

Speech by Jim Allister MEP to TUV Conference

Strict Embargo: 4pm Saturday 8 November 2008

Welcome to East Belfast where every Tom, Dick and Sammy must have their vehicle taxed and MOT displayed. You might expect the Road Safety Minister to know that, but then you might expect, in a democracy worthy of the name, that the Joint First Minister, his Junior and the Roads Minister not to be convicted terrorists. And you just might have expected those who made careers out of lambasting everyone else as weaklings, not to have been the rollovers who ushered unrepentant terrorists into government, clutching pathetically at the figleaf of non-existent Plan Bs. **But what a rip-roaring success Plan A has turned out to be.**

I pretend no sorrow over that, but on behalf of ordinary people, pensioners, homeowners, hard working families, primary school pupils and parents, who are all hurting and thought devolution would help, I do share the anger over the bad government to which we are all subjected. Direct Rule was poor, remote, uncaring, but at least ministers met, papers were approved and decisions flowed.

In one way its easy to be a Traditional Unionist, you hardly even have to make your case: **the Jokes on the Hill** make it for you. What a shambles. Think of what we were promised...stable, caring, efficient govt by those we were told were now committed to good government in NI, and if they turned out not to be, then there was the much vaunted default mechanism to get them out. How different the reality has been....a can't meet, won't meet Executive, runaway electricity prices when stability was promised through the all-island single electricity market, rising unemployment in place of the promised inflow of foreign investment, an Agriculture and Fisheries Minister interested only in an all-Ireland agenda and refusing aid which she could pay, water charges on the way, when all committed to blocking them, ongoing high corporation tax in the face of false promises of winning reduction, Stormont irrelevance in the face of economic turmoil. **And this is what "getting it right" looks like?** Need I go on?

Having said all that I should be surprised to see you all here. Weren't you told last week by the First Minister that the Union was safe, Sinn Fein was defeated and things had never been better. Didn't you believe him? Its precisely because we care for the Union, know better than to swallow that IRA/Sinn Fein are no threat and can see things are far from rosy, that we are here and must exist. Without us things would be much worse, because the very least TUV has done is keep those who are set on the nefarious Belfast Agreement road, looking over their shoulder and perpetually touching the brakes and, just past Dromore, travelling south, of course, they dramatically pulled up sharp and dumped the laughing gas driver and his sidekicks Junior and Poots and reached Willy a few more rennies, before setting off down the same old rocky road to Dublin.

You'd already have the Maze Shrine and Martyr the Terrorist would already have his hands on the levers of power over the Judiciary if TUV did not exist. But we exist to do

much more than that, we exist to see this hideous monstrosity of Belfast Agreement devolution ditched and destroyed beyond repair.

You always know you are winning when Sinn Fein is squealing.

A few weeks ago in the Assembly Adams said, "Jim Allister is as likely to be dictating what the DUP does as anyone on the Benches opposite." Another Shinner complained, "The pattern seems to be that Jim Allister raises an issue and it becomes a DUP priority." And An phoblacht has whined, "new DUP is paralysed by fear of criticism from the likes of Jim Allister." Not bad for a bunch of "irrelevants" and "headbangers" as the DUP Leader so kindly described us all!

I said in a way its easy to be a Traditional Unionist but being a DUP speechwriter is very easy nowadays. All they have to do is dust down an old Trimble speech and assure the gormless all is well. Where before did you hear what Peter Robinson had to say last weekend? From David Trimble, of course, who 10 years ago was regularly assuring us this same Belfast Agreement had strengthened the Union. This was what Peter Robinson had to say then, in answer to both Trimble and Taylor repeating the nonsense which he himself now peddles. **"With Adams hailing the deal as "a step towards the goal of a united Ireland" Mr Taylor and Mr Trimble sound increasingly ridiculous claiming it strengthens the Union. Trimble and Taylor's comical assertion that the Union is stronger may be entertaining but it is not credible set against the presence of Adams and McGuinness in government...., a nationalist veto in the Assembly, all-Ireland Executive structures... Come off it! This deal is the launch pad to a united Ireland."** That was Peter then, now with the Belfast Agreement still in place he tells us all is not just well, but wonderful! Which Peter Robinson should we believe? Hyde Robinson, Jackyl Robinson, or Heath Robinson? For what a Heath Robinson concoction we have at Stormont.

Why is it like this? No one should be in the least surprised, because such mayhem is the inevitable outcome of clutching to the bosom of government, those dedicated to the destruction of the state over which they govern, and doing it through a mechanism by which you can never get rid of them, or act without them, guarantees the Oscar winning chaos in which Stormont excels.

That mechanism, that inequity, that iniquity is mandatory coalition. Used no where else in the world as a means to form a government and used here for one reason only, namely to buy off the IRA. What a jackpot for the Provos to be told after decades of seeking to bomb NI out of existence and butchering thousands of its best and bravest citizens you can have, for as long as it takes you to attain your blood tarnished united Ireland, a guaranteed place in the govt of the place whose name you will not even speak, and all the time you can peddle and promote the extraction of NI from the UK through the high office that you will hold. And at the weekends you can still coat-trail the rabble round Belfast to protest the presence of real soldiers, equivocate over republican terror – even share a wreath laying in Omagh with Junior Jeff as you add hypocrisy and insult to the innocent dead – and frustrate govt at will, and all this while those who were foolish enough to admit you to govt are helpless to stop you.

10 years ago, when he too took the traditional unionist view, Peter Robinson made this succinct and pertinent observation in a speech in Filemiletown, **"There is no quicker or better way to finally destroy Northern Ireland than from within its own Government."** How right he was then, how wrong he is today!

Little wonder, after St Andrews, Gerry Adams said devolution would be but the latest phase in their on-going struggle. **We're seeing what he means.**

Look at the pitiful sight of Peter Robinson over recent weeks. The Provos bring the same blackmail and bully-boy tactics to government as they used for decades on the streets, through bombing and murder, and all the Joint First Minister can do is wag his "bad dog finger" and threaten "serious consequences" and the dog responds by barking in his face and eying him up as a suitable lamppost. Housetraining Sinn Fein - an expertise once claimed by some DUP publicists - hasn't been going too well. Nor have too many manners been put on Republicans, as promised by this work of fiction (DUP Manifesto). As for sackcloth and ashes, more like armani and cash!

A DUP First Minister impotent in the face of Sinn Fein belligerence. That is the indignity, the humiliation to which Unionism has been brought. Brought there by foolish leadership, based on the abject folly of ever believing Sinn Fein was fit for govt, of Ian Paisley's outlandish boast that Sinn Fein "had bought into the British State", and the betrayal of going back on decades of strength for the baubles of office.

What did O'Neill, Faulkner and Trimble do that the DUP did not end up doing itself – the only difference being, they got to do it. Is that what the last 40 years of struggle was all about? Sadly, for some, it seems so.

TUV exists to say what we have in Stormont is wrong, that Sinn Fein in government is wrong.

This is one Unionist politician and this is one Unionist Party which will never sit down in government with IRA/Sinn Fein. I say never, even though it is a word devalued by its infamous misuse at the City Hall, but TUV will put the honesty and constancy back into never. Why, because what is morally wrong can never be politically right..

For us that is not just a slogan, it's a conviction.

Unionism is in its present sorry plight today because it trusted those who were strong on slogans but whose convictions turned out to be weaker than the lure of office.

Conviction politics has never left a man without honour yet, nor put him in government with the IRA!

But what of those weak minded, weak willed Unionists who say, "You can't have devolution without Sinn Fein." You can't have Belfast Agreement devolution without them, but you can have democratic devolution without them, and it is that which we as democratic Unionists seek.

Why should NI be the only place in the western democratic world where the electors can never vote a party out of govt. It shouldn't be, but because of mandatory coalition it is. Think of the absurdity if McCain, having lost the US election, could nonetheless say to Obama, never mind what the voters said I'll be Joint President. Yet that is what mandatory coalition inflicts here.

Why should NI be the only place, outside depraved dictatorships, where there is no provision for an Opposition – a vital component of democracy? It shouldn't be, but thanks to the 1998 Act it is.

Why should NI have this absurd, dysfunctional office of Joint First Minister where mutual and equal vetoes make it unworkable? It shouldn't have, but the Belfast Agreement enforces it.

Why should cross-community govt not be attained, as anywhere else, through voluntary coalition and even qualified majorities, with those able to agree in government and those outside in a meaningful opposition.

Let me make it clear, we are not opposed to Catholics in government, or cross-community government, but we most unashamedly are implacably opposed to terrorists in government. **Yes, when it comes to government I wouldn't have a Provo about the place!**

Voluntary coalition is the proper route to shared government. No party is capable of forming a government on its own in NI, so a coalition is inevitable, but it must be a coalition of choice, not compulsion, a coalition of the willing, not the truculent, a coalition sharing power, not dividing power, a coalition that works, not implodes, a coalition built on democracy, not statute, and above all a coalition capable of being voted out and replaced. That is democracy; this is totalitarianism.

How do you get such a coalition, precisely how you get it elsewhere after an election, by negotiation between the parties, where those who can agree form the government and those who can't provide vibrant opposition. Then, if the DUP wants to share power with IRA/Sinn Fein, let them do it openly and honestly, instead of hiding behind the skirts of mandatory coalition. The only argument against voluntary coalition is the contemptible assertion "oh, but you must have a system which guarantees inclusion of Sinn Fein, because if you don't we'll go back to the bad old days".

Who would take us there? Surely not those we are constantly told have given up violence for good, have decommissioned, are wholly committed to the democratic process? If that is wrong, then we are being blackmailed, as well as conned. If Sinn Fein are only democrats so long as they have power, then they are not democrats at all and the sooner we face up to that uncomfortable fact the better.

You see Traditional Unionists are those still prepared to ask the difficult questions, those who still put principle before party, and right before office.

I suppose you could say we are those who never found the medication for the stomach-turning sight of IRA/Sinn Fein at the heart of our government.

We are those who in 2005 thought mandatory coalition was indeed out of the question, rather than merely a ploy to get through another election!

We are those they forgot to tell tough talk was only posturing.

Those who say what they mean and mean what they say!

Those who refuse to turn a blind eye to murder and join in the pretence that the IRA didn't really murder Paul Quinn!

We are those who still think IRA/Sinn Fein is unfit for government, rather than embraced as an equal in the joint office of the First Minister.

Those who think Sinn Fein is not only unfit to hold policing & justice, but any ministry.

Those to whom principle is conscionable; not expendable.

That's who we are!

And what of those, propping up the regime while clutching their stomachs, or is it their wallets, and telling us they are still unhappy with Sinn Fein in government! Who do they think they're kidding? Actions still speak louder than words.

So where should Unionism go from here? Back to basics. Instead of Peter Robinson spinning the pretence that Belfast Agreement devolution is working and strengthening the Union, he should face reality.

I have both a challenge and an offer for Peter Robinson.

The challenge is to face the fact that Mandatory Coalition is irredeemably flawed, can never work, has failed again and determine that it will never fail again because it will never be tried again.

You tell us Peter that the DUP is unhappy with mandatory coalition, that you're only there because it was a shotgun marriage and you want out of it as soon as possible. Well, there's a quickie divorce on offer. As a lawyer I can think of two unanswerable grounds. First, there is desertion. Every day for 6 months now Peter has sat at the Executive table waiting for his partner Marty to come back and every day Marty stays out all day. Whether he's seeing another, perhaps his old flame, the Army Council, I don't know. **But he does have form!** Second, there is unreasonable behaviour. In the vows of this civil partnership with the DUP, Sinn Fein promised to faithfully work the Executive and forsaking all others to be there when Peter needed to meet. How much more desertion and unreasonable behaviour is Peter going to put up with from his Sinn Fein partner?

Iris rightly rails against civil partnerships, but there is as much political immorality in partnering wicked, unrepentant IRA/Sinn Fein in the government of the Province where they practised genocidal murder.

The parting may be painful, but it's time to face reality. Mandatory coalition, like mandatory marriage, doesn't work.

So the challenge Peter Robinson is to abandon mandatory coalition and the offer is to gain the support of all Unionists in going to the Prime Minister and saying, "We tried your mandatory coalition with Sinn Fein, even against the better judgement of some, but it doesn't work, won't work, can't work and if you want devolution in Northern Ireland then it can only be on the terms that will work, and apply elsewhere, of voluntary coalition. But mandatory coalition is over, done, finished."

The public understandably crave unionist unity, well here's the basis upon which it can be attained and unite all unionists - those who thought Sinn Fein were fit for government, those who weren't sure but thought they should give it a go and those of us who held they were never fit for government - all could be united in this irresistible conclusion that mandatory coalition is dead and the demand that devolution is only attainable through voluntary coalition. What Unionist, Democratic, Ulster or Traditional could disagree?

So rise to the challenge Mr Robinson, **you have nothing to lose but the chains of mandatory coalition that bind you to Sinn Fein.** I wish he would, but I fear the love of office will win the day.

But there is a day when the DUP will answer at the polls. **And we'll be there.**

For the TUV the journey started so memorably in Dromore, it's next stop Brussels, unless some other election intervenes. If it does, then we'll fight that too and with a big enough block of Traditional Unionists in Stormont it'll be the end of mandatory coalition.

In the Euro election, make no mistake, **we will fight to win.** We will fight on a record no other Ulster MEP has ever attained. I see 9th count Poots at the DUP Conference suggested I'd done nothing in Europe. I'll pitch my record any day against my predecessor's - at least I attend, which is more than Mr Poots can say. He's supposed to represent Northern Ireland on the **Committee of the Regions** in Brussels. Do you know how many times he's been at its plenary meetings in the last two years - twice, not once in the whole of 2007 or the first 6 months of 2008, and I've yet to find a record of him having said a word! And this is the man who says I'm doing nothing! Maybe he'd like to be the DUP vote-splitting candidate and we could thrash this out at the hustings. Let's see how big a man you are then Edwin.

So roll on the Euro Election. I'll gladly fight it on my record versus their record, my work versus their indolence, my principles versus their expediency.

Let's be clear, if DUP find and field a candidate then it is they who split the vote.

The DUP playing the oldest card in their well worn deck is arrogantly saying only they can top the poll – when ego rules supreme, then that matters, but in truth something matters even more to the DUP in this election and that's getting rid of this MEP, while what should matter most to every Unionist is ensuring two seats stay unionist. How

telling that one of the things which unites the DUP and Sinn Fein is their shared determination to get this MEP out of Europe.

What a commentary that their greatest goal in this election will be to unseat not de Brun, the candidate of their partner in govt, but this Traditional Unionist MEP. **Of course what an unmitigated con it is for the DUP to talk of keeping SF from topping the poll. It has worn rather thin, you can't cling to SF in government by day and go out by night knocking doors saying vote DUP to resist SF. You can't hoist Sinn Fein to the top office in the land and then pretend concern that they might top a poll!** Ulster people will see that for what it is, base opportunism and insincerity and will know that if you want to fight SF and really discomfort republicanism, then you vote for the candidate who takes that **principled stand at home and abroad**, and not just at election times.

It has been an honour to represent Ulster in Europe. To be interested enough to turn up, to fight for farmers, fishermen, consumers, small business and all who need protection from the bureaucracy of Europe. It has been a delight to stand up for national sovereignty in face of every effort to diminish it and a pleasure to take on Sinn Fein every time they raise their head, without the constraint of treating them other than the terrorist apologists which they are.

If Unionists in this Province think its wonderful to wake up every morning to Sinn Fein rule, then they won't vote for me - the DUP will be their candidate. If they think its fantastic that three convicted terrorists sit in our government, then I'm not their man. If they think it is heaven to have Catrina Ruin wreaking havoc with the education of their children, then they'll want to thank the DUP. But, if they abhor what has happened to their Province, are sickened by terrorists in government, feel gross disillusionment over the shambles at Stormont and want constant, determined, principled representation at home and abroad, then I'd be delighted to have their vote.

Make no mistake this will be a David and Goliath struggle, but I'd rather have David's five stones of truth than all the spin, special advisors, arrogance and bluster of Goliath.

Ladies & Gentlemen, we have a great cause, far greater than any of us, far greater than any man. And we have the makings of a great Party. Let me thank every one of you and every officer. To Ivor for taking the often thankless job of Chairman, to Keith for having the courage to put his head above the parapet in Dromore, not knowing what he'd face. We all owe the Harbinator a great debt of gratitude. To every Officer and member, Thank You.

The next 6 months will not be easy, but I'll give my best and if you do the same then we can confound the critics and show the last chapter in Ulster's greatness has not yet been written. Can we win? **YES WE CAN!** Thank you.