



Ulster Unionist Party
for all of us

29th October 2008

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Welcome home

Most soldiers don't regard themselves as either heroes or warriors. They are ordinary people who find themselves in extraordinary and sometimes extraordinarily difficult circumstances. They are glad to return home safely and in one piece. Not all of their comrades are so fortunate.

Those taking part in the Homecoming Parade on November 2nd have served their country with courage and honour. They will parade the streets of Belfast on the Sunday before Remembrance Sunday and many will be at cenotaphs and churches the following week to pay their respects to those from previous generations who served the United Kingdom in conflict zones across the world.

There is no political agenda to this parade. The men and women involved are not, in any sense, triumphalist. They are simply pleased to be returning to their friends and families.

In welcoming their safe return we pass no judgment on the war itself. We thank them for their dedication and sense of duty and pay our tribute to those who fell in battle or suffered serious injury. The UK needs a standing army of men and women who are prepared to put country before self. They don't have the luxury of choosing between "good" wars or "bad" wars. They serve as commanded to serve.

The Ulster Unionist Party is pleased and proud to support the Homecoming Parade. We ask others to support it, too, and to do so with respect and dignity. Sinn Fein's clearly orchestrated and politically motivated protest serves no purpose other than turning a "welcome home" ceremony into another type of conflict zone altogether. The Services personnel don't deserve this and Northern Ireland doesn't need it.

Sunday should not be a moment for political score settling. The Ulster Unionist Party suggests that Sinn Fein should step back from the brink on this occasion and allow the parade to pass off peacefully, respectfully and free from the prospect of violence.

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