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## **First Minister declines to criticize Ruane's Sands comments**

**17 February 2009**

Traditional Unionist Jim Allister has expressed his disappointment at the failure of First Minister Peter Robinson to rebuke his Ministerial colleague Catriona Ruane for praising IRA terrorist Bobby Sands in front of school children.

The MEP said:

“Last week a DUP MLA issued a statement headed “Ruane is right SHOCKER” in which he quoted an answer which he had received to an Assembly question. The Education Minister had informed him that “It would not be appropriate to praise a terrorist under any circumstances”.

“It appears to be beyond the wit of Alastair Ross to see that Ruane’s answer revealed not a backtracking from her disgraceful comments at Colm’s High School in Twinbrook but rather that Sinn Fein/IRA’s perverted view of what constitutes terrorism remains unchanged. Sinn Fein don’t regard Sands as a terrorist so obviously the Minister saw no contradiction between her comments and the answer she gave to Mr Ross.

“If Alastair Ross requires clarity in relation to this matter he should consult his party leader. I wrote to the First Minister inviting him to comment on Ms Ruane’s remarks and to clarify if he believed that Sands was a suitable role model for children. I also asked what disciplinary steps he would be taking against Ruane.

“I have now received a reply from the First Minister which, as ever, is co-signed by his equal partner, McGuinness. I deeply regret that not only has Mr Robinson failed to outline any disciplinary steps he plans to take against the Minister but he has even been unable to say if he believes Sands is an unsuitable role model for children.

“So not only do Sinn Fein not believe the IRA were and are terrorists they are also able to prevent the First Minister saying so either. Yet the DUP have the audacity to claim that they are defeating Republicanism!”

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