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Ulster Unionist Party  
for all of us

10th February 2009

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## Objectives and Policy

### Objectives

- Standing up for Northern Ireland
- A Competitive Economy
- A Northern Ireland for Everyone
- Protecting our Environment
- Quality Public Services
- Stronger, Safer Communities

## Young Unionists

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## Eames-Bradley 1

Eames-Bradley 1: January 26, 2009

"Individuals waging an unjust war by unreasonable means are not committing legitimate acts of war, but acts of murder. They are not merely criminals, they are war criminals. And all of what I am arguing applies to Loyalist paramilitaries as well, even though they would try and argue that they were defending their country from the terrorism of the IRA. Drug peddling, brothel-running, money-laundering, extortion, assorted racketeering and the "any-Fenian-will-do" approach to murder, seems a very odd way, indeed, of defending your country! Whatever the pretend Generals, Brigadiers and Commanders of the UDA, UVF, UFF etc would have us believe, they, too, fall into the category of war criminal rather than warrior."

"I suspect that the vast majority of the living victims of the paramilitaries, and the relatives of those who were killed, will never obtain the justice they crave and deserve. To be told that...victims will be regarded as the unavoidable casualties or collateral would be a grossly offensive development. If the Consultative Group goes down that road it will be making a very serious error of judgment and will be as guilty of immorality and illegitimacy as the people it would be letting off the hook. How do you ever come to terms with reality if you run away from unpleasant and brutal truths? How do you avoid repeating the mistakes of the past if you offer a mantle of legitimacy to war criminals?"

I wrote that last January, at a time when the Eames-Bradley Consultative Group on the Past was conducting public meetings, and after an informed source within the Group had briefed the media that "some of the things we're coming across are going to have---I don't like to use the word devastating---a surprising effect, particularly within the Protestant-Unionist community." I can only presume that it is that same source who has now leaked the story that the Group is recommending that there should be "no hierarchy of victims" and that all the dead be treated equally.

In thirty-odd years of commenting on political matters in Northern Ireland I can't actually recall a decision which strikes me as being so thoroughly, fundamentally, utterly and comprehensively wrong. Indeed, it's more than wrong: it is a profoundly immoral decision.

A terrorist shot dead while involved in a terrorist act is not a "victim." A bomber blown up by his own bomb is not a "victim." A terrorist from one organisation killed by a terrorist from another organisation is not a "victim." A terrorist killed by his own organisation is not a "victim." A terrorist who starves himself to death is not a "victim."

To equate dead terrorists with the men and women they killed is to proffer a form of legitimacy for their terrorism. To say that the families of killed terrorists deserve financial parity with the families of those they blew-up, shot or tortured, is a logic-defying insult of monumental proportions. And please, please spare me the crap about the families of terrorists feeling the "same pain and shedding the same tears" as the families of the men, women and children they killed. Terrorists choose murder as a strategic option. They kill ruthlessly and without any consideration for the families of their targets: in many cases they shot them dead in front of their wives and children. The pain and tears of the families of innocent civilians and the pain and tears of the families of security force members are not the same as the pain and tears of the families of terrorists.

Bearing in mind that the Consultative Group draws no distinction between those killed by terrorists and the terrorists who were themselves killed, I dread to think what we can expect from their proposed "reconciliation forum," which is to be "tasked with addressing a wide range of underlying and often hidden issues relating to victimhood." But you can bet your bottom dollar that it will involve lots of groups looking for lots of funding and that many of those groups will have direct links to the very terrorist organisations that butchered their way through the last three decades.

In last January's piece I also warned about the likelihood of amnesties being offered to terrorists. It seems to me that this has now moved from likelihood to a distinct possibility. If there isn't enough evidence for a prosecution, then "immunity" will be given to any statement from anyone who was involved. It will then be up to a legacy commission (yet another recommendation from the Consultative Group) to make a final recommendation on whether or not an amnesty is advisable.

So there we have it: dead terrorists are to be viewed as equal to the people they killed; the families of the innocent are to be compensated equally with the families of the terrorists; and, by 2015, a veritable queue of former terrorists (many of whom can't be prosecuted because witnesses are now dead---having been intimidated while they were alive) will be queuing up for an amnesty. And let's not forget the promise of "thematic studies"---an in-depth research project into the Troubles and the role of paramilitary groups. Anyone willing to accept a bet from me that these studies will conclude that the paramilitaries were themselves "victims," who deserve our sympathy rather than our condemnation?!

This is the opening paragraph to last January's column: "Given the fact that the Consultative Group on the Past was set up by the Secretary of State and is co-chaired by someone who was ennobled by the State and by someone else who seems to be a semi-professional member of a quango, boards and consultation groups, it is no big surprise that it

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appears to be heading in a direction which is already broadly acceptable to government thinking."

A year later and I wouldn't change one word of that. I have, on many occasions in the past, expressed my concerns and reservations about commissions, consultation groups and enquiries. But if we are to have them, would it be possible to by-pass the usual do-gooders and congenial moderates and select at least a few people who have some genuine understanding of, and sympathy for, everyday, ordinary, unionist opinion? Or would that be defeating the whole object and purpose of the exercise?

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