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# The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

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SHOULD SINN FEIN BE PROSCRIBED?

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TO JOINT MEETING OF EXECUTIVE AND STRATEGY COMMITTEES

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The Alliance Party should support the call for the proscription of Sinn Fein, primarily because it is right that Sinn Fein be proscribed and it was an error of judgement to de-proscribe them. To proscribe means "to punish by declaring to be outside the protection of the law".

It must therefore be right in terms of logic perception and reality and political or otherwise, that Alliance as a Constitutional, democratic political party should endeavour to have proscribed those who by their own actions and by their own admission, abuse the democratic process, subvert the very institutions of government and support, if not actively participate in, acts of murder and mayhem.

The philosophy of the armalite in one hand and the ballot box in the other is not the way of the democrat but is the very antithesis of democracy. It represents the hypocrisy of Sinn Fein and demonstrates that those in Sinn Fein are hypocrits.

These are the people who fight an election and then support the murder of a young man while the votes are being counted, as happened in my constituency on 12th June 1987. These are the people who would detonate a bomb which might kill or injure someone and damage property and then offer the hand of help to those injured or to those whose property has been wrecked. This is the organisation which can support the murder of someone and issue an apology when their butchers kill the wrong person. These people trade in death and destruction. They are ruthless and cynical.

To permit such people to fight elections as bureaucrats and then when elected to sit in Councils as elected representatives of the people is an act of gross dishonesty, perpetrated against the decent people of Northern Ireland. It cannot be in the interests of freedom and democracy to permit those with an armalite in one hand, to fight an election. The Alliance Party cannot sit back and allow this cruel nonsense to continue. We can have no time for pseudo-democrats and Northern Ireland can have no place for them.

Yes we can blame the Government for miscalculating some years ago and urging the political wing of the IRA to fight elections but we must go further and demand that they now correct their mistake. They cannot be permitted to wring their hands and say "how terrible are these Sinn Fein Chiefs" but yet do nothing about it.

It is grossly dishonest of the Secretary of State to refuse to talk to Sinn Fein or for Ministers to refuse to meet them and yet expect that other elected representatives and other officials in the Housing Executive, Department of Environment etc., will operate with them and bestow credibility upon them by dealing with their complaints.

Her Majesty's Government are guilty of bestowing credibility upon Sinn Fein by letting it fight elections as a bone fide political party and the only real way of stripping Sinn Fein of their credibility is to proscribe it - make it illegal. Why should the whole electoral process be brought into disrepute by permitting the supporters and activists in a terrorist organisation like the IRA to so blatantly abuse it?

Does anyone believe that Sinn Fein's right to fight elections has made them less inclined to violence? Does anyone believe that their support has decreased because they fight elections?

The passage of time has only demonstrated the folly of the Government's weakness in this respect. Sinn Fein have been given every opportunity to step aside from violence and to use the democratic process. This they have patently refused to do. They rejoice in acts of violence and murder and then put on their elected representatives hat and talk about poor housing, unemployment and social rights. Their hypocrisy stinks to high heaven. If we cannot stop their support for the armed struggle we must do what we can to stop them abusing the ballot box. That means proscription.

It is no argument to state as I have heard many people say that to proscribe them would be used as a propaganda boost and used to recruit more volunteers to their so-called armed struggle. This is simplistic nonsense. The election and re-election of Adams, the election of 5 Assemblymen in 1982 and the election of 59 Councillors in 1985 hit the headlines at home and abroad. This was milked and exploited by the media. They get more air time than we do. They can use the media as elected representatives to talk about social issues and this is their entitlement as elected representatives as a legal bone fide political party. Its like giving Hitler a TV slot during the war. Its crazy. Propaganda is about being seen and 'getting your voice heard. By permitting Sinn Fein to be legal we are handing them propaganda on a plate.

But perhaps more important than media coverage is the fact that by being treated as legal and by being permitted to fight elections, Sinn Fein are given legitimate platforms via the Council Chambers from where they can vomit their hypocrisy on us all. There are now some 17 Council Chambers in Northern Ireland which can be abused by Sinn Fein and anyone who cares about democracy must shudder at the thought.

There is yet another argument used against proscription viz; fear of driving them under ground and thus making it more difficult for the Security Forces to keep tabs on them etc. Again I think this is a load of boloney. The Security Forces know or should know the Sinn Fein activists. Proscription won't change that. What it will change is Sinn Fein's accessibility to the people, the press and the media. It will curtail their freedom to flout the democratic process. It will remove their democratic disguise, their cloak of decency, their mask of respectability. It will strip away any lingering doubts about their legitimacy. They will be exposed for what they really are.

Gerry Adams doesn't want Sinn Fein to be proscribed. He would say that the British are changing the rules because they don't like the results of various elections. Do you think Adams would cry about proscription if it helped Sinn Fein or if it helped their bloody campaign. No way! What rules do they follow - the rules of the jungle. If we are to protect democracy and society from jungle law and if that requires a change in the rules then I'm all for it. Rules and law are there to protect the general good. It's no good fighting by the Marquis of Queensbury Rules if your opponent has a gun. If your body has a malignant growth then you cut it out, that's the only cure. Today Sinn Fein are the cancer in the democratic process. The Surgeons knife is proscription and I believe its time to use it. Aspirin, like oaths against violence etc., won't help.

