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DUP LEADER LEADS DELEGATION TO MEET PARADES COMMISSION

The Leader of the DUP, Rt. Hon. Peter Robinson MP MLA has led a party delegation to meet the Parades Commission in Belfast today. The purpose of the meeting was to lodge several objections to Sinn Fein's planned demonstration to coincide with the Armed Forces Homecoming Parade in Belfast. Mr. Robinson described the proposed Sinn Fein demonstration as a "flagrant attempt to stir up ill-feeling in the community". Mr. Robinson was accompanied by DUP Deputy Leader Nigel Dodds, MLA Nelson McCausland and Belfast City Councillor Diane Dodds. Peter Robinson said:



"What we have witnessed in the last few days from some within Sinn Fein is nothing more than a flagrant attempt to create ill-feeling within the community in Northern Ireland. Sinn Fein has well and truly opened a can of worms. It now appears as though the dissident Republicans groups, who have shown no hesitation in using violence against Unionists and Nationalists alike are organising to bring people from as far away as Lurgan and Portadown in order to be offended by the mere sight of people from Northern Ireland returning home from theatres of conflict.



What is clear is that this situation has potentially damaging repercussions both here and abroad. How will American investors view the site of troops being harassed in the streets by a party of the Northern Ireland government? The mature and sensible thing for Sinn Fein to do would be to withdraw this application for a protest march and accept that in a diverse multicultural society like ours, the tactics they have espoused have no place. If Sinn Fein want to protest against the war in Iraq as they claim they are doing in this instance, there are 364 days, 23 1/2hours in the year in which to do it. It is very clear that there are section of Sinn Fein who do not want to see anybody British about the place, even people welcoming their loved ones home.

Any reasonable or sensible person examining the parade route submitted by Sinn Fein will be left to draw the conclusion that the only purpose of this parade is to intimidate people watching the Armed Forces Homecoming Parade. If Sinn Fein are in any way committed to the concept of a shared future, this disgraceful proposal will be dropped. Failing that, it is incumbent upon the Parades Commission to ensure that the Sinn Fein protest march is at no point in contact with the Homecoming Parade or the people watching it."

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