

Shame on the two governments for their bias towards Sinn Fein

News Letter - 31st December 2019

This paper's Morning View (*'It is high time the UK explained and defended automatic citizenship,'* December 18) referred to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement being "under increasing assault from nationalists who masquerade as its defenders". Precisely!

The British and Irish governments are co-guarantors regarding the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA). Yet, both governments have consistently ignored a fundamental aspect; namely, Sinn Fein's refusal to recognise the legitimacy of Northern Ireland. It is imperative that the secretary of state and Tánaiste both publicly make crystal clear this obligation that Sinn Fein has under the GFA.

However, the BBC stated (December 19) that both governments assert "the Democratic Unionist Party is holding up a deal". And the Tánaiste stated "if there was a change of approach from [the DUP] ... a deal could still be reached before Christmas". The BBC's comment was that it was "an unusual move by the two governments" to call out the DUP.

I challenge the two governments; where is your balance? Why the silence about Sinn Fein's lack of responsibility regarding the GFA? I say simply; shame on both of you for such a biased position.

Consider the facts. Sinn Fein's clarion call during the election was "We need to give people the hope and vision" of the GFA. The GFA makes clear a commitment to mutual respect and also recognises the legitimacy of Northern Ireland's present status as part of the United Kingdom.

The Irish constitution initially contained a legal claim to the territory of Northern Ireland and was/is mirrored by Sinn Fein's non-recognition of the Westminster Parliament.

However, on May 22 1998 two referenda in Ireland (North and South) overwhelmingly approved the GFA. The Irish government thus removed its territorial claim and this was described in the Irish Times (December 4 1999) as "the most dramatic change in the definition of Irish nationalism since the foundation of the state."

Regrettably, in sharp contrast, Sinn Fein's position remains unchanged. Gerry Adams, the then Sinn Fein President, stated (BBC's 'The Andrew Marr Show', March 12 2017) that the position of the island of Ireland is: "totally and absolutely illegitimate".

But Northern Ireland's position is not illegitimate, rather the opposite, endorsed overwhelmingly by the peoples of Ireland. This demonstrates the extent of Sinn Fein's masquerade as defenders of the GFA. It is the policy of the dinosaur.

Denis Bradley (BBC Newsline, December 16 2019) described Sinn Fein's abstentionist policy as "very much past its sell-by date".

The refusal to respect Northern Ireland's legitimacy is a major stumbling block to securing a sustainable political way forward.

There are others who could also have make a better contribution. For example: Professor Jon Tonge, a regular media commentator, (Belfast Telegraph, 23 November 2019) viewed, without qualification, Sinn Fein's abstentionism as "principled", yet this flies in the face of the GFA.

Also, William Crawley (BBC's 'Talkback', December 3 2019) and Stephen Nolan (BBC's 'The Nolan Show', December 10 2019) didn't challenge Sinn Fein regarding its abstentionist rationale. In the run-up to the general election, this surely displayed a lack of investigative responsibility by the broadcast media.

Overall, Sinn Fein gives the impression of being modern and moderate. Yet, at the very core of its policy is a form of aggressive nationalism that has long been rejected by modern democracies.

I have always sought to build mutual respect across both communities, including support for an Irish language act. But, to be blunt: to be constantly lectured by Sinn Fein, on an inaccurate basis, about implementing the terms of the GFA exhausts all tolerance.

Sinn Fein demands full respect without offering reciprocal respect. Its demand for an Irish language act may have more support if, by words and action, it demonstrated respect for the GFA.

This it has demonstrably failed to do, yet masquerading as a defender of the GFA and supported by both governments. Northern Ireland deserves better.

The two governments are still refusing to hold Sinn Fein to account for failing to assist in reaching agreement. Others also have failed to expose Sinn Fein's true position regarding the GFA.

Would that the two governments and Sinn Fein publicly step up to the plate and create the environment for progress. No more lack of balance, do your job and start the process of restoring the assembly.

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