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DURKAN: 'WE MUST NOT ENDORSE THE LIE THAT TROUBLES' VIOLENCE WAS JUSTIFIED'

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Speaking in relation to the controversy this week over defining the 'Troubles' in the North as a 'war', SDLP Leader and Foyle MP Mark Durkan has said that whilst we should wait to see what Lord Eames and Denis Bradley have to say in their 'legacy of our past' report before we possibly mis-react to what is proposed, those who have been consistently opposed to violence should not now be asked to suggest that it was actually justified.

Mr Durkan said:

“We have to wait to see what the Eames/Bradley panel is actually saying before we possibly mis-react to what is proposed. But in terms of this whole notion about defining the 'Troubles' in the North as a 'war', if we go back to the debate on the Northern Ireland Offences Bill, what we found at that time was that the various people who were the victim-makers, whether they were the paramilitaries, the security forces or others all like to hide behind the pretence that “Yeah, some things happened but these were just the exigencies of war... Yes, there were some terrible casualties, but that's what soldiers do and that's what soldiers have to do in a 'war' situation.”

“Whatever excuses people might want to make for themselves they should not be asking the rest of us to endorse the lie that somehow this was a legitimate 'war' that was going on or being prosecuted by any proper conventional means. The fact is, many, many people throughout the 'Troubles' refused to confer any legitimacy or logic or justification on violence from republicans, on violence from loyalists, and the excesses in the name of security by the security forces.

“As far as many of us were concerned, none of those actions were justified. We consistently opposed them and we should not now be asked to say “Yeah, well it was a 'war' situation... there weren't any other choices that people could have made... no-one should be asked to explain or defend themselves.”

“All of that is totally unjustified. The fact that we no longer have people trying to justify violence is to be welcomed, but those of us who always opposed it should not now be asked to somehow suggest that it was actually justified, that somehow the 'Troubles' were a necessary or inevitable prelude to the peace process that we now have. Very, very wrong things were done. Very, very wrong campaigns were prosecuted by both paramilitaries and at times by people in the security forces.

“Again, people who consistently opposed these wrong-doings throughout the 'Troubles' should not now be asked to accept some sort of received wisdom that people really had no other choice but to be doing these things and that the rest of us who have moral sensitivities about it should just be silent on the matter.”

ENDS

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