

**COMPOSITE MOTION ON THE ECONOMY
TUV CONFERENCE 8TH NOVEMBER 2008**

**Speech by Tristen Kelso, South Antrim Traditional Unionist Voice
member**

Party Chairman, Party Officers, distinguished guests, Conference...it gives me great pleasure to propose this second motion, which deals with economic matters.

In Northern Ireland, the economic slow down has resulted in the sharpest contraction in business activity of all UK regions in the past 12 months. While the construction industry has borne the brunt of the slowdown, manufacturing is also experiencing a sharp decline in terms of output and employment levels. Compounding the difficulties our businesses face is the rising cost of energy, which largely thanks to the introduction of an all-island Single Electricity Market, is by far the highest of the United Kingdom regions.

Northern Ireland's share of the UK GDP is low at just 2.3%. Our over-dependence on the public sector continues, with entrepreneurial activity at a much lower level than in Great Britain. A high volume of red tape, and the over zealous application of EU legislation is suffocating many of our businesses, and doing little to foster that entrepreneurial spirit our land was famous for in the early 20th Century.

Agriculture makes a vitally important contribution to the Northern Ireland economy, both in terms of our 30,000 farm businesses, and the wider agri-food industry which depends on the supply of local produce. The industry is under increasing pressure from foreign imports, which are often produced to less stringent standards, -Brazilian Beef a case in point. Fundamental imbalances in the supply chain are largely to blame for the Red Meat sector generating an annual loss of 350 Million Euros in the past year. The Dairy sector also finds itself increasingly exposed to a volatile World Market, and this is only set to increase with the abolition of milk quotas after 2015. The recent EU Task force Report acknowledged that the level of support available to enhance the competitiveness of Northern Ireland Agriculture –at £50 million compared with the Irish Republic's 300 Million Euros –is much too low.

Our local fishing fleet has borne the brunt of years of EU mismanagement, where the application of a 'precautionary' principle has

resulted in ever increasing and illogical environmental controls on the industry. The local fishing fleet at Kilkeel, Ardglass and Portavogie has decreased significantly over the past number of years, as a result of year on year reductions in quotas. It is with regret that the interests of our fishing industry are being hindered by a Minister more interested in promoting her all-island agenda than in fighting for the distinct interests of the Northern Ireland fleet and industry.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our economic wellbeing requires Government help, not hindrance. I propose this motion.