

CHALLENGES: Jeffrey Donaldson needs to engage with his party in a process of reflection, rebuilding and planning if he wants the DUP to maintain its electoral strength in next year's assembly elections



Donaldson needs a plan if he is to avoid electoral disaster

JEFFREY Donaldson needs a plan. A plan that takes into consideration what Edwin Poots forgot in his haste to oust Arlene, namely that it's not about what you're given but what you do with what you've got.

Poots's short-lived leadership of the DUP is proof that many within the party hate the notion of Irish language protection more than they dislike each other. Yet they say they hate the NI Protocol most of all.

Following close of nominations for the leadership on Tuesday, Jeffrey Donaldson said it was "not realistic to expect stability when every unionist representative in the devolved institutions opposes the Northern Ireland Protocol".

But still, we see no alternative proposals for dealing with the impact of Brexit. No plan. Simply that David Frost reassures the DUP that all options are still on the table.

Meanwhile, Sammy Wilson was in Westminster giving off about the "condescending, patronising attitude" of British politicians to "the natives" in the north.

Prior to the nomination of Paul Givan and Michelle O'Neill to the first and deputy first minister positions just one short week ago, Secretary of State Brandon Lewis announced that agreement had been reached and that if the assembly could not bring forth legislation on language and cultural matters as set forth in the New Decade New Approach Agreement, Westminster would legislate for these matters in October.

It should be remembered that the Irish government was also part of the discussions and of brokering the deal. The role of the two governments as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent agreements is to make sure things happen as agreed, which is exactly what they did last week. There were no caveats, beyond those

Patricia
MACBRIDE



nominations happening, which they did. This was a baggy fit, no returns, no magical changes deal.

Despite Poots being ousted ostensibly because he nominated Paul Givan as first minister with undue haste, that appointment still stands (at time of writing, at least). Perhaps Donaldson has realised that Gaeilge horse has bolted and he may as well let the stable lad mind the yard for the time being.

There would be nothing new in Westminster passing rights-based legislation impacting on the north. It was a result of amendments proposed by MPs Stella Creasy and Conor McGinn to the Northern Ireland Bill 2019 that legislation providing for marriage equality and access to abortion were put in place. Of course, this suits the DUP when campaigning

to their fundamentalist grassroots supporters.

With Donaldson cautioning about a lack of stability and Wilson giving off about Westminster legislating for the north, there might be speculation that the DUP will, at some stage in the near future, collapse the Stormont institutions. That's unlikely because they have nowhere to go.

Last weekend, 300 people attended a rally protesting against the protocol in Newtownards, a predominantly unionist town with a population of 27,000. That's hardly the widespread support the DUP would want.

As well as Irish language legislation, Brandon Lewis indicated this week that he would step in if the Department of Health at Stormont failed to commission abortion services, as they have done to date. He's appointed a Special Envoy to the United States for Northern Ireland. He has been more hands-on than James Brokenshire and Karen Bradley combined. Direct rule wouldn't bother him.

Boris Johnson has asked for an extension of the grace period on regulations regarding moving processed meats between Britain and Ireland. If granted, that means the sausage wars are on ceasefire until at least the conclusion of the marching season. This might be the best and only win the DUP can bank in terms of renegotiating the protocol.

An assembly election with a fractured party lacking in direction would be disastrous for the DUP in the short term and they would haemorrhage seats right and left.

The DUP has only one option. Jeffrey Donaldson needs to engage with his party in a process of reflection, rebuilding and planning if he wants the DUP to maintain its electoral strength in next year's assembly elections.

Grandstanding, lashing out and threatening instability are tactics that just aren't going to work any more.

Last weekend, 300 people attended a rally protesting against the protocol in Newtownards, a predominantly unionist town with a population of 27,000. That's hardly the widespread support the DUP would want

ON THIS DAY

JUNE 24 1921

Faulkner's Minority Deal

IT WAS a case of 'wait and see' in Opposition circles last night as cautious consideration was being given to the announcement of the Prime Minister, Mr Brian Faulkner at Stormont yesterday that the Opposition would provide at least two chairmen of the four major committees which will consider Government policy in a new-style parliamentary set-up.

The Premier's statement is being considered at a special meeting of the SDLP. Mr Gerry Fitt, the party's leader, said last night that they would not determine their attitude until the matter had been studied very carefully. Mr Oliver Napier, leader of the Alliance Party said: "There can be no stability in Northern Ireland while Catholics can only participate in government through a system consisting of MPs elected on the basis of a religious majority and minority".

Mr Gerry Fitt quoted extracts from the speech of King George V when he officially opened the first Northern Parliament at Belfast City Hall in 1921.

Strict security precautions were in force around Stormont for the opening of the third session of the Twelfth NI Parliament. Police surrounded the Parliament Buildings and large contingents of ceremonial troops were also on duty.

British GOC on IRA Defeat

IN A statement the British Army Director of Operations in the Six Counties, General Sir Harry Tuzo said that, so far from hastening the departure of the British Army, the tactics of the Provisionals only serve to make the defeat of the IRA more certain and to strengthen the determination of the security forces to effect this defeat decisively and quickly.

"It is unnecessary for the Provisionals to lay proud claim to recent incidents in NI. These cowardly activities, which inevitably have the worst effect on old people and other innocent sections of the population, bear the unmistakable signature of the British and purposeless organisation". General Tuzo said the Provisionals were dictating their own downfall and increasing the contempt in which they were held by the vast majority of the steadfast population.

'Bomb Baby' Regaining Sight

A TWO-YEAR-OLD boy has regained consciousness a month after being injured in a bomb attack on Springfield Road police station in Belfast and doctors treating Paul McGeown in the Children's Hospital say he is beginning to see again. FAULKNER'S surprise offer to involve the minority in Stormont decision-making was a hint of his later pragmatism during the power-sharing negotiations of 1973. The blunt-speaking Falls MP Paddy Devlin described it as "Faulkner's finest hour". However, the premier's concession was soon eclipsed by his disastrous decision to introduce internal westward trial later that summer.

EDITED BY ÉAMON PHOENIX
e.phoenix@irishnews.com