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## News Desk



### Patricia Lewsley

9th November 2006

#### LEWSLEY WELCOMES VICTIMS COMMISSIONER APPOINTMENT RULING

SDLP Equality Spokesperson Patricia Lewsley MLA has welcomed today's High Court ruling which has criticised the Secretary of State's appointment of the interim Victims Commissioner. Ms Lewsley stated:

"Today's ruling vindicates what the SDLP has been saying since the appointment was made. It reaffirms the very serious and damaging fact that the Secretary of State has treated some public appointments as private political concessions. This is something that should never be allowed to happen. This appointment was a clear breach of accepted norms in relation to public appointments. It damaged confidence in the wider public appointments process and set a very dangerous precedent. The DUP trumpeted the fact that they had been consulted on it while no other political party had. The Secretary of State and the NIO should have known that this appointment was more damaging than helpful.

Today's ruling is a big and welcome setback for the culture of side deals that has bedevilled the process for so long. The appointment was unfair to victims and placed the interim Victims Commissioner in a very difficult position. The SDLP's problem was never with Bertha McDougall – rather with the nature of her appointment. The Secretary of State and the DUP must have realised the position this would have placed her in yet for political expediency they carried on with their plans. Using victims and survivors needs and rights as political pawns should never have happened. It should not be allowed to happen again."

**ENDS**

**09/11/06**