



SEA BORDER BET: DUP dinosaur-in-chief Edwin Poots – living proof that evolution (at least the political kind) is a myth – has bet his unsteady leadership on getting rid of the protocol

# Cheesed off by Poots's protocol posturing

IT'S BEEN 15 months since I last met up with colleagues from work. Working remotely has not been impossible, and we've done our best to stay in touch with one another and to support each other through this pandemic. That's what colleagues do.

One of the heart-warming things about this trauma has been seeing the countless acts of kindness of comparative strangers. Neighbours, family and friends have faced significant struggles and, in too many cases, those trials have been about matters of life and death.

A few people have disgraced themselves. Though to be honest, crooner Van Morrison's attitude to Covid is true to form, while Ian Paisley Junior (do we still have to call him junior?) has let himself down so many times he resembles a deflated lilo on a Sri Lankan beach.

Anyway, back to my colleagues. We decided to have a socially distanced get-together, and agreed on a picnic by the loch on the Scottish campus where we work. We're a small team – two South Africans, a guy from Pakistan, two Scots and an Irishman: a walking introduction to a joke.

To reflect our worldview, we decided to each bring a contribution from our homeland. Easy, thinks I, soda farls, freshly baked on the griddle from my granny's recipe; Kerrygold butter and some classic Irish cheese, maybe some Irish ham. Sausages were out, best served hot, and too political, I thought, given the row over the protocol.

Even post-Brexit, cheese counters are overflowing – everything from bland to noxious, and from every corner of the continent – haloumi and feta from Greece; pungent pecorinos, tangy teleggio, and buttery mozzarellas from Italy; and French cheeses of infinite number... and that's before you reach your Cornish Yargs, Stinking Bishops, and plain old Cheddars from England.

Tom COLLINS



But could I find an Irish cheese? Gubeen ideally, but even a Coleraine Cheddar at a pinch. Tesco, Sainsbury, Morrisons... nada. Marks and Sparks, surely. Nothing. Waitrose – a cert – no, nothing remotely connected to Ireland – a country where the cow is venerated as highly as by Hindus.

Well, I tell a lie. The ubiquitous Cheestring (\$1.50 for four) is made by the Kerry Group and, if memory serves me correctly, was brought to the market in the mid-nineties by a former pro vice-chancellor of Queen's University Belfast.

But, no matter what they say on their website ("only made from the good stuff, with no artificial colours, flavours or preservatives") Cheestrings do not warrant a place on any self-respecting cheese board, nor anywhere near my granny's soda bread. In my humble opinion, if Cheestrings were cheese the spelling would be correct.

In normal times, I would have lamented the loss of an opportunity to share the bounty of

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my country and moved on. But these are not normal times.

Running in parallel with my search was the farcical G7 summit in Cornwall and the continuing fall-out over Britain's refusal to live up to obligations it freely entered into when it signed the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Not only did we have the spectacle of Johnson, Raab and Frost pretending they had nothing to do with the protocol (even though it was their creation), but we had the usual suspects back here jumping on the bandwagon – the Loyalist Communities Council and its DUP hangers-on.

DUP dinosaur-in-chief Edwin Poots – living proof that evolution (at least the political kind) is a myth – has bet his unsteady leadership on getting rid of the protocol. Along the way he has conjured up a vision of violence on the streets in the weeks and months ahead. Well, at least we know what he means by the DUP returning to its roots.

Against all this, my misery over a lump of cheese seems misguided.

But, the simple truth is that the protocol gives Northern Irish food producers access to one of the biggest markets in the world – Europe, which values produce from this island; and access to markets in Scotland, England and Wales.

If unionism was really interested in promoting Northern Ireland, it would be expending its energies on making the most of those markets – creating jobs, and generating wealth and goodwill in the process; exporting decent sausages rather than importing inferior ones.

As John Hume said: "You cannot eat a flag." But you can eat a chunk of Coleraine Cheddar. Northern Ireland's agriculture and economy ministers (both DUP) should put their efforts into selling it, rather than wasting everyone's time bemoaning the protocol – which is a gift that can keep on giving.

## ON THIS DAY

JUNE 17 1921

### Child Victim

AN INQUEST was held by the City Coroner yesterday regarding the death of a 13-year-old girl named Lena Kelly, Kilmood Street (Belfast) who died as the result of wounds received during the disturbances in the East End recently. She was wounded on 17th May and died on 5th June.

John Kelly, the father, said the deceased girl was only five minutes out of the house to buy some sweets when she was shot. William Norrish said he saw a large crowd on Newtownards Road at the end of Seaford Street. The witness saw a motor tender pull up at the end of the street and heard shots. He saw a policeman in the centre of Seaford Street with a revolver pointed towards where the witness was standing. After the third shot witness saw the deceased girl fall and he carried her into a house. Witness saw no shots or stones from the [Sinn Féin] procession.

Mrs Catherine McDavitt asserted that when a band was dispersing she heard shots. Police evidence produced showed that a Sinn Féin procession came up Vulcan Street to Seaford Street, headed by a pipe band. At the corner of Vulcan Street a riot broke out between the processionists and a crowd of Unionists. Stones were thrown and shots fired by both parties.

The police succeeded in getting the Sinn Féin procession to move on, but when it had got fully into Seaford Street, someone in the rear fired shots back in the direction of the police who replied by shots fired by both parties.

The father recalled that the morning after the child was wounded he was shown a bullet at the Mater Hospital. It was a Webley bullet and had been coughed up by the child.

The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence. The Coroner remarked it was a very sad case, more especially as the deceased was an innocent victim. (Like the majority of the 450 people killed in the Belfast sectarian disturbances of 1920-22, Lena Kelly was an innocent victim. She was caught in a situation where shooting broke out during a Sinn Féin election parade in east Belfast. Lena appeared to be the victim of police fire.)

### Preparations for Royal Visit

AS THE day for the King's visit to Belfast approaches, workmen are busily engaged in transforming the interior of the Council Chamber of the City Hall where the King will open the Northern Parliament. A throne will be erected which will be replica of the throne in the House of Lords at Westminster.

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