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Elliott - Victims still in Limbo after Report

E-mail to a friend *July 31st, 2007 Tom Elliott MLA*



Although the recent investigation by Peter Scott QC has concluded that no attempts had been made to mislead the courts with regards the appointment of the Interim Victims Commissioner, Bertha McDougall, victims are still in limbo according to Ulster Unionist MLA, Tom Elliott.

Mr. Elliott added that as the appointment was still regarded as a gesture to entice the DUP into the assembly it was "completely mind-boggling" that the party, with the support of Sinn Fein, had recently rejected his calls to implement the recommendations of Mrs. McDougall's report.

In a statement the Fermanagh and South Tyrone assemblyman said: "It appears to be a given that the DUP had a large part to play in the appointment of Bertha McDougall as Interim Victims Commissioner. In my view, and I believe the view of victims' groups, the resulting report did make some very worthwhile recommendations for improving the lives of those who have suffered most from the troubles.

"However, when I and my UUP colleague, Danny Kennedy, brought a motion to the assembly that these proposals should be implemented the reaction from the DUP, particularly their leader, was most unexpected. From the defensive tone of the First Minister it became evident that for an assemblyman to even question such a pressing matter was almost beneath contempt in the eyes of the department he shares with Martin McGuinness.

"Indeed, my concerns with regards this issue were originally raised when the OFMDFM committee had an opportunity to question the First and Deputy First Minister. The response I received from the First Minister indicated then that Mrs. McDougall's successor would be announced before the assembly's recess and that the process had been commenced before devolution was in place. More importantly, was the indication that the successor would not be bound by the recommendations contained within the report by Mrs. McDougall."

Tom continued by adding: "Victims were promised that the post of Victims Commissioner would be filled by early July, did the First Minister mean this July? This issue has been allowed to drift and drift, a vital part of moving forward involves addressing the needs of victims and survivors. Mrs. McDougall has produced a commendable report and I think it is vital that substantive moves are made now with regards this matter if the Province is to progress out of years of conflict."

In conclusion Tom said: "I think I speak for many when I say how puzzling it is that the DUP have appeared to drop the ball on this issue, especially when they were completely adamant that they had defined the terms of play."

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