

# Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

## Oral evidence: Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol, HC 157

Wednesday 19 May 2021

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Members present: Simon Hoare (Chair); Mr Gregory Campbell; Mary Kelly Foy; Mr Robert Goodwill; Claire Hanna; Fay Jones; Ian Paisley; Stephanie Peacock; Bob Stewart.

Questions 722 - 820

### Witnesses

I: David Campbell CBE, Chairman, Loyalist Communities Council; Joel Keys, Member, Loyalist Communities Council; Councillor Russell Watton, Member, Loyalist Communities Council; Jim Wilson, Member, Loyalist Communities Council.



## Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: David Campbell, Joel Keys, Councillor Russell Watton and Jim Wilson.

**Chair:** Good morning, colleagues, and good morning to our witnesses for this, our session on Brexit and the Northern Ireland protocol. Gentlemen, you are very welcome. Thank you for finding the time to appear before us today. Before we start the meeting proper, I have to ask colleagues if anybody has any declarations of interest to make.

**Ian Paisley:** Yes, I have a declaration. I am involved in a High Court appeal on the impact of the protocol on businesses.

Q722 **Chair:** For those who have asked, and one or two have, why we are having this session today and why we are taking evidence from the Loyalist Communities Council, my and the Committee's answer to that is very simple. We are a Select Committee of the House of Commons and we are here to scrutinise issues. We believe that the best way of fulfilling that scrutiny function is to hear from the widest and deepest ranges of voices that we possibly can, across the whole of Northern Ireland. One can agree or disagree with what one hears, but it is important to hear it none the less. If that question was being asked of me, or of this Committee, rhetorically by some, I hope that is an answer that is understandable to all.

Mr Campbell, let me turn to you. Could you set the scene for us? Could you tell us briefly the whats and the wherefores of the LCC? What are you about? How do you join? Why do you join? What do you achieve? Where do you draw your support from?

**David Campbell:** Thank you for the opportunity for the LCC to speak to you and give evidence this morning. The origins of the LCC go back to the peace process, when, as one of the Ulster Unionist negotiators and then chief of staff to First Minister David Trimble, one of my key roles was liaising with the loyalist organisations to ensure they were briefed on developments in the process, both peace and political, and to encourage them down the road of fulfilling their commitments to decommission weapons. That was successful, and, as the Committee is aware, the loyalist groups signed up to the Belfast agreement.

Over the next period of years, when we were negotiating the terms of devolution, they started to engage with the decommissioning body to decommission illegal weapons. In particular, one of the groups, represented by the PUP, had representation in the first two Northern Ireland Assemblies. By the end of, I suppose, about 2010, largely due to the demise, unfortunately, of David Ervine, political representation for the LCC groups was negligible, with the exception of a few elected councillors, like Councillor Watton. There was a serious drift away from the political process and I was asked to re-engage with the groups during 2014.



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I asked Jonathan Powell, Tony Blair's former chief of staff, if he would assist with re-engaging with the groups. He came over. We had about a year of private engagement, during which the seriousness of the groups was tested. We agreed the formation of the Loyalist Communities Council and launched it in October 2015. One objective was to ensure that the groups could speak collectively and represent wider loyalism. The second objective was to ensure that Government, both locally and nationally, were aware of the serious economic, social and education underachievement in loyalist communities, and to bring together a vast range of community groups that work actively and daily in loyalist communities.

The LCC has been active since October 2015. As part of our wider engagement, we have met with everyone—from previous Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committees, to church leaders and political leaders. We found it somehow bemusing earlier this year that two parties in particular in Northern Ireland appeared to object to meetings that were being held with the LCC. Nevertheless, we have maintained a position that is borne out by reports from the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Independent Reporting Commission over the past six years. That has showed that the organisations are clearly on a road of transformation. They signed and declared a non-tolerance agreement against criminality.

By and large—and I emphasise “by and large”, because I do not think we will ever get to the point of 100% perfection, as none of us is perfect—criminality among loyalism has reduced to a level of about 5% of what it was, for example, 25 years ago. There is still work to be done. There are some groups that are outside of the remit of the LCC, but we estimate that 90% of loyalism is represented in the LCC.

Q723 **Chair:** For those who are not necessarily au fait with the nuance of terms, what do you see as the points of distinction between being a loyalist and a Unionist?

**David Campbell:** That is a difficult question to answer.

**Chair:** That is my job. My job is to ask difficult questions.

**David Campbell:** If you go back, for example, to the formation of Northern Ireland and the struggles prior to 1921 against the Home Rule Acts, a loyalist was deemed to be a Unionist in Ireland. A Unionist in the rest of the United Kingdom was deemed Unionist. For example, Sir Edward Carson or James Craig were deemed to be the leaders of loyalism in Ulster and Ireland, whereas Boris Johnson would be deemed to be a Unionist, if we were to go back to those days.

The reality now is that loyalism is largely representative of working-class Unionism, as distinct from Unionists, who are perhaps more identified, unfortunately, with the middle and professional classes. It is a distinction that is blurred. For example, I consider myself both a Unionist and a



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loyalist. I do not consider there to be any distinction. Others would perhaps deem loyalism to be Unionists who have engaged more actively and not just politically.

Q724 **Chair:** I am sure you will agree with me that words are generically important and, on sensitive issues, incredibly important. Would you agree with that assessment?

**David Campbell:** Indeed.

Q725 **Chair:** Could I turn to something that you said on the Radio Ulster programme in February of this year? I am quoting: "If it comes to the bit where we have to fight physically to maintain our freedom within the UK, then so be it".

**David Campbell:** Yes.

Q726 **Chair:** Was that a sensible thing to say at the time?

**David Campbell:** You would need to read or reference the entire quotation. The question being asked of me, essentially, was whether there are circumstances where physical force is justified. I said yes, if our freedoms within the United Kingdom are threatened, for example by a tyrant like Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin.

Q727 **Chair:** When you were asked if this was fighting physically about the protocol, you said, "No, absolutely not. This has to be a political fight. It has to be a fight based on common sense." But some young hothead might not have listened to your caveated words and just gone on the first bit, might they not? Indeed, some did.

**David Campbell:** When you have a broadcaster that has selectively edited the comments, then yes, but that certainly is not my responsibility. It is the responsibility of the editor and the broadcaster. It is something that your Committee might well want to probe.

Q728 **Chair:** It might, but one can only quote it in double inverted commas if one has actually said it. Let us turn to something that was not edited. Let me ask Mr Keys. This was in a post of 12 April: "To say violence is never the answer is massively naïve. Sometimes violence is the only tool you have left". You go on to say, "While I don't believe we are at a point that necessitates violence"—"at a point", that is my emphasis—"just yet, our leaders need to step up and take the reins before it's too late". Mr Keys, in hindsight, was that a helpful thing to post on 12 April?

**Joel Keys:** I would stand by the comments. There are certain circumstances where violence is the only tool you have left. For example, I do not think the people living under Kim Jong-un's sort of dictatorship are going to get anywhere with peaceful protests any time soon.

Q729 **Chair:** I am not talking about North Korea, Mr Keys. I am talking about Northern Ireland.



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**Joel Keys:** Yes, but in reference to my post I was referring to situations where you may have a Government or a state that is genuinely oppressing its citizens. In that circumstance, of course violence is the answer. The minute that you rule violence out completely, you are admitting that you are not willing to back up anything you believe in with anything really important. It was the same reason that Labour got into a load of trouble a while ago by ruling out the use of nukes. You have to have that willingness to back up what you say, back up what you believe in and fight for what you believe in.

I want to emphasise that I do not think we are anywhere near that point at the minute. The political process is one that we all have to use and take advantage of.

Q730 **Chair:** You just used the phrase "at the minute". I am talking here about the LCC's position, which is clearly defined, with regards to the protocol. Our remit is pretty big, but it does not extend to North Korea. You said "at the minute". If the protocol becomes embedded and is deemed by the EU and Westminster to be working, is that the time when violence is the answer?

**Joel Keys:** I am not sure if and when violence will be the answer. I am just saying that I would not rule it off the table.

Q731 **Chair:** Do you appreciate that that is an incredibly worrying and dispiriting answer?

**Joel Keys:** Let me make clear that I am no fan of violence. It has to be an absolute last resort. It worries me that we could potentially reach a point in this country, or in any country, where the people feel that they have to defend themselves. If we look across the pond to places like America, that very basic right of self-defence is instilled in their constitution. When I talk about how we may reach a point where violence may become necessary, that is specifically what I am referring to.

Q732 **Chair:** North Korea is interesting, North America even more so, but we are focused on Northern Ireland.

**Joel Keys:** You are asking me about my position on violence and I am using examples to demonstrate.

Q733 **Chair:** I think you have answered it. Let me turn to Mr Wilson. Mr Wilson, you may have been thinking of Mr Keys when you made this comment. I am not sure. In *The Irish Times*, on 20 February of this year, in what was a very sensible interview, if I may say so, you say, "The very last engagement we want in our communities is violence of any description". Amen to that and we applaud you for saying that. For what it is worth, thank you for saying that. You go on to make the point about the flags protest, that all it achieved was to give 300 children criminal records. Again, that was a very valid point to make.

You went on to say, "I'm not saying violence is totally out the window.



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We're a bit long in the tooth". That is very self-deprecating. "There are younger lads"—that might well be Mr Keys—"coming through...they'll push us aside and say, 'Well, it doesn't matter what you say'". Is that a worry? We saw that with the IRA, with Adams and McGuinness pushing away the grey-haired and acting as enthusiastic people for the cause. Do you have a sincere anxiety—I think you do—of a generational split of youthful exuberance spewing out into violence and criminality over this issue?

**Jim Wilson:** I would have to come back to you and explain that I believe that we are living in a society now where the greater threat of violence seems to win the day. We met the Irish Government over the protocol on three or four different occasions, with Simon Coveney and others, and they never listened to one word we said. We said we did not want a border on the island of Ireland, but we surely did not want a border in the sea.

It is disgusting and disgraceful that we have politicians in our own society who are constantly running about and using the threat of violence to attain a political decision. The Irish Government have done that. Politicians in the north have done that. I was involved in a conflict. I have grandchildren and great-grandchildren at the minute who I want to see being brought up in a society where we can respect each other and everyone, but we do not. We live in a society where the threat of violence wins the day. That is a disgusting situation to be living in. For political people to use those threats to win an argument is not the type of society we should be living in. They are not the type of politicians who should be doing this.

Q734 **Chair:** Mr Campbell, can you tell us please what the LCC's policy is in respect of the Belfast/Good Friday agreement?

**David Campbell:** Up until the agreement was reached in January of this year, the LCC was fully supportive and engaged in both the political process, represented by the agreement and the institutions, and the peace process. The two are nuanced and separate.

Once the protocol was imposed on the people of Northern Ireland without their involvement, engagement or consent, that fundamentally breached one of the core guarantees of the Belfast agreement, which was that our status would not change without our active consent. We wrote to both Prime Ministers to advise them, as co-guarantors of the agreement, that we could no longer support it until those core guarantees were restored. We hope that the current efforts by the United Kingdom Government will be successful in doing that.

Q735 **Chair:** A restoration of your support for the Good Friday agreement is conditional on something else happening.

**David Campbell:** It is conditional on the core guarantees of the agreement being restored. The agreement either works or it does not. It



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either works for both communities, or it does not work at all. We cannot cherry pick it.

Q736 **Chair:** What is the LCC's view on the scenes of violence that we saw on the streets of Northern Ireland in recent weeks?

**David Campbell:** We deplored the scenes of violence. We had members who actively risked their own safety, if not lives, to save other lives, in an attempt to calm the situation. We made it clear. In fact, the interview you selectively quoted from repeated our appeal for any protests to be political and constitutional in nature. We stand by those comments.

Q737 **Mr Gregory Campbell:** Welcome to the witnesses this morning. There were David Campbell's comments earlier about what I think he described as the non-tolerance agreement on criminality. Is that an accurate description of what your umbrella group signed up to a few years ago?

**David Campbell:** Yes. It was a declaration that was in part assisted by the church leaders and was publicly launched at the Linen Hall Library probably two or three years ago now.

Q738 **Mr Gregory Campbell:** Does that prevail today, in 2021?

**David Campbell:** It does. It essentially committed those who signed up to it to completely disavowing criminality as any means of engagement as a loyalist. Anyone convicted of a criminal action would be expelled from the organisations.

Q739 **Mr Gregory Campbell:** That is good to hear. The reason I ask that is that, in loyalist and republican communities, there is a pretty strong emphasis on community development. Some have been more advanced than others. Would you agree that, in both communities, that is a fairly significant emphasis? From time to time, occasionally, there have been allegations of criminality regarding community associations and groups. It is thankfully not prevalent, but that has happened on occasion.

**David Campbell:** I would take your word for that, yes. There are also serious issues of disparity of funding for groups active in loyalist communities compared with republican communities.

Q740 **Mr Gregory Campbell:** Yes, that is an issue that I and others have raised on numerous occasions. The reason I am taking that line of questioning is that it would be an irony, if Sinn Féin had taken its seats in Westminster, that it might be on this Committee today, asking you questions along these lines. That would be an ultimate irony. The reason I say it would be an ultimate irony is that, a week ago, I wrote to the Chief Constable about allegations of illegality among community associations in republican areas, where Sinn Féin members are involved.

My understanding is that there may well be a connection between that and a recent investigation by Sinn Féin, which has resulted in two Sinn Féin MLAs being asked to step down from the Stormont Assembly. I have not got a response yet from the Chief Constable, but what would your



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concern be, if you have one, about things like that, an issue as important and a question as important to have an answer to?

**David Campbell:** I would be deeply concerned. I would await the answer and, hopefully, any public investigation with interest. We are dealing with a party, in Sinn Féin, that both our own Chief Constable and the Irish Garda Commissioner, even in the past six weeks, have declared is still ultimately controlled by an army council. That army council is illegal and, essentially, is distorting political activity, not just in Northern Ireland but throughout the island of Ireland. It would be deeply worrying but not at all surprising for those who have lived and worked with republicanism under Sinn Féin for the past 30 to 40 years.

Q741 **Mr Gregory Campbell:** To be clear, if there were allegations of impropriety or illegality in community associations in loyalist areas, what would the response be by loyalist community representatives that would be on those community associations, if they were made aware of alleged irregularities or illegality?

**David Campbell:** I imagine they would be appalled and would want redress through the appropriate authorities.

Q742 **Mr Gregory Campbell:** Would they go the police?

**David Campbell:** I would imagine so, yes.

Q743 **Mr Gregory Campbell:** Would the LCC support them in that?

**David Campbell:** Absolutely, yes, as we have done and members have done, for example in our battle to combat the pushing of drugs on our streets.

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** The reason I raised that is that I have yet to hear Sinn Féin's response to these allegations of illegality in its community.

Q744 **Claire Hanna:** For the record, I do not believe that a representative body for paramilitary organisations should be meeting Governments or parliamentary Committees, because I do not believe that paramilitaries should exist. The process running up to the agreement in 1998, which the SDLP supported and drove as a party of engagement and dialogue, was in the absence of political structures.

Since we, as a people, in all our diversity, in Northern Ireland, have agreed political structures, what paltry excuse ever existed for paramilitaries to be in existence is not the case anymore. Their continued existence is a barrier to reconciliation and an oppressive force in many communities. I fear that the undetonated tactic of violence—people who believe that it is fine to use, just not right now—is a problem for our political structures. That is a legacy that we are still dealing with and that is what has framed the SDLP's concerns about the involvement of paramilitaries of any hue in the political process.

I want to ask you a couple of questions about your organisation and then



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some questions about the Brexit process. David Campbell, you are the chair. Is that an elected role of the LCC?

**David Campbell:** It is not a formal elected role. It was an appointed role. I founded the organisation, along with Jonathan Powell, in 2015.

Q745 **Claire Hanna:** What are the conditions of membership? Can anybody join this organisation?

**David Campbell:** It is an organisation that was founded by organisations close to the three main loyalist paramilitary groupings.

Q746 **Claire Hanna:** You made a declaration at your launch in 2015 that you eschew all violence and criminality. To your knowledge, are any of your members of the LCC members of the UVF, the UDA or the Red Hand Commando, which are still proscribed organisations under the Terrorism Act and are linked to continuing criminality?

**David Campbell:** Not to my knowledge.

Q747 **Claire Hanna:** The last Independent Reporting Commission stated that there were 7,500 members of the UVF and 5,000 of the UDA. Do you agree with that assessment?

**David Campbell:** I do not know. I would rely on police and IRC estimates.

Q748 **Claire Hanna:** Do you have any reason not to believe it? Do you have any understanding of why organisations have continued to recruit, if they are, in your words, going down the road to going away?

**David Campbell:** I am not sure that they are continuing to recruit. We have been engaged in a process of transformation. For example, at our last meeting with the IRC, the IRC commissioners congratulated the groups on the progress that had been made. We are looking forward to working with them through the final stages of that transformation. Unfortunately, the Northern Ireland protocol has driven a cart and horses through that process, as well as our political process.

Q749 **Claire Hanna:** The Independent Reporting Commission has said that there is continued recruitment and, indeed, there are people within those organisations who were not at adulthood at the time of the ceasefires. You said to the Chair this morning that 10% of loyalists were involved in criminal activity. How have you arrived at that figure?

**David Campbell:** I have referred to the decline in criminality and paramilitary activity over the past 25 years that has been reported by the police, and then the IMC and now the IRC.

Q750 **Claire Hanna:** What did the 10% figure come from?

**David Campbell:** It came from police and IRC reports. Also, it is pretty obvious on the ground. You can see that there is not *[Inaudible]* the



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paramilitary-related activity that we had 30 years ago, so you need to get real.

Q751 **Claire Hanna:** I have got real. Unfortunately, I represent communities that are trying to get real. These are not creations of my mind. For example, the PSNI head of criminal investigation branch has said that paramilitary organisations are still involved in controlling and coercing members of the community through drug dealing and illegal lending. Do you represent those paramilitaries?

**David Campbell:** Yes, and I think 5% of that criminal activity they have reported is down to dissident loyalists.

Q752 **Claire Hanna:** Do you represent the east Belfast UVF that Chief Superintendent Jonathan Roberts said is responsible for the murder of Ian Ogle?

**David Campbell:** I do not represent any of these organisations.

Q753 **Claire Hanna:** Are you saying that the LCC only represents the well-behaved paramilitaries and that anybody who is involved in, for example, threatening working journalists is excluded? Is there some condition of membership that differentiates between those paramilitaries?

**David Campbell:** We have made clear the purpose of founding the LCC and working with these groups as they transform. The point I am making to you is that, rather than focusing on 5% of negativity, you might actually achieve more by focusing on the 95% of positivity. I appreciate that it maybe is not in your nature to do so. It certainly was in the nature of your party's leadership 20 years ago.

Q754 **Claire Hanna:** They created structures then that removed any lingering excuse, not that there ever was any, for organisations such as these to exist. The fact is that, over the last two decades, the SDLP has supported initiatives to facilitate paramilitaries going away. This is a very long road that we appear to be on. Active recruitment and a membership that the monitoring commission approximates at 12,500 is not indicative of a number of organisations that are closing up shop.

**David Campbell:** Why is your party sitting in Government under a senior partner that is still controlled by an army council?

**Claire Hanna:** Our party is sitting in Government within a power-sharing Executive.

**Chair:** I am sorry to interrupt, but, for the Select Committees to work, elected members of the House of Commons ask the questions and the witnesses very kindly provide answers.

Q755 **Claire Hanna:** If further elected members attend, there are many parliamentarians in the one I served and the one I serve in now with whom I do not agree, but I respect that they are there on the basis of their mandate.



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Jim Wilson, I want to ask you a brief question about why these organisations still exist, and then I will move on to Brexit. You called for the Red Hand Commando to be de-proscribed. Why would it not just go away at all? Why do you want it to be legalised and to continue to exist?

**Jim Wilson:** You tell me how you do that. You tell me, after 15 years when not one person belonging to the organisation that I represent has been convicted of anything. When we went forward to ask for de-proscription, it was a way of trying to give a path for all the loyalist organisations to follow and to try to achieve that transformation you are talking about. We did that, and we got slapped in the face by the British Government and our politicians here as well

Give us a route map out of paramilitarism, Claire. It would be brilliant. It is dead easy to sit there and say, "How do you do this?" You have not given our people a chance. The republican movement was helped by the British Government, the Irish Government, the EU and everyone to go down the road. What have we done? You are sitting there with rose-tinted glasses. When you talk about loyalists and people sitting down with loyalists, you are sitting in Government with people who were members and are still members of the IRA, who still have an army council. It is a bit rich of you asking questions of us in that sense. When you are sitting there with those people, who we all know—

**Chair:** Order, order. These exchanges will be respectful or they will stop. We do not refer to each other by Christian names. We do it by surnames, as I said at the start of the meeting.

Q756 **Claire Hanna:** Mr Wilson and others, society here has been tolerant for over 20 years. We have funded, and the UK Government, the Irish Government and the European Union have funded, to the tune of tens of millions of pounds, organisations in an attempt to transform. People are supportive of the concept that people who have a past can have a future. But, 23 years after the Good Friday agreement, people are running out of patience for these organisations to continue to exist. We believe that your organisation is giving cover to criminals operating under a paramilitary banner, decades after a peace agreement. It is the choice of those members to continue to actively recruit and engage.

I want to move on to some questions around Brexit.

**Jim Wilson:** It is absolutely not true that everyone has engaged in extremism and all the things that have gone on.

Q757 **Claire Hanna:** Nobody has said that that is the case.

**Jim Wilson:** You made a statement and I believe it is unfounded. You have to understand that we have pleaded with every Chief Constable we have met over the years, every Secretary of State we have met, to take these people off our streets. Take these people who are professing to be loyalists, who are drug dealers and gangsters, off our streets. We cannot



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say it loud enough. We cannot say it enough times, but you constantly keep trying to link them.

They have the same problems, within nationalism and republicanism, that we have within our society. There are people hiding behind the mask of loyalism and republicanism to gain money. It will happen in any society in the world. Please stop accusing loyalism. There is a percentage, and it is a small percentage of loyalism. The good and great work that goes on within these communities and our communities is never, ever highlighted by anyone. The problem with that is then you paint the picture that loyalism is nothing but drug dealers, scumbags and gangsters. You do that in co-ordination with the media in this country. It is so sad. It is just so sad.

Q758 **Chair:** Mr Wilson, I think you and I will agree on one thing. The coin of the Good Friday agreement is two-sided. There is the peace side and then there is the prosperity side.

**Jim Wilson:** I do not think there is anybody sitting here who fought harder for the peace than I did.

Q759 **Chair:** The point I was going to make is this. Would you agree with me that renewed and enhanced focus needs to now be spent on the prosperity dividend of the Good Friday agreement, so that people across the communities of Northern Ireland can see what it can deliver for them? Would you agree with that? It speaks back to Mr David Campbell's point about social deprivation and social exclusion.

**Jim Wilson:** Money has come in to support this country from all over the world. I can speak only for the communities that I come from. I believe that about 75% of it has gone into nationalist areas to help and support the communities and all that. I have no problem with that, because I know Catholic areas are as bad as Protestant areas.

When we are talking about the Good Friday agreement, which I was part out, I went out. There are people sitting around this thing that we are doing who were against the Good Friday agreement. I fought against them to stop the conflict. I personally was one who went and confronted people, because I wanted a better way of life for my kids, my grandchildren and my family. I wanted this country to develop well. I have sat down with ex-republicans and senior provos to boost the peace process when the political process was dragging its heels in this country. The peace process went on, and worked and worked, to try to create the lack of stuff that was happening interfacing that.

It is rude for people to attack us when we are constantly trying to do the good work. For once, I would love to see someone saying, "Was that not brilliant?" I was put up for an award. I was put up for a British award by the Housing Secretary for cross-community work in this country. I went across to the London Hilton. I won the award, out of the four countries and different phases. When I came back, there was not one good word



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said from anyone. Do you know why? I was a loyalist. If I had been a republican or a member of the SDLP, it would have been great and wonderful, but because I was a loyalist, people looked down their noses at it.

I am proud of the things that I have achieved in my life. I am proud. I am not proud of some of my past. In hindsight, it is a bit shameful, but, at the end of the day, I have been working hard since I came out of Long Kesh to better my community and to better our communities. That is what we all should be acclaimed for.

**Chair:** Mr Wilson, I think you and I are agreed that the prosperity agenda needs to be felt across the piece. Claire, you wanted to turn now to Brexit.

Q760 **Claire Hanna:** I did. It is worth saying that everybody acknowledges and respects individuals contributing to their communities. It is the continuing existence of these paramilitary banners that is allowing criminals to hide behind the fact that threats are made to journalists, to constituents of mine and to many others. That is what people see. It is not the fact of being a loyalist. It is inappropriate and wrong to suggest that people are discriminating on the basis of political beliefs. We are opposed to criminal organisations continuing to fly their emblems unmolested on lampposts.

Mr Campbell, on 7 May, you were a signatory to a letter to UK and EU leaders against the protocol. In it, you said that “any significant decision affecting the lives and livelihoods of all our people would require the consent of both communities here”. Leaving aside the reference to communities, a hard, unmitigated Brexit would affect the lives and livelihoods of people here. What form of consent would a hard Brexit have had to require from the people of Northern Ireland? What consent would have existed for a hard Brexit here?

**David Campbell:** Brexit was decided on the basis of a national referendum, so the country made its choice. The referendum was the ultimate test of the people’s opinion.

Q761 **Claire Hanna:** Is it your position that the protocol requires specific consent but a hard Brexit would not require specific consent, even if it was against the wishes of the majority here?

**David Campbell:** A hard Brexit is entirely rhetorical now. The Northern Ireland protocol, first and foremost, affects Northern Ireland. The people of Northern Ireland, or their representatives, had no say in its negotiation, no say in whether it was acceptable and no say in its implementation, unlike, for example, the people of Gibraltar. Their protocol was negotiated, by and large, with the involvement of Gibraltar’s Executive. The end result was put to their legislature and it was approved. It is operating with the EU, Spain and a majority of Gibraltar representatives on the Standing Committees. Why was that good enough for Gibraltar, yet none of it has been good enough for Northern Ireland?



Q762 **Claire Hanna:** That is a very good question. Signatories to the letter that you signed last week who are members of the House of Lords, as well as DUP MPs, resolutely opposed efforts by the SDLP and others to amend Brexit legislation to put respect for the institutions and the agreement here on the face of the legislation. They cheered rulings in legal actions taken by the SDLP and others that were designed to achieve devolved consent for Brexit and its consequences. They consistently backed the idea that the treaty negotiations were a matter for the sovereign Government, and they should have unfettered discretion and no regard or locus for Northern Ireland elected representatives. Some even resisted Parliament having any say at all. Were those peers and MPs wrong to portray Brexit as consent free, with absolutely no locus for the people of Northern Ireland or the Assembly?

**David Campbell:** No, the people of Northern Ireland should very definitely be involved. That would be my opinion. What others' opinions are is up to them. One of the problems we all faced was that two years after the referendum, parties like yours were still trying to fight the referendum, instead of focusing on the actual positive outworkings of Brexit.

Q763 **Claire Hanna:** By trying to fight the referendum, we are talking about putting in the exact consent and role for negotiation for Northern Ireland elected representatives that you now decry and you say Gibraltar had and we did not. The point is that your letter said that "any significant decision affecting the lives and livelihoods of all our people would require the consent of both communities here". If I am understanding your position, it says that the protocol should require the consent of both communities but an extreme form of Brexit, the likes of which a number of elected representatives were voting for here, does not. I think that will feel to many people like an imbalanced and hypocritical position. Did your organisation express concerns about the consent deficit when it looked like it was going to be a Brexit that would have necessitated a border on the island of Ireland?

**David Campbell:** Yes, we fully recognised nationalist concerns about a hard border on the island. In fact, in our letter to both Prime Ministers, we stated that we fully recognised and respected that a hard border on the island would be as much anathema to the nationalist population as a hard border between Northern Ireland and the rest of our own country would be to Unionists. We are simply asking for equal respect.

In terms of the principle of consent, one of the reasons, despite the stops and starts of devolution over the past 20 years since the agreement was negotiated, was the fact that any major decision affecting the livelihoods of our people, nationalist or Unionist, requires the majority consent of both communities. That is how we have got to the point we are at now. It is now being breached and we want to get back to that respect.

Q764 **Claire Hanna:** I share many of those concerns. As I pointed out, the SDLP and others made numerous interventions to try to insert a role for



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elected representatives. The letter from your organisation, the LCC, to Boris Johnson in March said that the protocol gives effect to the Irish nationalist viewpoint “at the expense of the Unionist position.” That is a fairly simplistic analysis. Would you acknowledge that it was exactly this type of binary win-lose outcome that the SDLP was trying to avoid in hundreds and hundreds of political interventions between 2015 and 2019, which cautioned against exactly that binary and the insertion of a border in either direction?

**David Campbell:** I recall your vehement comments about the border on the island. Unfortunately, we have been annoyed at the silence from the SDLP, and nationalism in general, since the imposition of the border between Northern Ireland and the rest of our own country.

Q765 **Claire Hanna:** You can create a narrative, but our deep concern is there extensively on the record in the interventions we made, desperately begging elected representatives, in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, to choose a solution that did not create a border in either direction. My personal concerns about the imposition of a sea border are a matter of record in *Hansard* and other places.

You can try to present a viewpoint. In fact, you have outlined a position where you feel that a hard border or a hard Brexit does not require consent, but a sea border does. My point is that the SDLP expended a huge amount of political effort trying to insert consent mechanisms into the negotiations and trying to prevent a border in either direction. We were not supported and, from what you are saying, you do not support it.

I have two more small questions. Northern Ireland and Britain have divergences in many areas of life, in areas like libel law, very different tariffs in the RHI and policies. For example, representatives were pursuing policies to have different corporation tax. Do those affect your Britishness or your sense of being within the Union?

**David Campbell:** We respect differences in each of the devolved regions, but our primary issue is the principle of consent, and the change of what we view as our constitutional status and our position within the United Kingdom, without reference to us and without our active consent. We appreciate the efforts you have made. We certainly, after today, appreciate the fact that you are now supporting our position on the protocol.

Q766 **Claire Hanna:** The SDLP has been very clear. We sought and actively campaigned for a solution that would have no border, but that was blocked by others. I have one last question. What are your views on regulatory alignment? Do you support the concept of closer regulatory alignment from the UK with the EU—i.e. the prioritisation of the Union over regulatory divergence?

**David Campbell:** We certainly need to have regulatory alignment within the United Kingdom. I am a farmer. I work in the agricultural production sector and we have had extensive regulatory enforcement now for 20 to



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30 years. A point that is forgotten is that many of the high standards throughout Europe were driven by the United Kingdom agriculture and veterinary industry. Therefore, we need to get to the point where UK standards remain potentially at a level that supports particularly our premium food production in Northern Ireland and other regions of the United Kingdom. First and foremost, we cannot have a difference in our status between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom without our consent, and we do not consent to it.

**Claire Hanna:** I do not disagree, and, in the UK, all the good if it exceeds standards. I agree with you. I hope that, in the many political engagements you have, your organisation would articulate that regulatory alignment is a very clear solution and prioritises the integrity of the Union over a potential divergence that, as far as I am aware, no politician has claimed the need for.

Q767 **Chair:** Mr Campbell, with your farmer's hat on, let me ask you this. I think we have heard figures that some sort of veterinary SPS would eradicate about 85%, as a sort of median figure that we have heard, of checks on goods going from GB to NI. In the short term, do you think that that would be helpful?

**David Campbell:** In the short term, there are no divergences, so why are there checks over and above what we have had for the past 20 years occurring anyway? That would be my point. Unfortunately, the protocol has brought an overzealous attitude from both UK and European inspectors.

**Chair:** I agree with you on that.

**David Campbell:** That, in part, has fuelled much of the anger.

Q768 **Chair:** So that we can capture it, your point is that unless or until the UK were to diverge, i.e. be lower—one could go higher, but lower—than prevailing EU standards, it should just be accepted as an orthodoxy that we are meeting the standards, effectively de facto.

**David Campbell:** I think so. If the situation was based on common sense and goodwill, we probably would not be in the position we are in today.

**Chair:** It is the stuff around the "at risk" bit.

Q769 **Ian Paisley:** Mr Wilson, you have in the past, and indeed today, alluded to the fact that you have taken risks for peace. You are a supporter of the Belfast agreement and activities around that. Do you feel betrayed by what the Government have done to you?

**Jim Wilson:** Thanks for the question, Ian. I was a young lad who was interned at 18 years of age and throughout I have constantly been working within politics. I was a chairman of a residents' group for 25 years, so I know the feel of people and how things operate. I saw the



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Good Friday agreement as a way of the conflict ending and the stopping of us killing each other on the streets of Northern Ireland. I saw it as hopefully a way that bridges could be built within our two communities. We were in the process of doing that.

In east Belfast, I formed the Inner East Forum, which invited the Queen over, and where the decommissioning and stuff like that all happened. There are a lot of things, but, to me, the Good Friday agreement was a pathway to peace and reconciliation, and it has been anything but that. Up in Stormont, it just went from bad to worse at times. Then we had a collapse x amount of times. We were in the peace process, sitting down with ex-IRA men who were trying to kill me, and probably our community was trying to kill them. There were bigger difficulties there for us than there were in the political arena. This is the way that I am trying to paint the picture.

**Q770 Ian Paisley:** Mr Wilson, I get that and understand the history on this. I am trying to get you focused. You have taken risks for peace. You stepped out in support of something that other Unionists did not and all the rest of it. Now we are on to the protocol. Do you feel that that has betrayed the risks that you took?

**Jim Wilson:** Absolutely, and I will tell you why. They can say what they like, but, when people in the UK decided to leave Europe, it was for a whole multitude of reasons. I cannot just pick on one. The people of Northern Ireland constantly get this, that the people of Northern Ireland voted against it. It was not a Northern Ireland vote. It was a United Kingdom vote by the people who wanted to leave there. They wanted to leave for a whole raft of different reasons. For some of them, it might have been because they were being controlled and all that.

You look at where we are now. We are being left, as a part of the United Kingdom, inside an economic Europe, with no say, not being able to deal with anything, because our Government have given that away, as it was the easier road to go down, breaking the Good Friday agreement. In my eyes, as a loyalist, I believe as well that they have made an easier route to a united Ireland, because we are economically tied into the Irish Republic and the EU. That makes it far easier for the next steps.

I believe that I have been betrayed by the Good Friday agreement, because they have given more chance that the vote for a united Ireland would be seen as a lot easier. Economically, that is where we are. You cannot have both. You cannot have the protocol and the Good Friday agreement. I withdrew my support from the Good Friday agreement simply because it was not allowed for us to have a say on what our future is. As a British citizen, that is what I want to be. I want to have my say in my country. We are being told now that we do not have a say in our economics.

**Q771 Ian Paisley:** Mr Keys, you are a young guy. I do not know if you are late teens or early twenties, but you are a young guy. You are a post-Troubles



generation. You have indicated to us today that basically, if it comes to it, violence would have to be used if things were really bad. While that might be an ideological or theological question, whatever, I want to turn to you about your actual activity. Have you ever taken steps to step in and stop any of your young associates being involved in violence?

**Joel Keys:** Of course. Most recently, on Good Friday, I was arrested at the demonstrations at Sandy Row. I have been very open about the fact that I was there to dissuade a 13-year-old and his brother from engaging in the violence. Some people may have opinions or perceptions of what they think I might believe, but my actions back up that I maintain that violence is an absolute last resort. Up until you are pushed to that point, we should be doing everything to discourage our young people from potentially ruining their lives with criminal records. Also, there is the obvious: a riot is not a safe place to be for anyone, let alone a 13-year-old child.

Q772 **Ian Paisley:** You indicated that you were arrested. Were you charged subsequent to that arrest, or were those charges dropped?

**Joel Keys:** I was released without charge and then I was notified by my solicitor, I think just about a week ago, that they were not pursuing the case any further.

Q773 **Ian Paisley:** You were at the coalface in a riot. You had a fork in the road. You could have engaged in that riot but you chose to intervene to try to pull two 13-year-olds away from it. Is that right?

**Joel Keys:** A 13-year-old and a 14-year-old, but yes, 100%. I understand that these young people are frustrated. They do not know the details of the Northern Ireland protocol. They could not quote you certain paragraphs or anything, but they know that, fundamentally, something is wrong. They know that, when they are out, even at the Shankill, at Lanark Way, and they are watching the nationalist youths on the other side of the fence, the police are not responding to them. The police are not arriving to control their side of the fence, but they are arriving on our side of the fence.

Young people see on the ground that there is an injustice. There is a sort of imbalance in how nationalists and Unionists are treated. The violent outbursts we have seen across the country are a reflection of that. It is a way for these young people to vent their anger and frustrations. While I disagree with the methods of doing so, I understand their frustrations.

Q774 **Ian Paisley:** I do not want to go down the area of how these issues are policed, because that is probably a completely different inquiry. To set the scene, you are saying that these young people may not know which article or which part of the treaty they are opposed to, but they know, feel and sense that something is wrong. Do you get a sense, from speaking to young people and teenagers your own age, and in your own community, that both the UK and the Irish Government have sent the signal out that violence pays and that violence will be rewarded? Do you



get a sense of that?

**Joel Keys:** Yes, definitely. I went to a state school and we had talks about things like this. We had talks about borders, Brexit and that kind of thing. Any time the idea of a border between Northern Ireland and the Republic was brought up, it was met with an absolute no: "This cannot happen. This is an absolute, fundamental no way. We cannot do it. The Good Friday agreement is this document that sets out that this cannot happen".

Now, when we are being presented with the Northern Ireland protocol, which essentially does the same thing—it just puts the line between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, rather than between Northern Ireland and the Republic—we are being told that maybe it is not okay, but there are ways we can work it and tweak it to make it work. It is not met with that same level of, "Absolutely no. This violates the law". That is unfair. Young people know, understand and see that it is unfair.

Q775 **Ian Paisley:** Would you have political aspirations? Would you want to be engaged in politics, or do you now feel that politics has failed and is failing? Do you see a way out where politics could get back to working for you?

**Joel Keys:** I am a big fan of the political process. I have done everything that I can to encourage my peers and younger to try to get involved with the political process. It definitely can work. I would certainly be eager to see what your new party leader, Edwin Poots, has to offer Unionism. We really need a leader who young people can get excited about. It is all well and good these leaders coming out, condemning violence and saying, "You are going about it the wrong way", but we really need a leader to come out and say, "We understand what you are frustrated with. Here is what we want to achieve and here is how we are all going to work together to achieve it peacefully, politically, without having to resort to crimes".

Q776 **Ian Paisley:** Mr Campbell, in one of your answers to Ms Hanna—I know there were a lot of them you had to give—you alluded to the position that the SDLP had taken on the Irish land border. You wished that it had been as strong on the sea border. Ms Hanna wrote about this at length in an article on *Business Insider*. She had indicated at one point: "If 60% of people do not want a border on the island, and you say 'tough shit, we are putting you inside a hard border,' you cannot expect people to just choke that down and get on with their lives". She went on to say, "You cannot imagine that people would take that without civil disobedience at a very minimum." Do you equate that with a threat to instability if the land border had been reinforced in any way on either the British or the Irish side in Northern Ireland?

**David Campbell:** I would regret those comments, just as we have publicly vilified the previous Irish Government and its Taoiseach and Foreign Minister for actually going to Brussels and threatening the



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resumption of a bombing campaign along the border if there was a hard border on this island. I welcome Ms Hanna's comments today in coming in and saying that the hard border between Northern Ireland and the rest of our own country is equally unacceptable. Therefore, I hope that she and others would appreciate the deep sense of hurt and anger that there is right across the Unionist community.

I have said publicly that I have never witnessed such anger since 1985, when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was imposed. I thought, particularly with the 25 years I have spent trying to build peace and build relationships in this island, that the days of imposition had gone.

We have had a lot of focus today on elements of our letters and public comments that, in some ways, could be perceived as threats. We are not in the business of issuing threats, but we are in the business of issuing warnings. What was not read into our letters was the appeal, two or three months ago, to use the window of opportunity particularly created by the current pandemic restrictions to have that dialogue.

It has been a source of immense frustration to us, for example, that Michel Barnier repeatedly declined to meet us. We have asked Vice-President Šefčovič to meet with us. We have not had even the courtesy of an acknowledgement. We met Lord Frost last week, who had a very frank exchange with us and finished up by saying, "The European Commission needs to hear what I am hearing". Hopefully, he will undertake to facilitate such a meeting.

Our whole remit is about encouraging dialogue and co-operation, rather than confrontation. Joel Keys has put it extremely well. I was his age when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. I was arrested for protesting against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It came to nothing for me, and I was able, through my family, to go into the Ulster Unionist Party and spend the past 30 years in active politics. I hope he takes that same route.

The problem is that there is a whole generation that does not have the facility to go into politics. That is the challenge for all our leaders, right across the community, to offer the political solution. Politics has to be seen to work.

**Q777 Ian Paisley:** We have heard comments this morning: "If things come to the very end, we will go to violence"; "Violence could be used"; "We will have a situation where we will use civil disobedience at a very minimum and tough doodah if you do not like it". Mr Leo Varadkar has said things in the past, highlighting problems to do with the old security border. Do you think that that zero-sum equivalence on violence, which shows this as a spiral downwards on both sides of the community, is completely disingenuous, or does it show that there is a real concern within this society that we are always on the edge and could just creep over into violence at some point?



**David Campbell:** We definitely could creep over into violence. I have described this as probably the most dangerous situation for many years, but I do hope common sense will prevail. I get the sense that particularly the Irish Government misrepresented the potential impact of an Irish Sea border on the Unionist community in Northern Ireland. I really appeal to them to join the effort to rectify this protocol. It may require, for example, Simon Coveney to fall on his sword, if he was the chief architect of that mischief, but is the peace process not much more important than the Northern Ireland protocol?

Q778 **Ian Paisley:** I think most people would agree with that. Can I ask you about the issue to do with the protocol and how it undermines Northern Ireland? You have alluded to that in your comments. In my hand, I have an email from a constituent, who placed an order for a delivery from a shop in England. He got back, "Sorry, delivery is not available to this address. This may be because items in your basket cannot be shipped to your selected country".

This was a GB company, where he had normally purchased goods, here in Northern Ireland, for his own business. Do you think that that practical outworking of the protocol, right at the coalface, where people in Limavady or Lurgan cannot buy goods in British shops and ship them to their homes in the same way that people in Liverpool would, is what is really getting people's goat?

**Chair:** Mr Paisley, could you give us the date of that email? It would be interesting to know where it was in the cycle from 1 January.

**Ian Paisley:** It was sent to me at 7.32, two days ago, by my constituent from Ballymena.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**David Campbell:** I think there will be increasing irritation right across the community. It will certainly not just be in Unionist households. I noted the questioning and debate in the House of Lords yesterday, where every Northern Ireland peer who spoke, including the former SDLP leader, was questioning and expressing concern over the availability of cancer medicines in Northern Ireland as opposed to the rest of the United Kingdom, where they are freely available. There seems to be some doubt now, after the grace period ends, as to whether they will be available to cancer patients in Northern Ireland.

That is a situation that just cannot be allowed to pertain. No other country in the world would tolerate suppliers having to issue customs declarations to move goods from one part of its own territory to the other. It certainly would not be allowed in any European Union country, so why on earth would it ever be acceptable in the United Kingdom?

Q779 **Ian Paisley:** Lord Frost, the Prime Minister's key negotiator now in this, has said that the Prime Minister is ready to rip up the Brexit deal on Northern Ireland. This is from the *Mail on Sunday* of last week. He goes on to say, "The EU must stop point scoring and work with us to protect



the peace...Protests have been occurring and political stability is at risk.”

Do you welcome the thrust of those comments? While it is easy to say “rip it up”, how do you think the Government should deal with the problems in the protocol? Is it logical, probable or even possible to rip it up, or is there another method that they could use that would be acceptable to rank-and-file loyalists?

**David Campbell:** The starting point has to be the realisation that, however well-intentioned it may have been, the Northern Ireland protocol is not acceptable to both communities here. Therefore, I suspect one of the solutions might be for Europe and the United Kingdom, with the support of the Irish Government, to collectively agree to trigger article 16, pause the protocol completely and allow a period of dialogue, in order to find a workable solution.

Mr Chair, we were asked for, and are preparing, a paper on our ideas for an alternative, which will go to the Secretary of State and Lord Frost later this week. I will copy it to you, for the Committee.

**Chair:** Thank you. That would be appreciated.

**David Campbell:** We want to be genuinely seen as not just criticising and condemning but offering alternatives. It is interesting that, in Michel Barnier’s book—which I have not read yet, but I have seen qualified quotations from it—he actually does say there was a third way. That third way was customs checks at the mainland European points of entry, provided there was a solution agreeable to the Irish Government for the island here. It would appear that the Irish Government, frankly, did not explore that option.

That surely must be the option that has to be explored. If we can find a solution, whether it is through goodwill or some form of derogation for trade within this island, any goods and services moving forward to the rest of the European Union can have their checks on those European ports of entry, like Calais, Rotterdam or wherever. This idea that there is no alternative, no other solution, does not hold water. There are solutions and there is technology available now. Let us face it: if you order anything, from a bunch of flowers to a computer, to be delivered to your home, you get a tracking number. You can track the delivery in real time and even be given a date and time, almost to the hour, when it will arrive at your door.

This requires a bit of political goodwill and political common sense. If we had had that, rather than, in our view, the European desire to punish Britain for voting to leave the European Union, and I suspect a mischievous Irish desire to reignite strident nationalism in this island, we would not be in the position we are in today.

Q780 **Ian Paisley:** Finally, do you believe there is anything good in the protocol, for business or in practical ways?



**David Campbell:** We have said from the start that there has to be some form of protocol or agreement, because we are into a new dispensation and new arrangements. But, if there is any good in this current protocol, it is just so vastly outweighed by the constitutional hurt that it simply has to be replaced now. I do not think it can just be tinkered with.

Q781 **Chair:** Mr Campbell, do you get annoyed when you hear Government Ministers effectively giving rather low marks out of 10 for their own homework? Do you? There will be people shouting at their computer screens this morning, saying the UK Government co-authored the protocol; the UK Government legislated for it; the UK Government voted for it. This was not an impost; this was agreed. It is a bit of a brass neck, is it not?

**David Campbell:** At our meeting with Lord Frost last Monday, he said, I suppose apologetically, "I was responsible for this protocol, but I hear everything that is being said. I recognise it is not working and it needs change". Our answer is to focus on getting appropriate change that suits both communities.

Q782 **Chair:** I do not know if you either heard or saw evidence that we took the other week in Committee from representatives of HMRC and their advisers. I think Mr Paisley asked the question about the protocol versus the alternative arrangements. The point was made there that, even with the so-called alternative arrangements, they were likely to be more costly financially to business, in operational terms, and would still need some form of regulatory check for travel going from GB to NI. Isn't the nub of this that there needs to be "a border", and nobody wants it east-west, and nobody wants it north-south? There is nowhere else for it to go. In essence, this is the circular conundrum, is it not? There is nowhere else for this thing to go to give satisfaction to both sides.

**David Campbell:** That is why I am saying Barnier himself is saying that the third option is the border at mainland European points of entry, but that would have to be prefaced with a suitable agreement with the Irish Republic for trade within this island.

Let us face it: the Republic of Ireland is now a very small and peripheral part of a 27-nation European Union. Surely, for the sake of peace and prosperity on this island, trade within this island could be granted some form of derogation by both Britain and the European Union. If people want to be creative, there are creative solutions, but I would like HMRC's explanation, with the exception of the prevention of the spread of agricultural-related diseases, on why there have to be regulatory checks between Britain and Northern Ireland.

**Chair:** Claire, I want you to come in very, very briefly.

Q783 **Claire Hanna:** Thank you very much for the right of reply, Chair, because there has been a lot of innuendo. Mr Campbell, in April 2018, David Trimble said to *The Guardian* that the only thing that would



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provoke loyalist paramilitaries—he is talking about paramilitaries, not protests or civil disobedience—is “the Irish government saying silly things about the border”. Was that a threat of violence?

**David Campbell:** You really would need to ask Lord Trimble. I do not believe it is a threat of violence. I believe it was a sincere warning.

Q784 **Claire Hanna:** When MI5 came to this Committee and cautioned about paramilitary activity, were they threatening violence?

**David Campbell:** Was MI5 threatening?

**Claire Hanna:** Yes.

**David Campbell:** I would not have an idea.

Q785 **Claire Hanna:** When they said that a hard border would potentially create a focus, was that a threat of violence?

**David Campbell:** Again, a warning of violence that presumably was being based on threats, yes.

Q786 **Claire Hanna:** Finally, was Sammy Wilson threatening violence when he said that people should use “guerrilla warfare” against the protocol?

**David Campbell:** I cannot answer for third parties, I am afraid.

**Claire Hanna:** I am glad you acknowledge that the SDLP has been clear, over five decades, that we have never, in the past or in the future, supported violence. I am also glad you acknowledge the efforts, which were not you and which have been beyond rhetoric, to prevent a border in either direction. Thank you.

Q787 **Chair:** Mr Keys, I am going to ask you one question, if I may. Can I urge you not to rush into an answer but to think about it? Mr David Campbell has referenced the protest against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Ultimately, the Anglo-Irish Agreement continued to move forward and to deliver other things. In democratic society, we all engage in passionate debate, predicated on a response in the soul, whatever it may happen to be, to a particular issue. We do not always win. It is great when we do, but when we do not we have to accept that we have lost, and we have lost with good grace.

Do you accept that, or do you say, “I have exhausted one set of processes; I can now revert to violence”, as a way of continuing by another means? I have to say that, in answer to my questions earlier, and to other questions from other colleagues, that is the only direction of travel that I can detect in your mindset.

**Joel Keys:** I would urge you to approach me with an open mind. I am not a fan of violence and I respect the democratic processes. My issue with the Northern Ireland protocol is obviously ideological, but it is also that there is an unfairness and injustice in how Unionists are treated when compared with republicans. That is my issue.



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Q788 **Chair:** I take that, and I am not trying to seek clarity on that issue. I have a duty, as Chair of this Committee, and this Committee of the House of Commons has a duty, to uphold certain key principles. I know you will understand that. You have told us that you are a keen student of politics, and that, as Mr Paisley said, is to be welcomed.

This is a yes or no answer. You wage a passionate debate and you lose. Do you accept the result and go, "I am not happy with it, but I have engaged in the debate; I have lost the debate; I now must turn the page and move on", or do you pick up the gun, the baseball bat and anything else, and continue it through violent means?

**Joel Keys:** In the example you provided, I would respect the democratic result.

**Chair:** Thank you. That is helpful and I am grateful to you for that clarification.

Q789 **Fay Jones:** Good morning, witnesses. Thank you very much for joining us this morning. I wanted to go into a bit more detail around the protocol, picking up on some of the comments that Mr Campbell just made to Mr Paisley. Perhaps I should direct my question again to you, Mr Campbell. I am sorry that you seem to be doing the heavy lifting of answering questions today. You said that there needs to be some sort of protocol. Do I take that to mean that you are content with a protocol-type arrangement but just not this protocol?

**David Campbell:** The comment I am making is that we are in a new dispensation, with a withdrawal agreement, having left the European Union. Therefore, there is a significant change. Whether one calls it a protocol or a treaty, there has to be a working script to co-ordinate new relationships. I would have hoped that it could have been co-ordinated and accommodated within the provisions of strand 2 and strand 3 of the Belfast agreement. I go back to my earlier comment, and I suspect this is where Ms Hanna and I entirely agree, that, if the parties and the Northern Ireland Executive had been properly consulted and involved, we could all have arrived at a collectively acceptable solution.

Yes, there has to be some form of legal agreement that governs the new trading relationships, but not one prefaced on the provisions of this protocol.

Q790 **Fay Jones:** Would you not be content with the approach that the Government are taking now, in dialogue with the European Union, to amend and refine some of the problems that have been encountered thus far?

**David Campbell:** As long as they are substantive reforms and not just tinkering at the edges. As we indicated to the Chair nearly right at the beginning, this is not just about trade issues. This protocol goes to the fundamental concept of democracy and how we agreed to operate Northern Ireland, from 1998, as approved in the referendum on the Belfast agreement.



That is where the fundamental breach is. Once that is rectified and the rights and guarantees are restored, we can hopefully arrange a working relationship.

**Q791 Fay Jones:** Over the last couple of months, we have been hearing from various business groups, which have said that, actually, a large proportion of the problems have worked themselves through. Marks & Spencer and John Lewis say they are back up to 95% of their trade. I appreciate we need to work hard on that 5%, but you do not feel that even addressing those trade issues in full would solve the problems with protocol.

**David Campbell:** No, because it goes right to the thrust of constitutional change without our consent. On the day-to-day practicalities, I am just conscious that Councillor Watton has not had a chance to comment. I know his business takes him across to Great Britain every two or three days. I am just wondering if he perhaps could comment.

**Fay Jones:** That would be helpful.

**Chair:** Councillor Watton, it is nice to hear from you. The floor is yours, sir.

**Councillor Watton:** I have run a small removal business for 20 years. I have to go and move a lady from Chester to Coleraine, my hometown, on Tuesday. I cannot do it without paperwork, after 20 years. We face the potential of everything being left out and every single item being itemised, right down to a teaspoon. It is just not the way that I, as a British citizen, with equal British citizenship— The point that is lost here is that it is not a matter of being one of the legs of the Union—we are actually in a shed at the bottom of the garden. The whole thing about the protocol is a weakening of the Union, hence the broad nationalist consent for it.

It is a loss of identity. People believe we have lost our identity. I hear that all the time. I live on a housing estate, the same housing estate I was brought up on. I hear it. That is an accumulation of things. Off of that, you had the Bobby Storey funeral; you had what seemed to be political policing of my community. It goes on and on and on. It is an accumulation of things. Basically, the protocol was the last straw. It drives a coach and horses through the Good Friday agreement, which I voted for. It drives a coach and horses through it. Claire Hanna is being disingenuous, because—

**Q792 Fay Jones:** Can I please draw you back? I am sorry to interrupt you, but I would like to focus on the nuts and bolts of the protocol. You are perhaps best placed to describe how those are working. There are ongoing discussions between Michael Gove and his counterpart in the EU. Some members of this Committee are questioning Mr Gove tomorrow, so it is a very important discussion to have. I say this hypothetically, but if we could surmount all the issues around trade, if we were perhaps to get to a place where we might be able to implement the protocol without



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even any physical checks, would you be content with that or would you still have questions?

**Councillor Watton:** I would still have questions. I believe it should be unfettered. It is an attack on the Union. It goes against the Act of Union and against the agreement.

**Chair:** Mr Watton, that is an arguable point, which the courts have been taking evidence on, and we await the decision of the JR.

**Councillor Watton:** I have to say this, and it has been said before. It is not lost on the ground. The loyalists have been asked to address the implied threat of violence. Varadkar showed people photographs of the aftermath of an IRA attack. It is absolutely disgraceful. If any Unionist had done that, if Ian Paisley or Gregory Campbell had done that, they would have been absolutely vilified. It is an accumulation of things, but the protocol, for many, was the last straw.

**Fay Jones:** Thank you very much for that. I do not know whether any other witnesses want to add anything, but I just wanted to focus specifically on the detail of the protocol. If there is nothing else, I will hand back to the Chairman. Thank you very much.

**Chair:** Thank you, Fay. Let me just ask this question very briefly. Councillor Watton or Mr Campbell might wish to answer this, or anybody might wish to answer it. Would you go so far as to accept that, given the fact that Northern Ireland and the Republic is the only land border between the internal market of the United Kingdom and the single market of the European Union, to expect absolute parity on how Brexit operates, in practical terms, in GB and NI is highly unlikely to be delivered?

**Councillor Watton:** The thing about it is that Unionism never asked for a hard border on the land border with Ireland. They never sought it. They asked for solutions. They asked for technological solutions even about 20 miles from the border. That could have been done. As David Campbell said, when you get a parcel, you can track it. It just was not done. You had Sinn Féin knocking [*Inaudible*] down.

Q793 **Chair:** I think you would accept this. We all pray God that there may have been alternative arrangements, because nothing here is perfect. This is judged on politics, is it not? For four years, reference to alternative arrangements, as a thing, had always been made. They were never fleshed out to an extent that anybody had faith in them to adopt them and to even explore them further, in order to try to make them work. Some people referred to them as unicorns. Wasn't it always the problem that we were getting closer and closer to the cut-off point, business needing something, and this was something, and in the absence of anything else it was alighted upon as something that could be made to work? I know that probably sounds like a rather simplistic explanation.

**Councillor Watton:** Boris Johnson said "unfettered" and people took him at his word. That is another reason why there is absolutely seething



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anger. I am involved in stopping protests—or not protests, but stopping riots. I would rather have had a protest than a riot. We have been instrumental in stopping them. Many of my colleagues have been in prison, and I do not want any young man to go to prison. I do not want any young man to get a record, and I have [*Inaudible.*]

**Q794 Chair:** Let me ask you this, as a businessman. Former Secretary of State Julian Smith gave a speech yesterday about a unique opportunity for Northern Ireland plc that many of the businesses in my constituency would give their eye teeth for, which is the foot in both camps argument: a foot in the single market and a foot in the internal market Bill. If I take, as you do, and certainly as Mr Wilson does, this disparity of opportunity, investment, growth, et cetera, and the need to make sure that the prosperity agenda works across the communities, could that foot in both camps not be the golden opportunity for Northern Ireland's economy?

**Councillor Watton:** Like you, I heard that this agreement was going to be the greatest thing, we were going to get inward investment and the two communities would be going together. The two communities are not going together now; my community has gone. To Ms Hanna, they say that this is cross-community, but it is not. It is not on. It is an affront and an attack on British citizenship. They are equal British citizens.

**Q795 Mr Goodwill:** I would like to ask Mr Campbell about the consent mechanism provided by article 18 of the protocol. For those watching in, perhaps I might remind them that that is the mechanism whereby there is a democratic mechanism within the Northern Ireland Assembly to provide consent for the continued application of the protocol, for example, on customs, the internal market and state aid. That is, under article 18, able to be renewed every four years, or indeed, with wider consent, every eight years. Do you think that that consent mechanism provided by article 18 is adequate for your needs and requirements in Northern Ireland?

**David Campbell:** It would be adequate if it had operated from day one, if the consent of both communities voting in the Northern Ireland Assembly—

**Q796 Mr Goodwill:** We did not actually have a functioning Assembly at that time, so that could not have happened.

**David Campbell:** We have had a functioning Assembly for the past 12 or 14 months, so before the protocol was imposed upon us it could quite clearly and easily have been put to the Assembly for ratification. It was not. That goes to the core point that the consent of the people of Northern Ireland was not sought, yet the people of Northern Ireland are the very people most affected by the imposition of the protocol.

**Q797 Mr Goodwill:** If we come to a point where agreement is not reached, are we back into no-deal territory, or would the implications of having that even more difficult situation, in terms of trade, almost force politicians in Northern Ireland to renew that aspect of the protocol?



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**David Campbell:** I cannot see that we can remotely afford four months, let alone four years, to get this put right. I do not think the institutions can be sustained for the next four years if the protocol is not rectified within the next four months.

Q798 **Mr Goodwill:** As you have said, we have international trade, outside of the UK and the European Union, where parcels are tracked. Do you feel there should be a technical solution to the way trade can be done, so that we do not have physical checks and goods can move unhindered? Do you feel that that would be a better solution than having to keep renewing this protocol?

**David Campbell:** It is part of a new protocol solution, but, as I said earlier, there also needs to be goodwill and common sense used. For example, those of us who make self-assessment tax declarations, or do our VAT declarations and returns, ultimately, are all assumed to be honest and above board in doing those, and there are appropriate punishments if we are subsequently found not to have been honest. Why did we not start with a light-touch regulatory system that relied on goodwill and honesty, perhaps backed up with a fairly punitive system for those who abuse and attempt to smuggle?

I genuinely believe that there are a range of potential solutions out there, which would not have created the huge political problems that we now have.

Q799 **Mr Goodwill:** So you hope that Mr Gove might be able to make further progress, rather than just having this continued renewal.

**David Campbell:** Yes. If we can reach a solution that is acceptable to both communities in Northern Ireland, there will be little debate that it will inevitably be renewed, but it has to be got right, first of all.

Q800 **Mr Goodwill:** Do you think the issue of animal and plant health might be a slightly more difficult nut to crack?

**David Campbell:** Potentially, but, again, common sense needs to prevail. We have had successful regulations for the past 25 years. We have north-south bodies working in the field of food safety and animal health, and they have worked successfully. Why were they not used as part of a solution to this issue?

**Mr Goodwill:** That is understood. Thank you very much indeed.

Q801 **Chair:** Mr Campbell, just for argument's sake, would you, for want of a better phrase, trade Northern Ireland's access to the single market for the sort of self-assessment tax return honesty that you have advocated?

**David Campbell:** I do not see why the two are not compatible.

Q802 **Chair:** If they were and there was a choice, and the EU turned around and said, "You can have either the penny or the bun, but you cannot have both", which would you have? I will leave it to you to define which is



the penny and which is the bun.

**David Campbell:** I would have the restoration of my equal citizenship within the United Kingdom. It is one of the reasons I voted for Brexit: the return of trade, fiscal and regulatory autonomy to the United Kingdom's Parliament. I would much rather be a full part of the fifth or sixth largest economy in the world than a bit player and part of the economic direction of travel of the other 27 members of the European Union, over which I would not have any input.

Q803 **Chair:** That is a perfectly acceptable point to take. That viewpoint is at clear variance to the hitherto articulated voice of all business organisations in Northern Ireland—that might be a brave assertion—including the Ulster Farmers Union.

**David Campbell:** The business and farming leaders have never been known for being wholly representative. In fact, the farmers union initially supported the remain camp. When they got such an outcry from the rank-and-file members, they then had to rapidly retreat. I would not take for granted the representations from business and farming leaders. You had the same problem, nationally, with the leadership of CBI and other organisations, which did not necessarily reflect businesses on the ground.

Q804 **Chair:** But they have made known and clear their assessment that there are benefits to having a foot in two camps. To the best of my knowledge, I am not alert to any revolt from their grassroots memberships to say, "You have got this wrong; change the narrative", have they?

**David Campbell:** We all want Brexit to work.

**Chair:** Have they?

**David Campbell:** I do not know, Chair. All I can say is that the farmers union told me that there would be no sheep market left in Northern Ireland if we were to Brexit, and, this year, I have the highest price for my lambs that I have ever had.

**Chair:** Yes, lamb prices are encouragingly high at the moment, and nobody knows why, but we shall see.

Q805 **Mary Kelly Foy:** Good morning. It was said earlier that Michel Barnier has not met your organisation. After the protocol was implemented, the Secretary of State commented that, in terms of the protocol working, including the issues about supply lines, there needed to be an understanding of the real issues of identity that the loyalist Unionist community felt. To what extent have the UK Government and the European Commission engaged with loyalist viewpoints on the protocol?

**David Campbell:** As I mentioned earlier, we repeatedly sought meetings with Michel Barnier, not least when he visited Belfast. Those meetings were declined. We have sought meetings with Vice-President Šefčovič, and we have not had an acknowledgement. We are hoping Her Majesty's Government might take forward that request on our behalf.



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We had had largely a close-down from Dublin since about probably this time last year. We have had extremely positive relationships with Dublin for 20 years, but, in the latter stages of the Brexit negotiations, all contact essentially ceased. As Mr Wilson said, we engaged with Simon Coveney, and appealed to him to temper his language and the manner in which his Government was negotiating, as it was creating significant instability in Unionist and loyalist communities. The very next day, he issued statements that clearly showed that he had not listened to a word we said.

We have persisted in repeatedly asking for dialogue. Fortunately, our own Government has heeded that, and we hope they are listening. Dublin, as I say, has just closed down. Mr Wilson might elaborate.

Q806 **Chair:** Just before he does, Mr Campbell, whether it is at all helpful, as far as we are aware, Dublin's attitude has been that the EU does the negotiation because it is a member of the EU and it is not doing bilateral conversations. I certainly take your point that it is incredibly important for the EU to hear directly the concerns of your community. I understood, from what you were saying, that David Frost took that away as a key ask. If it is at all helpful, I can reach out to the Vice-President of the EU and see if I can broker a discussion or meeting between you, him and me, to have a conversation, so that he can hear directly your concerns.

**David Campbell:** That would be very much appreciated.

**Chair:** Not at all. If his lordship is doing stuff, I will not tread on his lordship's toes.

**Jim Wilson:** I go back 20 years with the group of loyalists, the Loyalist Commission, which went in and met Bertie Ahern, and told him the problems that loyalism and Unionism had with his country. He worked tirelessly hard to engage with our people and he did it. He did it through the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, and her husband. We built up what I saw as very good relationships and started to get an understanding that they were not as supportive of the IRA or the republican movement as we all thought they were.

We worked at that for a long while. There have been a lot of visits, up and down south, from loyalists and republicans together. Since Brexit, when we have met representatives of the Irish Government, they have constantly patted us on the head. It was like ticking a box, but they did not listen to one word we said. Our relationship with the Irish Government, after being built up for 20 years, has now gone down the tubes. It is sad to think that people can just destroy something as quickly as that. I felt sorry for Bertie Ahern, because he was the Taoiseach who worked so hard to build those relationships up.

We have met Simon Coveney twice, and other representatives of the Irish Government, I think, in total about four times, in this process. It has been an absolute waste of time. It is okay sitting there and talking, but



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you need to understand and take in what people are saying to you, and what their fears, worries and pains would be if these things happened. The Irish Government totally ignored us. How do you undo the fact that almost 20 years of work went down the tubes in the space of about six months? It is sad.

Q807 **Chair:** My understanding is that Dublin has tried to make clear that it will talk about things outwith Brexit, the delivery of it, because it was the Commission that was doing all the negotiation, with Ireland as a member of the EU.

**Jim Wilson:** It was Ireland that was doing all the pressurising. Quite obviously, as someone who has come through the conflict, we did not want the conflict to start again through something as cheap as the Irish border, because we have dissident republicans in this country waiting for one excuse to try to pull their young lads to create another conflict. We did not want that.

Loyalism and Unionism came out and moderately said, "We do not want a border on the island of Ireland, but we do not want a border in the Irish Sea". We had the British Government sitting back and not taking our side of it in the way they should have, the way the Irish Republic were taking what we have seen as the nationalist side, which did not want the border. I think a lot of Unionists and loyalists believe that the British Government caved into the pressure of who was going to say, "We can create more violence than they can".

Q808 **Chair:** Would you have supported the backstop?

**Jim Wilson:** No. The backstop also took away our control, similarly to what we have now. We would have had no control over what was going to be happening in this country through the backstop, and we also have no control over this system now where we are economically tied to the 27 states. We do not have a say in that. That is not what Brexit was about. Brexit was about all of us getting out of Europe, leaving Europe behind and doing our own thing with the United Kingdom.

Q809 **Chair:** Mr Campbell, what is your understanding about the status of the protocol after a vote in the Assembly, were the Assembly to say, "No, thank you"?

**David Campbell:** Chair, I have to admit I do not have a clear understanding of it, whether that triggers the equivalent of an article 16 suspension, pending some sort of fresh negotiation, one would imagine. But the problem is that, in the meantime, all the current regulations would presumably persist and stay.

Q810 **Chair:** There are two different views, are there not? One view I have heard advocated is that the protocol just disappears. It would need to be replaced with something else, but it disappears. Others are saying it would only remove certain clauses of it, but the substantive bit of the protocol would remain. You do not have a handle on that.



**David Campbell:** No. My suspicion is that it is the latter, that the thrust of it probably would still remain, but it would need to be tested.

Q811 **Chair:** If push came to shove, would you want to see the collapse of the Executive over this?

**David Campbell:** Ideally, no. I have worked most of my life for devolution to be restored to Northern Ireland, and devolution on a basis that it is substantiable and supported by both communities. But my initial preface remains that the agreement either has to work in totality or cannot work properly at all. If Governments in Europe are totally dogmatic and refuse to amend this protocol, against the clear consent of the majority community in Northern Ireland, I just do not see how the institutions remain sustainable.

Q812 **Chair:** Could I ask you to say a word or two on the north-south committees and their current disruption, given the fact that you, Mr Keys, Councillor Watton and Mr Wilson have mentioned the need for growth, jobs, prosperity, et cetera?

**David Campbell:** One of the areas I was responsible for in the Mitchell negotiations was strand 2 and strand 3. We certainly viewed those arrangements, particularly the north-south bodies that were created, as practical, hard-working and acceptable to both parts of the island. They have worked demonstrably well and delivered, for example, a high quality of food safety regulations right across the island. On that side, they are extremely positive. However, one of the democratic tools that David Trimble had at his disposal, in order to force the pace on IRA decommissioning, was unfortunately having to disrupt north-south activity. We did have to do that. We achieved stable devolution as a consequence.

I know that the DUP is very selective in what it is disrupting, so anything that might disrupt the common approach to the pandemic is not being affected. But it is sending a strong signal to Dublin: "Our status has changed; therefore, normality cannot just continue. You cannot have your cake and eat it". I and, I understand, the LCC support the DUP policy of disruption where it is not affecting the wellbeing of our own people.

Q813 **Chair:** Reverting to the thrust of questions I was asking Mr Keys a moment or so ago, if you wage the argument and a solution is alighted upon, which you do not find palatable, but it is there, would you see merit in the disruption north-south continuing?

**David Campbell:** If we can find an acceptable solution—

**Chair:** What if you do not?

**David Campbell:** If we do not find an acceptable solution, unfortunately, it is going to continue. I imagine a lot of the issues could well be taken out of our hands.



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Q814 **Chair:** Would you see that disruption continuing as helpful to the economy and wellbeing of your community?

**David Campbell:** Absolutely not. It would be extremely unhelpful, but unfortunately we are dealing with circumstances where, as Joel says, people, particularly young Unionists and loyalists, feel that their very identity and constitutional position has been jeopardised. We have no hesitation reiterating the appeal through your chairmanship. Any protest should be considered first. It should be lawful, democratic, constitutional and without violence.

Q815 **Chair:** That is encouraging to hear. I am going to revisit what I think is less encouraging, to make sure that I heard you correctly. I think I heard you say that disruption of the north-south committees, conversations and the like would be detrimental to the economic wellbeing, et cetera, of your community. I know this is a phrase that you did not use, but if a protocol solution was alighted upon that you did not find acceptable, in essence, that would be a price worth paying, and that north-south disruption should continue.

**David Campbell:** It should continue as a means of a legitimate, political protest.

Q816 **Chair:** Even though it would have, in your words, or in your agreement to my proposition, a tangible and demonstrable economic harm to your community.

**David Campbell:** I would hope that harm would be very minimal but, if we have to endure very short-term pain for long-term gain, I would hope it is a price worth paying. But it is a last resort.

Q817 **Chair:** If you were told, "That is that; it has been tweaked; it has been changed and this is as good as you get", and you still find what is being defined as "as good as you get", not as good as you wanted, you would still advocate a disruption policy that would negatively impact upon your community.

**David Campbell:** If it does not restore the rights and guarantees of the Belfast agreement, it is not an acceptable solution. The Unionist community will look to see what it can do to deliver that acceptable solution. We have fresh Assembly elections next May. This has to be sorted out, in my view, before the summer. If it is not, it is going to completely sectarianise and ignite the election campaigns next May. It is in all of our interests to find a solution that mitigates any form of protest.

**Chair:** I certainly concur with you on that latter point.

Q818 **Claire Hanna:** We had wanted to ask about alienation and ways to engage. I feel the point has to be made that it is a representative democracy, and the way we operate is that people elect elected representatives, who do the engagement. In terms of your feeling that you do not have regular access to politicians, I want to reflect to you that many of my constituents have very strong views on Brexit and other



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issues, and they are not guaranteed meetings with Frost, Šefčovič or anybody else. It is worth saying it is your business whom you vote for, but, for example, during the very intense Brexit years there was one particular political viewpoint represented in the Houses of Parliament, and it was not mine.

I say that in terms of countering. I really feel and understand, and you have expressed it today, the anger, dislocation and concern from Unionism and loyalism. These are not new sentiments. The SDLP cautioned, for many years, exactly this—that Brexit would be divisive—and desperately tried to persuade others not to take a course of action that would take us down that road.

**Chair:** Claire, order, order. I do not necessarily want a political broadcast on behalf of the SDLP. I am trying to draw the session to a close. Let us have your final question, and let us have a final answer.

**Claire Hanna:** Sure. The question we wanted to discuss as a Committee is about alienation. The phrase, “The straw that broke the camel’s back”, has been used today. Is it fair to say that there is an alienation that has been there for many years, and perhaps Brexit has ignited it in people, but in fact it is more related to the failure of delivery and outcomes of the last two decades? Would it make sense for the volume and the tempo that your organisation has brought to the issue of Brexit to campaign on issues like education, housing, addiction and a lack of access to decent work? Would that not be more productive for the individuals in the communities that some of your members say they are defending the interests of? Would you agree that that alienation predates Brexit?

**David Campbell:** Yes, absolutely, Chair. In so far as Ms Hanna’s community and constituents are concerned, they have a very articulate and able spokesperson in her, but we have loyalist communities that, by their voting figures, for example, at elections, only turn out maybe 25% to 35% to vote.

My old party is as guilty as any in ignoring and taking for granted working-class communities that have demonstrably changed, with the change of industry and employment demographics in Northern Ireland over the past 40 years. They do feel alienated. The most educationally underprivileged person in western Europe statistically is a young teenage boy from a loyalist community, leaving school at 16. We continue to fight for these issues, but we are repeatedly ignored. I wrote to you a while ago, Chair, about this: that, once things perhaps normalise with regard to the pandemic, we would be very keen to explore some of these issues with your Committee, ideally when your Committee perhaps is able to visit Northern Ireland, in due course.

**Chair:** Yes.

**David Campbell:** Therein is the reason and the methodology that ends paramilitarism and these groupings in all communities, because at the moment we are in danger of developing an underclass who simply feel



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there is no hope, no future and no career prospects. I am sorry to end on that sober note, but there is a job of work to be done.

**Claire Hanna:** Now we agree.

Q819 **Ian Paisley:** Is that letter available to all of us, or was that a private letter, if there has been this request to launch something into this?

**Chair:** I think the letter is on the website. I will have to check

**David Campbell:** It was some time ago.

**Ian Paisley:** Perhaps we can come back to it and see whether there is an opportunity to explore something like that.

**Chair:** I am sure we did agree to publish it, but let me go back and check on that. Mr Campbell, if you would be so kind, maybe forward a copy again, so that it is fresh and we know precisely the letter that you are talking about, because I know we have had various correspondence.

Let me close this session by thanking our witnesses. This has been a robust and honest exchange of views, question and answers, and I am grateful to colleagues and to our witnesses for engaging in that process. Mr Campbell, your final remarks are something that echo across the sea and across GB. There is a huge realignment of the electorate, and a sense of isolation and alienation from the process, which is being felt by different communities across the UK. The political class, to use that horrible phrase, needs to be really alert to that.

I do not make that as a party political point. It is something that is just happening and we all need to face into it; otherwise one does end up with a whole group of people who opt out. It is a curse on all your houses, is it not? "There is nobody here speaking for me, doing for me or delivering for me". Let us end this session on the note that we all need to work harder to make sure that things are delivered for communities across the United Kingdom. Let us all work towards that. Thank you very much indeed for your time.