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WEDNESDAY
27/06/2007
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SF slam SDLP at Stormont over RUC pension support

SDLP support for RUC pension rights is a smack in the face for victims and survivors of alleged security force collusion, it was claimed today.

Sinn Fein Assemblyman John O` Dowd lambasted his fellow nationalists for abandoning those who suffered due to claimed co-operation between Northern Ireland police and loyalist paramilitaries and dubbed the part-time RUC reservists a unionist militia.

Yesterday the SDLP backed special financial provision for the retired force. Mr O` Dowd said: "Its disbandment is an integral part of bringing about the new beginning demanded by the Good Friday Agreement.

"Many victims of collusion and human rights abuses by this force will have been angered by the SDLP calls for additional pensions to be paid to these individuals from the public purse.

"It must be remembered that these individuals will all have pension provision from their other jobs. They were also paid extortionate amounts of public money during the time they spent in this militia.

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"The fact that the SDLP support for this measure came only 24 hours after the British state publicly declared that it was closing ranks and protecting those involved in collusion from within the old RUC will anger victims and survivors even more."

The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) on Monday said it found insufficient evidence to prosecute any former or serving British soldier, RUC or PSNI officer arising from an inquiry led by former Scotland Yard chief Lord Stevens.

That probe followed the 1989 shooting dead of north Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane, 39, in front of his family at home by Ulster Defence Association (UDA) gunmen allegedly helped by security forces.

Yesterday SDLP Assemblyman Alex Attwood said police reservists had suffered horribly during the 30 years of conflict and supported unionist demands for an enhanced package.

He was speaking during a call in the Assembly for the First and Deputy First Ministers to lobby for a scheme recognising their sacrifice from the Northern Ireland Office.

"The part-time reservists suffered disproportionately to any other section of the old RUC," he said.

When you look at the unfortunate and tragic statistics of the last 40 years the number of part-time officers who were injured and killed is far in excess of any other section of the security forces.

"The reason for that is simply they were local recruits who lived locally, who were targeted locally and who were killed locally and I think there`s something particular about the part-time reserve that this chamber should acknowledge by supporting the broad thrust of this proposal."

Unionist MLAs have been pressing since 2001 for better provision for pensions for part-timers who worked unpaid overtime and were restricted to the bottom pay band regardless of how much experience they had.

Sinn Fein spoke against the motion citing the alleged involvement of members of the Reserve in controversial killings during the troubles.

However, it was passed with only a handful of dissenting voices.

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FILM: DANS PARIS

DIRECTOR: Christophe Honore.

STARRING: Romain Duris, Louis Garrel, Joanna Preiss, Guy Marchand.

DETAILS: France / 93mins (15)

RATING: ★★☆☆☆

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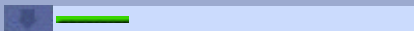
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