

Friday 6 March 2009

NORTHERN IRELANDS LARGEST POLITICAL PARTY



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DUP Westminster motion gains cross-party support

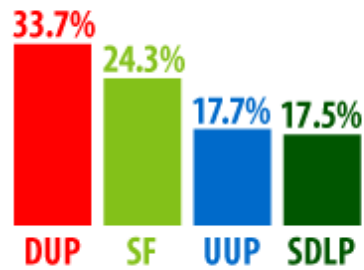
The Democratic Unionist Party has tabled Westminster motion to protect the rights of public representatives in the devolved institutions to receive information and deal with constituents on a confidential basis. The Westminster motion follows the successful passage of a motion at the Assembly on Tuesday calling for the right of Assembly Members to protect sources that bring information to them on a confidential basis. The Westminster motion which stands in the name of Jeffrey Donaldson MP MLA and has been signed by members of the Labour and Tory Party reads:



“That this House recognises the need for elected representatives to be able to protect the confidentiality of information brought to them by constituents and other sources; acknowledges the importance of being able to pass on to the appropriate authority information in the public interest without breaching that confidentiality; believes that any erosion of these rights would seriously weaken the ability of public representatives to perform their duty and is an attack on constitutional liberties established over many years and if unchecked will undermine the standing of Members of Parliament and Members of the Devolved Legislatures, thus diminishing the trust the public have in their elected representatives to protect the public interest and represent them without fear of

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interference.”

Ian Paisley Junior MLA is the subject of court proceedings to force him to name a source who provided him with information regarding the death of Billy Wright said. The case will be heard tomorrow (Friday 6th March) in the High Court. Mr. Paisley said:

“There is a central and important issue at stake here. When people go to speak to their GP, their solicitor, the police or even a priest, information is treated on a confidential basis. The same rules need to apply to individuals who approach their Assembly Member.

It is a matter of public record that a number of inquiries are taking place in Northern Ireland. It is also matter of public record that there are High Court proceedings taking place to compel me, as a public representative to divulge my source who provided me with information regarding the death of Billy Wright. The House of Commons must decide whether Members of devolved institutions should be allowed to be bullied, pushed or squeezed to name constituents in order to satisfy someone else, or whether the rights and liberties of the people of Northern Ireland, which we should guard jealously, should be protected by our actions and by our judgements as to whether we name, or do not name, people.

It is the job of elected representatives to hold the government and the institutions of the state to account. Any attempt to curtail that right would represent a violation of the constitutional liberties of the people of the United Kingdom. The purpose of our Westminster motion is to protect the role of the democratic institutions such as the Northern Ireland Assembly to defend the interests of the public.”

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