

**RARE OUL TIMES:**  
DUP leader Edwin Poots arriving at Government Buildings, Dublin, ahead of his meeting with Taoiseach Micheál Martin.



# Protocol progress dependent on a pragmatic Poots

**F**RIENDS of mine say I have a weakness for corny jokes and bad puns. It's true that I enjoy a bit of wordplay and one of my favourite writers is Flann O'Brien/Myles na Gopaleen (originally Brian O'Nolan from Strabane) who was a master of the art. It didn't detract from his overall literary achievements, although he described himself as "a spoiled Proust" – an interesting conjuncture of the French novelist with a failed cleric.

Without intending any disrespect to Edwin Poots, I have to reveal that the search for a pun on the surname of the new DUP leader has been playing on my mind of late. Readers of a certain vintage will recall the Nancy Sinatra hit-number, *These Boots are Made for Walking*, written by country music legend Lee Hazlewood. I'm trying to come up with an alternative version, titled *These Poots are Made for Walking*. All suggestions gratefully received.

Indeed, only last week, I saw a clip on BBC Newsline of Edwin Poots walking on a footpath. If it was in Lisburn or Belfast, I wouldn't have paid much attention, but this was in Dublin, capital city of the Irish Republic or, in colloquial terms, "The Free State".

And it wasn't just any old part of Dublin, this was Merrion Street where the Irish government has its headquarters. The same news bulletin showed the DUP leader heading into Government Buildings, accompanied by his party ally Paul Givan, for a meeting with Taoiseach Micheál Martin.

Edwin wore a serious expression but Paul was smiling broadly and this may have been in the expectation that he would shortly be named as first minister in the Stormont Executive.

His appointment to the position was finally confirmed yesterday and, since he was previously Minister for

Deaglán  
DE BRÉADÚN



Communities, his surname tempts me to remark that, "Politics is the gift that keeps on Givan". Another bad pun.

However, three days later, Secretary of State Brandon Lewis seemed to fire a shot across the bows when he was quoted in *The Sunday Times* as saying that the practice is for himself, the prime minister and royal visitors to hold meetings with the first and deputy first ministers rather than party leaders.

As John Downing pointed out in *The Irish Independent*, the Reverend Ian Paisley made his first visit to Irish government headquarters in 1999, a total of 28 years after the DUP was founded. He was there in his capacity as Moderator of the Free Presbyterians, to complain about vandalism against their churches on the southern side of the border. Five years later in 2004 he

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paid a visit as DUP leader, accompanied by his deputy Peter Robinson, to talk about the peace process with then-taoiseach Bertie Ahern. Mr Poots, by contrast, arrived at the door only a week after becoming head of the DUP.

Admirers of the late Charles Haughey won't appreciate the comparison and neither will supporters of the DUP, but there is a certain similarity between himself and Edwin Poots. I am reminded of the way Haughey, who was in opposition at the time, vigorously opposed the Anglo-Irish Agreement signed at Hillsborough in 1985. Fianna Fáil under his leadership voted against it in the Dáil but, after being elected taoiseach in 1987, Haughey changed his tune and, to quote a Fine Gael opponent, "walked all over his backwoodsmen".

The fundamentalists in the DUP seem to feel comfortable having a leader with a similar background to themselves but Poots can also be quite pragmatic. Hopefully he and his colleagues will deploy that quality to achieve an outcome on the Northern Ireland Protocol that satisfies all sides.

There were indications of that type of approach in his declaration that the DUP would attend the North South Ministerial Council on June 18. A degree of pragmatism on all sides facilitated the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and the largely-peaceful 23 years that have followed since. Senior Irish diplomat, the late Dermot Gallagher, who was an important figure in those negotiations, had a basic principle that all the participants needed to bring back something to their followers because constructive compromise was better than all-out victory.

It's a point that the UK government and the European Union need to remember in their talks about the protocol.

## ON THIS DAY

JUNE 9 1971

### UDR Opposed

THE Prime Minister, Mr Brian Faulkner told Stormont yesterday that it was perfectly clear to the public that both the British and NI governments were quite determined to take any initiative they believed, as a result of security advice, to be right to bring the terrorist campaign to an end. He was replying to a concentrated and heated protest by Opposition members against any proposal to set up a full-time armed battalion of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR).

Mr Gerry Fitt said that a kite was being flown by the Ministry of Defence. He claimed that a new force would do nothing to bring about a more peaceful state. Mr John Hume (SDLP) said there would be total opposition to the idea by members of his side of the House and he asked when would the PM ever learn that the solutions to the problems in NI were not and would never be military solutions.

Mr Robert Mitchell (Unionist) said the establishment of a full-time UDR was very welcome.

### Two Soldiers Shot in Falls

TWO soldiers were wounded when four men opened fire with sub-machineguns at an Army post at Upper Falls, Belfast last night. The post in Divis Drive is only a few yards from Andersonstown police station.

### Dungiven Orangemen to Defy Ban

DUNGIVEN Orangemen will defy a parade ban next Sunday, according to their Worshipful Master, Mr William McFarlane. Last night Mr McFarlane said: "The march is still on as far as we are concerned".

The march was banned yesterday after representatives of the Dungiven Lodge and Limavady District LOL met the PM, Mr Faulkner at Stormont and turned down his request to call it off. Then Mr Faulkner, in his capacity as Minister of Home Affairs, said that the security forces had advised him that a procession of the nature contemplated through the town could lead to serious public order.

### Stormont Team for Common Market

AS BRITAIN'S negotiations for entry into the Common Market reach the final stages, the Stormont government is making arrangements to send Ministers to Brussels to discuss issues of particular concern to the North. Mr Faulkner said it was not for Stormont to decide whether NI goes in or not. That was a national decision which will be taken for the whole of the UK by the Westminster Parliament. (No-one knew it then but, within a month, the Nationalist opposition would have walked out of Stormont leaving it an exclusively Unionist assembly. Faulkner's decision – under pressure from Westminster – to ban a provocative Orange parade through Dungiven incurred the wrath of his right-wing and Ian Paisley.)

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