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Last Updated: Saturday, January 24, 2009, 09:39

## Trimble rejects 'offensive' Troubles payment plan

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Former Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble today denounced as “offensive” a proposal to offer financial compensation of £12,000 to the family of every one of the 3,700 people killed in the Northern Ireland Troubles.

The payment was proposed by the Eames-Bradley Consultative Group on the Past. It suggested the payment be made to the next-of-kin of all victims, even if those killed were involved in paramilitary shootings and bombings.

Lord Trimble said today while he could understand the reasoning behind the proposal, he objected to the idea that money could make up for the loss of a loved one.

Financial compensation is already available to victims of violence from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme, and money is being paid out on a discretionary basis by the Memorial Fund set up 10 years ago.

The compensation package is part of a blueprint due to be unveiled next week aimed at promoting peace and reconciliation, which will cost £300 million (€19 million) and is to be financed by the British and Irish governments.

The proposals will address such matters as providing information for the bereaved on how and why their loved ones were killed, tackling sectarianism, providing support for victims and bereaved, and investigating past killings.

Former Church of Ireland primate Lord Eames and former vice-chairman of the policing board, Denis Bradley, who head the group are determined to press ahead with their proposals. They discussed them with British prime minister Gordon Brown on Thursday. They argued that the £12,000 payment was justified because the issue of a “hierarchy of victims” must be put aside.

The proposal has generated huge anger from unionist politicians in particular. DUP First Minister Peter Robinson portrayed the proposal as a “betrayal of innocent victims”, while DUP junior minister Jeffrey Donaldson queried how could there be a comparison between Thomas Begley who was killed planting the Shankill bomb and the nine

people he killed in that attack.

This morning, Lord Trimble told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme: "What the victims of the Troubles want is, first of all, to be remembered and, secondly, they want to feel that what they suffered was not in vain — that their sacrifice helped to build a better, safer, more democratic future for the people of Northern Ireland.

"To come forward first with money is offensive."

Lord Trimble acknowledged that the idea of giving compensation to the families of those responsible for violence in Northern Ireland, as well as their victims, was difficult for the community to accept and had not gone down well with most unionists.

But he added: "The fact that a family member joined a paramilitary organisation and engaged in acts of terrorism and maybe was killed as a result of that - it is possible to look at the family members and say that they themselves were not engaged in terrorism."

Under the Eames-Bradley plan, all current inquiries will be concluded, and there will be no future inquiries. This, if accepted by the British and Irish governments, would undermine the campaign by the Omagh families for a cross-Border tribunal of inquiry into the 1998 Real IRA bombing.

Michael Gallagher of the Omagh Support and Self-Help Group said he was dismayed by the suggestion that there would be no further public inquiries, as he believed such an inquiry represented the only means to establish all the circumstances surrounding the Omagh bomb.

Victims' group FAIR spokesman Willie Frazer said the report was aimed at "sanctioning the work of terrorists" and "rewriting history".

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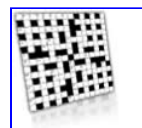
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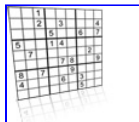
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