**Home truths about Home Rule**

* Sir, – John Bruton’s naivety is astounding (Opinion, April 17th). His idea is that the first World War was all about little Belgium’s neutrality and not about imperial and colonial rivalry for power and prestige. It was also a military and economic rivalry and had much to do with the acquisition of wealth. All the imperial powers of Europe had a single goal and that was to enrich themselves at the expense of indigenous populations in their respective colonies. King Leopold II, of little neutral Belgium, had a colony in the Congo. An estimated 10 million Africans died as a result of his atrocious regime.

Mr Bruton also attempts to mitigate the influence of John Redmond’s speech “for the terrible price that was paid in the trenches”. He also makes excuses for Redmond in that he could not have foreseen that the war would go on so long, and that there would be many casualties.

Redmond was at the height of his political power at that time and his speech would have had a considerable effect on the recruitment of young nationalists and as a result was responsible for some of the consequences that followed. He may also have wished for a free acceptance of Home Rule by the unionists but the Ulster Volunteers were formed in response to the imminent passing of the Home Rule Bill in 1912.

In response the Irish National Volunteers were formed in 1913. So one could argue that the introduction of the Home Rule Bill actually increased the threat of violence, contrary to what Redmond had wished for. One also wonders to whom Mr Bruton is referring when he implies that “Redmond was a realist” and “unfortunately some of his successors were not”. – Yours, etc,

TOM PARTRIDGE,

Tramore,

Co Waterford.

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