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ATTWOOD: EAMES/BRADLEY LAST BEST HOPE FOR DEALING WITH THE PAST

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SDLP West Belfast MLA Alex Attwood welcomed the keynote address today by the leaders of the Consultative Group on the past and urged everyone to engage positively with the Eames/Bradley process despite differing views on how to deal with the past.

He said: “The SDLP has taken a positive attitude to Eames/Bradley and has urged others to do likewise. Eames/Bradley may be the last best hope to deal with the past on an ethical basis. This is the key standard against which to measure today’s keynote address.

“Eames/Bradley are facing up to the past and to all of the past. We should all do likewise. They are right to state that dealing with the past can best secure the future and that the many personal experiences of pain must be addressed.

“Of course, the SDLP has points of difference with Eames/Bradley. The SDLP does not agree with them that the scale and depth of collusion should not become fully known. And while they are right that the republican movement should acknowledge the sectarian nature of their campaign, the vast majority of the nationalist community had no time for that campaign and share deeply the hurt inflicted on the unionist community.

“Eames/Bradley sent out a number of tough messages to those who were involved in the conflict, to those who had no involvement and to top politicians. They were right to do so and right to challenge all of us that in the five months that remain of their work programme we address the task on a full and ethical basis.

“In our contact with Eames/Bradley the SDLP has made it very clear that people who have suffered greatly have essential entitlements. There can be no limit set on the right to a proper legal investigation and each family must have their right to truth and justice protected. It is in this ethical context that the SDLP will take up the Eames/Bradley challenge and look at truth and recovery mechanisms including holding to personal account those who controlled organisations and directed violence

“The SDLP acknowledges that Eames/Bradley has clearly stated that the state had at times acted illegally, that many see the IRA campaign as sectarian, that collusion with loyalists and republicans was corrosive and all of us must stretch ourselves in pursuit of a shared future. We will work closely with Eames/Bradley to ensure that they make radical, inclusive and far-reaching truth proposals to ensure that the past is addressed on an ethical basis.”

ENDS

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