

News and Articles

Ulster Unionists seek support from the DUP on reclassification of 'victim'.

E-mail to a friend *March 14th, 2008 Alex Benjamin*



Tom Elliott Ulster Unionist MLA for South Tyrone has welcomed the fact that his party colleagues the Ulster Unionist Ministers Sir Reg Empey and Michael McGimpsey have pushed the issue of the classification of 'victim' onto the Executive's Agenda. Under the current Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 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. The opportunity to change the definition has arisen due to the need to introduce legislation that will accommodate four Victims' Commissioners. In light of this opportunity Sir Reg and Michael McGimpsey wrote to the Executive calling for the legislation to be amended. The Executive decided that the issue should be dealt with by the Ulster Unionists tabling an amendment to the Order and debating it on the floor of the Assembly. The Ulster Unionists are now seeking the support of the DUP and others on this issue.

In a statement Mr. Elliott said,

"Under the current definition a perpetrator of acts of terrorism is given the same legal status and potential compensation as an innocent victim of an act of terrorism; as I have stated this is clearly wrong and I am confident that most people agree that it should be changed. That is why I am very pleased that Sir Reg and Michael McGimpsey have pushed this matter onto the Executive agenda and we will now be bringing forward amendments to the long title of the Order and to the definition of 'victim and survivors' to ensure that provisions do not apply to those injured or killed while undertaking criminal acts or those who have received terrorist related convictions.

I would call on the DUP to support this initiative which will be dealt with in the week commencing the 31st March in the Assembly. We believe there is a groundswell of support on our view of the definition of a 'victim' and it will now be up to the Assembly to respond to this. I hope we can get a positive response across the political spectrum to ensure the correct outcome for all innocent victims in Northern Ireland.

In essence this process is about ensuring the best outcome for those innocent people who have in many instances had their lives ruined by acts of terrorism. It is also about building trust in our government institutions and the parties within them; ensuring that on this issues the new political dispensation in Northern Ireland does not get dragged into the political machinations of its past therefore the law has to be more categorical on the definition of a 'victim'".

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