



Ulster Unionist Party
for all of us

30th October 2008

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Sir Reg Calls On Sinn Fein To "Step Back From Brink"



As tensions continue to mount in advance of Sunday's Homecoming Parade, Sir Reg Empey has urged Sinn Fein to consider the wider consequences of their planned protests:

" Northern Ireland is supposed to have moved on in this last decade. We are supposed to be in the business of putting the past behind us and proving to the world---and to ourselves---that we can actually work together for the common good.

"Yet here we are. The Executive Committee unable to meet. Decisions unable to be taken. A simple Homecoming Parade cynically and deliberately exploited by Sinn Fein for entirely self-serving ends. Tensions built up. A heavy PSNI required on the streets of Belfast.

"What message does that send to the rest of the world? What message does it send to potential investors? What message does it send to the hundreds of thousands of voters who want their government to address the real and pressing problems that face us during this economic downturn?

" I make a personal appeal to Sinn Fein to step back from the brink and postpone their protest to another time and another place. If they are serious about sharing and cooperation, then they should give us some evidence of that fact. It isn't always necessary to remind us of their anti-British attitudes: particularly when their protest, this time, seems to be aimed at impressing their own grassroots rather than demonstrating their opposition to the Iraq war. I would urge them to consider the potentially dangerous consequences of their actions and the devastating knock-on impact it could have on Unionist-Republican relationships

" But I would also appeal to supporters of the Homecoming Parade not to be manipulated into any form of over-reaction by the actions of either Sinn Fein or other republican elements. The eyes of the world will be on Belfast and Northern Ireland on Sunday. Let those who genuinely welcome home our Services' personnel, do so with dignity and utter respect. Sinn Fein may want to drag us back to the era of street protests, but the rest of us need to prove that Sinn Fein, "themselves alone," are the only ones who want to return to the wreckage of the past.

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Ulster Unionist Party
First Floor, 174 Albertbridge Road,
Belfast BT5 4GS
Tel: 028 9046 3200
Fax: 028 9045 6899

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