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## DURKAN: PUBLIC AND POLICE BACK OMBUDSMAN

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SDLP Leader Mark Durkan MP said most people believe the Police Ombudsman is helping the police do their job better, and almost all police officers believe its investigations are conducted impartially. Speaking in a Westminster debate on the Ombudsman's report into the killing of Raymond McCord, he said: "In recent days we have heard a sustained attack on the Police Ombudsman. The Police Federation has stated that her office undermines confidence in policing. That is just utter nonsense. In fact, statistics published after the McCord report show that 82% of the public believe the office is *helping* the police to do a good job. Because her office can highlight where policing is going wrong, she can also help to ensure that it is put right. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in her Omagh report. It uncovered serious deficiencies in sharing of information, handling of evidence and many other areas. It led to far reaching reforms to put the problems right – and make policing better. The Police Ombudsman isn't just helping the police do a good job, though. She is also helping build confidence in policing. All investigations have been sensitive to the need to protect the rights and confidence of the Police itself as well as complainants. In fact, 85% of police officers believe that they were treated fairly in the course of investigations by the Ombudsman. 91% of police officers also believe that her investigations are impartial. That's because the office works only on the basis of evidence "In her McCord report, the Ombudsman found that Mark Haddock and his fellow paramilitaries had been agents of the state while carrying out a series of murders targeting both Catholics and Protestants. Mark Haddock's state protection effectively encouraged his murder spree. After the first of his murders as an agent, Special Branch actually *increased* his wages." Again and again many unionist politicians have tried to duck this truth by claiming that the report was just allegation. In fact, Special Branch had themselves classified intelligence that Haddock was involved in many murders as "*reliable and probably true.*" So Special Branch were damned by their own words. As the Ombudsman found, these matters could not have occurred without knowledge "at the very highest levels of the

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RUC.” We have also heard the DUP say that if there was evidence of crime, there should be prosecutions. It’s a familiar line – the same one in fact that Sinn Fein used after the Northern Bank robbery. In fact, so much of the paper trail of collusion had ‘vanished’ that prosecutions are most unlikely. Unionist politicians know this full well. But the wider truth, accepted by the Chief Constable and Secretary of State, is that collusion was a reality. And that Mark Haddock was involved in murder. Even Special Branch’s own files prove this. The powers of the Ombudsman have been used to the great benefit of all the community. The public agree. The Chief Constable agrees. The Secretary of State agrees. So I have to ask, what exactly is the agenda of those who differ?”

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