEAKER_2>So I think there's a number of factors, economic, political, but also social.

00:03:15.920 --> 00:03:28.440

<v SPEAKER_2>I think people, there's a lot of people like me that come from a pro-British background that are increasingly open to the idea of Irish Unity because we are embracing our Irish identity in a way that wasn't possible prior to the Good Friday Agreement.

00:03:28.440 --> 00:03:29.700

<v SPEAKER_1>Now Ben, why is that?

00:03:30.580 --> 00:03:34.000

<v SPEAKER_1>And actually I'd also be interested if you could drill down a bit more on the numbers.

00:03:34.000 --> 00:03:48.760

<v SPEAKER_1>You said that the Protestant majority is no longer the case in the North and that there's also a shift, and that must include the Protestants, of a sense of, well, we bid better off in a United Ireland.

00:03:48.760 --> 00:03:49.800

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, exactly.

00:03:49.800 --> 00:03:56.980

<v SPEAKER_2>If we look at the latest census figures that were released in 2021, we deny a region of multiple minorities.

00:03:56.980 --> 00:04:00.660

<v SPEAKER_2>So the Protestant population has fallen below 50%.

00:04:01.400 --> 00:04:06.460

<v SPEAKER_2>The Catholic population is slightly larger than the

Protestant one, but it is also below 50%.

00:04:07.080 --> 00:04:30.460

<v SPEAKER_2>But if we look at the voting patterns for the Northern Ireland Assembly, for example, around 40% vote for unionist parties, around 40% vote for nationalist parties, and then 20% vote for the non-aligned, and that would tend to be for the Alliance Party, which is a liberal party that doesn't take a position on the constitutional issue and the Green Party, which also doesn't take a position on the constitutional issue.

00:04:31.180 --> 00:04:41.240

<v SPEAKER_2>If we look at the second preferences of those who vote for Alliance and Greens, more people, more of those voters will vote for nationalist, i.e.

00:04:41.240 --> 00:04:46.260

<v SPEAKER_2>pro-Irish unity parties than will vote for pro-UK parties.

00:04:46.260 --> 00:04:49.480

<v SPEAKER_2>So we are seeing, gradually, the demographics are changing.

00:04:49.480 --> 00:04:51.760

<v SPEAKER_2>We're seeing that the voting patterns are changing.

00:04:51.760 --> 00:05:06.380

<v SPEAKER_2>We now have a scenario whereby the largest party in the Northern Ireland local councils, local government, that is, in the Northern Ireland Assembly and in seats at Westminster, are all, the largest party is Sinn Féin, which is a pro-United Ireland party.

00:05:06.380 --> 00:05:07.140

<v SPEAKER_2>And that's historic.

00:05:07.820 --> 00:05:13.280

<v SPEAKER_2>We have a Sinn Féin first minister for the first time in Northern Ireland's history.

00:05:13.280 --> 00:05:15.320

<v SPEAKER_1>And that's working.

00:05:15.320 --> 00:05:15.560

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah.

00:05:15.560 --> 00:05:18.180

<v SPEAKER_2>I think it's very much, it's a work in progress.

00:05:18.180 --> 00:05:21.820

<v SPEAKER_2>But I think people look to the South and they see the economic growth.

00:05:21.820 --> 00:05:24.600

<v SPEAKER_2>They see the fact that the Republic has changed.

00:05:24.600 --> 00:05:34.800

<v SPEAKER_2>As I said, I come from a unist pro-British background and I was determined during the conflict, during the troubles, that I was not going to be forced in the United Ireland by violence or other threats of violence.

00:05:34.800 --> 00:05:41.660

<v SPEAKER_2>But the Good Friday Agreement changed a lot, enabled me personally to look at things differently, and that was nearly 30 years ago.

00:05:41.660 --> 00:05:46.360

<v SPEAKER_2>We have had a peace dividend in Northern Ireland, but we have not had an economic dividend.

00:05:47.360 --> 00:05:53.580

<v SPEAKER_2>If we compare Northern Ireland to the Republic now, economic prosperity is much greater in the Republic.

00:05:53.580 --> 00:05:55.940

<v SPEAKER_2>The earning potential is much greater.

00:05:56.920 --> 00:06:04.920

<v SPEAKER_2>The life expectancy for people that are born in 2021 is now going to be two years longer for people born in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

00:06:04.920 --> 00:06:11.420

<v SPEAKER_2>And across a whole series of metrics, including things like educational attainment, they're higher in the Republic than they are in Northern Ireland.

00:06:11.420 --> 00:06:14.040

<v SPEAKER_2>And so I think it's that sort of economic aspect.

00:06:14.040 --> 00:06:27.620

<v SPEAKER_2>But then also in terms of political, whenever we look across to Westminster, Westminster at the time of the Good Friday Agreement, and I worked as a government press officer in the Northern Ireland office, which was the UK government department looking after this.

00:06:27.620 --> 00:06:36.760

<v SPEAKER_2>I worked there at the time of the Good Friday Agreement,

and thereafter, both the British and Irish government acted as stabilizers for the Northern Ireland peace process.

00:06:36.760 --> 00:06:40.220

<v SPEAKER_2>But unfortunately, in recent times, we've seen this political turmoil.

00:06:40.220 --> 00:06:45.280

<v SPEAKER_2>We had five conservative prime ministers during 14 years of office.

00:06:45.280 --> 00:06:54.140

<v SPEAKER_2>And now we have a Labour prime minister who, despite having a massive landslide majority just over a year ago, finds himself being deeply unpopular.

00:06:54.660 --> 00:07:02.980

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think we're seeing an increasing prospect of Nigel Farage and his Reform UK party being the largest part of the next election.

00:07:02.980 --> 00:07:06.640

<v SPEAKER_2>It could be like a 1993 scenario in Canada.

00:07:08.000 --> 00:07:09.000

<v SPEAKER_1>Interesting.

00:07:09.000 --> 00:07:14.080

<v SPEAKER_1>Listen, just to remind you, we're talking to Ben Collins about his new book, The Irish Unity Dividend.

00:07:14.160 --> 00:07:16.240

<v SPEAKER_1>It's something I encourage you all to read.

00:07:16.240 --> 00:07:19.040

<v SPEAKER_1>Ben, federalisms are notoriously hard to govern.

00:07:19.040 --> 00:07:21.340

<v SPEAKER_1>I look at what challenges we have in Canada.

00:07:21.340 --> 00:07:23.920

<v SPEAKER_1>You look at the European Union or the United Kingdom.

00:07:24.720 --> 00:07:28.040

<v SPEAKER_1>Would it work for United Ireland?

00:07:28.040 --> 00:07:28.960

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, this is the challenge.

00:07:29.080 --> 00:07:32.780

<v SPEAKER_2>Unlike Canada and the UK, we actually don't have a federal system.

00:07:32.780 --> 00:07:33.900

<v SPEAKER_2>That's part of the problem.

00:07:33.900 --> 00:07:37.180

<v SPEAKER_2>We still have an incredibly centralized approach.

00:07:37.180 --> 00:07:51.940

<v SPEAKER_2>While we have legislatures in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the London Assembly, the fiscal powers are still very much reserved, predominantly in Westminster and Whitehall in London.

00:07:52.080 --> 00:08:00.100

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think that goes back to Imperial times, that we had a real focus on a centralized approach.

00:08:00.100 --> 00:08:13.060

<v SPEAKER_2>The challenge in terms of United Ireland, whenever we talk about a federal approach, that tends to mean a two-state approach in terms of maintaining the Northern Ireland Assembly as part of a United Ireland.

00:08:13.060 --> 00:08:28.060

<v SPEAKER_2>Personally, I very much favor a unitary approach, where after a transitional period where we would keep the Northern Ireland Assembly, that that would be absorbed, hopefully, into the Irish, what's called the Arractus, which is the Irish Houses of Parliament.

00:08:28.060 --> 00:08:32.840

<v SPEAKER_2>If you consider that Northern Ireland Unionist MPs, i.e.

00:08:32.840 --> 00:08:43.340

<v SPEAKER_2>pro-British MPs, have not been in the British Cabinet for 80 years since the Second World War, I would say that Westminster has been a cold place for Unionism from Northern Ireland.

00:08:43.340 --> 00:08:45.520

<v SPEAKER_2>So for those who are pro-British in the right look.

00:08:45.520 --> 00:08:54.280

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think what I really want to see is Unionism in Northern Ireland being brought into the Irish political mainstream.

00:08:54.280 --> 00:09:04.960

<v SPEAKER_2>We had a leader of the Austro-Unionist Party, pro-British party, at his party conference just last weekend, said that in the event of a United Ireland TDs, i.e.

00:09:05.000 --> 00:09:15.180

<v SPEAKER_2>MPs effectively elected from Northern Ireland, Unionist MPs from Northern Ireland, to the DAAL, would be called TDs, they would hold, they could potentially hold the balance of power.

00:09:15.180 --> 00:09:21.000

<v SPEAKER_2>And that's absolutely right, because they will never be able to hold the balance of power on a regular basis in Westminster.

00:09:21.000 --> 00:09:32.580

<v SPEAKER_2>We had a very brief period between 2017 and 2019, where the DUP, the largest Unionist pro-British party in Northern Ireland, did enter into an confidence and supply agreement with the Conservatives.

00:09:32.580 --> 00:09:43.500

<v SPEAKER_2>They got a small amount of money, but essentially their views and their desires were ignored, and the British government did a deal with the EU on the Brexit withdrawal agreement over their heads.

00:09:43.500 --> 00:09:51.100

<v SPEAKER_2>So I think politically as well as economically and just more widely for quality of life, we need to go for a unitary approach.

00:09:51.100 --> 00:10:03.600

<v SPEAKER_2>But the key thing is, and I know we're coming up to the 30th anniversary of the second Quebec referendum, the key thing from an Irish perspective is that we need to plan and prepare beforehand so people know exactly what they're going to be voting for.

00:10:04.500 --> 00:10:14.780

<v SPEAKER_2>Because unlike Brexit, we won't avoid that chaos where people, a decade later, would still argue about what they were voting for, and it just hasn't satisfied anyone.

00:10:14.780 --> 00:10:20.840

<v SPEAKER_1>No, and that's the titles of your first book, Time to Prepare, and of course now the Irish Unity Dividend.

00:10:21.080 --> 00:10:28.540

<v SPEAKER_1>It makes sense, S-E-N-S-E, and sense to me, C-E-N-T-S, but the dividend as you call it.

00:10:28.540 --> 00:10:35.860

<v SPEAKER_1>But is unification a kind of burning issue on either side of the border at this time?

00:10:35.860 --> 00:10:43.040

<v SPEAKER_2>It is very much, I think it's a burning issue in Northern

Ireland because we have seen that there is increasing demand and interest.

00:10:43.040 --> 00:10:50.060

<v SPEAKER_2>It's something that's regularly discussed on all kinds of media outlets and podcasts, online and offline.

00:10:50.060 --> 00:11:04.060

<v SPEAKER_2>I know a lot of people personally that come from a similar pro-British unionist background to me, and they're increasingly talking to other people as well as to me in pubs and cafes and restaurants and in offices and in their homes.

00:11:04.060 --> 00:11:05.860

<v SPEAKER_2>So I think there is an increasing demand.

00:11:05.860 --> 00:11:07.720

<v SPEAKER_2>We look at the issues around Brexit.

00:11:07.720 --> 00:11:12.440

<v SPEAKER_2>I was deeply concerned at the time that Brexit vote that it could adversely affect the Good Friday Agreement.

00:11:12.440 --> 00:11:35.720

<v SPEAKER_2>That was an amazing peace agreement and it was helped, of course, not to forget by several Canadians, including General John de Chaslin, the important work that he did in terms of the decommissioning of paramilitary weaponry and also Judge Peter Corry, who undertook various inquiries looking at state collusion both in Northern Ireland and the public of Ireland.

00:11:35.720 --> 00:11:42.200

<v SPEAKER_2>But I think in terms of the public of Ireland, it's an ongoing desire for there to be a United Ireland.

00:11:42.200 --> 00:11:46.520

<v SPEAKER_2>All political parties in the public of Ireland are in favor of Irish reunification.

00:11:46.940 --> 00:11:52.360

<v SPEAKER_2>The key thing for me is about framing this in the context of it being about a better quality of life.

00:11:52.360 --> 00:11:57.760

<v SPEAKER_2>Bill Clinton in 1992 in his presidential election talked about, it's the economy stupid.

00:11:57.760 --> 00:12:01.500

<v SPEAKER_2>I believe we need to focus on saying now it's quality of life stupid.

00:12:01.500 --> 00:12:10.460

<v SPEAKER_2>I think across a whole series of areas, whether you're talking about housing, healthcare, economy, and political structures, we'd be better to have Irish unity.

00:12:10.460 --> 00:12:13.240

<v SPEAKER_2>That's why we need to have this conversation now.

00:12:13.240 --> 00:12:22.240

<v SPEAKER_2>We need to engage with the diaspora in places like Canada, and to get the support of people like Canada that have helped us in the past, and I think can help this process going forward as well.

00:12:23.860 --> 00:12:28.980

<v SPEAKER_1>Then you mentioned Sean de Chastelain, who is a distinguished Canadian soldier diplomat.

00:12:28.980 --> 00:12:40.540

<v SPEAKER_1>I remember going to a lecture in our Pearson building named after Mike Pearson, our most distinguished diplomat, later Prime Minister, who won the Nobel Peace Prize.

00:12:40.540 --> 00:12:55.460

<v SPEAKER_1>De Chastelain was talking about his experience in Ireland, and he made the point that you could take away the guns, but the hardest thing was changing the ideology and the mythology of those involved, and that he thought was going to take much more time.

00:12:55.460 --> 00:12:59.120

<v SPEAKER_1>And as you point out, it's now, what, 30-plus years.

00:12:59.540 --> 00:13:03.300

<v SPEAKER_1>Has there been sufficient time for that to start to move away?

00:13:03.300 --> 00:13:26.100

<v SPEAKER_1>Because that strikes me, particularly in the North, as a potential barrier to what you're hoping to achieve in terms of unity, and I would just then flip to the Southern side, because you mentioned that the North, there is interest in the North, but is there any interest in the South, and is this an issue for Southern leadership as well?

00:13:26.100 --> 00:13:29.240

<v SPEAKER_2>Oh, I think absolutely this has to be an issue for Southern leadership.

00:13:29.240 --> 00:13:41.900

<v SPEAKER_2>I know that Sinn Fein, one of the main party of opposition in the DAL, just had a motion last night calling on the Irish government to plan and prepare for Irish unity.

00:13:42.500 --> 00:13:53.600

<v SPEAKER_2>We had the Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement before the last national election in the Republic of Ireland called for planning and preparation to be done.

00:13:53.600 --> 00:13:59.240

<v SPEAKER_2>And that was a cross-party committee which had a representation from government parties as well as opposition parties.

00:13:59.240 --> 00:14:15.060

<v SPEAKER_2>So there is that demand, and I think there is this sort of this romantic ideal of, they talk about reclaiming the fourth green field because Ireland consists of four provinces, and Northern Ireland is six counties of the nine counties of the province of Ulster.

00:14:15.060 --> 00:14:20.720

<v SPEAKER_2>But I think for me the key thing is it's very much it's about framing this in the context of quality of life.

00:14:20.720 --> 00:14:29.340

<v SPEAKER_2>So for example, I think it's about bringing it into the day-to-day issues and showing how Irish Unity is going to be the benefit of everyone, both North and South.

00:14:29.340 --> 00:14:53.880

<v SPEAKER_2>So for example, we look at the COVID-19 pandemic during that time, because we had two states on the small island of Ireland, we were at times taking a completely contradictory approach in how we were managing that, that the Republic was very much in lockdown mode, whereas Northern Ireland was following the lead of Boris Johnson, the then British Prime Minister, in opening things up, and taking a contradictory approach in the small island does not work.

00:14:53.880 --> 00:15:16.420

<v SPEAKER_2>And that's something whereby if we have a United Ireland and we have a unitary approach, we can better manage pandemics going forward, because unfortunately with climate change, our continuing ability to destroy natural habitats, we're seeing different species living closer together, and you're seeing zoonotic diseases jumping from one species to another, which makes pandemics more likely going forward, unfortunately.

00:15:16.420 --> 00:15:28.480

<v SPEAKER_2>And therefore, we need to take a similar approach to New Zealand, I would suggest, and go for a zero approach, lock down our external borders, and work together until we can get a vaccine as we

were able to with COVID-19.

00:15:32.160 --> 00:15:35.520

<v SPEAKER_3>Hi, I'm Dave Perry, the President and CEO of The Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

00:15:35.520 --> 00:15:40.120

<v SPEAKER_3>I hope you're enjoying The Global Exchange, Canada's leading podcast on foreign affairs and trade.

00:15:40.120 --> 00:15:48.980

<v SPEAKER_3>If you're listening and you like to help us keep bringing informed discussion of these issues to key government decision makers, thought leaders, and the business community, then consider sponsoring the podcast.

00:15:48.980 --> 00:15:53.600

<v SPEAKER_3>Reach out to us at contact at cgai.ca for options and pricing.

00:15:57.380 --> 00:16:05.560

<v SPEAKER_1>One of the things you talk about and I found intriguing in the book, again, as you time to prepare, as you put it, was the Irish neutrality.

00:16:05.560 --> 00:16:16.400

<v SPEAKER_1>Does it still make sense given what we've seen taking place in Eastern Europe with Ukraine and Russia and the decisions recently by, of course, Finland and Sweden to join NATO?

00:16:17.480 --> 00:16:17.740

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah.

00:16:18.760 --> 00:16:20.740

<v SPEAKER_2>I think times have definitely changed.

00:16:21.280 --> 00:16:36.620

<v SPEAKER_2>I am not in favour of Ireland suddenly embarking on lots of foreign adventures, but Ireland itself does have a strong history of supporting UN peacekeeping missions around the world, and I think that will continue and that's great.

00:16:36.620 --> 00:16:43.440

<v SPEAKER_2>But absolutely, I think the current Irish government have said that they need to invest more in their defence forces.

00:16:43.440 --> 00:16:55.580

<v SPEAKER_2>If you consider the fact that something like 75 percent of Europe's subsea cables, data cables, go through Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone off the Western Seaboard, we have to be able to protect

those.

00:16:55.580 --> 00:17:06.060

<v SPEAKER_2>And I understand that people are absolutely committed and wedded to the idea of neutrality, and I get that, but that does not stop the fact we have to be able to protect our sea cables.

00:17:06.060 --> 00:17:26.820

<v SPEAKER_2>We have to be able to play our fair part in terms of working with Britain and with our EU partners in terms of protecting the continent as a whole, because you're absolutely right, you know, we see these increasing instances of shadow ships travelling around the Atlantic and so on, and we have to be able to do our bit and also around organised crime.

00:17:26.820 --> 00:17:39.420

<v SPEAKER_2>So I think there is more that we could do, but again, in terms of defence capacity, I think under Irish Unity we'll be in a better position, because I personally think that immigration is a good thing.

00:17:39.420 --> 00:17:51.540

<v SPEAKER_2>I think that taking our fair share of refugees is a good thing, but being able to do that using our topography and doing it on an all-island basis, rather than having this sort of very disjointed approach.

00:17:51.540 --> 00:18:10.040

<v SPEAKER_2>If you consider that the former British Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, was boasting about the fact that under his Rowan, the scheme, you had refugees going through Britain in the Northern Ireland and then in the Republic of Ireland, and there was nothing, very little, that the Republic of Ireland could do, because there is an open border between North and South and has been since the Good Friday Agreement.

00:18:10.040 --> 00:18:16.680

<v SPEAKER_2>If we have a United Ireland, then we will better be able to manage our borders through our seaports and airports.

00:18:16.680 --> 00:18:18.640

<v SPEAKER_2>As I said, I think immigration is a good thing.

00:18:18.640 --> 00:18:23.320

<v SPEAKER_2>It's hugely important for diversity, culturally, economically, for our healthcare and so on.

00:18:23.320 --> 00:18:36.940

<v SPEAKER_2>But being able to manage that effectively gives less ability for the far-right activists, which exist in places like

Britain and the USA, who are trying to sow dissent in Ireland, as well as a small group of them existing in Ireland, both North and South.

00:18:36.940 --> 00:18:55.440

<v SPEAKER_2>If we can reassure the population at large, and I realize there's some genuine concerns at the minute, but if we can reassure the population at large, in part by securing our borders and being seen to be able to effectively manage our borders, then I think that will help in terms of Ireland's security status.

00:18:56.660 --> 00:18:59.800

<v SPEAKER_1>Be interesting to see what happens there.

00:18:59.800 --> 00:19:13.620

<v SPEAKER_1>Another interesting section of the book is when you talked about Canada, and of course you referred to our new Prime Minister, Mark Carney, who has Irish roots, and you suggested that we could play a role in any reunification response.

00:19:13.620 --> 00:19:18.260

<v SPEAKER_1>Why and how, given some of the challenges we have in Canada?

00:19:18.260 --> 00:19:25.660

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, I just think that Canada has been an important ally to the peace process throughout.

00:19:25.660 --> 00:19:31.540

<v SPEAKER_2>As I mentioned, having people like John de Chaslin, Peter Corry involved has really helped with things.

00:19:31.540 --> 00:19:38.100

<v SPEAKER_2>There are strong historic and cultural links between Canada and Ireland as a whole, and Northern Ireland in particular.

00:19:39.280 --> 00:19:42.440

<v SPEAKER_2>I think one of the key things is about the growing economic links.

00:19:42.440 --> 00:19:54.140

<v SPEAKER_2>As you know, the Taoiseach, Micheál Martin was in Canada recently to talk about increasing the economic links between Canada and Ireland, and that's something that we can do within the framework of the CETA trade deal.

00:19:54.140 --> 00:20:03.940

<v SPEAKER_2>I know that Mark Carney has talked about wishing to diversify Canada's economy away from the reliance on the US for all kinds of reasons.

00:20:03.940 --> 00:20:17.540

<v SPEAKER_2>President Trump is just not a reliable ally, and I think that Ireland could be a gateway to the European market, and I think that it mutually can be beneficial, and I think prosperity is a key thing.

00:20:17.540 --> 00:20:44.560

<v SPEAKER_2>The front of my book is a picture of an upward moving line graph with a dove perched on it, and the reason that is to symbolize peace and prosperity, and those are going to be key things, and Irish Unity, I believe, can do and will lead to both of those things, and prosperity will be about increasing their links, because Ireland as well has very strong economic links with the USA, and we want to diversify our economic links, so I think it will be mutually beneficial between Canada and Ireland to do that.

00:20:44.560 --> 00:20:56.120

<v SPEAKER_2>I also think in the context of Canada has been existing for 150 years since Confederation, and yet you're still very open about the fact that you are undergoing further reconciliation.

00:20:56.120 --> 00:21:11.920

<v SPEAKER_2>That is also something that we need to continue to go through in Ireland, because for me, reconciliation is a process, it's not a single event, it's not something to go to an end point, and I think there may be and there should be opportunities where we can share best practice in that area as well.

00:21:13.460 --> 00:21:26.220

<v SPEAKER_1>That makes actually a lot of sense, and I'm going to now flip my question around, because you've spent all this effort and make a compelling case for Irish unification, reunification.

00:21:26.220 --> 00:21:38.400

<v SPEAKER_1>Canada too, we're not any stranger to divisions, we have religion, of course, and ethnicity is an issue, particularly with our diaspora communities, like the Sikhs and the Tamils.

00:21:38.400 --> 00:21:49.180

<v SPEAKER_1>And then there's the bigger divide that has long been a challenge in Canada, and that's language, French and English, and then region, which of course we have separatist movements in Quebec and Alberta.

00:21:50.200 --> 00:21:56.180

<v SPEAKER_1>Given the effort you put into studying the Irish situation, any advice for Mr.

00:21:56.180 --> 00:22:02.080

<v SPEAKER_1>Carney based on what you've seen and recommend for

Ireland that Mr.

00:22:02.080 --> 00:22:03.100
<v SPEAKER_1>Carney might find useful?

00:22:03.100 --> 00:22:06.260
<v SPEAKER_1>Because once again, we face these divisions.

00:22:06.260 --> 00:22:10.800
<v SPEAKER_2>Well, I think it was really striking whenever he became Prime Minister.

00:22:10.800 --> 00:22:16.960
<v SPEAKER_2>He visited France, the UK, and then he went to the Northern Territories, where of course he was born himself.

00:22:16.960 --> 00:22:22.660
<v SPEAKER_2>And I thought that was referring to Canada as the most European of North American countries.

00:22:22.660 --> 00:22:25.900
<v SPEAKER_2>I thought was really, really resonated with me.

00:22:25.960 --> 00:22:30.040
<v SPEAKER_2>I think, I think it is, it's about seeing diversity as strength.

00:22:30.040 --> 00:22:42.800
<v SPEAKER_2>It's about not trying to, it's about not trying to dominate one culture over another, but trying to have mutual respect to, I think you can appreciate different cultures.

00:22:42.800 --> 00:22:52.140
<v SPEAKER_2>I know at times it seems probably, it seems strange in the way that we look back and people were concerned about cultural appropriation.

00:22:52.140 --> 00:22:55.420
<v SPEAKER_2>Now it just seems to be ever more about cultural warfare.

00:22:55.860 --> 00:23:01.940
<v SPEAKER_2>But I think Canada can really, you are a vision, I think, of a pluralist society.

00:23:01.940 --> 00:23:04.060
<v SPEAKER_2>Yes, there are challenges, but we all face those.

00:23:04.060 --> 00:23:10.440
<v SPEAKER_2>But I think the key thing, it's about showing respect by your deeds and not just your words, which I think he started to do.

00:23:10.440 --> 00:23:12.720

<v SPEAKER_2>But it's also about trying to build that prosperity.

00:23:12.780 --> 00:23:27.940

<v SPEAKER_2>I think it's been interesting to somebody who's watched the issue around Quebec from afar as well to show that whenever he became prime minister and the prospect of a federal election, that the support for the bloc crumbled.

00:23:27.940 --> 00:23:42.780

<v SPEAKER_2>Because from my perspective, it appeared that Quebecers made a judgment call that Mark Carney was going to be able to secure a better deal for them than they would be able to secure on their own if they were separate from the rest of Canada.

00:23:42.780 --> 00:23:52.660

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think the fact that he has made this commitment to, he talked about loving the language, not being perfect in it, but working towards being increasingly fluent.

00:23:52.660 --> 00:24:03.040

<v SPEAKER_2>So I think it's about deeds in action and it's about just trying to build that prosperity and have a mutual respect and not trying to have a zero-sum game where you're trying to have one culture winning over another.

00:24:03.040 --> 00:24:16.720

<v SPEAKER_2>It's about letting all cultures flourish and saying Canada is the framework that allows that to happen in the same way that I think United Ireland will allow Protestant, Catholic, and dissenter to quote the United Irishmen of the 1790s.

00:24:17.300 --> 00:24:22.480

<v SPEAKER_2>We'll be able to come together and with our increasing new Irish who come from all over the world as well.

00:24:22.480 --> 00:24:30.860

<v SPEAKER_2>I think that's something we should really cherish because diversity is good, whether you're talking about in your boardroom, in a classroom, or in a place of recreation.

00:24:30.860 --> 00:24:33.560

<v SPEAKER_2>That's something that we should cherish and value.

00:24:33.560 --> 00:24:41.320

<v SPEAKER_2>As a late John Hume, a leading Irish statesman said, we should not focus on our differences.

00:24:41.320 --> 00:24:46.540

<v SPEAKER_2>Difference is just a result of an accident of birth.

00:24:46.540 --> 00:24:50.240

<v SPEAKER_2>Our differences are, and actually there's much more about us that brings us together.

00:24:50.240 --> 00:24:52.600

<v SPEAKER_2>I think that's actually right.

00:24:52.600 --> 00:24:53.600

<v SPEAKER_1>I think that's exactly right.

00:24:53.600 --> 00:25:19.720

<v SPEAKER_1>Actually, my last observation would be that having read your book, it struck me, one of the things that struck me is that with the economic renewals, what's taking place in the south, and to some degree in the north, but not to the same degree as it is taking the south, is that part of that may be due to inward migration from other parts of Europe, and that Ireland too is becoming more pluralistic society.

00:25:20.320 --> 00:25:26.380

<v SPEAKER_1>I also wondered, it struck me that the newcomers would probably find the divisions of the old something that they couldn't identify with.

00:25:26.460 --> 00:25:28.800

<v SPEAKER_1>Does that help the cause of Irish Unity?

00:25:29.740 --> 00:25:39.140

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, I think so, because we had a scenario, and this is part of the problem, is that partition itself created two ethno-cultural states.

00:25:39.140 --> 00:25:52.000

<v SPEAKER_2>Now, the Republic has gone further along the journey of becoming more pluralist, and not being a Catholic majority state, where minority religions, including Protestants and Presbyterians, felt that they were being excluded.

00:25:52.000 --> 00:25:57.620

<v SPEAKER_2>In the same way, Northern Ireland was very much a Protestant state, and the Catholic minority felt they were being excluded.

00:25:58.060 --> 00:26:05.020

<v SPEAKER_2>So, I think bringing the two together and with that mixture of newcomers that helps to break down those barriers.

00:26:05.020 --> 00:26:11.640

<v SPEAKER_2>We have a significant amount of people across the Ireland who have moved to Ireland from Eastern Europe.

00:26:11.640 --> 00:26:12.860

<v SPEAKER_2>We look at our healthcare system.

00:26:12.860 --> 00:26:19.780

<v SPEAKER_2>We have huge numbers of people from across Europe and further field that are working in our healthcare system, and that's really important.

00:26:19.780 --> 00:26:31.440

<v SPEAKER_2>I personally take it as a real compliment, the fact that people want to leave their lives in other places in the world and come here to bring their families, build up their families and be part of society and make that contribution.

00:26:31.440 --> 00:26:33.800

<v SPEAKER_2>And I come back to the issue of Brexit.

00:26:33.800 --> 00:26:40.820

<v SPEAKER_2>Brexit created a hostile environment for anyone who wasn't British, and it created a hostile environment for people who were British as well.

00:26:40.820 --> 00:26:47.680

<v SPEAKER_2>And that's something, the only way the escape hatch for us to escape the chaos, the political and economic chaos of Brexit is Irish Unity.

00:26:47.680 --> 00:26:50.060

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think that's how we can bring people together.

00:26:50.380 --> 00:27:07.160

<v SPEAKER_2>We can insulate as best we can on the island of Ireland ourselves from the madness of Brexit by having Irish Unity, and therefore that will stop any British government or any other political entity trying to leverage the fact that there are two states in Ireland, the Ireland, to their benefit.

00:27:07.160 --> 00:27:16.140

<v SPEAKER_2>We can protect ourselves and create better resilience and grow the economy more domestically, because the key thing for me is the Irish economy is doing really well.

00:27:16.140 --> 00:27:19.760

<v SPEAKER_2>It's due to grow something like 9%, 9.1% this year.

00:27:19.760 --> 00:27:21.920

<v SPEAKER_2>And in some ways, the Dublin economy is overheating.

00:27:22.420 --> 00:27:28.940

<v SPEAKER_2>But if you add those six countries in Northern Ireland onto the existing Republic of Ireland economy, that creates additional capacity.

00:27:28.940 --> 00:27:33.580

<v SPEAKER_2>So it's actually going to be a benefit both North and South, because you're bringing in additional capacity.

00:27:33.580 --> 00:27:37.380

<v SPEAKER_2>You're bringing in, you know, highly skilled people.

00:27:37.380 --> 00:27:40.320

<v SPEAKER_2>A lot of people like me, my generation left and went off to Britain.

00:27:40.320 --> 00:27:42.140

<v SPEAKER_2>I'm one of the few that actually returned.

00:27:42.140 --> 00:27:44.900

<v SPEAKER_2>I have two older brothers, one in London and one in New York.

00:27:44.900 --> 00:27:53.240

<v SPEAKER_2>But I think through Irish Unity, we can provide hope, opportunity and prosperity for people on the island, so that if they wish to stay, there'll be a future for them.

00:27:53.240 --> 00:28:05.900

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think it's about, you know, in terms of other things, we can work much better together on addressing our housing crisis by leveraging the housing bodies, the approved housing bodies that we have, North and South, then being able to work on an integrated basis.

00:28:05.900 --> 00:28:14.500

<v SPEAKER_2>Because there's so many regulatory borders, which you can't go into in this podcast, on terms of housing, healthcare, education, the economy.

00:28:14.500 --> 00:28:25.800

<v SPEAKER_2>And once we strip out that barrier, that border that was put in Ireland by the British government in 1921, we will be able to really unlock and unleash the potential to really grow things on an all-Ireland basis.

00:28:25.800 --> 00:28:28.680

<v SPEAKER_2>As you said, it's going to be a real process of renewal.

00:28:30.040 --> 00:28:36.260

<v SPEAKER_1>Ben, you make the case for listeners to pick up a copy and read about the Irish Unity Dividend.

00:28:36.260 --> 00:28:36.940

<v SPEAKER_1>Thank you.

00:28:36.940 --> 00:28:40.800

<v SPEAKER_1>My last question to you is, what are you reading or streaming these days?

00:28:40.800 --> 00:28:45.040

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, I desperately try not to read political biographies.

00:28:45.040 --> 00:28:46.160

<v SPEAKER_2>I try to read a lot of fiction.

00:28:48.480 --> 00:28:50.880

<v SPEAKER_2>I'm currently failing miserably to do that.

00:28:50.880 --> 00:28:57.920

<v SPEAKER_2>I'm reading called The Persuader by a TV journalist called Stephen Walker.

00:28:57.920 --> 00:29:05.280

<v SPEAKER_2>It's about the late John Hume and the work that he did over the Irish peace process over a 30-year period or more.

00:29:05.660 --> 00:29:15.740

<v SPEAKER_2>That's been fascinating because the start of my political communication career was just as he was coming to the end of his political career but it's fascinating just reading again.

00:29:16.460 --> 00:29:21.840

<v SPEAKER_2>Just how far we have traveled but just about the potential that we have going forward as well.

00:29:21.840 --> 00:29:27.840

<v SPEAKER_2>In terms of streaming, I'm listening to Paul Giamatti's podcast Chinwag with Dr.

00:29:27.840 --> 00:29:28.760

<v SPEAKER_2>Stephen Asma.

00:29:28.760 --> 00:29:40.680

<v SPEAKER_2>Unfortunately, they've stopped making it but it's a fascinating podcast, not about politics at all but about all kinds of things, UFOs, where the moon landing is fake, which they don't think they are.

00:29:40.680 --> 00:29:50.200

<v SPEAKER_2>I don't think they are but it's a fascinating discussion about everything and anything under the sun and it's a nice source of relief.

00:29:50.200 --> 00:30:01.460

<v SPEAKER_2>The only problem is, it's quite humorous, so I have to be careful whenever I'm at the gym and I'm listening to it, but my fellow gym goers don't wonder why I suddenly burst out laughing for no apparent reason.

00:30:01.460 --> 00:30:01.800

<v SPEAKER_1>All right.

00:30:01.800 --> 00:30:07.060

<v SPEAKER_1>The Chinwag and the Persuader about the biography of John Hume, I think you said by Stephen Walker?

00:30:07.060 --> 00:30:07.860

<v SPEAKER_2>Yes.

00:30:07.860 --> 00:30:08.180

<v SPEAKER_1>Yes.

00:30:08.180 --> 00:30:08.940

<v SPEAKER_1>All right.

00:30:08.940 --> 00:30:10.640

<v SPEAKER_1>Very good recommendations.

00:30:10.640 --> 00:30:11.800

<v SPEAKER_1>Ben, thank you.

00:30:11.800 --> 00:30:13.960

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks for listening to this episode of The Global Exchange.

00:30:14.480 --> 00:30:20.260

<v SPEAKER_1>We were joined today by Ben Collins, and I encourage you to read his new book, The Irish Unity Dividend.

00:30:20.260 --> 00:30:24.880

<v SPEAKER_1>You can also read Ben's work in Policy Magazine, and we'll link to it in the website.

00:30:24.880 --> 00:30:28.900

<v SPEAKER_1>You can find The Canadian Global Affairs Institute on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

00:30:28.900 --> 00:30:38.060

<v SPEAKER_1>The Global Exchange is brought to you by our team at The Canadian Global Affairs Institute, and as always, my thanks go out to our producer, Jordyn Carroll, and to Drew Phillips for providing our music.

00:30:38.060 --> 00:30:39.560

<v SPEAKER_1>I'm Colin Robertson.

00:30:39.560 --> 00:30:41.360

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks for joining us today on The Global Exchange.