



Join our party

Donate

Sign up for eNews

Search Website

Head Office

121 Ormeau Road
Belfast
BT7 1SH

Phone

028 90 247700

Fax

028 90 236699

E-mail

sdlp@indigo.ie

News Desk



Mark Durkan MP MLA

1st November 2006

DURKAN WELCOMES VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS FORUM

SDLP Leader Mark Durkan today welcomed a commitment by the British Government to establish a Victims and Survivors Forum but warned the Government to get honest about appointing a permanent Victims Commissioner. Speaking at Westminster during consideration of the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, Mr Durkan stated:

"The SDLP warmly welcomes the commitment in this Order that a Victims and Survivors Forum will be established. For too long in our process, the rights of victims have been denied and their voices have gone unheard. Shamefully, those who have suffered most in all communities have often been respected least.

That's why the SDLP has long sought a Victims and Survivors Forum. We succeeded in getting the British Government to consider establishing it at the Hillsborough talks in 2003 – despite the fact that both Sinn Fein and the UUP opposed us. Since then it's been a long struggle to get the Government to act – but now at last progress is being made.

It is important that the Government does not delay on this project and that all victims are included on an equal basis – be they the victims of the state, republican or loyalist paramilitaries.

"And one of its first jobs should be to work on developing proper proposals for truth, recognition and remembrance. We as a society have to look to a better future. But we must also get to the truth about the past – and remember it honestly - if we are not to repeat its terrible mistakes. Ensuring that the voices of all victims are heard lies at the very heart of this."

Turning to the appointment of a Victims Commissioner, Mr Durkan stated:

"It is vital that the British Government is honest about appointing a permanent Victims Commissioner. There must be no repeat of the cheap and damaging tactics used last year for the appointment of the interim Commissioner.

"The DUP were the only party consulted about the Interim Victims Commissioner. It even appeared that they had "approved" the appointment.

"Treating the appointment as a side deal with the DUP did a gross disservice to the interim Commissioner, Bertha McDougall, who has worked well. And it did an even worse disservice to all victims who have the right to expect this crucial public appointment not to be treated as a private deal with the DUP."

ENDS

01/11/06