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NORTHERN IRELANDS LARGEST POLITICAL PARTY

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DUP NEWS**Latest News:****£1.2m LEGAL EXPENSES: "SCANDALOUS" SAYS SENIOR DUP MLA**

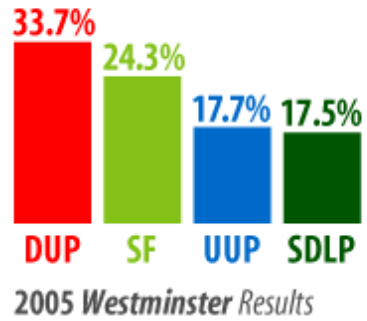
Democratic Unionist Party MLA for East Belfast Robin Newton has said the public will view as scandalous the revelation that three prosecution barristers were paid a total of £1.2million in fees for the Omagh bomb trial. The trial which lasted 56 days, ended without securing a conviction. The MLA recognised the importance of the Omagh trial but widened the discussion by pointing out that in many instances the only people who seem to benefit from examination and scrutiny of past events are lawyers. Speaking today, Robin Newton said:

"I fear that what is emerging in Northern Ireland is an extremely costly inquiries industry where the only winners seem to be the well-heeled, well-paid barristers. People will recall the huge £400million cost of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry. When the findings of that inquiry are published does anyone seriously believe that it will satisfy all sides and parties involved in the events of that day? Establishing the truth of events is important, but we must not allow the quest for truth and justice to become a sort of cash-cow for some in the legal profession.

The Omagh bomb trial was important. It is always necessary that if the Crown Prosecution Service feels that they have enough evidence to convict someone for a crime that they should be brought before the courts. There can be no quarter given or excuse made for those who are suspected of engaging in terrorism or criminality –

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they must be subjected to the full rigour of the law, even as in this case a not guilty verdict was returned.

Nevertheless, the news that 3 barristers have been paid a total of £1.2million in legal fees will be viewed by the Northern Ireland public as nothing short of scandalous, especially in light of the failure to secure a conviction for that wicked act and underscores the significant costs involved in examination of past where the legal field seems to be only party to leave satisfied.”

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