



PROTOCOL: In his first major speech as DUP party leader, Sir Jeffrey Donaldson wasted no time in vilifying Dublin

All Donaldson brings to table is a layer of polish

DURING his first major speech as party leader last Thursday, the DUP's Sir Jeffrey Donaldson spent almost half an hour speaking without saying anything different from his two predecessors who have shared the burden to date of carrying the party leader tag in this the centenary year of the state's formation.

The chickens are all coming home to roost at the same time for the DUP, and not one of its relay team of leaders has the first idea of how to handle the situation other than resorting to angry pronouncements seeking to divert attention and blame on to others.

True to form, Donaldson wasted no time in vilifying Dublin, where apparently the taoiseach has been replaced with a prime minister - either that or Sir Jeffrey thought it would be too much of a concession to use an Irish language term in his big speech this close to the Twelfth.

The DUP, alone amongst our leading parties, gave its unequivocal support to Brexit, and the disastrous manner in which Donaldson stewarded the party's approach to influencing the form of Brexit ultimately agreed by Westminster makes a mockery of his efforts to angrily accuse the Irish government of straining relationships and causing instability on this island.

The new DUP leader's lengthy speech was designed to be a turning of the page moment, incorporating a phrase of regret for the manner in which the party's internal wrangling had dominated politics for several months and allowed dirty laundry to be aired in public before asking for a line to be drawn under that episode.

Alas, Alex Easton had a different plan and his resignation from a party he labelled as lacking in "respect" and "decency" - the same party Arlene Foster called "nasty" and "regressive" some weeks ago - put paid to any notion that the DUP could convince people that the past two months were just a

Chris DONNELLY



bad nightmare.

Thanks to Easton's decision, Sinn Féin now sit as the largest party in Stormont, an appropriately ironic development as Orangemen prepare to march in commemoration of 100 years of their wee province's existence.

Another blow was dealt to the DUP-led Smash the Protocol campaign last week when the High Court dismissed the legal challenge brought by an assortment of prominent unionist figures, including Ben Habib, who now opposes the protocol he voted for just last year.

It is worth repeating over and over again that the protocol was agreed, endorsed and championed by Boris Johnson and his government who successfully secured its approval by the Westminster Parliament. It was not foisted upon anyone - and Justice

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Colton made a specific point of criticising as unhelpful the patently ridiculous charge by the applicants' barrister that the operation of the protocol could be compared to the Vichy regime that operated during Nazi occupied France.

The ruling confirmed what was widely known. The protocol is self-evidently lawful as parliament remains sovereign in the United Kingdom, which we have been told often enough was the point of Brexit. Making the case that the Act of Union, more than two centuries old and predating Catholic Emancipation by almost three decades, has been breached by the protocol ignores the fact that the act has been amended on numerous occasions. Indeed, the very existence of the state of Northern Ireland being commemorated this year by loyalists is only possible because Article One of the Act of Union declaring that Great Britain and Ireland would be forever united was effectively amended - and that's before we get into any of the other changes that have taken place over two centuries, including devolved government in the north post-partition which was not in place in Scotland nor Wales until 70 years later.

Donaldson is bringing nothing new to the table except a layer of polish. He has already employed the traditional DUP tactic of stoking fear and raising anger to rally the loyal. In his speech he was quick to pitch the next election as a referendum on a border poll in an attempt to frighten unionists back into the DUP fold. With typical arrogance, he went on to proclaim that "more than ever, unionists and those who care about peace and stability must come together to resist this threat." The logic of his carefully worded comments would suggest that, in the new DUP leader's mind, anyone supporting constitutional change does not care about peace nor stability.

Those expecting change will be disappointed.

ON THIS DAY

JULY 5 1971

Parade Bomb Defused

AN ARMY sergeant defused a five pound bomb in Coalsland while Orangemen marched ten yards away in their annual commemoration of the Battle of the Somme. As they marched, police searched the County Tyrone town for three more bombs said to have been hidden behind a café, a shop and a bank. They found nothing. Meanwhile Sergeant Clive Lambert defused the gelignite bomb which was timed to explode at 9.30 p.m. in the roof of the public toilet in the town square. Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Sibbald said later: 'It was quite a well-made device, a lot of people could have been hurt.'

RUC Man Repudiates Paisley

DETECTIVE Inspector Harry Taylor has denied the statement made by Rev Ian Paisley that he gave him information relating to Ardoyne Church, the Scarmán Tribunal was told yesterday. This was revealed by Mr Richard Chambers, QC for the RUC, a fortnight after Mr Paisley had told the Tribunal that he received information from the Detective Inspector that the church was being used by snipers in August 1969 and that the priests were handing out bullets. Mr Chambers told the Tribunal that Detective Inspector Taylor wished to make it known that he denies giving such information to Mr Paisley. The QC added: 'Justice must be done to Detective Inspector Taylor and that is why I am stating this in open court.'

New Dunnes Store in Bangor

TRAFFIC was disrupted in Bangor yesterday when hundreds of housewives thronged the main street awaiting the official opening of Dunnes new store - the nineteenth in Ireland. Mr Ben Dunne, the chairman of Dunnes Stores Limited, was born in Rostrevor and left the North as a youth, vowing that one day he would return. His company is completely Irish-owned and 95 per cent of merchandise being sold is Irish-made.

Youths Fined for UVF Painting

TWO young men who pleaded guilty at Belfast Magistrate's Court yesterday to painting the letters UVF on a Catholic house in Beechnut Street in a 98 per cent Protestant district in the city were each fined twenty pounds. Arrested by the Army, Norman McGrath said: 'I think it's a bit daft. I never heard of anyone getting into trouble about this before, everyone does it.' The RM - It is serious in the present climate of things in NI.

PAISLEY'S dramatic claim that snipers were operating from Clonard Monastery in August 1969 had been rejected by the priests there at the time. Meanwhile, the Orange parades through nationalist towns like Coalsland and Dungiven continued to generate community tensions and IRA attention. This would prove the most violent summer since 1969.

EDITED BY ÉAMON PHOENIX
e.phoenix@irishnews.com