



UMBRELLA BODY: David Campbell, left, with Jonathan Powell, centre, and Richard Monteith at the launch of the Loyalist Communities Council in 2015

# What's going on with rudderless unionism?

**T**HE pages of the not so secret diary of Ulster's unionism have experienced little difficulty writing themselves to date in this centenary year of our jaundiced Jerusalem.

The rudderless state of the DUP is becoming clearer with each passing week. Arlene Foster has lost all pretence at authority and the continuing fallout from the party's spectacularly disastrous handling of Brexit has left them feeling vulnerable and making the same old mistakes, yielding ground to and following the lead of unionism's angriest fringe players.

The latest Lucid Talk opinion poll has further instilled panic in party ranks, provoking the conception and publication of a hastily concocted five-point plan to kill the protocol, as well as some rather strange goings on at the ports.

On that note, wasn't it intriguing to learn that Edwin Poots felt assured enough with regard to his own investigative skills to dismiss the absence of evidence from the PSNI and instead order the withdrawal of port workers on the basis of his own assessment as to the severity of loyalist threats? Of course, this had nothing to do with the fact the DUP were then engaged in frantic efforts to gain some traction for their campaign to force the British government into triggering Article 16. That spotlight has now focused more intently upon our own little Alabama, also known as Mid and East Antrim Council, a place for whom the Good Friday Agreement is still a distant destination.

Following on from the PSNI's latest insult visited upon the families of the Ormeau Road bookmakers atrocity, Mervyn Storey stated that Simon Byrne had the party's confidence as chief constable and chided that others should "not try to start a crisis in policing". Within 24 hours his fellow DUP MLA David Hilditch had written to Byrne telling him to resign. The left hand of Ulster knows not what the right hand is at these days.

Then there is the curious case of the Loyalist Communities Council (LCC), an

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umbrella body representing three very active paramilitary groups in the year of our Lord 2021 – which also happens to be the year of our Ceasefires 27.

The organisation was established more than five years ago purportedly to help loyalists exit the scene. If indeed that is the body's *raison d'être* then a verdict of mission unaccomplished would be quite the understatement.

Even before his most recent ill-advised sabre-rattling radio interview, LCC chairman David Campbell appears to have been preoccupied with using his position to publicly intervene at key political junctures in an apparent attempt to gain leverage for unionist political parties, to little avail.

In November 2018, Campbell entered the public arena to criticise business and farming groups who had voiced support for Theresa May's backstop Brexit deal.

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In May 2019, David Campbell popped up on behalf of the trio of paramilitary groups to call on unionists to not transfer votes to non-unionist candidates, proclaiming that "apathy and low turn-out" in the local government elections earlier that month had "clearly helped the enemies of unionism". That not so clarion call didn't work out too well as, for the first time ever, unionism was reduced to holding just one European seat.

Last March, David Campbell issued a statement carried on the LCC website in which he declared that the loyalist outfit was instituting "a temporary moratorium on all meetings, rallies, band parades etc. organised by their constituent membership." The fact that illegal paramilitary groups were actually organising meetings, rallies and, apparently, band parades was revealing in itself.

Only a few months ago in September 2020, Campbell wrote an article in the *News Letter* in which he made the following absurd comments after alleging that loyalists were being discriminated against in terms of membership of a list of high profile public bodies: "If one were to delve into the resourcing of loyalist areas in comparison to republican areas one would uncover a huge loyalist deficit. Is it any wonder that statistically the most under-privileged young person in western Europe is a teenage boy from a loyalist heartland? Is it any

wonder that these teenagers continue to flock to loyalist paramilitary organisations and sustain their existence?"

There are many challenges facing working class communities across Northern Ireland. None of them will be overcome by pitting families and communities against one another by self-evidently baseless claims.

Unionism would benefit from adhering to the advice of the late, great Marvin Gaye. There's no need to escalate, we've all got to find a way.

Granted, there's more than a touch of Songs of Praise to Motown so I'm not certain Gregory's ears (nor mind) will be open to that.

## ON THIS DAY

FEBRUARY 15 1921

### Derry's Tragic Victims

AT Derry Recorder's Court yesterday, Edward Doherty of Friel's Terrace, who was shot through the leg in Longtower Street last June and had to have his leg amputated, was awarded £450.

Mr McGuckin [BL] said the applicant served through the Boer War and Great War. His Honour awarded £300 to Michael O'Kane in respect of the death of his son who was shot dead during the June disturbances. The Judge said the deceased had been stopped by one man and asked what his religion was, and was afterwards shot. The question arose as to whether, under such circumstances, there was unlawful assembly. Mr McGuckin submitted that there was an arrangement among certain people at this time to stop people on the street, ask their religion and to murder those who differed from them. His Honour agreed with that and held that, though O'Kane was murdered only by one individual, he met his death in the carrying out of this arrangement.

### Shot With Own Revolver

AT THE Derry Recorder's Court before Judge Osborne, Joseph Madill, West End Park, claimed for personal injuries.

Applicant, aged 74, complained that on the morning of 21st June, when the city was in a very disturbed state, he was passing through Waterloo Place where a large crowd had collected when he saw a number of men crossing the street towards him. Witness put his hand in his pocket. He had a revolver (for which he had a permit) and he pulled it out. The crowd then surged round him.

Witness, however, hesitated to shoot because no arms were presented at him. The crowd wrenched the revolver from him and a man fired at him at a distance of two yards, the bullet lodging in the region of the heart. Witness then put his umbrella up and he turned to retreat towards the police barrack.

The barrack, however, was closed and he started to run. He ran into a barber's shop but a crowd surrounded the shop and threatened to wreck it unless the shopkeeper put witness out. He was then dragged into the street but he told the crowd he had no connection with politics and was not an Orangeman or Freemason. (Laughter) The leaders then went away.

Dr Thomas McLaughlin said the applicant had broken down in health. His Honour awarded the former gas-meter reader £510 compensation.

**Around 40 civilians were killed in Derry's short, sharp Civil War in May/June 1920 during a trial of strength between the well-armed UVF and the IRA. Unionists resented the loss of the city to Nationalism for the first time since 1689.**

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