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Lá Nua

Nuachtán Laethúil na Gaeilge

From the Balcony



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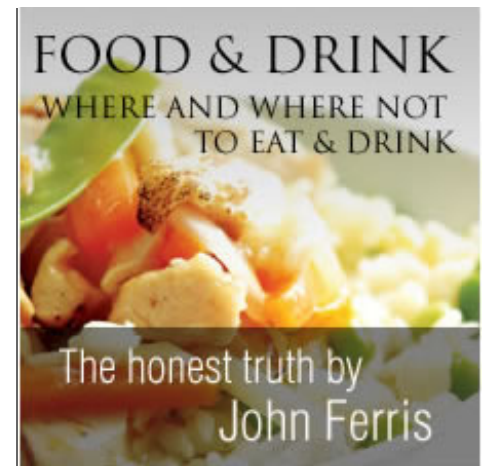
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Headlines

Attwood backs calls for RUC Reserve pension

Outrage in Assembly amid claims of cop collusion from



Sinn Féin

by **Damian McCarney AT STORMONT**

The SDLP this week backed a motion urging the government to provide pension provision to the RUC part-time Reserve in recognition of the “disproportionate” suffering they endured during the conflict.

West Belfast MLA Alex Attwood supported the “broad thrust” of the motion to make either a one-off payment or provide pension payments for the Reservists on two grounds. Mr Attwood gave it his backing firstly on the principle that part-time employees deserve equal employment conditions to full-time employees. But more contentiously, he said, that the Reserve suffered disproportionately amongst the security forces during the recent conflict.

In that time 53 reservists were killed, and a further nine killed after they had retired from the force.

“Over the years of conflict,” said Mr Attwood, “the part-time Reserve suffered disproportionately to any other section of the old RUC, that when you look at the unfortunate and tragic statistics of the last 40 years, the number of part-time Reserve officers who were injured and killed is far in excess of any other section of the security forces.

“The reason for that is simple - they were locally recruited, lived locally, were targeted locally and were killed locally.”

He continued by saying that this disproportionate suffering “is something particular about the part-time Reserve that this chamber should acknowledge by supporting the broad thrust of this proposal.”

He also offered a note of caution, saying that none of the above takes away from the fact that the SDLP has “grave reservations” about the “conduct of individuals and elements in the old RUC” which remain “highly questionable”.

No records

He further urged the new victims group headed by Denis Bradley and Archbishop Robin Eames to examine the activities of such individuals.

Sinn Féin, however, branded the motion unworkable given there were no records of hours worked to calculate pension entitlement, and further criticised it for rewarding those who may have been involved in collusion.

Speaking in opposition to the motion, Upper Bann MLA John O'Dowd was outraged that unionists had argued that the part-time Reservists protected all of the community “without fear or favour”.

“I don't know how anyone has the brass neck to come into this debating chamber after yesterday's [Monday's] announcement [by the Public Prosecution Service that no prosecutions would follow the murder of Pat Finucane] and tell us, as a whole, that the RUC was protecting us entirely,” he seethed.

“I wonder if the families sitting in the Ormeau Road who lost loved ones in the [Sean Graham] bookmakers, and I wonder if Pat Finucane's family is watching this? And I

wonder if Brian Adam Lambert, the young Protestant man who was shot to death in Lisburn, if his family are watching this?"

Mr O'Dowd concluded by quoting "not a republican propagandist" but the findings of Lord John Stevens' report, in which he concluded there was collusion in the Finucane and Lambert murders and asked whether if part-time Reservists were involved in these collusions should they receive a pension as well.

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