

So how can this be achieved?

The first thing is to get over the fact that we have to refer to the Belfast Agreement for every major decision. Everytime somebody brings up the topic of opposition in the Assembly Sinn Fein start complaining that this is not in the Belfast Agreement.

The Belfast Agreement was agreed and voted on in 1998. Over 14 years ago. Come the next Assembly elections there will be people voting who were not even born in 1998.

How long do Sinn Fein want us to refer back to the Belfast Agreement so that there is no opposition? One hundred years? One thousand years? Are we to be stuck in this time warp of a political stalemate until the end of time?

So here is what we do. Call a referendum on opposition to supercede the Belfast Agreement. And here are the proposals which should be put to the people in this referendum.

We re-allocate the Minister for Justice to one of the two major parties. If they cannot agree then this position should be advertised throughout the world to somebody who has a law background but just as importantly – an independent background with no local baggage. This person can be from anywhere in the world outside Ireland.

Next, we re-allocate the other Ministry positions to the two major parties. This will leave Alliance, SDLP and UUP with no Ministers and therefore in opposition. These three parties only have four Ministerial positions between them anyway so who would even notice the difference? They might as well not even be there.

With all these positions going to the DUP and Sinn Fein (except possibly Justice) those two parties will control the Executive and the Assembly. They already do this anyway. This would work because DUP and Sinn Fein have enough MLAs to form a majority without the other parties. This system would start at the next Assembly elections with the two parties in Government being the largest party from the Unionist 'side' and the largest party from the Nationalist 'side'. It will not necessarily be DUP and Sinn Fein although it probably will be. If the largest party from the two 'sides' does not have a majority then a bit of negotiating would have to be done with the other parties but I believe that they will have a majority.

The other parties all go into opposition. This system could last for two five year terms and then we move on to a total voluntary coalition where any two (or more) of these parties form a coalition no matter what 'side' (or perhaps no 'side') they are from. Because we use the Proportional Representation system in the Assembly the chances of one party forming a majority are almost impossible.

If nobody ever wants to go into a voluntary coalition Government with Sinn Fein well then that is their problem. It will be the past catching up with them.

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These are the proposals that I would like put to the people of Northern Ireland.

This should all be spelt out to everybody and then after a certain amount of debate and campaigning a referendum should then be put to the people of Northern Ireland.

The question should be: Do you agree with these proposals? Yes or No.

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## CONSULTATION ON NI ASSEMBLY

### Chapter 1

Question 1 – Size of the NI Assembly – 5 MLAs per constituency

### Chapter 2

Question 2 – Parliamentary and Assembly elections – these should be decoupled.

Question 3 – Term of the Assembly – Extended to 2016

Question 4 – NI Assembly should be moved to a fixed five year term – four years is not long enough to get anything done, even in a small country like Northern Ireland.

### Chapter 3

Question 5 – Representatives should be prohibited from being both MPs and MLAs.

Question 6 – Yes, MLAs should be prohibited from being members of the House of Lords.

Question 7 – It is better to use primary legislation.

### Chapter 4

Question 8 – Yes, the Assembly would operate more efficiently with an effective opposition.