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DUP man expelled from Assembly over Adams IRA claims

Monday, 9 February 2009

The DUP's Nelson McCausland was expelled from the Assembly today for claiming Gerry Adams had been a leading IRA member, despite the Sinn Fein president's denial of the allegation.

Mr McCausland refused to withdraw the claim after it was ruled unparliamentary by the Speaker Willie Hay.

Mr McCausland was then told to leave the Parliament Buildings for the day - the second time in the last four months he has been expelled for making allegations against the Sinn Fein leader.

DUP colleagues gave him a standing ovation and shook his hand as he left, actions which led to further complaints from republicans.

"I have to say to the whole house that this is an issue that I didn't think I'd have to return to, certainly as soon as we have," said Mr Hay.

"I have warned members on many occasions to be careful what they say about other members in the chamber.

"While they may be covered legally in some circumstances against action, they are not covered from parliamentary procedure.

"When members make direct allegations of criminal behaviour against other members, when there have been no convictions, I will rule such allegations as unparliamentary."

He added: "I reflected on what was said by Mr McCausland during the debate on the Consultative Group on the Past on February 2.

"I have taken counsel on the matter and I believe that a direct unsubstantiated allegation of criminal behaviour was made about another member.

"I am afraid that this is not the first time the member has made such an allegation and I regard the remarks as unparliamentary and therefore call on Mr McCausland to withdraw them."

But the North Belfast DUP representative, who had been expelled from the Assembly in November for making similar allegations against Mr Adams, said he would again refuse to withdraw the claims.

"Mr Speaker I do not intend to withdraw the comments because they were true and I was quoting from a book published by the IRA, which I now intend to place in the Assembly library," said Mr McCausland.

Mr Hay interrupted the remarks before ordering Mr McCausland to withdraw immediately from the chamber and its precincts for the remainder of today's Assembly sitting.

Mr McCausland then left to the cheers of party colleagues.

The Speaker also said he had reviewed claims by Mr Adams that DUP member Mervyn Storey had referred to Mein Kampf during a debate last week.

Mr Hay ruled that he had checked Hansard and said there was no record of any such comment being made.

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