

ACT 1

SCENE 1.1

SFX CROWDS CHEERING / TRUMPETS/ MUSIC

1.1920s REPORTER Jubilation in the streets on this bright sunny day in 1921. The signing of Anglo-Irish Treaty finally puts an end to years of fighting between British and Irish forces and cements the idea of 'partition'!² Two states have been formed on the island of Ireland - one in the south called the 'Irish Free State', leaving the United Kingdom - goodbye folks! And one in the north called 'Northern Ireland', which remains part of the UK. They are separated by a border, which stretches over 300 miles, cutting through communities, roads and even through houses. But don't worry chaps! It's only temporary!³ A new border line - a more sensible solution - is to be agreed by a 'Boundary Commission', which will undertake the easy task of fixing the problem. I'm sure it will be all over by Christmas!

1. FISHER: I'll take it from here MacNeill - before you bore us to death with a history lesson.⁵ Hello. My name is Joseph R Fisher, editor of the Northern Whig newspaper. I'll be representing Northern Ireland on this Commission. My aim is to ensure that 'not one inch' of territory passes to the south.⁶
2. CROWD: Yayyy!!!!/ Booooo!!!!
3. MACNEILL Well obviously there will be some territory passing...
4. FISHER Not if I can help it!
5. MACNEILL Now see here Fisher...
6. FISHER You're out of your depth MacNeill! You don't even have legal training.⁷ And, you've no integrity!
7. MACNEILL Integrity?! I've seen your sneaky letters to Northern Ireland's Prime Minister James Craig - the dealings of this committee are to be confidential!⁸
8. FEETHAM *(To the bickering men)* Gentlemen, quiet! *(To the*

1. CROWD: Yayyy!!!!/ Wooo!!! / Go on you boy ya!
2. FEETHAM Alright, any questions? Or comments?
3. SALLY: This border business is all the greatest rot. I can tell you that no-one wants it!¹³
4. FISHER: Excuse me ma'am, the people of Ulster *do* want a border.
5. SALLY: Maybe in 'Belfast' there's rich fellas with their fancy clothes like yourselves that want it, but not here. It'll never last!¹⁴
6. PAUL: Excuse me! I want a border! I want it to be stronger and taller than ever!
7. SALLY: Well I don't want it all!
8. MACNEILL: Don't worry *a chairde*. Justice Feetham here will sort it out.
9. SALLY He's a big Englishman! He's biased!
10. FEETHAM: Excuse me, I was born in Wales, not England. But I am a South African.
11. MACNEILL: You see? He has no skin in the game one way or the other. He will be a fair minded man.¹⁵

1. PAUL: Well... what will you do with our border then Mr Springbok?!

2. FEETHAM: I will fix the problem. Easily! I solved the issues with the Indian constitution in merely four months!¹⁶ Myself and my two commissioners here have an important task in front of us. Sorting out this border is of vital importance to the entire British Empire. We must not allow ourselves to be swayed by emotional arguments. We will focus on facts and figures. We will be fair and just in our decision-making. We will find the 'technological solutions' and 'alternative arrangements' necessary.

3. SALLY: What does that even mean?

ACT 2

SCENE 2.1 **INT: RADIO STUDIO**

1.1920s REPORTER Many Northern Irish Unionists - people who consider themselves British - don't want their homes moved to the Free State. Today, Northern Irish Commissioner Fisher will be taking Justice Feetham to meet a Unionist delegation in a local Orange Hall.¹⁸

SCENE 2.2 **INT: ORANGE HALL MEETING ROOM**

1. FISHER: They shouldn't be long sir.

2. FEETHAM: Not a problem.

- (BEAT)

3. FISHER: While we are alone, I'd just like to say I've been speaking to Prime Minister James Craig up in Belfast.

4. FEETHAM: The dealings of this Commission are confidential, Fisher.

5. FISHER: I know, I know! But Craig is concerned you might be organising some kind of vote or plebiscite on the border?¹⁹

6. FEETHAM: I'm considering it.

7. FISHER: Well... we would advise against that²⁰, sir. It'll only get people riled up. You don't need that type of anger on the ground.

8. FEETHAM: What do you... and Craig... suggest?

9. FISHER: You know, take your soundings, look at old election results, the census - that type of thing. A large scale vote would just make trouble for everyone.²¹

10. FEETHAM: Maybe you are right.

THE 100 YEAR OLD BACKSTOP

SCENE 2.3 **INT: RADIO STUDIO**

1. 1920s REPORTER The Boundary Commission is hard at work, hearing both sides of the argument. The Unionists have been concentrating on the economic argument - claiming being part of the Irish Free state would put their businesses at risk.²⁵ But, nationalists, on the other hand, hope to be transferred *to* the Free State. Reports are that MacNeill has arranged to meet Feetham at a local Gaelic Athletics club to chat with some of them and hear their views.

1. CHARLES O'NEILL: Oh, you're serious? Well, it's like this. In four short years, the Unionists have forced 7,000 Nationalists out of their jobs³¹. They've murdered nearly 300 Catholics³³ and burned hundreds more families out of their homes.³² And now their government is gerrymandering our districts, so we cannot elect our own representatives³⁴. They want a Protestant State for a Protestant people³⁵.

2. FEETHAM And there have been IRA atrocities against Protestants and Orange halls burnt down all over the island. But, I will not be swayed by threats of violence. I am a rational man and I will make my decisions based on the rule of law. Let us move on; how would altering the border affect you economically?

3. EUGENE COYLE: Well... I'm an enterprising businessman. I wouldn't want my livelihood taken away.

4. FEETHAM: What is your business, sir?

5. EUGENE COYLE: Smuggling!

SFX: THE NATIONALIST CROWD LAUGHS

1. FEETHAM: And yes... I think that's done it. Easy peasy Kumquat squeezy.

2. FISHER: You're finished already? Let me see that map!

SFX:

SFX Revving of engine. Wheel spin.

1. FISHER: What happened?! You almost drove us into that river.
2. MACNEILL: You thrust the map in my face!
3. FISHER: You asked me to /show it to you!
4. MACNEILL: I couldn't see the /bridge was down!
5. FISHER: And now we are stuck in a ditch!³⁹

SFX Revving of engine. Wheel spin.

6. FEETHAM: Gentlem o n w

SCENE 3.2 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD

OMITTED

SCENE 3.2 A EXT. COTTAGE

SFX: Running, panting, shouting, knock on the door.

1. FEETHAM: Hello! Hello!

2. MACNEILL: Let us in!

SFX: DOOR CREEKS OPEN

3. THERESA: No need to bash the door in.

4. FISHER: The bridge was down. Our car crashed. We need somewhere to rest for the night.
5. THERESA: You may come in so.
6. MACNEILL Thank you!
7. THERESA But just one of you... I'm a woman all on my own - I can't have three strange men in my living room! The other two can bunk in with the cattle.
8. FEETHAM: MacNeill and Fisher - that's you.
9. FISHER: But sir!

SFX: DOOR SLAM

10. FISHER/MACNEILL (*Sigh*)

SCENE 3.3 INT. COTTAGE

SFX: FIRE CRACKLES

1. THERESA: Have a seat there by the fire.
2. FEETHAM: Thank you.
3. THERESA:

4. FEETHAM: Ummm.... Nm

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M

6. THERESA: Aye. And I'm Emperess of India. Now are you for tea?
7. FEETHAM: Just one minute... I need to speak with the fellows outside.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS

SCENE 4.2 - COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE**SFX PAPERS RUSTLING, CHAIRS BEING PUSHED BACK, PEN
SCRIBBLING**

5. FISHER: You were chosen because you're a conservative who wouldn't rock the boat!⁴⁴
6. FEETHAM: I left my family in Oxford to come over here to work this out. My allegiance is to the law.
7. FISHER: I'm warning you. Do not make concessions to this Free State. The Irish people in the South are entirely beholden to the Catholic Church in Rome. Ulster will not have her laws written by the Vatican! Craig says not an inch will be given to the Papists!
8. FEETHAM: I've told you before; the dealings of this Commission are confidential!
1. FISHER: I don't care. Craig wants you to know that any changes to the border will not be tolerated.⁴⁵

(BEAT)

2. FEETHAM: What do you mean 'will not be tolerated'?
3. FISHER: Craig is willing to mount full scale Unionist resistance, and Churchill backs him up.⁴⁶
4. FEETHAM: That sounds like a threat.

5. FISHER: Threats got us this far. It's a tactic that works.
6. FEETHAM: What about democracy? You cannot subvert the law with such duplicity.
7. FISHER Five years ago, this whole island was under British rule, now only six counties fly the Union flag. Do not reduce the size of the state even more! I am British and proud. The Northern Irish people are British and proud.⁴⁷
⁴⁸James Craig and I will do everything in our power to keep the Catholic influence away from our borders. I care about this place and about my people and will do anything to protect them.
8. FEETHAM: Fisher -

SCENE 4.3

OMITTED

SCENE 4.4 ENNISKILLEN TOWN HALL

1. FISHER: It's looking pretty hairy om ý iry ... ng p o

**SFX: CURTAIN BEING PULLED BACK, ERUPTION OF NOISE - PEOPLE
SCREAMING AND SHOUTING.**

4. FEETHAM: Settle down, settle down!

(THE NOISE CONTINUES).

5. FISHER: (screaming) SETTLE DOOOOOWN!

(THEY SETTLE DOWN).

6. FEETHAM: Thank you, Fisher. And thank you all for coming. I have been reviewing your submissions and statistical arguments, but I am here today to hear your personal stories - what is it really like to live here? Ehhh, yes, you sir. What's your name?

7. TRIMBLE: W. Copeland Trimble. Local Landowner and proud Unionist.

1. CAHIR HEALY: He's a Protestant settler is what he is!

2. TRIMBLE: A SETTLER?! My family has been here for 400 years!

3. CAHIR HEALY: Let me speak! I am Cahir Healy, local nationalist politician.

4. FEETHAM Mr Healy, please let Mr Trimble speak - you will then have your turn.

5. TRIMBLE: Thank you sir. As I was saying, my ancestors came here and found a barren marsh and they turned it into productive farmland. We made something of this place with our blood, sweat and tears, while the Catholic workers flit about like flies, never settling at all.⁵¹

6. CAHIR HEALEY: There are more of us Catholics than there are of you Protestants!

7. TRIMBLE: Aye, swarms of yous! Coming up from the south, replacing the Loyal sons of Ulster who died on Flander's Fields!⁵²

8. CAHIR HEALEY: What about our wishes?

9. TRIMBLE: Your wishes? You and your people have contributed three quarters of the crime of this place and you do not pay even one-third of the rates!⁵³

1. CAHIR HEALEY: Well, you base your claims on the possession of bullocks and grass rather than on the goodwill of human beings!⁵⁴

2. FEETHAM: Gentlemen! If you cannot be civil I will have to ask you to leave.

3. CAHIR HEALEY: The will of the people! The will of the people!

FX: NATIONALISTS CHEER

4. FEETHAM: No! I must get this under control - gentlemen?!
5. TRIMBLE: We will not be ruled by the Pope in Rome!
6. CAHIR HEALEY:

4. MACNEILL: It was never going to be easy.

5. FEETHAM: I didn't think it would be this hard! I can't fix this
 problem. I give up.

6. MACNEILL:

SCENE 4.5

EXT. MOUNTAIN

FX: BIRDS. FEET SQUELCHING. FEETHAM is out of breath.

1. MACNEILL: Come on Feetham.

2. FEETHAM: I don't think I can go any further. Why have you dragged me halfway across the province just to get my shoes dirty?!

3. MACNEILL: We're almost there.

SFX: THE TWO MEN REACH THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN - LIGHT BREEZE.

4. MACNEILL: Here we are.

5. FEETHAM: It's... beautiful.

6. MACNEILL: To the right are the Cooley Mountains in the south, and the left are the Mourne Mountains in the north. And that in the middle, that's Carlingford Lough, marking the current border. At one time, all of this was part of the 00008873 0 595

1. MACNEILL: To my bones, Feetham. If only we could stop killing each other. There are many things I would change about the last few years in Ireland.

2. FEETHAM: The Civil War must have been terrible.

3. MACNEILL: It was. Finally independent from Britain and the first thing we do is turn on ourselves. My sons fought on opposite sides. Brian was killed. Three years ago. He died thinking I was the enemy.⁶⁰

4. FEETHAM: I'm sorry. I can't imagine what it must be like to lose a child.

5. MACNEILL: We've known nothing but war on this island for almost a decade, Feetham... the culmination of a 700 year old conflict... I fear if we do not succeed with this Commission, the violence will never stop.

6. FEETHAM: What can I do? Move it one way, the Nationalists will be furious, move it the other way, and the Unionists will be up in arms! I tried looking at the big picture - that didn't work. I tried list0 gians

9. MACNEILL: What will be the cost if we do nothing?

(BEAT)

1. FEETHAM: You're right. But the only way I can see it is... small changes. I cannot justify large transfers of territory, but maybe I can try to make it... make sense - for those children who are to come.

2. MACNEILL: There are Irishmen who would call me a traitor for not pressing you to undo this border.⁶¹ But do what you must, Feetham. Time is running out.

(SILENCE. NATURE SOUNDS.)

3. FEETHAM: You will not like it. Neither will Fisher.

4. MACNEILL: I know.

5. FEETHAM: Go raibh maith agat MacNeill.⁶²

6. MACNEILL: Look at you, speaking Irish! You've gone native!

7. FEETHAM: Hardly. I can't wait to get out of this bogland. My good Oxfords are ruined!

1. FEETHAM: You weren't there. I was. I spoke to them. I listened to them. This matters, sir! We can't just sweep it under the carpet.

2. BALDWIN: Enough! It's done. Craig's Unionists welcome it.⁶⁹ And we bought off the southern Irish easily. They're fine with no border changes as long as we cancel a few deb

SCENE 5.2

1. 1920s REPORTER And so the work of the Boundary Commission
has been suppressed. The border will remain the way it
is!⁷¹ It's all sorted now. No more trouble in Ireland!

FX: Al Jolson - Keep Smiling At Trouble plays