

Belfast Telegraph

VIEWPOINT

Still the best option

BELFAST AGREEMENT: Majority continues to back the Good Friday deal

DESPITE the frustrations of the past 18 months, today's opinion poll broadly shows that support for the Good Friday Agreement is holding up reasonably well. There is plenty to give hope to the politicians, still wrestling with the Mitchell review at Stormont this week, and little to persuade them that all is already lost.

While a bare majority of the Protestants (51pc) who were polled would now vote against the Belfast deal, compared with 36pc in the referendum, 72pc still want it to work, even if this figure has fallen from 89pc last March. Support among those who want to see it working varies greatly, from 50pc of DUP voters — down 23 pc since March — to 87pc UUP, indicating a fall of only 7pc. David Trimble could regard this as a vote of confidence, showing that, as the experts say, most of the swing against the Agreement is an expression of protest against its non-implementation.

Although 83pc of the people, Protestants and Catholics, still want the deal to succeed — down just 10pc since March — their priorities differ greatly. Decommissioning is still the number one priority for Protestants, as it has been since a poll in January 1998, while for Catholics it comes 12th. Top of the list for Catholics come commitments to "non-violence, peace and democracy", knocking RUC reform into second place. Interestingly, Protestants put the same commitments as their second priority, so it is evident that support for the Mitchell principles, which underpin the peace

process, is positively universal. Not surprisingly, Protestants are highly dissatisfied (88pc) with the lack of progress on decommissioning, while 63pc of Catholics agree. The next cause of dissatisfaction for Catholics is RUC reform (61pc), on which 69pc of Protestants also register discontent — for entirely different reasons. Clearly each community will be emphasising its very different concerns when it comes to implementing the Agreement.

Again, there is a serious divide between the expectations of unionists and republicans on the linkage between decommissioning and an executive. Eighty pc of UUP voters say the Agreement requires an end to all IRA violence and intimidation before an inclusive executive, while only 28pc of Sinn Fein supporters agree. But there is a clear majority among their supporters that decommissioning will not be completed without the formation of an inclusive executive.

The leaders of the G7 group, who today are urging the politicians forward, may find consolation in the poll finding that across both communities there is an acceptance that failure to implement the Agreement will hit the economy, will send more young people away and will deepen the existing divisions. That is the future against which success and, yes, compromise, must be measured. Sinn Fein, on whom most pressure now falls, take note.

Crazy ideas and ill-informed protests in the world of art

IHAVE a painting of an Orangeman on my living room wall.

He is standing in the street, urinating. He originally belonged to a pair.

If you look closely at my Orangeman you can see that the paint has been laid on very lavishly. Instead of sitting evenly on the board, it sits up, almost like a sculpture. In fact, it looks like a thick smear of filth, something that someone has slipped on.

I keep meaning to take this up with the artist, Joe McWilliams, and ask him if that was his intention. I wouldn't put it past him.

Joe's sarcasm showed through in the title he gave to a recent picture of Orangemen at Drumcree. He called it, Christians Leaving Church. At least that sounds sarcastic to me.

He has done a substantial series of pictures of Orange and Green parades, and Catholic parades.

They pay considerable respect to the complexity of these events, in the trouble he has taken but, at the same time, they incline you to feeling that the artist would not be of a mind to join in.

He has done enormous pictures of Orangemen walking past the Irish News in the rain, bleak under black umbrellas in the bleakest street in Belfast.

No one that I know of has picketed Joe McWilliams, the way they have picketed the Sensations exhibition in New York or railed against Tracy Emin putting her bed and the detritus around it on display in the Tate Gallery; the way some planned to protest against Gilbert and George and their celebrations of bodily functions at the Ormeau Baths Gallery this week.

There are some obvious

MALACHI O'DOHERTY



reasons for this. One is that the people who protest against art know nothing about it. They only respond to what breaks through and catches their attention.

For instance, on the night that Free Presbyterians picketed the film, Showgirls, at the Virgin Cinema, I was at the QFT watching Ai No Corrida, the most sexually explicit film I have ever seen.

Pickets only turn up to protest against something if they have heard about it, and then only if they are confi-

dent they can understand it, or how it offends. It is very hard to argue that McWilliams simply insults Orangemen when his response to the parades is so much more complex.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians exhibited the Sensations exhibition in New York because they believed, if they read the Irish Voice, that it

included an image by Nigerian artist, Chris Offili, of the Virgin Mary smeared in dung.

Had they gone inside and looked around for such an image, they would not have been able to find it. The Virgin in the picture was not as they see her at all, and the dung was elephant dung in dried lumps attached to the canvas. Why? Well, why not?

The protest against Tracy Emin's bed in the Tate on Sunday made more sense than the Hibernian picket of the Sensations exhibition.

Emin's installation, which is a finalist for the Turner prize, is simply her bed and the unhygienic rubbish that fell from it; her knickers and her tissues and her contraceptives.

On Sunday, two men jumped on to the bed for a pillow fight in the Tate for perhaps the same sort of reason as others have slashed revered canvases, though at less cost to put right.

Arguably it was an artistic response, an engagement with the piece rather than an act of vandalism. Why? Well, why not?

The Italian artist Fontana slashes his own work. The indulgence of crazy ideas in the art world leaves it open to mockery, as in the current plot in The Archers, where Eddie Grundy's cow Polly paints with her tail and gets exhibited.

But it is more creditable than ill informed protest and single minded uncomplicated ideological rancour.

WRITEback

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Molyneaux's legacy

IF Lord Molyneaux and his Westminster colleagues had been more adept at dealing with the threat to Ulster Unionism in 1985 when they allowed Dublin to dominate attitudes to Northern Ireland,

then current leader David Trimble would not be in the danger he faces today.

What I find difficult to understand is why the former leader of Unionism, once referred to as a "Judas

Iscaiot" by Ian Paisley, has now surrendered his moral authority to this most virulent critic. Again, it appears irrational that those who worked hardest to have Lord Molyneaux ousted as leader of Ulster Unionism are

among those to whom he now appeals. Could it be that he is actively playing out the adage attributed to his late friend Enoch Powell, that, "All political careers end in failure?"

UU VOTER, Belfast 12.

Appalled by attacks in press

I AM appalled at the way Jim Molyneaux has been attacking David Trimble in the press over the past weeks.

I supported Jim through thick and thin when he was leader. But I have to say that comparing his record to David Trimble's today, it is not hard to see who has done more to defend and promote Unionism at home and abroad.

David Trimble needs support from the Unionist people and the Loyal Orders at this time if Sinn Fein/IRA is not to be let off the hook.

Jim and the rest of the idiots following him would do well to remember that.

They should be standing shoulder to shoulder with Trimble, supporting him. This will give him more power in negotiations and give more confidence to the Unionist people.

UUP LOYALIST, Belfast.

Unionist leader needs total party support

AS someone who voted no in the referendum, I must say that events politically have turned out as I expected them to last year.

I oppose prisoner releases and unnecessary policing reform, but I support institutional goals set out in the Agreement.

I feel credit must be given to David Trimble for how he has stuck to his word since the referendum. He has faced jealous and petty opposition from senior Unionists, McCartney and

Robinson included, who have known all along that the deal he secured for Unionism is the best and only deal on offer.

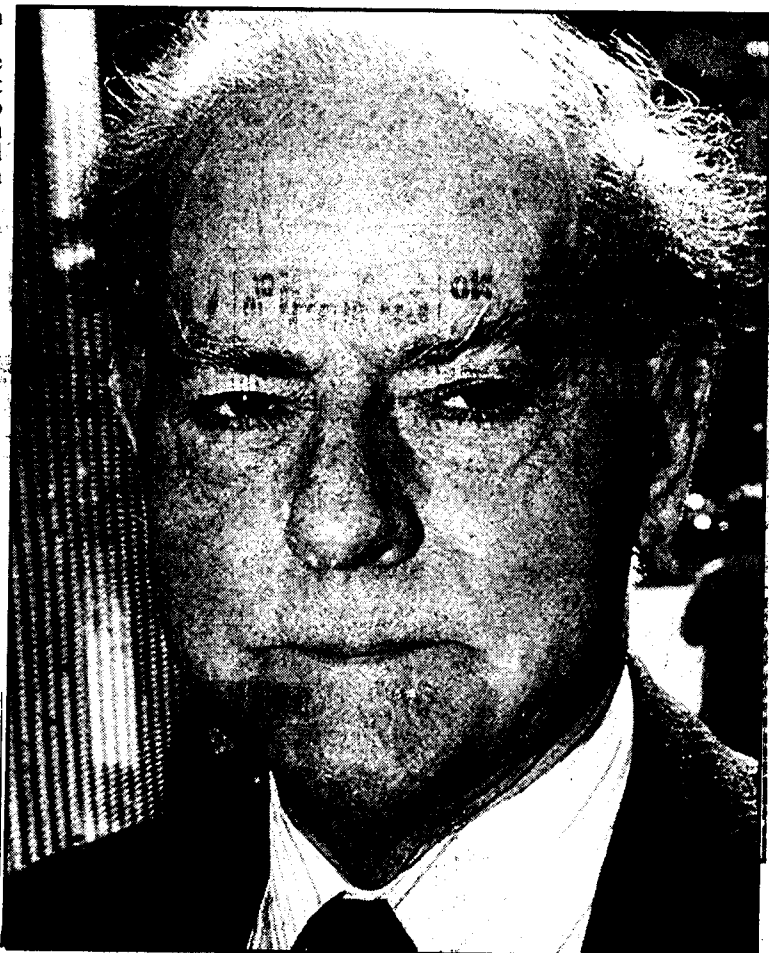
Mr Trimble has shown enormous courage and tenacity against all the odds to bring Sinn Fein/IRA to the position they are now in. They must deliver.

Decommissioning has to be dealt with. It is now time to put the Provos to the test. Mr Trimble must hold firm on decommissioning, but he must have some degree of flexibility on

sequencing. The representatives of the IRA cannot be allowed to wield Ministerial power in Northern Ireland unless they prove their democratic and peaceful credentials.

The Unionist community and the RUC has endured its pain with prisoners and policing reform - republicans must honour their part of the deal. David Trimble needs support from the Unionist people. He must stay the course.

UNIONIST VOTER, Belfast 9.



Lord Molyneaux: "surrendered moral authority"

Trimble critics offering only 'fudge'

IF it was not so pathetic I might be able to smile at the recent statement signed by Lord Molyneaux and six Ulster Unionist MPs imploring their erstwhile colleagues in the UU Assembly Group "to resist the enormous pressure being applied under the Mitchell review process to back down on the decommissioning issue".

Is this not the same Lord

Molyneaux and company who, with Ian Paisley and his Westminster colleagues, allowed Unionism to be subordinated to the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Downing Street Declaration and the Framework Documents. Do they know no shame?

David Trimble and his Assembly Group may not yet have restored all lost ground but they have at least arrested the

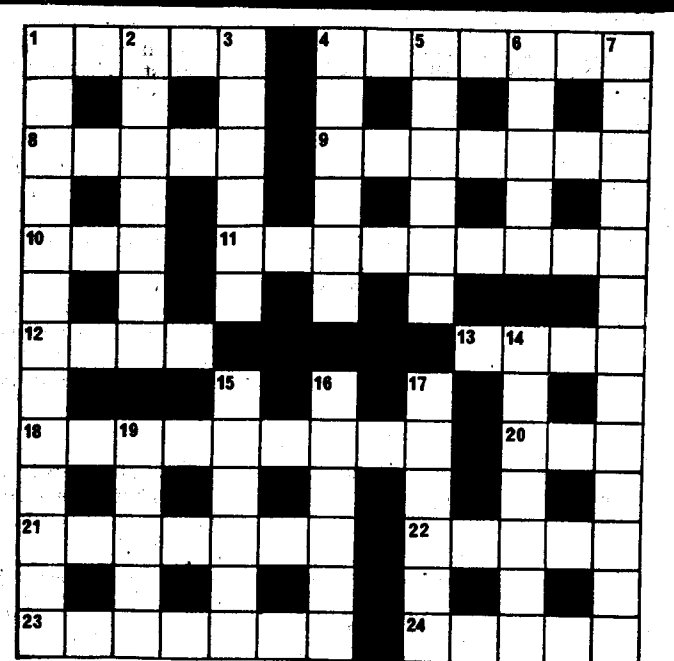
slippage and given Unionists the assurance that their future is more important than the dubious patronage of the Thatchers, Majors etc which blinded former leaders of Unionism.

The greatest "fudge" on offer at the moment is that offered by Trimble's critics. It's that honey-coated Paisley sweetmeat which allowed every bitter pill to be swallowed while, at the same

time, maintaining that deteriorating Unionism is in the best of health. David Trimble is at least working to stabilise the patient — with a bit more support he may yet effect the recovery of Unionism and make up for years of damaging neglect.

DAVID GORDON, Belfast 9.

TONIGHT'S CROSSWORD



No 1840

CRYPTIC CLUES

- Across:
 - 1 It may be solo with first single (5)
 - 4 Study the class that will adapt to the pattern (7)
 - 8 Different notes are issued at the start (5)
 - 9 How can early bit seem so awkward? (7)
 - 10 Start to form as part of the contest is put back (3)
 - 11 Retain a quarter, one is told, to speak in public (4,5)
 - 12 Weight allowance made for a weed (4)
 - 13 It gives one an idea about part of the ulcer returning (4)
 - 18 Will expand on tale
- Down:
 - 2 A bore might make it (9)
 - 20 A measure of resistance by hero with team finishes (3)
 - 21 To enter unwitting with it under difficulties (7)
 - 22 Sort of athletic event that's on record (5)
 - 23 Might grant me a piece of apparel (7)
 - 24 Man who's up to being a moss-trooper (5)
 - 1 Absent-minded knitting bee? (4,9)
 - 2 Prejudiced about rail being affected by sun (7)
 - 3 Irritable as the City gets at losing one (6)
 - 4 Make a rough repair
 - 5 Tell the authorities of tiny changes made (6)
 - 6 Poor merchant can offer one an ear-shell (5)
 - 7 Troublesome person marks mice if he is put to it (8-5)
 - 14 It is spotted as being unchangeable, they say (7)
 - 15 Component part of program endlessly moulded around it (6)
 - 16 A progenitor must need the right sort of partner (6)
 - 17 A character may come in the post (6)
 - 19 Place of sacrifice bride is led to (5)

QUICK CLUES

- Across:
 - 1 Card game (5)
 - 4 Toe the line (7)
 - 8 Beginning (5)
 - 9 In good time, early (7)
 - 10 Come together, begin to take shape (3)
 - 11 To declaim, speak publicly (4,5)
 - 12 Vetch, weed (4)
 - 13 A hint as to solution (4)
 - 18 Highly detailed, complicated (9)
- Down:
 - 20 Unit of electrical resistance (3)
 - 21 Thrust oneself in, unwanted (7)
 - 22 Running circuit (5)
 - 23 Something to wear (7)
 - 24 An equestrian (5)
 - 1 Dreamy, absent-minded (4,9)
 - 2 Narrow in outlook, prejudiced (7)
 - 3 Short-tempered (6)
 - 4 Mend shoes (6)
 - 5 Make known, give information of (6)
 - 6 The sea-ear (5)
 - 7 One who stirs up strife (8,5)
 - 14 Spotted large cat (7)
 - 15 Self-contained unit in spacecraft (6)
 - 16 Father or mother (6)
 - 17 Piece of correspondence (6)
 - 19 Communion table (5)

Answers to No 1839

- Across: 1 Proposition, 8 Ounce, 9 Halibut, 10 Orbital, 11 Enjoy, 12 Gusset, 14 Assign, 18 Board, 19 Abiding, 21 Reserve, 23 Glade, 24 Endorsement.
- Down: 1 Prolong, 2 Omnibus, 3 Overt, 4 Inhale, 5 Illness, 6 Nub, 7 Batty, 13 Endured, 15 Imitate, 16 Neglect, 17 Career, 18 Board, 20 Ingle, 22 She.

TO THE POINT

KEEP ON RUNNING; So Northern Ireland has a new Secretary of State — Peter Mandelson, a new kid in town who apparently has hit the ground running and whose job it should be to see to it that the RUC is not destroyed, and that terrorists and their fellow travellers are never permitted under any circumstances to take part in government. And if he does not perceive his job to be just that, then I suggest that he would be well advised to keep on running.

EDWARD ORME, Millisle, Co Down.

LOW COUNTRY? Recently we had the pleasure of entertaining five Belgians who were attending a conference in Belfast. It was their first visit to Northern Ireland. On introducing them to Belfast night life I was astonished, embarrassed and then angry, at the filth of the lavatories in some of our downtown, main street pubs. Ratepayers contribute large sums towards attracting visitors to Belfast and yet we display conditions which compare with third world shanty towns.

One only has to walk along the inappropriately named Golden Mile, to see the filth.

TOM EKIN, Alliance Councillor,

Peace needs movement

PEACE in Northern Ireland requires movement and concessions from all three principal pro-Agreement parties.

I The UUP and all parties which are eligible and wish to take part in the Executive immediately agree to its formation on a fully inclusive devolved basis, subject to 2 and 3.

2 If General John de Chastelain cannot report to the governments by May 1, 2000 that the IRA have delivered on the decommissioning issue, and have made it clear that they are exclusively committed to peaceful politics, Sinn Fein will be automatically excluded.

3 The SDLP, the Northern Consensus Group.

The UUP and all parties which are eligible and wish to take part in the Executive immediately agree to its formation on a fully inclusive devolved basis, subject to 2 and 3.

Sinn Fein please acknowledge that the UUP are right and in good faith when they claim that they genuinely want to establish the Executive and implement the Agreement.

The UUP and Sinn Fein have both taken risks in their commitment to the Agreement. The UUP will not

Praise for magazines

I HAVE just received your complete set of 12 Millennium magazines and feel I have to congratulate you on a wonderful achievement especially for people like myself so far from the land of our birth.

Your Millennium magazines brought back such a flood of fond memories and I may add a trickle of tears. I felt for a little while I was back again among the wonderful unique folk of Northern Ireland.

I was born in Belfast in 1926 and left the old city with my wife and three children in 1974 and settled in Australia.

Like your magazines I also have wonderful memories of Northern Ireland. I was born and raised in Sailor Town, drove a trolley-bus and was in the First Aid Post in Academy Street during the big blitz. I remember the launching of some great ships in Belfast and in spite of recent happenings there I believe that Northern Ireland has a terrific future. So, again, congratulations on your great publication of the Millennium magazines, they will bring loads of happy memories to Ulster people around the world. R McLAUGHLIN, Perth, W Australia.

DAVID GORDON, Belfast 9.