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It's time for a proper truth commission, says Alban Maginness

North Belfast News

by Michael Kenwood

23/02/2007

SDLP Justice Spokesman and North Belfast MLA Alban Mag-inness has stated that any proposal for a truth commission must be victim-centred. Speaking in the light of a high profile policing conference held in the Waterfront Hall and a public meeting on collusion at the Hilton Hotel this week, the SDLP candidate said: "Nobody wants to relive the past. But nor should we cover it up.

"What we have to do is leave the past behind on a moral basis. That means designing a truth process that puts the rights and interests of all victims at its heart – be they victims of the state or paramilitaries."

He referred to truth programmes in South Africa after apartheid as an example to avoid, saying that in this case the victims all too often felt that it was all about excusing the perpetrators and not about recognising the loss of victims.

Independent process

Calling for a fully independent and international process, he said: "Nobody, especially victims of collusion, will have confidence in a process run by the British Government when it has a lot to answer for, as the McCord report proves.

"All victims must have the right to record what happened to them – and how it impacted upon their lives. They must have the right to have their hurt recognised.

"They must have the right to have the truth uncovered. And, if they want, they must have the right to seek prosecutions."

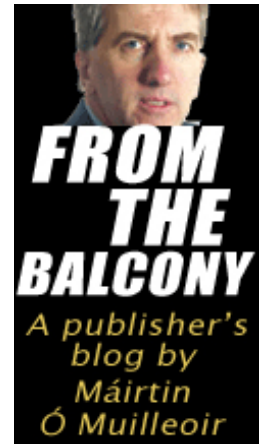
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