

SAFE FROM CRIME

DUP Priorities for Policing and Justice



There are few issues that have a more significant impact on people's lives than their fear of crime. The fear and consequences of crime blight the lives of people in Northern Ireland with many living in daily fear. This issue should be at the top of the political agenda and must be tackled vigorously.

Concerted action by society, the police and the courts can make a difference but it is essential that every measure is used to counteract this scourge. Only by additional resources and the right steps being taken can this problem be alleviated. The fear of crime particularly affects the most vulnerable in society such as our older people.

Our goal must be to have a society which is free from fear.


DUP
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OUR PRIORITIES FOR POLICING AND JUSTICE

1. END 50:50 RECRUITMENT

The 50/50 recruitment policy which was first suggested by Ken Maginnis of the Ulster Unionist Party in 1996 is both discriminatory and damaging to effective policing in Northern Ireland. The policy discriminates on the basis of religion and means the best candidates are not selected.

While we welcome greater participation by all sections of the community in policing, the 50/50 policy is expensive to administer and denies suitably qualified candidates from being selected, solely on account of their religion.

We believe the policy must be scrapped immediately and recruitment should be based on merit alone.

2. PROTECT THE COMMUNITY FROM ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Anti-social behaviour can be a blight on people's lives. The introduction of Anti Social Behaviour Orders in Northern Ireland offers the opportunity to deal with problems such as teenagers terrorising communities, noisy neighbours or problems associated with binge drinking.

It is important they are used to the full by the authorities, and where the evidence exists that criminal prosecutions are brought.

Initiatives should also be introduced to engage parents with the police in order to combat the nuisance caused by their children.

3. ASSETS RECOVERY AGENCY

The Assets Recovery Agency has a vital role in recovering illicitly acquired gains of criminals. It is critical those who profit from criminal activity are not immune from the authorities.

Society must see there can be no hiding place for the assets of those who are involved in organised crime. It is important that the ARA takes an aggressive approach in pursuing those who are known to be actively involved in criminality.

The ARA must perform its functions in a balanced manner and deal with all offenders from right across the community.

4. SERIOUS CAR CRIME

Car crime is one of the biggest problems facing many parts of Northern Ireland. Whether it is the theft of cars or deaths through collisions Northern Ireland has some of the worst statistics on car crime in the United Kingdom.

There have been more deaths over the last thirty years from road traffic accidents than from terrorism. More severe criminal sanctions are an essential element in tackling the most serious offences.

In particular we believe that there should be statutory minimum sentences for those convicted of causing death or grievous bodily injury by careless driving while under the influence of drink or drugs.

5. TOUGHER SENTENCES FOR SEXUAL OFFENCES

It is vital that we protect the innocent from those who commit sexual offences. A key element of this is to increase sentences for paedophiles.

The DUP successfully argued that the sentences for gross indecency should be increased from two to ten years and this is now the law in Northern Ireland. It is also critical that with increasing use of the internet the necessary powers to catch predatory paedophiles are made available to the authorities.

With such a high rate for re-offending with sex crimes it is critical that the community is protected.

6. GETTING TOUGH ON HATE CRIMES AND PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

All crime is undesirable but there is something particularly repugnant about attacks on the elderly or crimes which are motivated by sectarian or racial hatred.

Tougher sentences should be put on a statutory basis for attacks which are perpetrated on older people. This can never be the whole solution to this problem but it is an important element of it. In relation to hate crimes it is proper that society treats them differently from crimes which lack such a motivation.

We therefore favour statutory provisions concerning the sentencing of these offences.

7. GETTING TOUGH ON BURGLARY

Domestic burglary is of particular concern to people in Northern Ireland with less than 10% being successfully dealt with by the Criminal Justice System.

With around 10,000 domestic burglaries every year this is a totally unacceptable situation. A burglary not only results in a financial loss but perhaps more significantly the invasion of people's homes can leave lasting scars.

Victims of burglary deserve an immediate response from the police and there should be presumptive mandatory minimum sentences for repeat offenders. Such a step would give a clear indication of the seriousness of the offence.

8. RECONSTITUTE THE POLICE BOARD

The Policing Board was formed on the basis of the 1998 Assembly elections and is now out-of-date. The Board has not been reconstituted since the last Assembly election when the unionist electorate rejected the UUP.

The Ulster Unionist Party opposes the reconstitution of the Policing Board as it would reduce its representation. Rather than wait for Sinn Fein the DUP believes that the Board should be reconstituted immediately.

We believe that the same attitude should be taken towards Sinn Fein joining the Policing Board as it is to their membership of any Executive as the issues are equally important. On the basis of excluding Sinn Fein - and as the board is no longer representative of the community - we believe that the board should be reconstituted at the earliest possible opportunity.



The issue of the devolution of Policing and Justice remains a key issue in any future negotiations. During the last negotiations, the DUP ensured that that unionist position was protected and devolution could only occur with the support of the unionist community.

This is in stark contrast to the position negotiated by David Trimble and Gerry Adams during the secret October 2003 deal:

UUP CONCESSIONS:

- In 2003 the UUP signed up to a deal which could have seen devolution by the end of this summer.
- On the issue of a Sinn Fein Policing and Justice Minister the UUP said, "It has to happen"- David McNarry, UUP MLA, 18th September 2004
- In October 2003 the UUP signed up to a start to all-Ireland Policing and Justice arrangements.

DUP COMMITMENTS:

- The DUP deal ensured that there would be no devolution without the support of the unionist community.
- The DUP has made it clear that there will be no terrorists in Government.
- The DUP has made it clear that co-operation should only be for mutual advantage and no all-Ireland role is acceptable.



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