

News and Articles

DUP – Sinn Fein collision in chaos – Kennedy

[E-mail to a friend](#) *April 8th, 2008 Alex Benjamin*

THE DUP and Sinn Fein alliance is in chaos according to Ulster Unionist MLA Danny Kennedy. Speaking from Stormont after the Consideration Stage of the Commission for Victims and Survivors Bill was unexpectedly, and at the last minute, postponed by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) the MLA described as “cruel incompetence” the DUP/SF handling of the Bill: “Only last week, OFMDFM were telling the Assembly that this was crucial legislation which had to be accelerated in order to ensure the Victims Commission was secure allowing it to get up and running. However today we have seen the unedifying spectacle of the DUP-SF political fudge falling apart. Once again, the DUP and Sinn Fein have failed to deliver for the people of Northern Ireland.”

In its proposed amendment to the Bill, the Ulster Unionist Party has voiced their concern surrounding the DUP’s failure to change the flawed definition of ‘victim’ contained in existing legislation. Although because we were not the Bill’s sponsors our amendment was not accepted, we are asking the DUP to take our amendment and include it in the Bill – removing the offensive definition of ‘victim’ which includes terrorists something they believe is causing repercussions within the DUP-Sinn Fein alliance.

In the event of another attempt to push this Bill through the Assembly, the Ulster Unionist Party will continue to support amendments which seek to improve this rushed and flawed Bill.”

The Ulster Unionist Party amendment to the Bill sought to change the current definition (in the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006) of a ‘victim’ to protect innocent victims of the Troubles from being lumped together with convicted terrorists. Currently a victim can mean anyone who has been affected physically or psychologically as a result of a conflict-related incident. This leaves the door open for former terrorists to claim that they are ‘victims’ of the Troubles.

Notes to editors

Proposed amendments

‘Interpretation: “victim and survivor”

1A. In Article 3 of the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 insert

“(3) In this Order references to “victim and survivor” shall not include an individual appearing to the Commission to be any of the following –

- (a) someone who is or has been physically or psychologically injured as a result of or in consequence of their undertaking a criminal act in a conflict-related incident;
- (b) someone who provides a substantial amount of care on a regular basis for an individual mentioned in paragraph (a); or
- (c) someone who has been bereaved as a result of or in consequence of a conflict-related incident where the deceased was undertaking a criminal act in that incident.”

Prior to the Bill being retracted the Ulster Unionist Ministers had been expecting support from the DUP Ministers as the newly appointed Junior Minister in OFMDFM, Jeffery Donaldson, has frequently stated his position on this matter. In February of this year, he said:

“The DUP is engaged in advancing the victims’ agenda and we will continue to fight for victims and will resist any efforts to rewrite or sanitise history to suit republicans. That includes any attempt to equate terrorist perpetrators with their innocent victims.” (Jeffery Donaldson News Letter 8th February 2008)

This echoed his statement of 2005:

“We will also be making it clear to government that it must not equate innocent victims with the perpetrators of violence and that any definition of victim must exclude those engaged in acts of terrorism.” (BBC News 1st March 2005).

Nor is this merely a personal view held by Mr. Donaldson. A DUP policy paper makes clear that party’s stated position on the definition of victim:

“There is a fundamental distinction between those who have suffered at the hands of terrorist gangs and those terrorist gangs and former terrorists who contributed to the terror campaign... The DUP simply demands a fair and sensible recognition of the victims of terror. Clouding the issue or applying a one-fits-all definition merely concedes to the principle of political expediency.” (DUP Policy Paper ‘A Voice for Victims’ 2003)

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