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'Peace' Priorities anti-Unionist

23 October 2008

Jim Allister has launched a blistering attack on the roll out of the EU Peace III Programme, saying its priorities reflect a clear anti-Unionist bias.

The MEP said,

“After the poor focus of previous Peace Programmes on tackling disadvantage within Unionist communities, I highlighted my concerns to the Managing authority, the Special European Union Programmes Body. In particular, I raised my concerns over the lack of assistance given to innocent victims of the Troubles, particularly when compared with the funds lavished upon groups linked to paramilitaries”.

“In January of this year, I wrote to then Finance Minister Peter Robinson, expressing my concerns at the lack of Unionist representation on the Peace Steering committee, which has responsibility for assessing project applications and approving funding. Only now in October have the authorities decided it might be an idea to include representation from the Unionist community, despite a number of deeply objectionable projects having already been recommended for funding”.

“The Steering committee has approved funding amounting to £7.5 million to be directed to ‘current and former republican prisoners, their families and displaced persons’. In addition, a further £3 million has

been approved for loyalist ‘ex-prisoner’ groups. Of course, ‘ex-prisoners’ is one of the priority areas for funding under the Peace III Programme, which has been approved by our very own Northern Ireland Executive.”

“I am deeply concerned at the lack of equality within the allocation of funds under the Peace III Programme, and the objectionable manner in which funds are being prioritised towards combatants, rather than innocent victims. This is simply another case of airbrushing history and appeasing paramilitary thugs, facilitated by an unwillingness on the part of DUP Executive Ministers to rock the political boat.”

“I intend to follow up these issues with the Managing authority, and with Commissioner Hubner in the coming days.”

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