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**FROM THE ARCHIVES:** The eventual partition of Ireland was becoming evident in the 1912 House of Commons debate on the Home Rule Bill: one of the amendments, moved by Tommy Agar-Robartes, Liberal MP for a Cornwall constituency, aimed to exclude Antrim, Armagh, Down and Derry from the proposed Irish parliament.

THE AMENDMENT, he said, would solve one of the most complex questions connected with the government of Ireland . . .

The Bill made the mistake of treating Ireland, not as two nations, but as one nation.

Ireland consisted of two nations, different to each other in sentiment, character, history, and religion. It was absolutely impossible to bring those two incongruous elements together, just as it was to reconcile the irreconcilable and appease the unappeasable. There was in North- East Ulster a bitter opposition towards the majority in Ireland on this question of Home Rule . . .

Of course, there were Protestants in the South and West, but they lived under totally different conditions to those in North-East Ulster. They lived amongst a population of Roman Catholics, who predominated. They could not be singled out for special taxation or for special attention at the hands of the Irish Parliament . . .

It was feared that Belfast, for instance, might be made the object of attention on the part of the Parliament. It might be a speculation, but it was a speculation which the Unionists were not prepared to risk. They could not reconcile these two nations by making one subject to the other. While orange bitters would mix with sherry, orange bitters would not mix with Irish whiskey.

Mr. [Augustine] Birrell [Liberal Party chief secretary for Ireland] said it was an entire delusion to suppose, strong as was the feeling in Ulster, that the shrewd inhabitants of that prosperous province were entirely devoted to no other question than their religious opinions or their religious differences. They were very strongly involved in the general prosperity of Ireland, and they certainly were bankers in Ireland, and he could see their branches in all the most prosperous towns in the South and West of Ireland. [...]

Mr. [Andrew] Bonar Law [Opposition leader] said the hostility of the North-East of Ireland to being put under a parliament in Dublin was at least as strong as the hostility of the people of the rest of Ireland to being put under the rule of the British House of Commons.

If Ireland, which was a small part of the United Kingdom, was entitled to separate treatment, on what ground could it be said that the North-East of Ireland was not equally entitled to separate treatment? It was said there was only about a million of them.

Yes, and the whole of the nation of Ireland was only something like a fifteenth part of the United Kingdom, and if the fifteenth part could claim the right to separate treatment, the fourth could certainly claim with greater justice the right to refuse to submit to a Government which they detested.