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## Local & National

### Alliance warns of creating victims shambles

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

By Noel McAdam

Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness were last night warned they are facing "meltdown" over the latest Victims Commission row which is souring Sinn Fein and DUP relations.

The First and Deputy First Minister faced accusations from the Alliance Party of creating a "legal timebomb" on the suggestion of appointing one of the four commissioners as chief.

And Alliance leader David Ford argued the deal between the two main Executive parties which lead to the appointment of four Commissioners is "falling apart at the seams".

His attack came as high-level contacts between Sinn Fein and the DUP continued, in an attempt to reach agreement so that legislation to kick-start the work of the Commission can be fast-tracked through the Assembly from next Tuesday.

The Assembly was briefly suspended last week after Junior Minister Jeffrey Donaldson announced it was impossible to proceed with the legislation, required by the appointments of former interim commissioner Bertha McDougall, ex-UTV anchorman Mike Nesbitt, former Bloody Sunday Trust member Patricia MacBride and Brendan McAllister of Mediation NI.

Sinn Fein is outraged at the suggestion one of the four should be given prominence, while the DUP appears to be relatively sanguine on the issue.

Some Sinn Fein MLAs also view the idea that the Commission could operate on a two-thirds majority basis as an attempt to sideline Ms MacBride, whose brother was killed by the SAS and whose father died 17 months after being shot by loyalists.

Ms MacBride was not immediately available for comment yesterday.

Mr Ford said: "Paisley and McGuinness talk about putting victims first, but actions speak louder than words.

"The First and Deputy First Ministers are creating a legal timebomb.

"The Assembly was suspended because OFMDFM couldn't even agree to allow the discussion. Our changes would limit the maximum number of Commissioners to four, and ensure that money is spent directly on victims and not an ever-expanding Commission.

"Alliance wants one of the Victims' Commissioners to act as Chief Commissioner to ensure there is a single, strong and coherent voice, and we also think that, whilst consensus should be aimed for, where it can't be achieved decisions could be taken on a two-thirds majority basis.

"This means that the support of three out of four Commissioners would be needed to make a decision.

"It is unrealistic to expect unanimity on everything and we can't have a Commission deadlocked and unable to deliver."

The First and Deputy First Ministers Office has said it is examining the Alliance Party amendments in detail.

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