



DRAFTED IN: Peter Robinson embraces Arlene Foster after she was formally elected as leader of the DUP in 2015. Mr Robinson has now been drafted in by new leader Jeffrey Donaldson to review party structures
PICTURE: Liam McBurney/PA

Who says the DUP has no sense of humour?

WHO says the DUP has no sense of humour? Peter Robinson has been drafted in by Jeffrey Donaldson to review party structures and has reportedly been spotted several times behind the newly-varnished headquarters door.

Reviewing structures was the pledge that saw Edwin Poots elected leader, briefly, three months ago. However, the structures party members desperately wanted to remove were those set up by Robinson at headquarters.

Of course, this could be said to make him ideal for the task, although he would need to make some ruthless recommendations to prove it.

It might also help to acknowledge his mistakes in putting Arlene Foster at the helm and building the machine that kept her there, unbudging, for five and a half years.

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SINN Féin is the executive party most opposed to integrated education, yet its voters are strongly in favour of it.

An online survey commissioned by the Integrated Education Fund has found 72 per cent of Sinn Féin voters want children taught together, slightly above the population average and miles above the 59 per cent figure for DUP voters.

It should be no surprise that people who want to unite Ireland do not want to segregate children. Sinn Féin is nothing if not responsive to its base, so how much longer will it stick with a position its supporters do not share?

A statement this week from party chair Declan Kearney on ending sectarianism by ending "segregation" could be a straw in the wind.

Precedent suggests any major policy shift would be rapid and total. It would have a transformative impact on the integration issue.

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WITH the sale confirmed of Barry's in Portrush, fears have been expressed by local councillors that the site will be used for yet more expensive apartments that sit empty most of the time.

Last year, Causeway Coast and Glens councillors investigated listing Barry's to ensure it was sold as a going concern but had to give up when advised the structure had no architectural merit. However, they are hardly short of powers on a replacement.

Any new development must comply

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with regional and area policies to respect Portrush's townscape character, revitalise and improve its mix of town centre uses and enhance its residential, recreational and tourism potential.

In fact, the planning system is so complex a determined body of councillors can jam a spanner in pretty much any application, should they really wish to do so.

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THE true state of planning has been revealed by a fascinating row in Lisburn over a huge new development of 500 houses.

DUP first minister Paul Givan objected as an MLA due to concerns from surrounding residents about traffic and schools. DUP councillors joined colleagues from other parties in approving the scheme, noting the developer was going "above and beyond requirements" to fund road improvements.

But nobody batted an eyelid at the planning officers' report that the developer had failed to supply further information on providing social and affordable homes.

Planning policy requires such homes in private schemes, councils have legal powers to make this a condition of approval

By announcing £100 Covid High Street vouchers will be checked against a copy of the register as of September 1, the department is ensuring everyone updates their details at record speed. How long before Sinn Féin complains this is some kind of unionist plot?

and Stormont reviews have repeatedly recommended using those powers to compel developers to build a percentage of social and affordable homes, as happens in the rest of the UK and Ireland.

These policies have been in force for a decade, while the powers have been available since 1990. Yet they are almost never used and few people even care to ask why, despite all the complaining and political grandstanding over social housing shortages.

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FOR months, Sinn Féin has been spreading conspiracy theories that this year's routine canvas of the electoral register is a British anti-nationalist plot for "a mass purge of voters" as "a blatant attempt to suppress the voice of citizens in next year's historic assembly election."

The party must know this is nonsense and anyone taken in by its claims must be scratching their heads at the DUP-controlled Department for the Economy.

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THE PSNI has written to dozens of loyalists giving them 14 days to attend voluntary interviews over anti-protocol protests that were not notified to the Parades Commission.

One of those contacted is blogger Jamie Bryson. He has written back to say his diary is regrettably full for the next six months, adding this should be no problem as Sinn Féin members were given the same length of time to attend interviews over the Bobby Storey memorial parade, also an unnotified procession – although police did not even consider that and restricted themselves to examining Covid breaches.

Bryson's response is highly amusing, as is the reaction from his online republican fan club, but the real punchline to emerge from the story is that the PSNI has a Public Order Enquiry Team that goes by the acronym POET. Alas, it does not use the motto 'when hope and history rhyme'.

ON THIS DAY

AUGUST 7 1921

'Truce to End' Crisis

THE exclusion of Mr [Sean] McKewin, TD from the list of Dail members to be released to attend the Dail Conference on August 16 has caused deep indignation in Sinn Féin circles and may produce a crisis in the impending negotiations.

An alarming message was sent out last night by the Press Association that Sinn Féin will immediately terminate the truce which would mean the end of the negotiations.

Dublin Castle has announced that all members of Dail Eireann at present interned or undergoing sentences would be released forthwith and without conditions to enable them to attend the meeting of the Dail. Mr J J McKewin, TD [Sean MacEoin], Longford and Westmeath, who, according to the Castle report, 'has been convicted of murder', is not to be released.

A statement issued from Dublin Castle states: 'In keeping with the public undertaking given by the Prime Minister that His Majesty's Government would facilitate the steps now being taken to promote peace in Ireland, it has been decided to release forthwith and without conditions all members of Dail Eireann who are at present interned [or imprisoned] to enable them to attend a meeting of Dail Eireann which has been summoned for August 16th. [The government] has decided that one member, J J McKewin, who is convicted of murder, cannot be released.'

The Government's decision has created a situation of grave anxiety and danger. The Dail Eireann Cabinet sat to the late hour last night and it was authoritatively stated that unless Mr McKewin is released, there is a possibility that Sinn Féin will almost immediately terminate the truce.

New Chief Justice for North

THE Royal Warrant officially appointing Mr Denis Henry, KC, MP to be Lord Chief Justice of NI was issued yesterday afternoon.

(Nicknamed the 'Blacksmith of Ballinalee' as a result of his success in holding the Co Longford village against superior British forces, Sean MacEoin emerged as the leading IRA figure in the Midlands. Badly wounded and captured in March 1921 he was court-martialled and sentenced to death in June for the murder of an RIC district inspector.

While in prison MacEoin was elected to the Dail. After the Truce all imprisoned Deputies, save MacEoin, were released causing an early crisis in the peace process. He was finally released following an ultimatum from de Valera.

Meanwhile, Craig had selected Denis Henry (1864-1925), Attorney General for Ireland, as first Lord Chief Justice of NI.

From a wealthy Catholic family in South Derry, Henry single-handedly created a separate Northern judiciary.)

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