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Home > News > Politics

Sinn Fein conference blow for Eames-Bradley

By Noel McAdam
Friday, 20 February 2009

Delegates at Sinn Fein's annual conference this weekend are set to back the establishment of an International Truth Commission to deal with the legacy of the Troubles.

A key motion arguing an independent body would be the best way of dealing with truth recovery, rather than the Eames/Bradley blueprint of a five-year Legacy Commission, is expected to gain widespread support.

Stormont Junior Minister Gerry Kelly — who has also referred to its more controversial proposal for a £12,000 payment to victims' relatives as 'a mistake' — is due to address the opening session in Dublin tonight on the issue of truth recovery and argue the suggestion from the Consultative Group on the Past is inadequate.

Party President Gerry Adams has already warned the Eames/ Bradley suggestion "is not the independent and international commission, established by a reputable international body like the UN, which Sinn Fein believes is necessary."

Instead, the motion from the party's ard chomhairle (executive) argues a more powerful instrument could analyse "the historic policies and practices that sustained and fuelled the conflict" and should also "be empowered to deliver the truth to bereaved families as a result of independent investigation".

With the Government still considering its response to Eames/ Bradley deliberations, Sinn Fein is arguing: "Building a united harmonious society demands that these difficult issues are dealt with in an inclusive way, as a necessary part of putting the past behind us".

The motion calls for acknowledgement by the British state of its role in the conflict "and the hurt and suffering it has been responsible for" and further argues "an acceptance that the revision of our history in order to exorcise |the role of the British state in fomenting and prolonging conflict in our country, is in no one's interest."

Will the set-pieces gloss over a year of little achievement?

Sinn Fein is standing still but, as Political Correspondent Noel McAdam argues, still standing

Republicans used to refer to the 'long war', recognising the dream of a united Ireland was not just round the corner.

Now they can just as easily talk of the 'long peace', cognisant that the achievement of unity may be even more distant than that.

While Sinn Fein has relatively little to point to in terms of achievement in the 20 months since Stormont resumed — the apparent loss of the Maze stadium project, the failure to achieve a radical replacement of the 11-plus, and no Irish language legislation — the very fact of on-going government alongside the DUP may be achievement enough.

Sure, the five months the Executive failed to meet last year swung towards the threat of collapse but, in the terms of the late Mo Mowlam, governance was breached but not broken.

Thus this weekend's Ard Fheis gathering of activists north and south, under the banner of "A Vision For Ireland's Future", will once again set out the party's envisaged steps towards Irish unity.

Sinn Fein is still on board the peace train but seems to have gone into its own siding for a while. The party should be gorging on the economic woes which continue to threaten the Dublin

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government but has enjoyed little or no bounce in the polls.

Voters south of the border have shown little gratitude to the party which arguably had to move furthest, and deepest, to achieve peace in the north. But joint administration of the six county statelet was never a key aim.

Following its poor performance in the last Irish election, the party is continuing to engage in a massive re-organisation across the island, with West Tyrone MP Pat Doherty due to stand down as Vice President this weekend.

A series of set piece debates at the conference are designed to render the party fit for purpose everywhere on the island and, in Gerry Adams' own words, "make republicanism relevant to people in their daily lives".

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This of course begs the question will Sinn Fein and the IRA give any input into any international truth inquiry regarding the troubles as they have already ruled out doing so for any other inquiry so far. There cant be one rule for them and one for everyone else. Justice must be seen to be done for all sides and not just the constant demonising of everyone else but Sinn Fein/IRA. . We all know the Sinn Fein propaganda machine is second to none but it must not be allowed to airbrush IRAcrimes and pass the blame elsewhere.

Posted by *Woody* | 20.02.09, 11:29 GMT

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Yawn.....

"The motion calls for acknowledgement by the British state of its role in the conflict"

All "Britain" has to do then is to say 'yes, Britain was involved in a conflict in Northern Ireland'.

End of.

Anyone see the SF party political broadcast yesterday evening? Rarely have I laughed so much. How anyone can take this party seriously is beyond comprehension.

Posted by *mickey* | 20.02.09, 09:16 GMT

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Hey, lets waist some more money!! It seems to be the way ahead especially as we are in a recession. Thousands of properties now negative equity. Children wondering what will happen next year with regards to the 11 Plus, Farmers camping out for subsidies, oops maybe not, and thousands of people being made redundant and the shrinking of the councils will undoubtedly create more. The Bloody Sunday farce is still sucking up more money, and what will it achieve ultimately, as I am sure it will not create more jobs, change the price of Milk. But I am sure it will lead to more questions. Take off the blinkers, look forward and invest in the next generations future; Education, infrastructure and medical services. This is where the tax payers' money needs to go to afford our children a better future! Reality; A terrorist isn't going to come out, be identified and explain how and why he killed unborn babies in Omagh, a Soldier in Belfast or a tourist in Manchester!!

Posted by *Gethin* | 20.02.09, 05:02 GMT

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