



CNI



Comment - Does the DUP need a conscience clause?

Immediately after the Asher bakery judgment on Monday a DUP MLA, Paul Girvan, stated that he was going to pursue the provision of a conscience clause through the Assembly.

The BBC's Spotlight programme televised that same evening evidenced that the DUP's

concept of conscience and its application, was rather limited in respect of one of their own councillors who refused to accommodate her membership of the party with her conscience in regard to her duty as a member of the Housing Executive.

Basically she had failed to obey instructions to vote in a certain way in a Housing Executive enquiry. The instructions were issued by the aptly named Brimstone, a Political Adviser to DUP Minister Nelson MacCausland who had oversight of the housing quango.

As a consequence of her maintaining her integrity and her independence from the party machine, in her role on a public body, she was attacked vehemently by DUP MLAs in the Assembly Committee enquiring into the Minister's relationship with a maintenance company contracted to the Housing Executive.

She was also attacked in the Assembly itself.

Both the attackers shown on BBC television were "double jobbers" - holding posts as MLAs and MPs. Their manner of attack to any impartial observer was offensive and in the committee hearing, directly intimidatory. It was disgraceful in its wilful disregard of democratic accountability. It is more than sadly ironic that the screening of these incidents and their background occurred in a week which marked

the anniversary of Dunkirk. A nadir in western democracy when fascists almost conquered conscience and responsible free expression.

Jeffrey Donaldson MP has paid tribute to the service and work of the Councillor and her husband who both have resigned from the DUP. As Mr Donaldson said, he has experience of the pain of resigning from a party.

The fact that the Policy Advisor involved has now been appointed by Peter Robinson to the Office of First Minister does absolutely nothing to enhance confidence in Mr Robinson, his party, or the present system of governance at Stormont.

Allowing for the hurt felt by the Paisley family at the late Ian Paisley's treatment by the current DUP leadership cadre, the comments made earlier this week by Kyle Paisley are nevertheless both cogent and relevant. Their strength is not weakened by being made from some distance away. In an article posted on Eamonn Mallie's news and comment web site, Paisley Junior wrote -

“The Red Sky controversy which has rumbled on for the last two years may never be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. Nevertheless, it has exposed what Seamus Close has rightly

described as “a nest of vipers.”

“It seems that from the moment Jenny Palmer became whistle-blower, the DUP had it in for her. There was never any honest intention on their part to face up to their wrongdoing, but every intention to humiliate someone who actually cares for the party’s character and reputation.

“Their behaviour is a mass of hypocrisies.

“They wanted to discipline Mrs Palmer for telling the truth, but they themselves refused to recognise the truth.

“They wanted to make her the subject of an internal party inquiry, but were in denial as to the findings of the DSD Committee Inquiry, which inquiry was not partial, but broadly representative of the Assembly.

“Nelson McCausland was proudly dismissive of the DSD inquiry, casting it off as “not worth the paper it was written on.” It wasn’t true – it couldn’t possibly be true – that he had acted inappropriately! Obviously Nelson’s eye is out. Self-inflicted blindness!

“There is the touch of a supreme pontiff about some DUP Assemblymen. They can only ever

Speak the truth. They can never be wrong in their pronouncements. It's others who are wrong and they intend to let the world know! Or we could put it this way – the party is the church, and infallible at that!

“Here is another glaring hypocrisy. The DUP cry “persecution” when their sin is discovered, but turn persecutor against a woman whose loyalty to the party is unquestionable and whose actions in this whole unhappy business have been appropriate and honourable from the beginning.” (More at reference below).

Mr Girvan as a self-proclaimed “Christian” would be better engaged in a critique of his party and his colleagues’ behaviour in this matter. In the immortal non-scriptural words, “It won’t go away you know”.

The Christian Churches which were remarkably quick and vociferous on the issue of a cake, have been unanimously silent about this issue of abuse of public office in the political forum which affects every citizen of Northern Ireland.

Whilst having been critical of welfare reform, the Churches Boards and their spokespersons have not raised a word of criticism of the over-staffing at over-inflated salaries of the number of so-called Special Political Advisors at Stormont -

where there are more pro-rata than any other devolved administration in the UK and where the Office of First and Deputy First Minister employs more SPADS than David Cameron in Downing Street.

Kyle Paisley's comment applies to more than the DUP - "Who will stand up and speak out against corruption? One wonders if there is a real man left, who will draw on the grace of God and do what is right."

Houston McKelvey

Kyle Paisley's article is at -
<http://eamonmallie.com/2015/05/the-party-may-die-warns-kyle-paisley-in-a-commentary-on-the-case-of-dup-whistleblower-jenny-palmer/>