



LAWS: Irish language activists at Stormont calling for solidarity and support for language rights

# Irish language row down to semantics

**A** FRESH row over language legislation comes down, appropriately enough, to semantics.

DUP sources are claiming the party never agreed to 'an Irish Language Act'.

Sinn Féin says "the commitment to an Irish Language Act was a key component of the New Decade, New Approach deal."

The truth is that the deal is not for a single piece of legislation but for a whole set of new laws, services and amendments to existing laws, covering Irish, Ulster-Scots and other cultural issues.

You could call it an Irish Language Act in much the way ten amendments to the US constitution are called the Bill of Rights.

Or you could call it the Rights, Language and Identity Framework, the terms actually used in New Decade, New Approach.

During Stormont's collapse, DUP negotiators - including Edwin Poots - hoped they could sell Irish language legislation to unionists by expanding and rebranding it as 'a cultures act'.

They won that argument but the victory was so trite it was promptly forgotten, so now we have to sit through the argument all over again.

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Edwin Poots has been unambiguous that he supports full implementation of New Decade, New Approach.

The real question is whether promises on language can be delivered in the 11 months before the next scheduled election, when passing even a straightforward law at Stormont routinely takes two years.

The new DUP leader has called for a "step change" to speed up the legislative process, although he did not mention language or culture acts when making this call.

He did cite "licensing laws" as one of the "major areas which can deliver real benefits for our citizens". Even under the logic of the peace process, by which only hardliners can deliver compromise, it seems barely believable that it will take a Caleb Foundation-run DUP to finally liberalise Northern Ireland's alcohol and entertainment restrictions.

Perhaps Poots meant he intends to tighten them.

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The UDA threats Jeffrey Donaldson says were made against his DUP leadership campaign reportedly came

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from one individual and have been condemned by the UDA.

This has not stopped Sinn Féin's Gerry Kelly from sounding the securocrat alarm.

The UDA "is infested with agents of the British Security Services," he tweeted. "What is their direction to their agents?"

While this is presumably mischief-making on Sinn Féin's part, it plays to genuine nationalist concerns about Britain using loyalist unrest as a Brexit negotiating tactic. There is poor awareness that the UDA and UVF are just about keeping a lid on unrest by endorsing anti-protocol protests.

If any 'agents' are being 'directed', this is how.

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The Public Prosecution Service has dropped Covid cases against Black Lives Matter protesters partly to ensure "proportionality and consistency". The Bobby Storey funeral will be the point of consistency in many minds: it would look terrible to pursue fines for a socially-distanced anti-racist demonstration after not fining anyone for an IRA rally.

Another potential inconsistency is now on the horizon. How can anyone be fined over unnotified anti-protocol protests when the memorial procession for Storey was separate to the funeral and therefore should also have been notified to the Parades Commission?

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The BBC may be next in line for his frozen just desserts. Paisley, who has a long list of grievances against the broadcaster, has called for BBC "top brass" to face consequences over the Martin Bashir interview of Princess Diana. The North Antrim MP has demanded Westminster authorities investigate Baron Hall, the BBC's director of news at the time of the interview. Paisley appears to have secured government support for this demand and he repeated it an article for the Daily Mail, which was notably pleased to print it.

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As the environmental impact of short-haul flights comes into question, plans have been revealed for a passenger airship service between Belfast and Liverpool. Unlike Boris Johnson's bridge to Scotland, this is a serious proposal - a large prototype vehicle has already been built.

However, like the bridge, airships might be too vulnerable to high winds to operate reliably. The significance of this story is how exposed the whole of Ireland is to mounting pressure for green aviation. Almost everywhere else in Europe can just swap short-haul planes for trains.

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There is a growing row in Banbridge over street preachers, with disputed claims of hate-filled sermons and police warning of alleged "hate incidents".

Similar disputes in England have become a culture war flashpoint and the capacity for this to escalate in Northern Ireland is obvious. Banbridge Sinn Féin councillor Kevin Savage summed up the dilemma, saying "we have freedom of speech" but some preaching is "bordering on the offensive".

His solution is for those who wish to preach to do so in church. Another approach would be to let people preach while enforcing noise nuisance laws where amplifiers are being used. Volume as much as content is bringing this issue to a head.

## ON THIS DAY

JUNE 5 1921

### Specials' 'Friendly Fire'

MISTAKING a Special Constable in mufti for a Sinn Féiner at Armagh on Thursday night, a patrol of B Men called upon him to halt. He disobeyed the order and was fired at and, mistaking the B men for Sinn Feiners, he returned the fire and safely reached the Market Street barracks. Meanwhile the death has occurred of Special Constable Armstrong, a native of Drum, County Monaghan, who was wounded by the accidental discharge of a comrade's revolver in Gortin police barracks.

### JEWS AND THE IRISH CAUSE

THE splendid generosity of the Jewish race and the readiness with which they respond to a purely humanitarian appeal have probably never been better exemplified than in the case of the campaign which the American Committee for Relief in Ireland [AMCOMRI] is now conducting. The campaign has been endorsed by such distinguished and national figures as President Harding but no section of the US people have been so generous in their response than those of the Hebrew race.

The action of the [Jewish] Climber Social Club in Brooklyn in raising a million dollars among the thousand groups that go to make up the club is typical of the Jewish attitude in the United States.

'The need of help is imperative,' said Rabbi Krauskopf of Philadelphia. How imperative is told in a cable received recently by AMCOMRI to which the signatories include chairmen and laymen of the Church of Ireland, Methodist Trust, Society of Friends and finally the leading Rabbi of that country, Isaac Herzog, MA who spoke for 800 Jews in Dublin alone.

### Child Wounded in Sektarian Attack Dies

LENA Kelly (13), who resided with her parents at Kilmood Street, Belfast died in the Mater Infirmorum Hospital yesterday as a result of the wounds received on the night of 19th May in Ballymacarrett. On that occasion an Anti-Partition meeting had been held in Seaford Street and the people returning home were the victims of an Orange attack from the Newtownards Road. A Crossley tender came on the scene and the crowds were fired upon, the little girl Lena being struck with a bullet in the mouth. The medical and nursing staffs of the Mater were unremitting in their care and attention to the unfortunate little patient but she passed away though the bullet has been extracted.

(Born in Poland, Isaac Hertzog (1888-1959) who served as rabbi in Belfast and then Chief Rabbi of Ireland, was a close friend of de Valera. In 1920, the Rabbi described Belfast's sectarian violence as a 'pogrom' against Catholic minority. His son, Chaim Hertzog became President of Israel in 1983.)

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