

# Power-Sharing, Stability and the May 8<sup>th</sup> Devolution Day

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“They do, they don’t who the hell knows...”

Elaine Coyle on if the Northern Ireland Assembly is active.

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## Introduction

May 8<sup>th</sup> 2007; a day which will be a monumental moment in history. It will be seen as an end of an era of fighting and lost lives. For others it is going to be a moment of relief and progress. And still others will feel dazed and confused. Yet no matter where one might stand on the spectrum, this day will forever remain a historic one. One which will be referred to in the history books and stories will be told of what lead to this extraordinary moment. May 8<sup>th</sup> 2007 will be the day which Nationalists and Unionists from the two extreme parties, Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party, share power in the Northern Ireland Assembly by their own consent.

For the past three weeks, I have had the opportunity to research this fascinating topic and gain a better and deeper understanding of the current political situation. For myself, this topic was not one of attempting to create a piece of literature which would be cited and used as an example of what should come on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, but instead is a result of serious interest in the topic from the start. This project was to focus on the aspects of power-sharing and devolution. I wanted to take Members of the Legislative Assembly, interview them and ask them about the possibility of power-sharing, compile the results and comment on said testimony. The following is a written result of my findings and understandings.

I undertook this project for several reasons. First and foremost is my love for politics in general. What makes politicians click? How are they able to make difficult decisions? Do they act on behalf of themselves or on behalf of a constituency? These are all questions which tickle my inner mind and have me constantly pondering the government and the workings within.

Secondly, this topic is of great interest to me in that this is a situation which will never be encountered in the United States. In Northern Ireland you have members of an Assembly who

are elected. However, just because they are elected does not mean that they are going to necessarily sit in power or take part in government. This is unheard of in the states. For this project, I wanted to see what the reason was that they now all seem to agree to work together. I wished to explore whether this was going to be a stable arrangement between the two parties. I wanted to talk to the people in these seats and figure out if this was a feasible idea.

Perhaps thirdly and finally this project is of a truly ambitious nature. I do want to be able to present a paper which contains my own research and analysis on a subject which is of great interest of my own. I want to be able to comfortably make a claim and be able to back a claim up on research and sources which I have achieved in finding and maintaining. I want this to be an experience which will prove to me and others that I am capable of taking a particular situation and dissecting it piece by piece in order to find results.

There were, during the course of this project, many factors which influenced the making of my project. As a university student researching power-sharing I was able to find many people who were interested in speaking with me. As timely as this project is many individuals were willing to speak on the issue. Political parties and politicians played a major role in this. As a student they were very willing to meet me and take part in my research.

Something which also played to my advantage was my ability to choose certain political figures for this project. This will be discussed more in the methodology section of the paper. It is important to note that the people chosen for this project were not in fact random. In fact, the people chosen were quite deliberate and considered before progressing to contact them all.

There were few problems encountered within this project. One pressing issue was the time length which I had for researching. I do not believe that this project is finished. In fact, I feel that the research was stopped early and could have continued for much longer. However,

politicians, with the May 8<sup>th</sup> deadline approaching were pushed for time. I had to work and rework a schedule in order to suit their schedules. It is simply a matter of having a bit of patience and understanding. They have a job to do too and they are taking time out of their schedule to meet with a student. I felt that this problem was a good one to have. At least the men and women I was approaching were taking the time to meet with me.

Another problem which I encountered was that of the massive amounts of information collected. As I interviewed different people it became clear that there was a lot of information. However, not having the time to compile the information and analyze it, I was left with a problem in what to do with the remaining pieces. To overcome this I have attached the interview in Appendix B and summarized some of the other points which were presented in the conclusion.

The main sources of information for this project came from individual interviews. Instead of looking only at the tangible, already presented reasons as to why power-sharing should occur this time around, I wanted to take a different approach. I wanted to speak directly to the people involved with this decision and hear from them why this was so important. I made appointments and took careful time to consider the questions which needed to be asked. After meeting and talking with people, I transcribed each interview and used as much as possible within the main body of this text.

The final result of this text is actually quite simple. When a person goes to look at power-sharing in Northern Ireland, three underlying questions must first be considered in making a statement. Once those considerations have been taken into account, one can more clearly look at power-sharing. After interviewing and discussing the results, I have come to the conclusion that power-sharing in this assembly will in fact work, however bumpy the ride might be.

It is necessary to note certain words and phrases which will be used repeatedly throughout this text. First is the term “Northern Ireland.” It is to be noted that when this term is used outside of a quote, I am in no way attempting to identify with any particular side of the constitutional argument. Technically Northern Ireland is the official term which is given to the area which is under dispute between the Nationalists and the Unionists. I am not attempting to take side, but and only using the term in the most general and literal senses.

It is important to also note that no matter how I attempt to write this paper, there will be a slant in some fashion or other as to my personal feelings and leanings on the subject. The process of politics is completely political and is all but impossible to separate from one’s own thoughts and feelings. It is necessary to note that I do not wish to attempt to take sides in any of the arguments or discussions presented. Instead I hope to have given as much of an unbiased view as possible. I hope that readers of this text are able to draw their own conclusions from my experiences. To ensure that readers are able to look at the validity of my text I will use the appendix to supply all of the interviews used throughout this process. Each interview is transcribed as closely as possible to the original recording. Any changes in verb tenses or word order should be noted.

Also attached are all of my letters and emails of correspondents to show that each person interviewed was given the same amount of information. I felt that it was necessary to give each potential interviewee the same amount of information so that when questions were asked they were not feeling tested or felt that I was attempting to lead them to certain answers. Each interview bar Martina Purdy, which was a spur of the moment interview, did receive timely requests and information regarding this project.

Next, throughout this paper there will be numerous abbreviations used. The following are the abbreviations and the actual contextual meanings attached to them: UUP is the Ulster Unionist Party, DUP is the Democratic Unionist Party, SDLP is the Social Democratic and Labor Party, NIO is the Northern Ireland Office and MLA is Member of the Legislative Assembly. These terms can and may appear in the text which follows and have no explanation attached to them as this has just been presented.

## Methodology

The beginnings of this project date back farther than only three weeks. I started to gain an understanding of the political context with classes on the situation lead by Dr. Maillot. These classes began the first week we arrived in Dublin. In these classes I began to understand the greater difficulties and questions which were being asked. As the classes became more detailed, I learned more about the situation.

Newspapers were also an important source of information at the start of the semester. I began reading and looking over the daily newspapers each day while in Dublin. I read articles from The Irish Times and other major newspapers which were available to me at the time. By reading these newspapers I was able to keep current and up to date about the ongoing and developing situation in the North.

Another major portion in my methods and where this project developed from was my initial trip to Belfast and the Northern Ireland Assembly. In this first trip to Northern Ireland, I became interested and began to focus my general curiosity about politics into a more detailed question concerning the then March 26<sup>th</sup> deadline. While in the North I had the chance to visit Stormont, the common name used for the Assembly. While visiting the Assembly on Monday March 5th there did not seem to be much activity taking place other than what seemed to me as causal school tours of the Assembly. This is prior to the March 26<sup>th</sup> deadline and the historic meeting between Gerry Adams and Ian Paisley.

During this first time period in Northern Ireland I focused my question on the March 26<sup>th</sup> deadline and whether people thought that the assembly would sit on this date. I began asking this question to many of our lecturers with whom we were meeting. As I began to see the

complexities of the answers, I became more curious. Gradually I began to have an understanding or impression of what my Independent Study project was going to deal with; I wanted it to have something to do with the idea of power-sharing and the deadline set by the British government..

Returning from Northern Ireland, I continued questioning the deadline of March 26<sup>th</sup>. As the date for devolution came and went, I saw the opportunity to look at the new date which had been agreed to by Mr. Adams and Dr. Paisley. That date was set for May 8<sup>th</sup>. By continuing to read current and daily newspapers I kept myself up to speed on the developments and slowly learned the details of the process and situation. This was of great help to me. When I returned to the North I already had a strong base in what I was attempting to research and thus I believe more successful in my quest for knowledge.

“Endgame in Ireland” written by Mallie and McKittrick, proved useful in gaining an understanding of the failings and short-comings of the previous executive. Also, it allowed me to look at issues which caused the previous executive to stumble and see if any of those issues were still present. By reading this book I was able to continue to focus my over-arching question for my project.

By this point in time I had come to the conclusion as to what I wanted my question for my project to be. I wanted to ask the following: Will the current Assembly and executive be stable enough to maintain unlike previous executives? Once I had formulated this question I was then able to begin the focused and primary research which this project relies on heavily.

My first step in beginning the process was unearthing what and who I wished to research with the previous question in mind. I came to the conclusion that I wished to interview politicians and academics/knowledgeable individuals on power-sharing and gain their own perspective on the current and upcoming power-sharing assembly. However, this posed a problem in my

research. How was I going to go about choosing the politicians with whom I would ask this question as there are 108 total member of the Assembly to choose from?

To answer this inquiry I devised a plan which would allow me better opportunities to meet with politicians. Understanding that an election had just taken place, I set out to interview newly elected members of the Northern Ireland Assembly. I chose those who did not have as large and busy portfolio within the party. This was done for a two-fold reason. First was so that I would be able to have a better opportunity to meet with these individuals. I believed that as newly elected members they would be more interested in meeting and American student than those who have been in office and already done similar meetings. Secondly the contact information for the newly elected members was much more readily available to me. I accessed this information through the Northern Ireland Assembly website and made great use of the in information.

One interview does not fit into my category. That was the interview with Martina Anderson. As my Academic Director already had her contact information available, I did chose to use it. She is what I consider to be a more high-profile member of the party as she is one of the highest and most influential women within the Sinn Fein party at this time.

My first material action in beginning the research was to send an introduction letter to the people I planned to interview. In this letter I mentioned that I was an American Student studying the current political context in Northern Ireland. This proved to be a very effective measure as I received replies and phone calls informing me that it would be no problem to meet. The following are the individuals with whom an arranged interview took place:

*Mr. Daithi McKay, Sinn Fein MLA*

*Ms. Martina Anderson, Sinn Fein, MLA*

*Mr. Simon Hamilton, DUP, MLA*

*Mr. Peter Weir, DUP, MLA*

*Mr. Ian McCrea, DUP, MLA*

*Dr. Richard English, Politics Lecturer, Queen's University*

*Dr. Sydney Elliot, Politics Lecturer, Queen's University - \*Advisor*

*Dr. Brain Walker, Politics Lecturer, Queen's University*

Several interviews happened spur of the moment. While finishing an interview that was arranged with Daithi McKay he suggested that I meet with some of the other MLA's who might have been in the office that day. I While walking to the administration office, I had the fortunate opportunity to meet someone very influential. As we turned the corner Mr. Gerry Adams was walking down the hall towards us. Mr. McKay stopped and introduced me to Mr. Adams. After a few moments of polite conversation we went out separate ways. It was an amazing and exhilarating experience. Moving into the Sinn Fein office, I then proceeded to have spur of the moment interviews with. The following are individuals I met under those circumstances:

*Ms. Sue Ramsey, Sinn Fein MLA*

*Mr. Paul Maskey, Sinn Fein MLA*

*Mr. Francie Malloy, Sinn Fein MLA*

The interviews with the politicians all took place in Stormont, bar Martina Anderson. Being inside the Northern Ireland Assembly in mid-March as compared to my first visit is quite

contrasting. This time there was an air of excitement in the building. This could be deduced because of the many people scurrying from place to place. Being in this building for the interviews gave them a sense of authority and truthfulness. This was due to the fact that as the interviewee was mentioning the prospects of power-sharing, there were people working in the Assembly that very instant preparing the way for it.

To meet with Martina Anderson I traveled to Derry to meet her in her mother's home. The house was very quiet and relaxing. The atmosphere was very relaxed and informal as we sat at the table over coffee and biscuits. The interview lasted only twenty minutes and polite conversation was had for the next ten to fifteen.

Each interview was quite different and a lot of information was obtained. This caused a problem for me in my research. I was not planning and did not know what to do with all of the extra information gathered. As a solution, I have attempted to include in my conclusion a section which will address these other fascinating sources. Also, I have attached the entire transcribed interviews so that that information is readily available for future reference.

The best interview in my personal opinion was with Mr. Simon Hamilton. This was because Mr. Hamilton was long and detailed in his answers. I did not have to re-ask a question in order to clarify any of his responses. His perspectives were very helpful and useful when considered. Ms. Sue Ramsey was the least helpful in terms of interviews. She was very quick and short with her answers. She not wanting to press forward with any long dialogue. However, it is important to note that only a short period of time was given for this interview.

On average the scheduled interviews lasted about thirty minutes. The spur of the moment interviews lasted roughly ten to fifteen minutes bar.. The time for the interview was crucial and a bit of a problem. I wanted to be sure that enough time was allotted to build some rapport. This

was not possible in all cases. With the spur of the moment interviews I had only a few seconds to introduce myself and proceed directly to the more difficult questions. This was not the case with any of the interview with the members of the DUP. These interview were all given at least thirty minutes. In order to solve this problem I simply stated my thanks to the interviews which were given less time. This seemed to work well and I have received several notes expressing their thoughts as to how well the situation was handled and to contact them if I ever needed anything else.

The interviews with the academics were just as informative. First, Dr. Sydney Elliot, who was my advisor for this project, was a major influence as to how I went about the process of focusing this project. In speaking to him we discussed the different aspects of power-sharing and how they related. He informed and educated me that the question of whether the government would sit is not a question which can be answered completely without understanding other certain issues of the current situation. In the course of three weeks I was able to meet with my advisor three times with correspondances back and forth via email. In talks with him I was able to progress my thoughts and focus to a point which allowed me to get the most out of the information and interviews as possible.

Dr. Brian Walker and Dr. Richard English were both extremely helpful. Each added his own perspective on the situation and helped to address other factors such as a historical context with which to understand the process.

Ms. Martina Purdy is the one interview in this project which was completely random. After walking by the British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC) building for roughly five days I finally decided that it would be in my interest to try and find a political correspondent. I did this to try and gain a journalist's view on the situation. After asking the reception for someone to

speaking with I was introduced to Martina Purdy who is the lead political correspondent for Northern Ireland politics in the BBC. She was very helpful and informative. The interview took place in a side room from her office and was quite friendly. After the pleasantries were exchanged we proceeded to speak for twenty minutes. Again, this interview, as mentioned previously, contains a lot of information which could be used in relation to this subject. However, due to constraints beyond my control, it was necessary to leave portions out of this paper. It is also included in the appendix.

Ms. Purdy introduced me to a book she had recently finished. The book Room 21; Stormont Behind Closed Doors was an analysis of the previous executive. This proved extremely useful in my research. The book goes into very detailed interviews and structures about how the last executive failed. This provided me with more background knowledge of the situation.

Following the interviews and a lapse of one week letters were sent saying thank you to all interview subjects. This was done for two reasons. First, by sending a thank you letter it shows an appreciation to the interviewee. Secondly it allows the “door” to be left open. By leaving the door open there is the opportunity to continue the research at another time.

The Linen Hall Library was extremely useful. There I was able to browse the massive selection of newspaper clippings and articles to inform myself of any information which might have passed me by while preparing for the project. I was able to use and access many daily newspapers which continued to allow me to keep up-to-date guidelines for this project. My newspaper of choice was the Belfast Telegraph complemented by The Newsletter and The Irish News. All of these papers had a wide variety of coverage on the power-sharing and devolution issue.

The Queen's Library was not as useful because current and up-to-date material is much harder to access. I did not spend more than three days total working inside this library. Also, this library did not carry the selection of daily newspapers as the Linen Hall library did.

My space in Belfast for the project was important as well. I stayed in Elm's Village, a Queen's University accommodation outside of city-center. This was a problem and a blessing. The problem was that finding and organizing transportation to and from was difficult. I had to plan meeting times according to bus schedules or risk paying large taxi fees to the parliament buildings. It was a blessing because it allowed me to retreat at night by myself and think over and about the information gathered.

### ***Introduction to Paper***

The scope of this paper analyzes and interprets this executive's ability to sustain itself once devolution occurs on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May. The central question for this project is whether or not the devolved government will be a sustainable situation, unlike executives in the past. This is an interesting question to be posing, as it does not allow for a complete and straight forward answer. Instead, by asking this question, there is a need to address underlying factors which will cumulate together in terms of issues thus laying the foundation for sustainability in this executive.

As the idea and original scope of this project was only to address the stability of the May 8<sup>th</sup> deadline, there is a necessity after completing the research to broaden the parameters to achieve a better understanding. Only after considering the underlying factors and attempting to answer those thoughts, can one make an assessment as to whether this government, which will come into effect on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, has the ability to be sustainable in the Northern Ireland context.

There are three underlying questions which should be addressed when attempting to answer the larger, all encompassing question. These questions are as follows:

- 1). is there a factor or issue which will lead this executive into a division, thus causing irreprehensible damage to the process of government?
- 2). is the potential for a split in the Democratic Unionist Party (hereafter sited in this section as the DUP) controversial enough to send this executive plummeting?
- 3). Is there any need or desire for the other two parties, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) or the Social Democratic and Labor Party within this executive?

The following sections will attempt to answer the aforementioned questions. After analysis of the four underlying themes, the larger question and context of a stable executive will be considered and analyzed.

### *Factors and Issues*

The first question in the series as proposed above deals with issues or topics which will lead the executive into a division causing damage to the stability of the said executive. This could potentially lead to the collapse of government. Consideration of all different types of issues must be taken into account. Many individuals interviewed had different observations. What was attempted to do within this section was to compile the responses from different individuals. In doing so it will show a variety of response. After consideration is had of these responses analysis will be made accordingly.

First and foremost, it is interesting to note that the previous executive, formed in 2000, had to deal with this same focus. For instance, in her book, Martina Purdy points out that the previous executive did in fact fail over underlying factors and issues. In her novel she helps to deduce the different reasons why power-sharing fell. Seemingly fine on the surface, the entire government lay at the hands of delicate, then current, bread and butter issues. (Purdy: Room 21). The issues soon caught up with many of the politicians involved. Had there been a better understanding, recognition, and solution put into effect the issues when first encountered the executive might have had a longer life. However, by allowing the underlying issues to be put on hold and attempt to function a government fatal. The question remains, will this new executive avoid a similar fate by recognizing issues now which could potentially exasperate the executive?

Many of the politicians answered this question quite broadly and quickly. Daithi McKay of Sinn Fein had this to say about any upcoming issues which would affect the assembly in a negative way: "I think there are a lot of subjects that are going to be spoilers. But it seems to be mainly bread and butter issues" (McKay Interview). It is interesting to note that the constitutional issue is not, immediately, considered to be the issue which a vast majority of

interviewees believe will come into direct conflict with the workings of this executive. In his interview, Mr. McKay goes on to spell out that no single issue will arise in the course of this assembly particularly. Instead, there is this idea that smaller issues will in fact play a weaving of a larger web. This web, once weaved completely, will cause stains and tensions over issues relating not to the constitutional position of Northern Ireland, but instead to simple bread and butter issues.

Mr. McKay does however make note of one specific area which he sees as a potential problem. That area is education. He understands that there is to be division between the parties, however does not see this as a lone factor for the failings of the executive (McKay Interview). This again is not uncommon with regards to this question. Many interviewees, like Daithi himself, spell out one or two certain issues that come to mind which could cause damage. However, these issues, they feel, are not damaging enough to destroy the executive.

Like Daithi, Simon Hamilton of the DUP seems to relatively agree with this consideration. He states that:

There (are) obviously a lot of delicate issues on the table. I don't have my crystal ball to see into the future. There are a lot of important issues where there is still a lot of division on, the issue of education and academic selection. There are issues around finance, water charges, and rates and so forth. There are issues on the size, scale and scope of local government. There are a lot of big issues which came up during the election to a greater or lesser extent. I think that they will be hot potatoes, flying around (Hamilton Interview).

Mr. Hamilton refers to many different issues and factors which have the potential to cause this government to falter. However, Mr. Hamilton also see a bright prospect and does not necessarily see these issues becoming major division causing a complete collapse: : Yeah, there are going to

be disagreements and there is going to have to be give and take from everybody... I think people's initial engagement have been quite constructive. I think that we have the potential to come to some sort of agreement" (Hamilton Interview). The optimism shown by Mr. Hamilton seems to reverberate across the board with many politicians. They are not seeing the bread and butter issues as a complete and total potential disaster but instead view them as a potential way to progress through differences and come to some understanding.

Others similarly concur with this assessment of the situation. Mr. Peter Weir attempts to explain in comparable fashion that the issues at hand are not necessarily issues of a constitutional matter, but instead ones of current issues of the day: "I suspect that there will be a number of issues in which there are very difficult political impasses... And it will be, largely divisions on key bread and butter issues be it in education or local government, those types of things. Those are going to be quite difficult to solve" (Weir Interview). Again, there is skepticism in regards to any central issue which should be fronted as a factor which has the ability to bring down an executive.

There is also again the mention of "bread and butter" aspects which will cause some concern within the executive. In addition, Mr. Weir also makes note of two specific examples of bread and butter issues. When asked to elaborate on either one as to which he would see as more important, he instead reiterated the idea of bread and butter issues in general will cause more issues. He did not wish to state that education or local government specifically would be the area of trouble.

In a parallel fashion Dr. Richard English alleges that there is not going to be any easy decision for this government to make which will not lead to the bread and butter issues becoming major factors. While speaking to Dr. English, he remained adamant about the thought of "bread

and butter issues becoming green and orange bread and butter issues” (Dr. English Interview). Although he maintains that the constitutional issue has not completely been removed from the political circumstances, he does see that as time progresses the issues which everyone will want solved will become just as controversial as the constitutional question. The issues which will end up causing the most heated arguments are the issues which will be being discussed everyday within the executive. Since there is a mechanism in place to help alleviate the constitutional issue, there is not necessarily the need to debate said issue within the current political framework.

However, because there is a long term sense of distrust between both parties, Dr. English maintains that when one solution to a bread and butter issue is put forward by one party, the other will automatically snap into a stance that because it was proposed by ‘them’ it must be bad. (Dr. English Interview). This is where the issues relating to every individual will formulate themselves into potential deal breakers. If the parties are unable to begin to make reasonable decisions on bread and butter issues based on facts and accurate information and instead rely on the old prejudices of us versus them, the small issues jointly will combine and bend this executive to a breaking point.

Other academics reveal a strikingly comparable argument. Dr. Dominic Bryan of the Institute for Irish Studies also comments on this idea: “I suspect that to begin with they will fight on almost everything. If a DUP Minister produces a piece of policy, then it will be opposed by Nationalist/Republicans and vice a versa” (Dr. Bryan Interview). Here again is the idea that simple everyday issues which should be being addressed within the Assembly have the potential to cause massive waves within the entire structure. It is not necessarily the constitutional issues being heckled over, but instead issues which are everyday dealings for many constituents.

Dr. Bryan does however focus on one issue which he believes could cause more damage and tensions than the others. He refers to the idea of a policing and justice minister in his thoughts: “The big one will be when the ministry of justice is set up... Another words, power over policing gets put down to the local government instead of being run by the NIO (Northern Ireland Office). That will be a huge thing. Much will depend on the Republicans engagement on the policing issue and how the DUP recognize or don't recognize that” (Dr. Bryan Interview). Dr. Bryan is not the only individual interviewed to see the connection and the potential which the policing issue might have on this newly forming executive.

In an interview with Mr. Ian McCrea of the DUP, the Assembly member brings forward this same concern as something which has the potential to make or break this assembly. Although at first, Mr. McCrea is non-committal as other previously have shown to be, further elaboration led to policing being his main concern:

...then there is no question or doubt that me and the party need to be there to force them out of it, or be there to force the government to make the decision to remove Sinn Fein from that structure. The ball is totally in their court. They are the ones who need to prove their credentials...They are the ones who have to prove that when they say that they have changed, they have actually changed. When they say they are signing up to policing, that they do to the entirety, not political policing, civil policing, or whatever they want to paint a picture of. It's policing in its entirety. I believe that there are interesting days ahead (McCrea Interview).

Mr. McCrea's comments demonstrate the potential which policing could have on affecting the running of the assembly. Should policing be violated, Mr. McCrea could see the need for the removal and exclusion of Sinn Fein from the process, essentially ending any executive which would be running at that point in time. Again, it is an issue, but still a bread and butter issue, one

which will affect the entirety of a community. It is this bread and butter issue as Mr. McCrea sees it, which will cause “interesting days ahead” which could conceivably force the executive into potential collapse.

As the interviews have shown thus far, there are a range of opinions and thoughts as to how exactly a central issue of factor might affect an executive. Martina Anderson, however, does not believe that this is a concern at all. When asked if there was an issue which she thought would prove to be a spoiler for this executive, causing it to collapse she replied: “No. Nothing. Certainly not” (Anderson Interview). She goes on to explain that there will in fact be challenges ahead in the process, but does not believe that there are any factors which will cause this executive to implode. Understanding this response and interpreting it is interesting. Every other person interviewed responded with a certain amount of certainty that there will be something that would challenge this executive to the point of collapse. In certain contexts there are specific examples given, as by Dr. Bryan and Mr. McCrea. Ms. Anderson is the only individual to maintain that there is not one issue, bread and butter or constitutional, which has the potential to bring this executive to the ground (Anderson Interview). It is interesting that a person who has been directly engaged with the political and armed struggle would be willing to take such an astute and firm position on this question as she has seen the potential of the past destroy executives.

Mr. Francie Malloy, MLA for Sinn Fein also takes a firm stance on what he believes will be the downfall, if any, of this executive. Instead of avoiding the constitutional question in this aspect, Mr. Malloy sees this still as the potential stop to all government functions:

We see it as part of the Irish nation and such the reunification of Ireland is crucial to us. The British and the DUP see it as part of the British constitution and they want to maintain the British connection. So there is

where the main disagreement comes in. And it has always been about that. It has always been about the constitutional position of the North, the British or Irish context. And that's why there is still no agreement of that and there is still no acceptance of that... So, that's where I think the weakness will be (Malloy Interview).

Although down-played by most interviewees Francie maintains that the constitutional issue is one which is never going to be agreed on. The constitutional position of Northern Ireland is one which cannot ever be completely solved or negotiated as there is too much controversy surrounding said issue. When one side is happy with the result, the other side will be unhappy and begin work to rectify what they may deem as a wrong.

As previous paragraphs have shown, there is a diverse sense of what exactly could and should be considered an issue or factor which will cause this newly formed government to stumble and fall. Although many interviewees suggested that there was potential for issues on the bread and butter scale to have detrimental effects on the process, few would commit themselves to any particular issue. Coupled with the fact that those who did express that opinion also showed a great deal of optimism over the circumstances leaves one with the impression that there are not any crucial factors which are going to creep up and surprise this administration. There are some who do express sincere concerns for certain aspects. These concerns are what they deem, to be crucial in having a working and better government.

However, what this section essentially can be seen to unearth is where the potential fault line is within each individual. The answer to this question can be found in looking at the interviews and responses. The real fault line on issues and factors is not so much the issue itself, but how a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) decides to deal with said issue. If, for instance, the policing issue became complex, it is obvious that at least one interviewee would be

ready to begin calling for the exclusion and perhaps even the resignation of members of a certain party. If one member begins this process, what is to stop others from joining in? In essence, all an issue needs, whether it be bread and butter or constitutional, is one person to begin negative dialogue using that issue as a catalyst to bring the Assembly and the coalition between Sinn Fein and the DUP to a halt.

### *Democratic Unionist Party Split*

As mentioned in the introduction, the prospect of a DUP split is something which needs to be considered in the over-arching question of whether this Assembly has the stability to survive. If the DUP does in fact split, there is no longer a decisive majority within Unionism supporting the path proposed within the St. Andrew's Agreement and the political process. If this split were to occur the balance which has been recently developing over the past weeks will be in immediate danger. Should the balance be interrupted there is a distinct possibility that the DUP could find that they are in no way able to negotiate and lead the way ahead for Unionists of all walks of life.

In first considering the splits, members of the Democratic Unionist Party were all very adamant that this is not something that is likely to occur. Mr. Ian McCrea of the DUP states that: "...it has been blown out of the water" (McCrea Interview). Ian goes on to report that there are, like any party in the world, disagreements within the structure. He claims that there are always going to be some people within an organization which are unable to keep their disagreements within the party organization. These people, in turn, make decisions which they feel are necessary, whether that be resigning a seat or making a media growl (McCrea Interview). These decisions which are taken in what members see to be the best interest are then misrepresented and presented in a negative light.

Although he does believe that the members of the DUP have a right to make a decision and stand for what they believe, Mr. McCrea, an openly hostile critic of the DUP's leadership's decisions, maintains that even he would not be resigning his seat: "People have suggested to me that, why don't I stand for what I believe in and resign your seat? What is there to gain from me

doing that” (McCrea Interview). Mr. McCrea believes that within the DUP if there is an argument brewing, which he maintains there is not, there would be no point in splitting from the party. This would only decrease the amount of influence one could have on the process. He believes it is better to sit within the government and help to influence decisions in this manner than that of protesting outside the system.

Another member of this party, Mr. Hamilton, seems to take a slightly different approach when discussing the possibility of a split within his own party. Instead of focusing on the decisions which people are forced to sometimes make, Mr. Hamilton reports that it has much more to do with a “fascination” than anything else: “...there is always a fascination with every political party... The media in particular love to see people within the parties falling out. They will hone in on the tiniest, smallest thing that someone says one day and what somebody says the next day and they will say that this is evidence of a split” (Hamilton Interview). Mr. Hamilton sees the media as the perpetrator in this situation. Instead of reporting what is going on, they are targeting and exacerbating an already delicate situation which needs to be addressed in a manner that will not destabilize the balance of power.

Simon continues to assess this situation in a manner which slowly begins to show similarities with the rest of the party members interviewed. He goes on to explain that the decision which the party has been forced to make on tough topics have been hard for members to deal with in recent times. He can understand the reason why there would be distress within the party and is ready to accept that as a challenge, but not as a potential breakdown of party structure and discipline:

There is no doubt that the decisions that the party has taken in recent weeks are very difficult for some people to stomach. I think that is universal. I think there is nobody who says that this is an easy decision,

easy choice to make. And for some, there is no doubt that it is particularly difficult for them. We haven't endured whole sale resignations or any public mud-slinging matches between any senior members of the party. What you have in fact is a very unified party moving forward (Hamilton Interview).

There is evidence in this quote of a great sense of optimism regarding this delicate situation. Mr. Hamilton does not hesitate in answering forcefully that this is a “unified party moving forward.” It is difficult to see a member of a party making such a firm claim unless fairly certain that this claim can be backed up substantially by the party itself on an issue of such importance. Mr. Hamilton also identifies that there is no easy decision for people within this executive. However, just because this is not an easy decision does not connote that the decision cannot and should not be made. It is necessary that a decision and subsequently progress be pushed forward and eventually dissidents will fall into the political line as they become more comfortable with the process.

Peter Weir, the final member of the DUP who was interviewed for this project also dismissed this potential split as something which is completely different from the split which occurred within the Ulster Unionist party during the previous administrations. He claims that: “... that this is a different situation...” (Weir Interview). While speaking to the former Ulster Unionist, he makes clear that there is nothing occurring within the DUP that occurred within the UUP in the 2000 Assembly in relation to a party split. He maintains that while during the 2000 Assembly there was a lot of separation within the UUP, there is not that severance within the DUP. Mr. Weir goes on to elaborate about the extent to which that division within the Ulster Unionists effected the peace process in order to compare how unified the DUP is in comparison.

He proceeds to make reference to David Trimble and the former Ulster Unionist Party as what he saw as a party of coalition ideas ,in that, there is no central spelled out policy that each

member will subscribe to. Instead, there was "... (a) situation in which the split within the UUP was about adopting policies that only about 60% of the Ulster Unionist party would be comfortable with" (Weir Interview). He believes that this is a hugely important difference between what is occurring within the DUP and what occurred within the UUP.

While there is a difference of opinions in both parties, there is a clear distinction in the dimensions of the difference. Within the UUP, only about 60% of the members at the time were willing to support the leader of the Ulster Unionist who was attempting to move forward with power-sharing. Martina Purdy confirms this statistic when she writes that: "Trimble won 53% backing for his plan to return to devolved government. It was hardly ideal" (Purdy 186). This quote justifies Mr. Weir's answer in that the Ulster Unionist party did not have the member's overwhelming majority behind the leader's party line. Thus, people were more willing to move without consent of the party and to take a different path instead of continue down one which they were uncomfortable with at that time. This is not the case with the DUP. When asked if the DUP had in fact brought the party with them into this executive in a full fashion as to avoid the situation as previously mentioned by Mr. Weir himself, he replied "Yeah. I mean, I think that there are obviously concerns which will need to be worked out over time. But as to the scale of things, I think that there is a vastly difference in what was there with the Ulster Unionist party" (Weir Interview). The validity of such a statement can be seen to be a cover or a smoke-screen to divert the searching eye from something bigger, however, speaking with Mr. Weir he remained confident throughout the interview that the DUP was not going to suffer any similar case as the Ulster Unionists did within the 2000 Assembly.

It is interesting to note that even political writers and correspondents are aware of David Trimble's previous problems in regards to bringing his party with him completely into power

sharing. Graham Walker writes that “Paisley, mindful of David Trimble’s tribulations, has had to prioritize the unity of his party. Some prominent DUP personalities, such as Gregory Campbell and Jim Allister, have not been afraid to make public their doubts about going into government with Sinn Fein and they have tapped into a deep vein of skepticism in the rank and file” (Walker, *The Herald*). He notes that the problems which David Trimble once had could easily become an issue for Dr. Paisley. Although that some members have been ready to make public their doubts, no major office holder within the DUP which includes officers within the party, MLA’s and senior advisers have openly resigned at the time of this publication. This is important in that it shows that while members are openly allowed to consider different alternatives to power-sharing, there is still a control by the DUP leadership over its members, allowing some level of coherence.

Martina Purdy, political correspondent for the BBC in Northern Ireland also sees the potential for a DUP split, though she sees it in a different context. She comments:

But, you just never know what banana skins lay on the road. And, you know there is still an element and some people say that Sinn Fein may want to split the DUP. So they will bed down for awhile, but there may be troubles down the road, because cohesive unionism is not may be in their interest. Because as the DUP continues to grow and there is still that split in nationalism between the SDLP which hasn’t been seen off, is that to Sinn Fein’s strategic advantage to drive a wedge between Unionism again and have them fighting with each other and weak (Purdy Interview).

In this context, Martina sees a DUP split not only as possible, but perhaps even a strategy by Sinn Fein to gain more seats and achieve more goals. With a split in the DUP the Sinn Fein party would become the largest party in the assembly, thus allowing them more control over certain

areas and having a large enough mandate to press through certain pieces of legislation which otherwise would be vehemently opposed by the DUP. However, since the DUP would not be able to have a decisive say because of their lack of electoral power due to the split, Sinn Fein's chances are much increased. Throughout the conversation, Ms. Purdy maintained that the likelihood of a split within the DUP is a sincere possibility. However, like her journalistic colleague Mr. Walker, she does believe that Mr. Paisley has brought the majority of the party with him and thus will avoid this seemingly detrimental scenario.

Within the party of Sinn Fein, similar responses have been given as those by the DUP in that a split is not likely and not in the best interests of either party. When asked about the potential for a split, Mr. Francie Malloy showed concern: "I think that there probably is and are large divisions within the DUP... We don't want to see a division or a split within the DUP. That wouldn't be to anybody's advantage. We think in the terms of, if you have strong leadership, you have strong delivery within the DUP" (Malloy Interview). Instead, however, of debating the extent of the possible split within the opposition party, Mr. Malloy makes a case for wanting the party to stay together. If, as outlined briefly above, there is not a coherent voice on Unionism, he feels that the likelihood of a successful first full term could in fact be jeopardized. This, he believes is crucial to continued successful negotiations within this newly forming executive: "...in that you can get the whole together of the DUP and Sinn Fein and try to manage the day to day affairs of the North. And whatever happens in the future that will likely build the trust. And that trust hasn't been able to be put up in the past because the two sides were very far apart and there were no arrangements where the two sides had to come into partnership. This time you actually have that partnership" (Malloy Interview). Trust, he sees, is the key fundamental principle. Without a cohesive and firm stance from the DUP and their leaders, trust will falter,

and thus the executive. Hence, should the DUP waiver in their ability to maintain a party coherence, the entire executive will be in jeopardy.

Paul Maskey sees the split as a less likely occurrence. He believes that thanks to the mandate from the voters of Northern Ireland, the DUP has had a firm calling from people to maintain active within the political system or risk losing the mandate they have been given: “I don’t see it fractioning too much to be honest... the DUP were told quite clearly on the doorstep when they were canvassing for this election that the people wanted to see them within the government. And that the reason they are in government...that’s why each and every single MLA returned to the assembly by the DUP were told by the voters that this is what they want them to do” (Maskey Interview). Maintaining that the DUP are committed, Mr. Maskey comes to the conclusion that should the DUP split, it will cause an out-cry within the rank and file voters of the DUP. Seeing that their party cannot get into power and work for the betterment of everyday life for individuals, they could be voted out of power, thus losing any ground which they might have gained. Mr. Maskey believes that they will in fact honor their commitment to government and work within the system as a party united by one things; the power of the voters. Daithi McKay, Sue Ramsey and Martina Anderson take yet another approach from the Sinn Fein ranks. Instead of seeing this just a split within the DUP, they see this as a change which many people in general are unaccustomed to and need to mentally prepare for: “I think that for some people in society that change is very difficult thing to contend with.... despite the fact the people fight it, nothing ever stays the same... I don’t envisage the DUP splitting. I do think that they will lose people, like we did. And they will lose some good people, just as we did also. But hopefully in time they will return” (Anderson Interview). In this, Ms. Anderson shows a great deal of patience and consideration for the DUP. She understands that people are not accustomed

to change and will in fact fight it. However, she also notes that Sinn Fein itself went through a period of change, and with time more and more people can come to accept that change.

Sue Ramsey agrees with this consideration. Instead of looking at this as a potential party split, she sees a need to allow rank and file members of the DUP to be taken through a process and presented information which will help to make the change more comfortable and sustaining:

Our leadership and our structures actually took us through this process, bringing people to get engaged in the community and done all of that stuff. So you know that there wasn't two people waking up in the morning and saying that there was going to be a power-sharing executive... the DUP, I think, probably need to do that at a constituency level. If there is a split, we need to deal with it collectively. We need to give the DUP space to deal with that (Ramsey Interview).

Here again there is strong evidence of Sinn Fein wanting to be sure that the DUP stay as coherent as possible. Instead of pushing the DUP for decisions and manifesting the situation during this critical juncture in the party's existence, Ms. Ramsey calls for time and space. She wants to see the everyday members of the party be taken through a process which will allow them to see why power-sharing must in fact take place.

Daithi McKay sees the fracturing of the DUP as something which is directly affecting the Assembly process and hopes to see an end to the situation soon. Mr. McKay, like Ms. Anderson and Ms. Ramsey, would like to see the DUP as the most operational and function body possible during this upcoming executive and would be dismissive of any comments that Sinn Fein has any ulterior motives for attempting to split said party: "We would prefer it that the DUP has taken this step and recognized our mandate and our right to exercise power within these institutions; we would prefer that the whole of the Unionist community accepted that as well. A

split... isn't going to be beneficial for Sinn Fein on. They only way to resolve those issues is through dialogue and mutual respect" (McKay Interview). Mr. McKay, like others, shows support in a sense for the DUP. He does not necessarily agree with all of their policies but does believe that dialogue and respect can help to achieve certain benefits for the average person. He wishes to see the DUP enter power-sharing as a unified party so that as much work can be done as possible.

After considering the potential for a DUP split based on the interview questions above, one can in fact receive a mixed review. It seems plausible that a DUP split could be a real prospect as there have been several resignations from lower level members of the party (The Irish Times). It is however only at the local level where these resignations have taken place.

All three members of the DUP who were interviewed came across very strongly in their personal insight that the DUP is not facing a fracture. Instead, it is made clear that people within the DUP are allowed to voice their concerns and be heard. After those concerns have been raised, the party then will press forward if the overwhelming majority approves of the actions. According to Mr. Weir, 90% of the party is completely backing the actions as approved by the leadership and will continue to do so as they believe, as a party, that this is the safest and securest way to move forward.

Sinn Fein seems to concur in that they too do not believe that a DUP split is likely. Sinn Fein is more conscience as to what would happen to the executive if the DUP were to split. Instead, three MLA's call for more consideration and unity in order to secure a safe working environment for the future. Sinn Fein does not want to exploit the DUP's set of circumstances as, to date, this has and will be the perhaps best attempt to restore and work a power-sharing executive.

Presented with all of the above information a logical conclusion can be formulated. The signs, according to the research, of a faltering Democratic Unionist party, are slim and perhaps over-exaggerated. It has more to do with allowing time for people to adapt to change than it does with party unity. It is in the best interests, according to both parties, that DUP's unity remains secure so that an executive can be run and maintained. It does not appear, in light of the research, that DUP split is intimate and of any serious concern at this moment in time.

### *Concerns for the UUP and SDLP*

The final piece in the underlying questions deals with the other two parties, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and the Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP). There is a question as to whether either of these parties are of any more direct influence on the Assembly. This becomes a concern for this executive in that should these parties be deemed unnecessary and Sinn Fein and the DUP decide to minimize coalitions, the system could in turn become essentially a two party system. With Sinn Fein and the DUP dominating, there are no “in-between” parties which might prove to be an alternative for the voters. Also with this question comes the idea that with Sinn Fein and the DUP in government, there is no viable opposition for either party, which is not an ideal governmental situation as there should always be some sort of opposition for any government body.

The majority of people, when interviewed and asked this question, seemed to think that the SDLP and the UUP were in fact on the brink of calamity. Dr. English makes clear his personal considerations for the UUP and SDLP. He refers to the idea of two green parties and two orange parties. One party obviously is bigger than the other. That party gets the big green or orange T-Shirt, as it were. So the question becomes, why is there a need for a smaller party to wear a smaller T-Shirt of the same color? (Dr. English Interview). He believes that in effect, the SDLP have already won from their party standpoint. What people rallied behind in the SDLP was their work and commitment towards power-sharing and thus the Good Friday agreement. Because they have achieved that, there is no longer any real purpose for them to serve. He believes that both the SDLP and the UUP will receive some votes but will continue to falter until they are nothing more than a minor party within the system.

Ian McCrea joins the chorus in this assessment. Mr. McCrea believes that "... the UUP is a party that is on the brink of disaster..." (McCrea Interview). Mr. McCrea sees the opportunity for his party to grow at the expense of the UUP as Sinn Fein will grow at the expense of the SDLP. However, he maintains that the real concern here is not of parties and which party has the larger number of seats in the Assembly. Instead, he believes that Unionists in general need to be working together to take seats from Nationalists (McCrea Interview). He sees a need for the UUP and perhaps even the SDLP, but only as buffers for a larger context. He believes the real concern is over the Unionist versus the Nationalist agenda and if there is a smaller party which can be brought onboard to help, he believes that this should be done.

Martina Purdy holds that it is in fact a strategy of the DUP and Sinn Fein to minimize the coalition needed to run government, and thus reduce, as much as possible, the size of the SDLP and the UUP. She asserts that "I think that is the goal of each of those parties..." (Purdy Interview). Ms. Purdy believes that the DUP and Sinn Fein are in fact considering and willing to work away at the expense of the other two parties. And yet, Ms. Purdy believes that there is still some need and hope for both the SDLP and the UUP:

...a weakness of the current administration is that there is no serious viable opposition... I'm not entirely convinced that they will see off their rivals so easily, because if the rivals go into a period of opposition and Sinn Fein and the DUP are increasingly judged not on the Constitutional issues...but on bread and butter issues, then people, the fickle public; do get annoyed if you're closing their hospital. So I think the longer term prospects of these two parties isn't as bad as some people might think if they can get their acts together (Purdy Interview).

Ms. Purdy can see the realistic need for opposition in government. She maintains that without opposition to the two main parties, there will not be good government. Instead you will be having two parties' similar agendas on many bread and butter issues issuing legislation with no viable alternative. She believes that if paired, both the SDLP and the UUP can become this opposition which is necessary for good government.

Martina Anderson agrees that there is a need for an opposition. Ms. Anderson feels that "People are looking for an equitable resistance" (Anderson Interview). She discusses how there isn't much of a support base for either the SDLP or the UUP, but can see how they could be beneficial to the political process in providing a "resistance" to two party politics. In providing this resistance the two parties might be able to restructure themselves into a better working, more stable party and thus potentially return to some greater level of authority.

In his interview, Mr. Francie Malloy concluded similarly as the above persons. Mr. Malloy is sure that the UUP and the SDLP can and should serve some purpose in government, however does not comment on whether this is realistic to conclude will happen: "I think that there is always a need for opposition in any situation...I think that it is possible to have a role for the Ulster Unionists and the SDLP Nationalists as well, as an opposition that is challenging and continually questioning the issues within the assembly and to scrutinize the differences... it's not about holding them back at all" (Malloy Interview). Mr. Malloy hopes that the UUP and the SDLP are in fact still working within government. He sees this as a way to challenge the authority and be an opposition, keeping the leaders within their own bounds. He does not believe that it is right or justifiable to have other parties actively seeking to eliminate the other parties, but did not directly condemn Sinn Fein or the DUP as they are in fact the two parties which have benefited the most at the cost of the UUP and the SDLP.

Simon Hamilton takes a bit of a different route when processing this question. Instead of looking at the need for opposition, why not just consider this a two party system, thus one party is always in opposition:

I think that it is moving progressively towards a two party system.... And I don't think you can accurately describe the electoral outcomes for this election as four main parties...So I think that as long as you seen Sinn Fein moving and growing, you will see us growing at the same or similar rate in order to counter that rise. And it may and probably will be at the expense of the other two parties (Hamilton Interview).

Mr. Hamilton believes that the order of events taking shape is not one where four parties need to be involved. On the contrary, there should be, in his own personal view two parties, and thus a two party system. Once this occurs, there will be no need for the SDLP and the UUP. He believes that as the number of seats in Sinn Fein grows, you will see the same rise in seats in the DUP. These seats must come from some other party and thus the UUP and SDLP will be minimized to the extent which they will serve no active purpose in government.

From the examples and exerts above one can see that the majority of people see that the SDLP and the UUP are in trouble. Should Sinn Fein and the DUP completely take over the SDLP and the UUP there is a distinct chance that this executive might become more unstable. For instance, should the SDLP and the UUP be eliminated and Sinn Fein and the DUP get into a serious debate which in turn leads to the dissolution of the assembly, according to the St. Andrew's Agreement, an election must be held. If there is not the SDLP or the UUP which people could vote for in order to show their apprehension with the two larger parties, Sinn Fein and the DUP will return to the table with essentially the same make-up in the assembly. This will not accomplish anything productive. Without the two smaller parties in government and

maintaining that threat of over-taking the DUP or Sinn Fein should a major event occur, you will be trapped in stalemate politics for quite some time in the future. This is why the question of as to the stability and need for the SDLP and the UUP must be addressed.

After considering the responses from the interviews, it is difficult to conclude whether the UUP and the SDLP will remain an active part of this Assembly. It is reasonable to believe that at least for four years, should this current Assembly be maintained, they will have some voice in the political realms. However, unless both parties reorganize in some fashion and jointly prepare for opposition politics, there is serious doubt as to whether these parties can survive in a fight which is dominated by the two larger players.

### *Stable Executive on May 8<sup>th</sup>*

After addressing the three underlying concerns and having a better understanding on their potential effect on the stabilization of government, the central and over-arching question of a stable executive can be assessed. Should the above factors work to the ideal favor of the Assembly, there is a higher potential for an executive which will allow the day to day work to be accomplished. The following section poses the question to the interviewee as to whether this executive is going to be stable enough to be maintained. Each interviewee had his or her own distinctive response. This segment will attempt to analyze each response. First responses will deal directly with members of the party Sinn Fein. After their responses have been dealt with, the DUP Assembly members will be considered for their thoughts leading finally to the thoughts of academics and a journalist.

Beginning first with the MLAs from Sinn Fein, there are a lot of positive responses in regards to the general question. Daithi McKay, the first individual interviewed for this project, was openly optimistic about the possibility of an established Assembly which will come into existence on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May:

I think it will be. I think looking at how the UUP approached power-sharing from 1998 onward was one foot in one foot out... So I think that is why Ian Paisley and the DUP have crossed the river now and they are doing so in a clear cut fashion... I think that thing has been crossed now and I don't think there is any going back, which is a good thing.... So when the DUP accepts equality in these institutions, it's a massive step forward in our point of view. We'll accept that at this point (McKay Interview).

The optimism in this quote shows a deep sense of hope within Mr. McKay. Growing up through portions of the trouble, he wishes this to be a step in the direction which will lead to peace. He sees the attempt at power-sharing in 1998 and thus the 2000 executive as a lame attempt. He believes that Sinn Fein have a much better opportunity of completing this process. He does not believe that the DUP can retreat from this process which has been started. He believes that the cards have been played and there is no turning back.

Francie Malloy shows a similar amount of optimism. He also sees this executive as having a substantial chance at moving forward in government. He states that “Well, I think that this time it looks to be that it is going to work” (Malloy Interview). Mr. Malloy goes on to explain that this executive has a better chance at survive due in part to the willingness of the DUP to “run with the power-sharing” (Malloy Interview). He believes that Unionism now has a strong voice within the Assembly and will be more likely to move forward with the arrangement. HE understands that each party now has a decisive mandate and the people on the ground have shown a willingness to move into government on both sides. It is of his opinion that it is time for this to occur and it optimistic about the product: “. We are quite confident that we will continue and we will get it up and running by the 8<sup>th</sup> of May” (Malloy Interview). His confidence rests on the ability of his party and the ability of the DUP to put aside decade old grudges and work for the betterment of the people on the ground.

Martina Anderson sees this as a “real opportunity.” She, like the previous two members of her party, is looking forward to the May 8<sup>th</sup> devolution day and candidly welcomes the opportunities that it will be bringing:

...there is a real sense that this time around that this is not going to be start stop and that this is going to work ... he (Ian Paisley) was quite clearly saying that he was going to do the four years.... And I think that

that gives you insight and indication into the intent. I think that there is a real opportunity here. There is potential. .... I do believe that in terms of the assembly there is a special opportunity and there is potential. There is a moment in time where the transfer of powers will work and for us to operate a system of government (Anderson Interview).

Ms. Anderson in her quote refers to the aspect that this is not going to be a stop and start administration and instead will be one which the Dr. Rev. Ian Paisley will endorse himself for the entire four years. She believes that this is a very good indication that the executive will work and be sustainable for the entire four year term. As she progresses through her interview though, she maintains that this is only a stepping stone to something larger; “We have a vision of something else beyond the assembly” (Anderson Interview). Although she believes that this assembly will be stable and workable, her own aspirations as well of that of the Republican movement is for an all Ireland phase. She hopes people understand that a stable government now will eventually lead to this institution becoming a reality.

Ms. Anderson is not alone in her beliefs in regards to a stable executive leading to something more. Mr. Paul Maskey believes that this Assembly too is only a stop on the way to an all-Ireland executive: “I think that executive will last until there is no more need for it. That’s, we want; a united Ireland. And that’s how I would see and end for it” (Maskey Interview). Mr. Maskey feels that the way which things are progressing will maintain and add to a stable government. Because of this, all Ireland institutions will be able to run and work effectively, showing people, including the DUP the benefits to all-Ireland cooperation. When the benefits are proven to be too great to leave untouched, the “transitional” Assembly in Stormont will be filtered out in favor of representation on Dublin as part of Ireland (Maskey). He maintains

though that until a stable executive is had here in the North of Ireland that there will not be as quick as wanted move towards and all-Ireland emphasis.

Not unlike her MLA colleagues, Ms. Sue Ramsey believes that this executive will have a substantially better probability of maintaining itself. Ms. Ramsey comments that this Assembly will “not only lasting longer, but I see that there will probably be better outcomes this time around” (Ramsey Interview). Believing that this is not a forced coalition but one entered into with both sides understanding the expectations, she thinks that both sides are committed to working for the betterment of society. It is this common ground which she believes will allow this executive to work and function.

Members of the opposite party are equally optimistic about the likelihood of a fully devolved and functioning Assembly. Mr. Simon Hamilton was very willing to speak to the likelihood of a function government:

I think that it probably is (going to be a stable Assembly) for several reasons...really, I get a sense from the community which I think is more openly being reflected by public representatives that there is a real desire for this to work this time. I think that if there is any benefit in start, stop, fall and getting up again, for the past ten years that we've had, it's that people are completely sick of that and people will no longer tolerate that any longer.... I think that probably if it is real it is being brought about by a desire of the community out there to get on with it as people are fed up.... there is massive suspicion out there, a majority. But we are making tentative steps toward power-sharing (Hamilton Interview).

Mr. Hamilton shows that he gets the sense that this is going to happen not from members in the Assembly itself, but from the everyday person on the ground. They have come to a point where they cannot any longer tolerate direct rule. Direct rule, according to Mr. Hamilton, was not kind to the average person. They are prepared for better services and government. Mr. Hamilton also points to the massive amount of suspicion that is still common in everyday affairs. However he

affirms that as time passes there will be less and less of that flying about the air. Instead you will have people more ready and likeier to take part in an active government institution.

Mr. Peter Weir concurs with his party member in thinking that this executive stands a much higher possibility of working through an entire term. However, his reasons are in contrast to those of Mr. Hamilton:

It seems to be that the structures are fairly stable... I think that the overall structure, barring actions from an external nature, is a lot more likely to be longer lasting than what was there before. We are not going to have this sense that this is going to work on the events of future events going our way. We have tried to get that right from the start. And consequently it is a much more stable structure (Weir Interview).

Again, hopefulness is found in the words of the Member of the Legislative Assembly. He is not dismissive of the fact that there are aspects and conditions which are not ideal. But he does not believe that these will be allowed to deter the functioning of this assembly. He claims that as the DUP has been trying to get this right from the beginning, there is less likelihood of the executive not functioning as the kinks have been pressed and worked out prior to the election and subsequent formation of the Stormont government.

When asked this question about the stability of this newly forming executive, Mr. McCrea responded with "Good question!" He does not necessarily believe that going into government is a good idea. He would prefer if that did not have to happen at this point but states clearly that "I think that we are probably in a situation where Northern Ireland needs stability. And that involves a devolved government" (McCrea Interview). Although not happy and content about the process and the speed at which it is moving forward, Mr. McCrea does see the need for stability within Northern Ireland. He believes that this executive will be able to achieve that

stability and bring about a lasting form of it: “; I don’t think we have an alternative other than provide(ing) our country and our people with a form of government that gives us something that we can look to the future for. I have three young children and I (do) not want them to go through what I had to go through growing up through the troubles” (McCrea interview). Mr. McCrea sees the hurt and pain which could be caused if a lasting stability and peace is not found. Seeing the potential for his children to have to grow up in a violent setting, even Mr. McCrea, an outspoken critic of the entire process, is ready to endorse this government.

Members outside of the doors at Stormont are just as optimistic about the future of the political system. Dr. Dominic Bryan is ready to endorse the idea that this power-sharing arrangement has a moderate chance at survival: “I think that it will probably stand this time. I think it will. There are going to be lots of problems. The DUP are going to find something. There are a lot of skeletons in a lot of closets.... I don’t think it will collapse... They will have to work together. That’s the theory” (Dr Bryan Interview). Dr. Bryan points to the fact that there are a lot deeds which may or may not have come to light at this point in time. When the timing suits an opponent, one of those deeds may be leaked out and cause a sort of uproar. He believes that this is likely to occur, but the executive itself will remain in place. He sees that they have been left with no other choice than to work together or be completely dismissed. He sees the entire situation in Northern Ireland as an experiment in devolution and power-sharing. And he firmly believes that this experiment is only about half way in its completion, leaving plenty of time for more interesting circumstances.

Dr. Walker of Queen’s University also sees this executive having a better chance at a successful level than the previous levels. However, he attributes this not only to the process but a lack of external factors which other executive had to deal with. In past executives, Dr. Walker

claims that they have had to deal with sustained IRA and Loyalist paramilitary violence. This was in no means conducive to government and led to people fighting back and forth across Nationalist/Unionist lines. Also, he sees the idea of principle of consent as a key factor as to why this executive will last longer. As there is a mechanism in place which will determine the constitutional status, there is not need for the parties to attempt to try and influence this particular goal directly. Instead they can focus on working on the day to day work which needs to be accomplished. Finally, Dr. Walker claims that the economic conditions are crucial to sustainable executive. (Dr. Walker Interview). As people are receiving better wages and have more conducive living conditions, there is less battle over the jobs and housing, allowing politicians to work on solutions instead of acting on violent considerations which leads back to the turbulent conditions. Since these three aspects have been met in the formation of this Assembly, Dr. Walker sees no reason why this should not be a fully function Assembly come the 8<sup>th</sup> of May.

Dr English also sees this executive in a positive light. Believing that this executive has a better chance than previous attempts, he discussed the idea that there will be many hard decisions within this new executive, but nothing which will lead to dissolution. Understanding that they will in fact disagree on almost every issues brought before them at first, he sees that this executive, despite this, will remain in tact. He feels that the executive will have many rough roads and decisions and subsequently internal struggles (Dr. English Interview). These however will not be enough to stop the Assembly from functioning.

Journalists also give this executive a high degree of a chance in a successful manner. The Irish Times writes that “Most of the talking was done by Mr. Paisley and Mr. Adams, but members of their delegations did join in diverse discussions covering issues including water rates. However, one basic issue was on the menu at this meeting and that was agreement to press

ahead and finally forming a power-sharing government on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May” (The Irish News).

This quote shows the reality that this government is prepared to face. As you have the two leaders of the parties who before would not have sat at the same table now expressing consent and confirming power-sharing on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May one must accept this a vitally good signal that this Assembly has a substantial opportunity for achievement.

Statements by the leaders of each party captured by the media are equally important. Mr. Adams had this to say about the power-sharing and executive which will come into existence on May 8<sup>th</sup>:

Sinn Fein is about building a new relationship between orange and green and all other colors where every citizen can share and have equality of ownership of a peaceful, prosperous and just future. There are still many challenges, many difficulties to be faced, but let us be clear – the basic of agreement between Sinn Fein and the DUP follows Ian Paisley’s unequivocal and welcome commitment to support and participate fully in the political institutions on May 8<sup>th</sup> (The Irish News).

His commitment is again an equally impressive signal that the validity of this agreement will be adhered to and remain a successful venture.

Mr. Paisley also commented on the new executive. He states that: “We must not allow our justified loathing of the horrors and tragedies of the past to become a barrier to creating a better more stable future” (The News Letter). In this, the leader who is known for saying no to power-sharing expresses consent. In this simple line, he shows that he himself is prepared to work for a more stable future. This can only be achieved in a stable executive.

Finally, Martina Purdy puts her own stamp of approval on this Assembly which is forming. She shares her own thoughts:

I think that it does stand a good chance... The previous administration fell in part because the people who were pledged to make it work were fighting.... Now you have a situation where you have these two power blocks are more confident, they have more or less seen off their opponents. Their opponents aren't out but there down. And they could very well make it work. And certainly the Chemistry already seems to be better between Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley than it was between Mallon and Trimble (Purdy Interview).

As a reporter for the BBC and constantly being involved with the day to day occurrences in the Assembly, Ms. Purdy seems to be more or less confident that these two parties will have a much more successful term than that of the previous administration. She senses that the "chemistry" is already better and more productive, leading to a better form of power-sharing at the end of the day.

The responses from the interviews are interesting and deeply intriguing. They shed a great deal of light on the subject and bring about a complete sense of optimism. Each person seems to have a slightly different reason for this optimism, and yet it remains. Is this justified? It seems that thus far it is. The servants and staff at Stormont have begun the preparation for government and the briefs have been handed over by the Northern Ireland Office to the prospective ministers in order to make a smooth and efficient transition into devolution.

## Conclusion

After considering all of the previously presented information, one can begin to make conclusions in regards to the questions posed. Each section previously discussed has its own merits within. However, there is a need to make certain conclusions based on the overall aspects of the research and understanding gained from such. This section will attempt to assess the sections presented in the main body. Once this is done a conclusion will be drawn. It is important to note that these conclusions are of my own personal nature as influenced by the information gathered. This section will also address problems, extra information synopsis and where this project can and might go from this point.

In the first section of the main body the issue and factors related to power-sharing are discussed. I found this section extremely hard to look over and rework my mind around. As I took the time to consider the responses it becomes apparent that it is not going to be a certain issue which will cause this executive to fail. There is no central agreement from individuals as to what the issue could or would be that would cause power-sharing to cease. Instead it will be an issue which a member of the assembly chooses to exploit. No one issue is present at this time which will cause a major issue. Instead it will be an Assembly member who sends one issue to the forefront and causes uncontrollable damage.

The second section of the main paper dealt with the issue of a DUP split. It is my personal opinion that this is unlikely. After speaking to members of the DUP specifically on this issue it seems there is an understanding with all members, those agreeable and those not, to continue this process as a party united. There seems to be concern over this happening from others. Member of the Sinn Fein and academic world do consider this a real possibility but seem

to be only planning for the worst case. The DUP split is something that is seemingly misrepresent and taken out of context. Yet, this seems to be more of a concern over how the executive will continue to function if this occurs. I however disagree and support the stance of the members of the DUP interviewed that this is not going happen and that there is a unity within the DUP.

Thirdly the section on the SDLP and the UUP becoming irrelevant in politics is addressed. Through the questions and the answer I believe that the SDLP and the UUP will serve for at least one four year term. However, if the parties have not reformed their political stance and found a new direction by the next election their numbers will decrease again. The next election will be the tell for both parties. If they can sustain their current votes and not lose any they have a chance to remain in the political structure. If they do not maintain the seats and lose seats as is projected to happen, they will become only minor parties. It is paramount, in my opinion that both parties consider the possibility of opposition politics giving people the opportunity to vote for parties with different ideas than those of Sinn Fein and the DUP.

When it comes to the over-arching question as to whether or not this executive will be stable enough to maintain, it is the assessment of this researcher that this assembly will be sustainable and working. This is not to say that the executive will not have hard and difficult issues. However, after speaking to the interviewees it seems apparent to me that the there is a need, hope, and want on all fronts for this executive and Assembly to work. It is not necessarily an ideal situation for either party. Yet, it is a stable situation, one which has the backing of the two largest parties, both of whom openly have endorsed power-sharing. Power-sharing will take effect on May 8<sup>th</sup> and will continue to run successfully until some undated time in the future.

There has been a lot of personal development which has occurred in the process of this project. Mostly this development has occurred in the manner which I went about completing the interviews. I have learned that a good interview is not necessarily a long interview, but one which is informative. I have learned that asking questions and challenging oneself to open your eyes to new perspectives is not a bad thing. It is a good thing. The personal growth and development for me has been substantial. I feel more comfortable taking a focus and developing an entire project out of the idea. I feel that I have learned how to incorporate different sources and methods into my research.

There were a few drawbacks in the way which I attempted to complete my research. One in particular was my interviewing methods and times available. There was a lot of information gathered in the interviews, but there could have been a lot more depth and questioning take place had the time been extended. My method was one which was very quick and to the point. I would like to build more rapport with an individual before moving on to questions which are of a more serious nature so as to receive as blunt and straight answer as possible.

Meeting with politicians during a busy time period led to certain meetings having to be scheduled and rescheduled. Although not a terrible problem it was still very difficult to balance the time frame. Should this project be redone it would behoove an individual to set up interviews earlier or during a time which more allowance of time for the interview is granted.

The paper aspect of this project was extremely difficult for me to complete. Having never finished a paper of this magnitude I did not know where to begin with the sections other than the main body. The main paper seemed to flow as I was able to use and access plenty of information and sources. However the other aspects of the paper were not as easy for me to begin writing about.

As mentioned earlier there were pieces of information which were excluded during the discussion of the main body the following is a summary of the other considerations made known by the politicians. First was the question of equality which was addressed. Many were wishing to speak more in depth on this issue. There was a lot of talk about trust and who needs to trust first. This seemed to be a reoccurring issue which could be addressed on a much closer level. Finally, one last issue which was addressed was the idea of cross-community relations. Many of the individuals interview made reference to cross-community work which is being done. There was a lot of emphasis put on this issue and would again leave a large area for farther research.

This project is by no means completed. Instead this project is only a scratch on the surface of the larger picture. From here this project could be expanded to include more politicians and interviewees. There could be more in-depth questions being posed. The idea of trust and the building and maintaining of trust is yet another issue which should be addressed in this context. This project should be used only a basis for starting this discussion as there are many more places and topics which directly relate.

The main constraint and limitation to this project was time. Had there been a longer amount of available time there could have been more interviews and information. However, this in itself proves a problem. As more information is presented, there is still a need to filter what exactly should be used with the paper. There is a need to address this situation. I have partially over come this issue by attaching the complete interviews as an appendix. However, with more writing time and space more attention could be given to writing more fully about the discussions had within the interviews.

This paper has been a challenge and ambition of mine since the beginning of this study. I have been anticipating and looking forward to have the opportunity to research and present a

topic which I found interesting. It is with pride and joy that I bring this final section and conclusion to an end.

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Appendix A  
Correspondences via Mail and Email to Stormont

2 April 2007

Daithí McKay

162 Bóthar na Tullachain  
Dun Lathaí  
Co Aontroma  
BT44 9AF

Dear Daithí McKay :

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Christopher Walker, an American student studying abroad. I am currently studying the existing political context of Northern Ireland. I am hoping to have the opportunity to meet and talk with you if at all possible. I have been very interested in your recent successful election campaign and extend to you warm and heartfelt congratulations. As a university student myself, I earnestly believe in and wish to see a younger generation take part in the political processes around the globe.

I have decided that I wish to pursue and gain a better, deeper understanding of the current political context with which Northern Ireland is currently faced. I was hoping if at all possible to meet with you to gain your personal thoughts and ideas. I will be in the Belfast area beginning April 9<sup>th</sup> and will remain in the area until the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the same month. Any time which you might be able to spare would be marvelous and greatly appreciated. Again, congratulations on the election and best wishes. I hope to be in contact with you shortly.

Respectfully,

Christopher Walker  
Ireland: Peace and Conflict Studies  
School of International Training  
walkerca@washjeff.edu

13 April 2007

Daithí McKay

162 Bóthar na Tullachain  
Dun Lathaí  
Co Aontroma  
BT44 9AF

Dear Mr. McKay :

It is again a pleasure to be contacting you. I hope that my previous letter has made it into your hands and you have had the chance to look over the note. I am still very interested in meeting with you in the upcoming weeks if at all possible.

I have arrived in the Belfast area and will be here until the 26<sup>th</sup> of April. If you have anytime which you could spare to meet with me, it would be of great help and appreciation. Again, I wish you the warmest congratulations on your election campaign and hope to hear from you shortly.

Respectfully,

Christopher Walker

Ireland: Peace and Conflict Studies  
School of International Training  
[walkerca@washjeff.edu](mailto:walkerca@washjeff.edu)  
085 111 5177 (Republic of Ireland Mobile)

April 25, 2007

Mr. Daithí McKay, MLA  
Sinn Fein Administration Office  
Parliament Buildings  
Belfast BT4 3XX

Dear Mr. McKay,

Please accept my sincere level of personal thanks for your time on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April. It was a complete pleasure talking with you. Your insight has proved invaluable to me in my research and I cannot express enough sincere thanks.

Also, congratulation is in order as per your appointment to the Policing Board in Northern Ireland. I wish you all of the best in the future times ahead. After speaking with you, I have only the highest regard for you integrity and sense of responsibility. I know that both will serve you well in all of your dealings over the course of this Assembly.

I hope that this letter will find you well. Again thank you for you time and thought. It was my pleasure. If you are ever in the United States and would like to talk or need anything which I can be of assistance with, please feel free to contact me at any point. All of my contact information can be found at the conclusion of this letter.

Again, all of the best and thank you.

Best wishes,

Christopher Walker  
Ireland: Peace and Conflict Studies  
School of International Training  
[walkerca@washjeff.edu](mailto:walkerca@washjeff.edu)

Mobile: 1-814-442-9571  
Home: 1-814-634-5126  
Mailing Address:  
2875 Cumberland Hwy  
Meyersdale, PA 15552, USA

April 13, 2007

Simon Hamilton, MLA  
Democratic Unionist Party  
Parliament Buildings  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr. Hamilton:

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Christopher Walker, an American student studying abroad. I am currently studying the existing political context of Northern Ireland. I am hoping to have the opportunity to meet and talk with you if at all possible.

I have been very interested in your recent successful election campaign and extend to you warm and heartfelt congratulations. I have also taken interest in your move from local politics to the national level and admire this greatly.

I am currently researching the political context at the Northern Ireland Assembly and would be greatly appreciative of gaining your own personal insights and thoughts on the current issues. Any time which you could spare would be of great help and importance to my research. I will be in the greater Belfast area until the 25<sup>th</sup> of this month.

Please accept my apologies for not sending this letter formally, however I have been informed by DUP constituency offices that it is perhaps easier for an MLA to respond via email. Again, thank you for your time and I hope to be in contact with you again shortly.

Respectfully,

Christopher Walker  
Ireland: Peace and Conflict Studies  
School of International Training  
[walkerca@washjeff.edu](mailto:walkerca@washjeff.edu)  
085 111 5177 (Republic of Ireland Mobile)

April 13, 2007

Mr. Ian McCrea, MLA  
10 Highfield Road  
Magherafelt  
Co Londonderry  
BT45 5JD

Dear Mr. McCrea,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Christopher Walker, an American student studying abroad. I am currently studying the existing political context of Northern Ireland. I am hoping to have the opportunity to meet and talk with you if at all possible.

I have been very interested in your recent successful election campaign and extend to you warm and heartfelt congratulations. I also have taken interest in your move from local politics to the national level and admire this greatly.

I am currently researching the political context at the Northern Ireland Assembly and would be greatly appreciative of gaining your own personal insights and thoughts on the current issues. Any time which you could spare would be of great help and importance to my research. I will be in the greater Belfast area until the 25<sup>th</sup> of this month.

Please accept my apologies for not sending this letter formally, however I have been informed by DUP constituency offices that it is perhaps easier for the MLA's to respond via email. Again, thank you for your time and I hope to be in contact with you again shortly.

Respectfully,

Christopher Walker  
Ireland: Peace and Conflict Studies  
School of International Training  
[walkerca@washjeff.edu](mailto:walkerca@washjeff.edu)  
085 111 5177 (Republic of Ireland Mobile)

April 19, 2007

Mr. James Spratt, MLA

Dear Mr. Spratt,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Christopher Walker, an American student studying abroad. I am currently studying the existing political context of Northern Ireland. I am hoping to have the opportunity to meet and talk with you if at all possible. Mr. Ian McCrea suggested that you would be another great person to talk to form the DUP and might be willing to speak to me in the few days which I have left here in Northern Ireland.

I have been very interested in your recent successful election campaign and extend to you warm and heartfelt congratulations

I am currently researching the political context at the Northern Ireland Assembly and would be greatly appreciative of gaining your own personal insights and thoughts on the current issues. Any time which you could spare would be of great help and importance to my research. I will be in the greater Belfast area until the 25<sup>th</sup> of this month.

Please accept my apologies for not sending this letter formally, however I have been informed by DUP constituency offices that it is perhaps easier for the MLA's to respond via email. Again, thank you for your time and I hope to be in contact with you again shortly.

Respectfully,

Christopher Walker  
Ireland: Peace and Conflict Studies  
School of International Training  
[walkerca@washjeff.edu](mailto:walkerca@washjeff.edu)  
085 111 5177 (Republic of Ireland Mobile)

Mr. Jeffrey Donaldson, MLA  
29 Castle Street  
Lisburn  
BT27 4DH

Dear Mr. Donaldson,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Christopher Walker, an American student studying abroad. I am currently studying the existing political context of Northern Ireland. I am hoping to have the opportunity to meet and talk with you if at all possible.

I have been very interested in your recent successful election campaign and extend to you warm and heartfelt congratulations. I have also taken interest in your vast political experiences and admire them greatly.

I am currently researching the political context at the Northern Ireland Assembly and would be greatly appreciative of gaining your own personal insights and thoughts on the current issues. Any time which you could spare would be of great help and importance to my research. I will be in the greater Belfast area until the 25<sup>th</sup> of this month.

Please accept my apologies for not sending this letter formally, however I have been informed by DUP constituency offices that it is perhaps easier for an MLA to respond via email. Also, I had hoped to contact you earlier, but had trouble getting a correct email address. Again, please accept my sincere apologies for the tardiness of this correspondence. Again, thank you for your time and I hope to be in contact with you again shortly

Respectfully,

Christopher Walker  
Ireland: Peace and Conflict Studies  
School of International Training  
[walkerca@washjeff.edu](mailto:walkerca@washjeff.edu)  
085 111 5177 (Republic of Ireland Mobile)

April 19, 2007

Mr. Peter Weir, MLA

Dear Mr. Weir,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Christopher Walker, an American student studying abroad. I am currently studying the existing political context of Northern Ireland. I am hoping to have the opportunity to meet and talk with you if at all possible. Mr. Ian McCrea suggested that you would be another great person to talk to from the DUP and might be willing to speak to me in the few days which I have left here in Northern Ireland.

I have been very interested in your recent successful election campaign and extend to you warm and heartfelt congratulations

I am currently researching the political context at the Northern Ireland Assembly and would be greatly appreciative of gaining your own personal insights and thoughts on the current issues. Any time which you could spare would be of great help and importance to my research. I will be in the greater Belfast area until the 25<sup>th</sup> of this month.

Please accept my apologies for not sending this letter formally, however I have been informed by DUP constituency offices that it is perhaps easier for the MLA's to respond via email. Again, thank you for your time and I hope to be in contact with you again shortly.

Respectfully,

Christopher Walker  
Ireland: Peace and Conflict Studies  
School of International Training  
[walkerca@washjeff.edu](mailto:walkerca@washjeff.edu)  
085 111 5177 (Republic of Ireland Mobile)

April 26, 2007

Mr. Peter Weir  
DUP Administration Office  
Parliament Buildings  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr. Weir,

Please accept my sincere level of personal thanks for your time on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April. It was a complete pleasure talking with you. It was refreshing to meet a gentleman like yourself who was willing to speak candidly and opening about their beliefs. Your insight has proved invaluable to me in my research and I cannot express enough sincere thanks.

I also would like to wish you all of the best in the future times ahead. After speaking with you, I have only the highest regard for you integrity and sense of responsibility. I know that both will serve you well in all of your dealings over the course of this Assembly.

I hope that this letter will find you well. Again thank you for you time and thought. It was my pleasure. If you are ever in the United States and would like to talk or need anything which I can be of assistance with, please feel free to contact me at any point. All of my contact information can be found at the conclusion of this letter. May your future ventures be fruitful and full of excitement! And, once again, thank you for everything.

Best regards,

Christopher Walker  
Ireland: Peace and Conflict Studies  
School of International Training  
[walkerca@washjeff.edu](mailto:walkerca@washjeff.edu)  
Mobile: 1-814-442-9571  
Home: 1-814-634-5126  
Mailing Address:  
2875 Cumberland Hwy  
Meyersdale, PA 15552 USA

April 2, 2007

Martina Anderson, MLA  
Unit R3D  
Rath Mor Business Park  
Blighs Lane  
Derry

Dear Martina Anderson :

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Christopher Walker, a United States student studying abroad here in Ireland. I was hoping that I could possibly arrange another meeting with you in the coming weeks. You met very briefly in Derry with myself and also my fellow classmates at the Free Derry Museum, as you were off to the installation of the new Archbishop Alan Harper. Aeveen Kerrisk and the School of International Training was more than likely the contact person through which the meeting was arranged. I wish to thank you so very much for the splendid opportunity to talk with you! It was a tremendously helpful and generous contribution to our lectures to speak with someone who is actively involved in the on-going political context. Your thoughts and comments were extremely helpful and useful in gaining a better understanding.

I have decided that I wish to pursue and gain a better, deeper understanding of the current political context with which Northern Ireland is currently faced. I was hoping if at all possible to meet with you again to gain you personal thoughts and ideas. I will be in the Belfast area beginning April 9<sup>th</sup> and will remain in the area until the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the same month. Any time which you might be able to spare would be marvelous and greatly appreciated.

Again, enough thanks can not be given to you for your time and thoughts. I hope to be in contact with you again shortly.

Sincerely,

Christopher Walker  
Ireland: Peace and Conflict Studies  
School of International Training  
walkerca@washjeff.edu

April 13, 2007

Martina Anderson, MLA  
Unit R3D  
Rath Mor Business Park  
Blighs Lane  
Derry

Dear Mrs. Anderson :

It is again a pleasure to be contacting you. I hope that my previous letter has made it into your hands and you have had the chance to look over the note. I am still very interested in meeting with you in the upcoming weeks if at all possible.

I have arrived in the Belfast area and will be here until the 26<sup>th</sup> of April. If you have anytime which you could spare to meet with me, it would be of great help and appreciation. Again, I wish you the warmest congratulations on you election campaign and hope to hear from you shortly.

Respectfully,

Christopher Walker

Ireland: Peace and Conflict Studies  
School of International Training  
[walkerca@washjeff.edu](mailto:walkerca@washjeff.edu)

085 111 5177 (Republic of Ireland Mobile)

April 25, 2007

Ms. Martina Anderson  
Sinn Fein Administration Office  
Parliament Buildings  
Belfast BT4 3XX

Dear Ms. Anderson,

Please accept my sincere level of personal thanks for your time on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April. It was a complete pleasure talking with you. I am also very grateful for your time on the weekend as I am sure it is not customary to have meetings during your leisure time away from it all. But, your insight has proved invaluable to me in my research and I cannot express enough sincere thanks.

Also, congratulation is in order as per your appointment to the Policing Board in Northern Ireland. I wish you all of the best in the future times ahead. After speaking with you, I have only the highest regard for you integrity and sense of responsibility. I know that both will serve you well in all of your dealings over the course of this Assembly.

I hope that this letter will find you well. Again thank you for you time and thought. It was my pleasure. If you are ever in the United States and would like to talk or need anything which I can be of assistance with, please feel free to contact me at any point. All of my contact information can be found at the conclusion of this letter.. Go raibh maith agat arís

Best wishes,

Christopher Walker  
Ireland: Peace and Conflict Studies  
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[walkerca@washjeff.edu](mailto:walkerca@washjeff.edu)

Mobile: 1-814-442-9571  
Home: 1-814-634-5126  
Mailing Address  
2875 Cumberland Hwy  
Meyersdale PA, 15552, USA

April 26, 2007

Mr. Francie Malloy, MLA  
Sinn Fein Administration Office  
Parliament Buildings  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr. Malloy,

Please accept my sincere level of personal thanks for your time on the 16th of April. It was a complete pleasure talking with you. It was refreshing to meet a gentleman like yourself who was willing to speak candidly and opening about their beliefs. Your insight has proved invaluable to me in my research and I cannot express enough sincere thanks.

I also would like to wish you all of the best in the future times ahead. After speaking with you, I have only the highest regard for you integrity and sense of responsibility. I know that both will serve you well in all of your dealings over the course of this Assembly.

I hope that this letter will find you well. Again thank you for your time and thought. It was my pleasure. If you are ever in the United States and would like to talk or need anything which I can be of assistance with, please feel free to contact me at any point. All of my contact information can be found at the conclusion of this letter. May your future ventures be fruitful and full of excitement! And, once again, thank you for everything.

Best regards,

Christopher Walker  
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April 26, 2007

Mr. Ian McCrea, MLA  
DUP Administration Office  
Parliament Buildings  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr. McCrea,

Please accept my sincere level of personal thanks for your time on the 18<sup>nd</sup> of April. It was a complete pleasure talking with you. It was refreshing to meet a gentleman like yourself who was willing to speak candidly and opening about their beliefs. Your insight has proved invaluable to me in my research and I cannot express enough sincere thanks.

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April 26, 2007

Mr. Paul Maskey, MLA  
Sinn Fein Administration Office  
Parliament Buildings  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr. Maskey,

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April 26, 2007

Mr. Simon Hamilton, MLA  
DUP Administration Office  
Parliament Buildings  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr. Hamilton,

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April 26, 2007

Ms. Sue Ramsey, MLA  
Sinn Fein Administration Office  
Parliament Buildings  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Dear Ms. Ramsey,

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **Transcribed Interviews**

Interview with Martina Anderson  
 Sinn Fein Senior MLA  
 Home in Derry  
 April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007

*1. Come the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, do you believe that this power sharing is a feasible arrangement and will last this time around? Where do you see this leading to in the future?*

- Well, I suppose that there is two parts to this question. The first part, I suppose that there is a real sense that this time around that this is not going to be start stop and that this is going to work. If you believe and listen to the comments from the DUP's Ian Paisley, there going to be an interview put out on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May and there are wee extracts on some of the comments that he made, and he was quite clearly saying that he was going to do the four years. I think that they were asking him about his age and all that there. But he said he confident that he'll be staying on for four years. And I think that that gives you insight and indication into the intent. I think that there is a real opportunity here. There is potential. More than what there was last time with the arrangement between the SDLP and the UUP because David Trimble did not bring his people with him. And there is still going to be challenges ahead for us all. I do believe that in terms of the assembly there is a special opportunity and there is potential. There is a moment in time where the transfer of powers will work and for us to operate a system of government. That was never the case here before. Now the second part that I find myself thinking when you saying if this were going to lead to something else. Well for us it should and for us we want it to. We want it to lead to something else, as this assembly is only transitional. I see this as part of our vision to a new Ireland and to all Ireland institutions. We would hope that through the power of persuasion and through the strength of our argument that we would persuade more people and get more people to buy into our vision. But then, I do see an opportunity that was never there before. That we are now in a level playing field. And it goes to the strength of one's argument and ability to persuade people. I suppose that all of us collectively in the two largest communities here and all of the other minorities and ethnic communities that exist here as well as across the 32 counties should be talking about, at this stage, the forming issue of the new Ireland and the kind of governance that we would like to see put in place. We should all have a say in the blueprint of that. It's not that Sinn Fein has the blueprint for that. But what we do need is to work with people. We are very big into the concept of participative democracy, be complimentary to representative Democracy. So it is not just that you elect a representative to represent you and walk away. We are very big into empowering people. And that is all people across the 32 counties, to take ownership of this process and to assist the change. And that is at the time our vision of the Assembly. We have a vision of something else beyond the assembly.

**2. *Do you think that there is going to be a split within the DUP? Will this be a problem for Sinn Fein and the new executive?***

- I think that for some people in society that change is very difficult thing to contend with. And there were concerns that Sinn Fein might split as a result of our decision to challenge and to monitor and to make full use of the policing board. It's what it is there for, which is as an accountability mechanism. People thought by endorsing that decision, our party would split and it didn't because of the management of that process. And I think that the DUP will manage its process too. That's not to say that everyone will stay on board and will be completely cohesive party because the whole nature of change is a challenge to people. Despite the fact the people fight it, nothing ever stays the same. That you will find people who don't want to maintain the status quo. You can see it with the MEP Jim Allister split and councilors from Ballymena. But, perhaps in time they will come back on board. I don't think that there is anywhere for them to go. If they are looking to be involved in a process and perhaps influence it, they are looking to do it from the outside and they have to travel along the road and journey and they need to be allowed to do that. But I don't think it will matter anyway. I don't envisage the DUP splitting. I do think that they will lose people, like we did. And they will lose some good people, just as we did also. But hopefully in time they will return.

**3. *What do you see anything as a spoiler for this upcoming executive? Is there an issue which will cause this new executive to collapse along sectarian lines?***

- No. Nothing. Certainly not. I think that there will be challenges. I think the human rights and equality agenda is something that needs to be adapted across society, for all people living in that society and for the way it has been accurately presented that one community has no more equality over another. We have just come out of a situation where one community policed another. This isn't about just one community. As equality human rights spokesperson and someone who is going to be sitting on the civil rights round table and monitoring the single equality bill in section 75 and making sure that that is applicable across this society. I would feel that if we can get all or the two main communities to take ownership of this, then what we have to do is ensure that we never have a situation where one community is in charge of doing anything over another. I don't, absolutely don't think that there is anything that, even for us, that is going to stop this process. We are all entering into a process and it takes courage to compromise. I do think that there will be challenges without a doubt. And I expect that and anticipate that. But, life has been a challenge for all of us and many of us for a long long time. I suppose that if you were to put it in the context of it is more important to win peace than to fight a war.

**4. *Do you think that the peace process has reached a point where violence is now out of the equation?***

- I think that there is a broad spectrum of opinion. There is a broad spectrum of concerns within the Republican and also within the loyalist, protestant Unionist community. And I

think that all of us, each and everyone of who are elected, and all the other leaders in society, the church figures and business owners and all of us collectively, should take responsibility to persuade them that they have no way to go and that they are not representing the community. There is not an appetite and there is no support for it. And I think that they have got that message at the last election. The community showed them that that is not the way which they want to move on.

5. *Do you see any future need for the SDLP and the UUP as Sinn Fein and the DUP have the largest and growing public mandate?*

- Well I think without doubt that the mandate has shown that. But I do think that it is always good to have other parties involved in a system that challenges people. I think that inevitably they will find their support base shrinking because they tend to represent a sector which is more business. It's been very difficult on both sides. People are looking for an equitable resistance. Looking for equality to applied across society and there is not going to be favor over one class or another. But I think that the more political players which you have in the field and the vast array of opinion and spectrums out there I think are healthy and good. And we will certainly confront and challenge and work with all of that.

Interview with Dr. Dominic Bryan  
 Director of the Institute for Irish Studies  
 Queen's University, Belfast  
 April 11, 2007

1. *The current political situation, which was set up and achieved through the Good Friday Agreement and the St. Andrew's Agreement, is this too complicated a political system for a society like Northern Ireland? Does a complicated system help or slow the "peace-process?"*
  - In some senses, there are a whole variety of democratic systems that you can come up with for societies which will reflect or not reflect the diversity of that society. If you can think of many of the democratic systems throughout the world, including, I can think of the UK, Ireland and the US, where those in power won an election, fair election and the democratic system has done its work. And when you actually look for how people voted for them and how are they a reflection of the whole society, you can even have an election where the voting system is such that the winners lose, as Gore did the time before last, and we've had at least two occasions in the UK where, on one occasion the Labor have gotten more votes than the Tories, and yet the Tories ended up in government and vice versa. So, the first thing said is that democratic systems are usually slightly problematic versions of the politics of that society. Blair's got massive majority now, and still only has 36% percent of the vote. He still runs the country with a big majority. In that sense I don't think Northern Ireland is different. You have a democratic system which is an attempt to deal with an ethno-religious conflict. And for that reason, it has come up with a system of governing, which is probably unique, particularly the way which the government ministries are set up, in that everyone (those running for office) get a seat in government. It's not as if everyone gets a seat in parliament. Everyone gets a seat in government, or at least the four biggest parties. Now that's as far as I'm aware is probably going to be unique. In some senses, in a way, it is a fairer assessment of this society than the government of the US or the Republic, or the UK of their society. There is some argument for saying that we've set up a complicated system to deal with a difficult problem, but it does reflect. Now, the problem of course comes in the governance. Can you actually have a functional, working government? Traditionally it has also been an argument between what we call PR (Proportional Representation) voting systems and the first past the post system, which the UK tends to use. In countries where you use PR, alright, so that you get a proportion of the vote rather than the one per a constituency. Now the PR system tends not to produce clear cut victories. Italy is the greatest example and it actually switched to a FPPS a few years ago. And in fact in the Republic of Ireland you've had a coalition government for a long long time. So there are some arguments for saying that one system gives you strong governance, and the another system gives you coalition. But those with coalition say that coalition better reflect this cross-section. So you can make an argument for the system in NI better reflects the

politics of a greater range of this society. However, the next part of your question is does it produce a working government? Now that is a much harder problem. The changes in the St. Andrews agreement made it even more problematic because now three members of the cabinet can effectively block a policy and it gets sent to the floor of the assembly. Then the voting system needs 40%, there's a couple of equations that go into that, of the vote on both sides. So effectively, you can block any policy, which raises the specter of nothing getting through. Now, practically that appears to be a major problem. But maybe in the politics of this society we need to have that lesson. We need to find that it's not working. We need to, before people start perhaps playing the politics where you go into government together where you argue, where you actually form coalitions, its been argued for some time that the UUP and the SDLP could form a coalition. They could say, vote for us and we will produce government that works. We will offer you policies right now which we will work with with whoever one of us is in. So maybe we've got a period of time to go before we learn how this will go. I don't know. My suspicion is that we will have some stalemate politics, maybe for two or three years, maybe till the next elections. But, in terms of restructuring how we run this place, we need to do that. We've already learned that the peace-process doesn't happen in one Good Friday agreement. It takes ten years. It will probably take fifteen or twenty, to restructure the way people think about politics, if they want a structure around what to do about education and health and all that, you've got to give policy making back to local politicians and even if local politicians make a hash of it because they cannot agree on anything which is potentially what is going to happen, maybe you need to go through that process before you emerge on the other side of getting things done, consensus, or whatever. So, even now we're are not at a point of solution. Even now we are in a process and we are waiting to see, and it could be in my view, two or three or four years time we will look at some of those governments structures and say, not workable. But, if all of the parties come to agree on that then you've achieved another step in the way of governance in Northern Ireland

2. *Do you think the currently elected executive will stand this time or do you believe that it will be dissolved again and repeat the process of elections and attempt to find new ideas which will allow an executive to form?*

- I think that it will probably stand this time. I think it will. There are going to be lots of problems. The DUP are going to find something. There are a lot of skeletons in a lot of closets. In all honesty, Sinn Fein probably has more than most. And the DUP are going to love to look in that cupboard and find those skeletons. And we're going to have that sort of politics. But I can't believe the DUP hasn't gone into this knowing that. They do know and made us well aware of Sinn Fein's past. So they must know that they have got to go in and make it. Make it work in some ways. I don't think it will collapse. I'm just not sure how effective it will be. I think there will be ministry playing off of other ministries. They key to what has been constructed politically is that this is a consociational political agreement. Basically what you are saying is you effectively have two ethnic groups and you have got to come up with a system which realizes that and accepts that and finds a mechanism for them to work together. Once you've found that mechanism a new sort of politics will appear at the other side. They will have to work together. That's the theory. Others have argued that you actually have to integrate to get a new form of politics. What

you're doing in that consociational agreement is that you are institutionalizing the two groups. You're now writing them into your political system. If we have a bill of rights for Northern Ireland, which has nationalism and unionism two as groups named in it, your legally institutionalizing the existence of these two groups, and therefore you're going to find it very hard to create new forms of politics. There are the two sorts of arguments. One is that look, they exist, you've got to get them to work together, therefore you give them a legal basis, you give them protection within the assembly you give them both power in government and they will work it out and come to a new point. The criticism being, if you institutionalize them you're not going to get new politics, you just going to get a constant institutionalized struggle between the two groups and have poor government. And that seems to me, if you like, the experiment which we are half way through running.

3. ***Is there one major obstacle approaching which will throw the entire process into a knock-down fight, or is there perhaps a smaller obstacle which is being overlooked at this stage which will be detrimental to the political process?***
  - I suspect that to begin with they will fight on almost everything. If a DUP Minister produces a piece of policy, then it will be opposed by Nationalist/Republicans and vice versa. Now, maybe the political classes are already getting beyond that. But certainly one suspects that in education which Sinn Fein have taken on and we know Martin McGuinness wanted to get rid of the eleven plus, which bizarrely the DUP want to protect even though it seems to discriminate against protestant working class kids, anyhow. Bizarrely the Unionist middle classes are a very powerful body, as are the Catholic middle classes in maintaining their education system which to most of us looks painfully unfair. I'm sure it will be defended. I can't think right now of one issue. I think there will be a whole lot of fights on a whole number of issues. The big one will be when the ministry of justice is set up. I think that has been promised in the next two years. Another words, power over policing gets put down to the local government instead of being run by the NIO (Northern Ireland Office). That will be a huge thing. Much will depend on the Republicans engagement on the policing issue and how the DUP recognize or don't recognize that.
4. ***Should the Dr. Rev Ian Paisley or Gerry Adams leave the political scene, what will become of the current process? More importantly, I sense from reading in the newspapers that there could be a split in the DUP. Is there a strong stigma attached to both of these men?***
  - If you take away the politics and look at them as political parties, you'll go a long way around the world to find political parties which have had the same leaders as long as these two has. This tells you something. You're right to say there is something going on there. DUP are in a sense a charismatic lead party, in the old Bavarian sense. They are being held together by a charismatic leader. Once he goes, are there factions within the party that might split? Yes. Even more so now that they are now the biggest party because many of the Ulster unionists have come on board. And Ironically the DUP are going to have many of the same problems which they used to mock the Ulster Unionist

party for having. They've now taken on all those sorts of divisions. And I think that it is quite likely there will be much more faction fighting in the DUP. And it is also likely that Ian Paisley, an amazing man in many respects. He has stood aside politics here since the bloody 1950's. You think around the world and perhaps only Castro can you think of that has that longevity. It's astonishing really. But. I cannot see him being in for more than one term of a Stormont government. Therefore, four years. So yes I do think that it will create problems. And the Gerry Adams is different. He is a younger man. I think he still has goals in Sinn Fein position in the Republic that he wants to realize. I can't see him leaving the political stage for some time. I think probably Sinn Fein have less division than the DUP. And their position is a little less problematic, although I am not sure. It's harder to tell with the Republican movement. It doesn't reveal itself quite as easily. It may come after time that you'll get more and more disillusionment with Republicanism. It is interesting to look at the style of those parties. They are democratic parties, but it is always unusual to democratic parties, in the DUP case, 35 years since its foundation. And Gerry Adams came to power in 1981, so 25 years. That's strange.

5. ***Which party do you believe will "slip up first?"***

- Well you can never judge who is going to slip up. It depends on whose terms you are judging when you look at who slipped up. I mean I think the DUP will find it harder work, because they do have a base which is very apprehensive about this arrangement. We've already lost some people, some councilors. Sinn Fein has already lost some people. So, I don't know and I don't think you can say one is going to slip up. I think both will find politics harder. The big difference is for most of the past twenty or twenty-five years these are parties that have always been able to sit outside government and criticize. Criticize water charges; criticize this, that and the other. But then they have never had power. It's always British Ministers who have always had to introduce things. Now, when you're in power, it changes the nature of your politics, you've got to make decisions. If there is a limited budget and you've got two hospitals, you might have to close one. You might have to close down schools. Now I think a lot of us are going to be intrigued by how the parties adapt. How they move from the politics of opposition to politics and reality of how to govern. That will be the most interesting things to see over the next few years.

6. ***What are your own thoughts on the Office of the Exchequer and the peace-dividend which is being proposed currently?***

- On a personal view, I've found they way it has been done a little bit like blackmail. You know, we will sit in government if you give us this money. And if I was the English taxpayer, not that the English taxpayer really gives a shit, as long as your not blowing up London, if I was the English taxpayer, I'd say who the fuck do you think you are? Come in here and saying, well we'll do this if you give us this amount of money. Now there are some structural arguments to say that Northern Ireland has been disadvantaged, but there are also some structural arguments for saying it has been supported economically by the rest of the UK and Europe to huge extents over the years. It's a bit rich. And I heard a Scottish editor of a newspaper the other day giving dog's abuse to the Northern Ireland

government for this sort of demand for various monies. Now I actually think you'll probably look at the nature, knowing how the UK government works, if you look at the money which the Chancellor is giving, I suspect it is money already being given. It's not quite what's cracked up to be. I suspect the fiscal condition which the Northern Ireland government will find it self in will not be that great. It will have some tuff decisions. I suspect what will happen is they will blame the British government when they have to shut some things down. It will perhaps depend on how devolution will progress in the UK

**7. *What do see the as the fate of Northern Ireland? Is it fated to become a part of the republic, perhaps it becomes a separate entity, or remain a part of the UK?***

- The greatest we face at the moment will be, in my view, rather than see this as an endgame, republican think this is a step towards a united Ireland. The danger of that is that if the Catholic population does grow and there have been lots of scare stories of growing to such a point that they are going to be more than fifty-fifty and to be honest with you the Catholic birth rate is dropping off as well as I understand it. So I think in the next five or six years you're going to see that. Also I think there is less will in the Republic for a united Ireland. Ideally yes, practically, the amount of subvention the English government has to pay, the Irish government would have to do that, which has all sorts of problems. The danger becomes, the nearer you come to that 50-50 point, the more tension arises and the more fear in the protestant community. And that leave the probability, especially if there is an economic downturn, of us going back into potential violence. I think the prognosis at the moment looks good, but you'd be naive if you thought that was inevitably what was going to happen and the troubles have been left behind. Now, I think the answer therefore is to have a final solution, if you'll forgive the phrase. And say that Northern Ireland in some way probably has to exist as an entity. Whether within the Republic of Ireland or in the United Kingdom or between them, it has its own separate dynamics and we probably have to reflect that, by saying that even if it is in the Republic of Ireland, could it be devolved? The answer is yes, it could be devolved. You could still have all of those things we have up here that protect unionism and protect nationalism. Personally, I think the end play is to start accepting that situation and say we don't look for something which is a untied Ireland as nationalism would have imagined it, but neither should we be in a United Kingdom as Unionists imagine it. We look for a way of running this entity which reflects the beliefs of part of the country being Irish, the other part being British, and find a political system for navigating those differences. Neither side, of course, is happy with that end game because it is not what either wants. I personally think that in reality the best way to get a secure future, to have some sort of a decision around this thought of identity, which isn't a stepping stone to a united Ireland, but it's a final political solution which accepts that it is never going to be a untied Ireland as Nationalists understand it just as it can't be a part of the United Kingdom as Unionist see it. Now, I think as time goes on, people will start asking that question. Interesting enough, a couple of Sinn Fein councilors talk about whether even in a united Ireland the North could be devolved. I think that is the first step in really saying and having that question answered. For me, long term stability should be based around that notion, otherwise, we leave ourselves open to return, the nearer it becomes to fifty-fifty, the more

unstable things could become. My understanding of the dynamics of it still leaves us another fifteen to twenty years before we are even close.

8. *Who would you choose as the most interesting person in the current political context:*
  - Ian Paisley, Anna Lo.

Interview with Simon Hamilton  
 DUP MLA  
 Stormont  
 April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007

**1. *To start, would you please tell me about what got you involved in politics and perhaps who you represent?***

- I'm a DUP assembly member. I am an MLA for the Strangfold constituency. I was elected in the elections there what seems like an eternity ago, but I think that it has only really been six weeks as we sit here. Time has moved so quickly since that date. I graduated from Queen's University. I worked for an accountancy firm for a number of years before actually becoming full time with the party in the press and communications outfit. I oversaw and helped out with several elections. It was quite an interesting time in that period where the party was going through getting more seats and more support getting us into the position that we are into today. I got into politics, got an appetite at a very early age I suppose. I always like to get involved and be hands on. I had been working in the backrooms for a long time and I suppose that my longer term aspirations were always to go toward to the front of things and I ran for my local council in 2005. I was successful. The opportunity came up in my constituency. There was an opportunity to run. I put my name forward, was selected, got it and perhaps a little earlier than I thought that it might happen, but sometimes you have got to take these opportunities when they arise. So I did, and I was fortunate enough to be elected and a very good vote. I was very surprised I suppose too. But that is where I've come from and what I've been doing. And I'm now looking forward to getting down to work. We are now sort of in this period in the middle between getting elected and getting down to work proper.

**2. *Is this new executive that is expected to start on May 8<sup>th</sup> going to be stable enough to maintain unlike previous attempts?***

- I think that it probably is for several reasons. Some are fairly concrete reasons and some are probably more intangible reasons. The intangibles are probably more in a personal opinion than anything else. Really, I get a sense from the community which I think is more openly being reflected by public representatives that there is a real desire for this to work this time. I think that if there is any benefit in start, stop, fall and getting up again, for the past ten years that we've had, it's that people are completely sick of that and people will no longer tolerate that any longer. And I think that the initial stages of building up towards power-sharing in that past there was still a lot of posturing going on by parties. There was point scoring and attacking and so on. And that will continue. I'm not saying that we are in some sort of utopia where that will not happen. But, I think there

is a desire, certainly within our party and Sinn Fein have said that they have a desire to be more serious about it this time and get down to the work. That is something that I just personally perceive. I think that probably if it is real it is being brought about by a desire of the community out there to get on with it as people are fed up. Direct rule hasn't been a great form of government for Northern Ireland and I think that people are keen to move. I think that in itself, that mood out there is a positive thing which will help to stabilize the assembly. On the real front, why I think it can be more stable, why it will endure is that the last sort of agreement with the Belfast agreement was a stop start because the foundations just weren't there. A lot of the architect is similar. But the problem there was that you still had people within the system of government or wanting to get into the system of government who were still allied to those who were engaged in terrorism. All be it not as intensely as in the early 70's 80's and 90's but it was still there and incidents were still happening. And when you have a society like ours that was coming out of the troubles and there is still a lot of suspicion today, still suspicion ten years after the first IRA ceasefire. There is massive suspicion out there, a majority. But we are making tentative steps toward power-sharing. Those things that happened in those instances were very serious in their own right, but they had the power to destabilize things. And unless you have all of that sort of stuff out of the way, gone for good, nothing else out there, and it wasn't enough for the IRA to say that this is finished. They needed to demonstrate that it was finished. I believe that they have done that. I believe they have moved considerably within the past couple of years to a position where I think we can all as comfortably and confidently as you can be that that is something they are not going to go back to. I don't think that they will. I don't believe that we will ever see the troubles reappear certainly through mainstream Republicanism anyway. I think that would be too big a leap. I think that too many bridges have been crossed to go back. That key element, that everyone being in government on that same democratic basis is essential. So I think that is the important part of it. And the because if you go back to the previous suspension, the government had visions which were taken by ministers which were taken by ministers which were seen to be clearly to the detriment of one community. Everybody is going to play to their constituency but that is not going to work in this country because there is that deep suspicion. There is that sort of division in society which is hopefully something that will work its way out over time. But at the minute it is obviously still very real. There are obviously legislative changes to allow more accountability, which some say will create a difficult form of government. It could potentially hold up the works and have a stalemate or deadlock. But better that it is there and that happens rather than someone taking and making a decision a rogue minister to pull the whole government down. It's better that the checks and balances are there to allow all assembly members to weigh in on those decisions and say now hold on a second this isn't good and get a more fair and balanced decision. So those are real things that haven't changed that I think have the potential to see this form of power-sharing work in a much better way than the previous one. That is not to say that this is perfect. You still have people who are diametrically opposed to being in government together. It's not going to be easy. Someone described it as a battle a day. I hope it's not a battle a day. Maybe a battle a week. Maybe a battle every so often on major issues. But I think that certainly our party has been pushing forward those ideas that those checks and balances are there. SO something that is in the grand scheme of things in the context of governing which isn't a particularly major

decision doesn't run out of control. Those real changes are very important and that's what I think has the potential to destabilize things.

**3. *There has been a lot of talk about a DUP split. Is this occurring within the party?***

- Well I think that there is always a fascination with every political party, in this part of the world in the UK generally. The media in particular love to see people within the parties falling out. They will hone in on the tiniest, smallest thing that someone says one day and what somebody says the next day and they will say that this is evidence of a split. There is no doubt that the decisions that the party has taken in recent weeks are very difficult for some people to stomach. I think that is universal. I think there is nobody who says that this is an easy decision, easy choice to make. And for some, there is no doubt that it is particularly difficult for them. We haven't endured whole sale resignations or any public mud-slinging matches between any senior members of the party. What you have in fact is a very unified party moving forward. And that comes on the basis because we set out very clearly years ago what we required in order to do a deal, we were described as anti-Belfast agreement, but we were never anti any agreement. We said that this must be done, this must be done and that must be done. And when those things were done then obviously we proceeded along a line of doing that deal. And that is what has kept the party together. There wasn't anybody on the let's just do it now, I know we haven't solved it. We made sure we got the conditions right. And that has been what has kept the party together. No doubt there will be a lot of talk about it. But it will move onto another party. We've had the Ulster Unionist party in public rowel. Next week you'll have some other party. So it moves around. I guess more often than not it is media fascination than it is factual.

**4. *Do you see any future need for the UUP or the SDLP as a streamline party as the DUP and Sinn Fein have shown a huge mandate from the public? Is it time to minimize the coalitions?***

- Well, I think that it is moving progressively towards a two party system. You've had a situation where you have had what is commonly described as four main parties. And I don't think you can accurately describe the electoral outcomes for this election as four main parties. Two main parties and then maybe two intermediate parties. You obviously have some very minor parties and even some independent representatives. But, again, my own personal view of whether the parties are going to be completely wiped out is no. You don't ever get parties completely wiped out. There is clearly a very hardcore group of supporters out there for the UUP and the SDLP. And they will always get a vote. Now, I believe that our party has very successfully held onto its traditional support and also grown that support and eating into the UUP side of things. We have eaten into the UUP more aggressively and have continued to do that. Now, the rate of such gain has slowed down and at some stage it may level off. But, I do our numbers continuing to grow, particularly if some on the other side continue to do the same to the SDLP as we have done to the UUP. Then it goes back to people wanting to see progress made and all these enemies of the past buried for good. There will always be a latent them versus us and people who are Unionist know that if Sinn Fein were becoming the largest vote and

becoming the biggest party that would be having an undermining effect on the union and would perhaps give us more votes as we have tried to build union confidence. So I think that as long as you see Sinn Fein moving and growing, you will see us growing at the same or similar rate in order to counter that rise. And it may and probably will be at the expense of the other two parties. It's not for me to say really. I wish that everyone would vote for us, but I don't believe that is ever going to happen. But, I wouldn't say that they are going to become totally irrelevant. You see the SDLP go from a position where they had deputy first minister and three ministerial position to a place now with one minister. I think that is probably their future for some time to come. And I can see the UUP slipping similarly. It doesn't take a lot of changes, thanks to our system of government, to see that happening. Our strategists are looking already at seats we could pick up. That's the way any good party operates. We want as many seats as possible. But, I wouldn't say that they will be completely wiped out. There will always be support for them.

**5. *Is there an issue which you see as a spoiler for this executive?***

- There obviously a lot of delicate issues on the table. I don't have my crystal ball to see into the future. There are a lot of important issues where there is still a lot of division on. The issue of education and academic selection. There are issues around finance, water charges, and rates and so forth. There are issues on the size, scale and scope of local government. There are a lot of big issues which came up during the election to a greater or lesser extent. I think that they will be hot potatoes, flying around. But, in all of those that I mention, with the exception of academic selection, there isn't an issue there are differences. And even something on the review of public administration for local government. That is something that is political. Is like insider baseball; how one politician can use another politician. It doesn't effect the service from local governments. There is division between ourselves and Sinn Fein on that issue, but it is probably not an issue of such magnitude that it will cause people to walk away and stop early. Something like academic selection has the potential to go back and forth for a long time and that is obviously very fundamental to everyone. It is affecting children's education. We need to get that sorted out and get it right. We can't afford to mess around up here and say lets try this and experiment with that because if the experiment is ruined then you're failing the children who are going through it. But, again, I don't think that it's an issue that people are going to storm off about. Yeah, there are going to be disagreements and there is going to have to be give and take from everybody. I think that we are going to have to work together to get a good decision out. I think people's initial engagement have been quite constructive. I think that we have the potential to come to some sort of agreement. There are always things like parades, which is a big issue, which do have the potential to cause untold problems at times. It has caused political problems in the past and it will cause political problems in the future. What is incumbent on us is incumbent in particularly on Sinn Fein as a party who has direct interest to take a constructive approach to this. If our genuine aim is the betterment of this society, if that is the one thing that we do share, then it is in nobody's interest that parades become a problem. It's in nobody's interest to have a situation on our hands with violence which goes out to the world and gives a bad impression about Northern Ireland as unstable and society here and to people who might be interested in investing in our society here. That's something that has the potential to.

But I think that there has already been some talk about getting over that and trying to work through that and trying to work through some of these issues. And then there is always the specter that some terrorist incident happening. Again, who knows? Hopefully it won't happen, but those things cause suspicion. At this point in time, I don't see any political issues floating about. I don't see the differences being substantial enough to cause the collapse of the executive. But I would be hopeful.

**6. *Do you think that the Constitutional issue has been settled now that the MLA's and parties can begin focusing on bread and butter issues?***

- Yes and no. The important of the constitutional issue in the political debate has diminished significantly because I don't believe in the prospect of a united Ireland happening. I think in some of the ways that Sinn Fein have behaved, they themselves are resolving to come into power here and if we want to have any influence over what we do we're going to have to involve ourselves in what is essentially a British system. So, I don't think that it is a big issue, or as big as it used to be. And I think that we will see it increasingly remove itself from the political discussion. And there are so many issues that we have to deal with that that are where the people want the focus. There is a big expectation that there will be delivery from this building here. There are huge expectations that we can solve these problems. It's not good for those of us here! But there is this huge expectation that we can sort these things out. And that is where the emphasis be put on and the discussion will inevitably be. But I think electorally, the constitutional issue will for the foreseeable future remain the predominant political issue. That is how, unfortunately how it is. I would love to see us get to a position discussing bread and butter issues, as the term takes in all of those things. I think that when we get to that point we have truly moved on from the past that we have had. But I don't see that happening anytime soon. I think that there will always be that. Because Unionists want to maintain something and Republicans want to gain something the way that battle is now being fought out is no longer on the streets or through bomb and bullet but at the ballot box. That battle transferred onto elections. And you will see the vote for us to keep the other ones out. And that works on both side. It will be you must vote for us to stop them. I think it will still be an issue for the foreseeable issue. So long as people hold on to it it will be there. As long as parties hold on the Unionist and Nationalist stance it will be the focus of discussion.

Interview with Francie Malloy  
Sinn Fein MLA  
April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
Stormont

**1. *Would you mind telling me a little bit about yourself and what urged you to become an MLA here in Stormont?***

- My name is Francie Malloy. I'm an MLA for Mid-Ulster which is basically about 40 miles outside of Belfast. I'm in a rural constituency. I have been involved in politics since about 1966. First elected to council in 1985 in Dungelton. And since then I have been the mayor on two occasions on the council. I'm elected here to the assembly for my third term for Mid-Ulster.

**2. *How long do you see the current executive working? Why or why not?***

- Well, I think that this time it looks to be that it is going to work. I think that because you actually have a strong vote for the DUP that is now quite clearly the largest Unionist party and a strong vote for Sinn Fein making us the largest nationalist party quite clearly. I think that you actually have all of the mechanisms in place to actually make it work because I think that unionism actually has to have a strong voice within it. And I think that the DUP now rightly have that strong voice and a strong mandate. It can afford to lose a few on disagreements on some issues and then not go into power-sharing in that situation. But I think the leadership of the DUP has decided that they are going to run with the power-sharing. It's not something that they probably like in the long term. But I think it's likely they see an accommodation being reached. Their view would be that it can only run for a couple of terms and then you go back to majority rule. We don't see it that way. We think that you actually have to have a state for itself, because its not a natural boundary, its not a natural country. It's actually a partitioned country by the British government. We believe you actually have to have coalition. Even though it is a forced coalition, you need to have a coalition that represents both the minority population and the large population. And also direct accommodation between the parties that you then need to have the base of that, you need to have the understanding of what power-sharing is so to know what to deliver in that situation. We are quite confident that we will continue and we will get it up and running by the 8<sup>th</sup> of May.

**3. *Is there one issue which you perceive to be a spoiler for the entire executive?***

- Well I think there are all these issues that if Unionism wants to get out of the situation... The fall out position that it has been in the past where the British government has always

stepped in and dissolved the assembly. That mechanism is now out of it. That if you dissolve the assembly now, you go back to another election. And so, I don't think that the DUP will actually want to risk their mandate in that situation. I think that the big difference is, and what makes it difficult to actually run with here is that there is no agreement on the constitutional position. We see it as part of the Irish nation and such the reunification of Ireland is crucial to us. The British and the DUP see it as part of the British constitution and they want to maintain the British connection. So there is where the main disagreement comes in. And it has always been about that. It has always been about the constitutional position of the North, the British or Irish context. And that's why there is still no agreement of that and there is still no acceptance of that. We accept the fact that there can be no change without the majority of the North wanting to do that. But in saying that, you also have a situation of where the Unionists don't want to work a system and the fact that the British government has always bailed them out of the difficulties and that the British government will always be able to pull them back out again. So, that's where I think the weakness will be.

**4. *Do you see the constitutional position of Northern Ireland being able to be solved outside the idea of a United to Britain or United to Ireland?***

- I think that that is a bit idealistic. I suppose that you actually have this in-between stage at the moment. You have everybody walking into a power-sharing arrangement and that you've actually agreed to administer the North for the foreseeable future until the people make a decision. We obviously want to see a United Ireland. That's our aspiration within it. We want to see it as quickly as possible. And even within an all Ireland context, I believe that you will still have to have in the North for the foreseeable future some form power-sharing arrangement as regarded that it will manage that situation. So whatever the constitutional position of the North, I think the big thing about it is how you actually manage the situation in the foreseeable future.

**5. *There is currently a lot of talk about a split within the DUP. Will this actually happen and would this be a benefit or a hindrance to Sinn Fein and the new executive?***

- I think that there probably is and are large divisions within the DUP as regards to just the different thinking of them. I think from our point of view is better for them to have strong leadership at the present time. We don't want to see a division or a split within the DUP. That wouldn't be to anybody's advantage. We think in the terms of, if you have strong leadership, you have strong delivery within the DUP. That will actually help us to do the same. In that you can get the whole together of the DUP and Sinn Fein and try to manage the day to day affairs of the North. And whatever happens in the future that will likely build the trust. And that trust hasn't been able to be put up in the past because the two sides were very far apart and there were no arrangements where the two sides had to come into partnership. This time you actually have that partnership. And so likely, the people will begin to build up the trust and start to deal with some of the issues. And gradually as you get away from the conflict, maybe you'll be able to start dealing with the big constitutional issue.

**6. *Do you foresee in the near future that the DUP and Sinn Fein will begin to minimize coalitions and slowly work out the UUP and SDLP from the political table?***

- Well, I think that there is always a need for opposition in any situation. But here, as a forced coalition, I think that it is possible to have a role for the Ulster Unionists and the SDLP Nationalists as well, as an opposition that is challenging and continually questioning the issues within the assembly and to scrutinize the differences. And of course, our own two parties will also be scrutinizing each other within that situation. It's not just about holding them back. It's not about holding them back at all. It's about how do you make progress and how do you get them involved in it? But I think the whole thing is about how do you build for the future and start to build that trust within it and it actually gives people the confidence to deal with the bigger issues. Now they are going to have to be dealt with at some stage. What that comes down to is the constitutional issue. And if we could manage that transfer, that change from the British rule in the North into an Irish dimension and reunify Ireland, it might take a completely different form. It maybe that the North is still part of an assembly and it still has its old structures. But that is actually built into an all Irish structure as well. It doesn't have to be a conflict situation again.

**7. *Is there anything else which you would like to add about any and all of this?***

- Well, I think one thing that is from my own point of view is that there has been tremendous change over a number of years. There have been big risks taken. And I think that what Unionism has to do now is recognize that change. To recognize its sincerity and to recognize that we want to build trust here to actually add to our future. As a matter of fact that building of trust and working together and there are so many things that unite together on a constituency level. And the big constitutional issue is something that I think will be left for farther down the line.

Interview with Paul Maskey  
 Sinn Fein MLA  
 April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
 Stormont Offices

**1. *Would you mind starting off by telling me a little bit about yourself, perhaps where you are from and who you represent?***

- I'm elected from West Belfast. We have five MLA's from west Belfast. Five of the six seats we won, and I am one of the five. The other would be the SDLP. I'm also a councilor on Belfast city council as well. So this is the first time that I've been elected to the assembly. So that is basically where I am coming from. I'm just working away. I'm the deputy chief of the assembly group now at this stage. Working through all of that at the moment.

**2. *How do you see this executive working? Will it be stable enough to maintain and last longer than previous attempts at an executive?***

- I think that executive will last until there is no more need for it. That's, we want an united Ireland, and that's how I would see and end for it. I think the working relationship that we already have with the likes of the DUP in areas like the Belfast city council. We have had a lot of committees and sat down with them and done the daily business in Belfast and other cities and councils across the North of Ireland. So there is going to be no difference in here other than your in a more strategic and more powerful level of government. So we will be doing the business here and be working collectively and working hard. In fact these two parties will probably work a lot harder than some of the other parties.

**3. *Do you see a need to minimize the UUP and the SDLP?***

- No. Because I think that sometimes the more parties there are sometimes the better, the more you have adverse politics and stuff. So I think that sometime more parties is good for a group of people who live within a society. But I mean, the two parties certainly have grown over the last number of years and the votes continue to rise. And I can speak obviously on behalf of Sinn Fein is that the elected representatives are in there working very hard. When I look at West Belfast and Belfast City council, we have nine seats out of ten seats. And that shows the amount of work. That's not by fluke. It because your

actually doing a service for people in that area. So out of ten seats, we have nine and the SDLP have one. So that shows the extent of the hard work which is being done.

**4. *There has been a lot of talk about a DUP party split. Do you think this will occur? Do you see this as a benefit or a hindrance to Sinn Fein and the executive?***

- Well I don't know. There has obviously been some members of the party who have left in the past and that continues to happen. And who knows? I mean, that is a matter that the DUP know better than what I know of it. I don't see it fractioning too much to be honest. That's my own personal opinion. The DUP were told quite clearly on the doorstep when they were canvassing for this election that the people wanted to see them within the government. And that the reason they are in government, because people told them on the doorsteps. That's why each and every single MLA returned to the assembly by the DUP were told by the voters that this is what they want them to do. I think they are honoring that commitment.

**5. *Is there anyone issue which would cause you to step away from the assembly? Is there any single issue which will cause this assembly to not work as in the past executives?***

- No. I don't see any issues at this stage. And I think that the two parties will work together and work their way around when they come. There's no doubt that there are going to be problems in the future. Because, no, what you would call coalition government anywhere, you have to work your way and negotiate your way around. I think we are both big enough.

**6. *What do you see the future as? A United Ireland, or perhaps more realistically a devolved Northern Ireland within the Republic?***

- Well, I'm a republican. And I would say that I want to see a united Ireland. I believe that Ireland should never have been divided in the first place. We were conquered by another nation. So, my aspirations and my goals are that of a United Ireland and I will be in politics until that day happens. We are certainly using this phase of what we would call the struggle, or of the Assembly as to further our objectives, to get a United Ireland. Because financially and economically it has to happen because the north of Ireland is a basket case economy. It can't sustain itself. And the only way which it will be able to sustain is if you go back to a United Ireland basis.

**7. *Are there any external factors, perhaps overlooking the British government for a moment, that you see as being a help or a hindrance to the peace process and this executive?***

- Well, I think that we need investment. It's obviously a massive issue for ourselves. Obviously, I think we know what the cost of violence has been. I think the British government need to have a role here as well now, to pay for their lack of investment, because they have taken taxes from people for many many years and never put it back into. And obviously we would be looking for the British to come up with what we would

call a dividend, because they have taken taxes out and not invested or invested in all the wrong reasons. So I mean we would be looking for invest coming from all different countries as well, including America. I think we also need European money. I mean, because we are coming out of a war and moving into a future. And I think that it is a very positive future for ourselves.

**8. *What do you feel will be the central program of government for this new executive?***

- There are many many issues, including investment and the health and education stuff. The education stuff is going to be a massive task for us all to get our heads around because we are opposing between Sinn Fein and the DUP in that regard about our young people. So, that will be a battle. But there is other stuff we can agree on. All of us want to see better health facilities. I mean, obviously people in the DUP want to see better health facilities as well and create a better fashion for themselves. So those will be some of the issues, health and education.

**9. *Do you have any other comments that you would like to add?***

- I'm looking forward to challenge for myself. It's a big issue for ourselves and it's a big issue we get stuck in and get down to business as a way for our future. It's a good chance to challenge ourselves, to help the drive forward my politics and the politics of a United Ireland.

**9. *Do you have any other political aspirations at this point?***

- I'm quite happy where I am at the moment. And I'm working away at Belfast city council and I'm also working away at the assembly. I've got a number of jobs. I'm going to be deputy chair of one of the main committees. Also, I'm chief whip of our group. Probably, I've got too much to do at the moment. Would you like to take some jobs off me at the moment?!

Interview with Ian McCrea  
DUP MLA  
Stormont  
April 18<sup>th</sup> 2007

1. *Do you believe that this executive will be stable enough to maintain or is it ill-fated as previous executives have been?*
- Good Question. I'll give you answer first, and then I'll give you a reason. I think that we are probably in a situation where Northern Ireland needs stability. And that involves a devolved government. It's probably not going to be the easiest things as far as our party and Sinn Fein's are from the extremes, from both sides of the political divide. And therefore it probably is not going to be the easiest form of devolved government and executive. But, it has probably got to the point where we really don't have any alternative, reasonable alternative. There is, I suppose an alternative where we have direct rule with both the British government and the Irish government and Unionism has no real say what-so-ever. That's not what I want. I'm happy to work with the Irish government as a neighboring government, the same as the American government, who are a government in another country. That's how I treat the Irish government. And that's how they will be treated. That don't and shouldn't have any direct say in running our country. But, that's another story from that point of view. Back to the questions; I don't think we have an alternative other than provide our country and our people with a form of government that gives us something that we can look to the future for. I have three young children and I am not wanting them to go through what I had to go through growing up through the troubles. And I suppose having a father, William McCrea, being one of the top MP's from the Unionist side against the Republican movement and the things that came with that, the threats, the bombs, the shootings and all of that. I don't want my kids to go through that. But, like I say, the rights and wrongs of going into an executive on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May might be, in my personal opinion, too soon. But unfortunately we have to do it at some stage and had we not been able to get an agreement, we would have been looking at a very very quick turn to the direct rule with Britain and Dublin governments. And therefore, that's probably one thing that we avoided. But there is still a few weeks left to go and there are other things. I'm sure that you heard Dr. Paisley saying that there are other things that are going to come out at the end of the week with regard to security and all of that. So there are things still happening and negotiations still ongoing. I believe that they need to because there are other issues that need to be dealt with. The IRA army council in itself needs to be disbanded. Whether or not Sinn Fein are trying to use our tactics of the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, by, no its not going to happen by the 26<sup>th</sup> of March as far as setting up an executive, whether they are trying to use our tactics, and say well listen, if

you wanted by the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, we just aren't going to do it. We decided that it should be a few weeks later. But I believe that is a fundamental issue that needs to be dealt with. Sinn Fein knows what they need to do and the IRA knows what needs to be done. By default it is probably happening as it has over the last number of weeks. People need to come out and say that my job is no longer the Army Council, it's no longer. And whether you believe them or not, I don't know, because they have the ability to set it up like that. It's not that easy and quick. As quick as it can come down, it can come up. As quick as it decommissions its weapons, it can get more. So that's the dilemma that we are all in. It's down to trust. I probably won't trust them. I'm here to do the job that I was sent here to do as far as my constituency and the people that voted for me, take my stand as a Unionist and the principles that I have, but to ensure that a form of government is delivered to the people of Mid-Ulster from my own perspectives. But for the people of Northern Ireland, can have something that they can be proud of, something that they can say well listen, this can make a change. We can take the bomb and the bullet out of Northern Ireland politics. It's not going to be easy. To some extent it grieved me that our party met with Sinn Fein. I literally all but threw up at the thought of it. But I suppose it is because of the family, friends that I know who have been killed by some of those men who were sitting in that room who signed if not did it themselves. That's the difficulty. I suppose to some extent that if it hadn't been Martin McGuinness as the deputy first minister, that probably would have been easier for the Unionist community to swallow. But the fact that he has self-acclaimed that he has blood on his hands as he has confirmed that he was in the position he was in at the time of the bloody Sunday and what-not.

**2. *Hearing your thoughts on Sinn Fein and the Republicans, do you talk or have conversations with them at all?***

- I do not have conversation with them. I sit on council in Cookstown and I won't change. Just because the party, the two parties have met, it's happened, it's over and it's done with. I will not change how I feel about a party that has been directly involved with terrorism. They can say what they want, but the main personnel and the part and part supporters have been part of the IRA struggle against the Unionist community over the last 35 years. I won't forget that. I have been told many a times to forget the past. I won't. I won't forget the past. I won't forget the family and my friends who were caught up in attacks, either injured or killed. So I'm not going to forget that, and I am not going to change the principles and stands that I have taken for so long just because the two parties have been able to sit down. It wasn't, as Dr. Paisley has talked about, a love it. It was a work in. It was setting down our principles and they set down theirs, the meeting was over, a statement was read, and that's it. Yes, unfortunately, it was inevitable that it was going to happen someday. I would have rather that it happened someday rather than that day. But, that's in the past as it were, it's happened and we have to move on. But I won't be setting down with them. I take over in my role as councilor role of chairman in June. Sinn Fein will be in the vice-chair. I'm not going to change when I'm in the chair or when they are in the vice-chair that I never spoke to them. I never have any words with them what-so-ever. I called them when they wanted to speak. All I can say is, and this is certainly only for me, on council, Sinn Fein and the DUP have been at heads for the last 20 odd years I suppose within the political arena. But I have been on council since 2001

and I have taken my stand. I have opposed them on things where they have tried to play politics with people's lives at the local level. But, we have still been able to provide a good form of local government providing the needs for local people. You take that model and make it bigger, a lot bigger in what we are now looking at in an Assembly, there have been decisions that have been taken that all parties agree on. We don't like each other when it comes to it. And we are never going to change that. But for the betterment of our country and our people, you have to look at things. And to some extent, the parties are overly similar because the DUP for generations has been a big working class Unionist people and the needs of those people, to some extent, Sinn Fein have the same ofr their community. So what the working class community and the Unionist community's needs are reflects the same needs in the nationalist community. And therefore there are circumstances where both parties have agreed on. Even when the Assembly was functioning, look at some of the votes the transitional assembly took. They couldn't change anything, but they were still voting on issues which they then sent to the Secretary of State for consideration. But parties agreed. When it comes down to everyday things, things that affect everybody in our country, the parties can agree. It will be a battle a day, as I believe Gerry Adams has stated and Peter Robinson couldn't disagree with. When you look at the executive and you look at the policies that the different parties have, Sinn Fein's policy on academic selection is a total removal of that academic selections. I'm not sold on marinating the 11+. I did it. I passed. Got whatever education I got. But, I didn't enjoy it at ten and eleven years of age being forced to sit down at night and revise to try to get your eleven plus. That's a lot pressure for someone at that age. .Now, I see that it will be maintained. But Sinn Fein has the ministry of education, and the first proposals which they send are going to be for abolishing the 11+ system. And the DUP will then use their veto to say, no you're not going to get it. The fact that you need a majority of Unionist and Nationalists to agree on something before it can go through the assembly, which is a silly form of government if you ask me, will be the most daftest set of government form any country. From a government in our position, we have an opposition and yet the opposition is in government. It certainly doesn't square the circle when it comes to a form of government. But, that's what we have. We certainly are proposing and going to be looking at some other form for the period of this assembly. Whether it changes or not is another thing. But whenever it comes to the assembly given the fact that we don't need the UUP votes to get something refused, we say no. So then it has to come to the department. The minister has to bring more proposals and it goes round in a circle until you get something that can be brought about that we all can agree on. There is now a form of government that no matter what, there are controls in place, or vetoes, that ensures no matter what parties demand there can be a compromise. But the fact remains that if you look at the history of the two former ministerial posts we had, we did what was best for Northern Ireland. Not what was best for Sinn Fein or any other of the parties? Look at Martin McGuinness in the Education post. He discriminated in Mid-Ulster, my own constituency, at times three to one for funding in favor of Catholic schools. I have no problems funding a Catholic or integrated or protestant held school as long as it is on an equal basis. One isn't getting more than the other because the minister thinks that it will serve his purpose. It just so happened to be his constituency. It served his purpose to provide this funding for these other schools. Those flaws in that system are no longer there. Any decision that they attempt to take we can veto. So unless we get

what we want. I mean, let's be realistic about it, we have the number of votes there to insure that as far as some of the issues we feel strongly about, they cannot put through unless we agree to. This talk of Sinn Fein pushing through whatever they want is just not true. Some of the things that the UUP gave up when it negotiated the GFA, I don't understand why they did it. They sold our country out. If you want to look at it from a Unionist prospective, they sold us out. They brought us closer to a United Ireland than we have ever been without anyone ever being able to stop them. I think that we can have a form of government here for the people and do what we said we would do and bring. And that is accountability. Any form of government has to be about accountability. If you make a decision, you have to be accountable. We need to have accountability and full controls. We are about providing good government for Northern Ireland.

**3. *What do you make about this idea of a DUP party split? Is this something that is taking place within the party?***

- To be honest with you, I feel it has been blown out of the water. Yes, there are disagreements, as every party has disagreements. Some can't keep it within the party and they have never been able to keep it within the party. And therefore, some people have had to do what they thought needed to be done over the past couple of weeks. I don't believe that there is anything to gain by resigning my seat. It's been talked about. People have suggested to me that, why don't I stand for what I believe in and resign your seat? What is there to gain from me doing that? If someone goes in in my place that isn't as strong in their principles, that doesn't really mind Sinn Fein in government and wanted to work the system as far as making sure that my constituents get the best out of what comes out of any executive or any decisions. But I don't believe that there is a split within the party. Certainly, I'm sure, that some have a direction they may feel is better. But when I think that it comes down to it, the party knows that the negotiations that we have made and the things that we have been able to draw back as far as what concessions were given, that when it comes to it, that the achievement we have got, we are united. We are united on the issues of accountability over the vetoes and ensuring that there are no rogue ministers as they were called at the time. I would certainly not accept that the party is splitting.

**4. *Do you see any future need for the likes of the UUP or the SDLP in the future political realms of Northern Ireland?***

Personally, I think that the UUP is a party that is on the brink of disaster. I think that they still have a few numbers. They still have a party structure, but perhaps it won't be as strong as it was in the last election. Certainly there are benefits. We take their seats. There are benefits for us as a party because it makes our position stronger. It helps our right to demand for an actual government with opposition because if we have the majority that's all that will be needed. Because, then nothing would happen without our say in anything. But to be honest, it is more important, there is something more than party that I have looked at, and that is Unionism. I'm a democratic Unionist. I'm a loyalist, a protestant, whatever you wish to call me. I've been called worse, I can assure you! When it boils down to it, if you look at the figures and the way the votes transferred, if you look

close at it. Where we could have picked up some extra seats, the Ulster Unionist transfers, the DUP could have picked up a third seat. Unionism could have picked up a fourth seat. But, when the Ulster Unionist votes transfer, they were either transferring in small numbers to the DUP in-between numbers to the SDLP and the alliance, but alliance didn't even need them, or they didn't even transfer at all. So when it came down to it, when the Unionist could have taken the seat of the SDLP, it turned out that because the UUP transfers didn't work on our favor, it handed the seat to the SDLP. We can say that we are not happy with that, but should we be looking at this from a party point of view or as a Unionist family. But I think we need to look at the whole system. Of transferring votes within the Unionist family. Take seats off the nationalist community and not ourselves. If we can take it off of the UUP, well and good. With our mandate, I think that it will happen and increase in numbers whenever people see how this system is such a far better system than what the UUP were working towards. But I think it is important that given that the number of Unionists reduced from the last assembly to now, we need to take them off of the Nationalist community is more important, or for me, than taking it from the Unionist community,. Yes I'd like to see the UUP wiped out. I believe that they sold us out. There are a few of them that stood firm, but I think that we have them now. But from what I can see from those who have been returned, there are not many that I would want within our party structure, never mind that too many of them wouldn't want to be in our party. But I think it is inevitable that it will happen over the next number of years. The UUP will blunder away. They can't win the seats. They are no longer the voice on Unionism. They no longer have the Unionist community in their back pocket anymore. But the Unionist community has obviously spoken and we heard them loud and clear. And I believe that they will speak even louder in the future. But that's as long as we don't do what the UUP did, and that is cutting one's own throat. If we are seen to do what they did, and I don't believe we will, and I can assure I certainly won't be letting it happen. It's more important to take seats off nationalists than it is to take them off of Unionists.

**5. *Is there an issue which will cause you to leave the table today, an issue which will cause this executive to close down?***

- I obviously have my concerns over the whole situation. I think to be honest with you, off the top of my head, I can't think of anything that I could honestly say today if this does or doesn't happen I would leave. Obviously, something big happens and the IRA is involved in another murder or bank robbery or something that the IRA was involved in, then there is no question or doubt that me and the party need to be there to force them out of it, or be there to force the government to make the decision to remove Sinn Fein from that structure. The ball is totally in their court. They are the ones who needs to prove their credentials. We're ready and waiting, as we have said, to get this all done. They are the ones who have to prove that when they say that they have changed, they have actually changed. When they say they are signing up to policing, that they do to the entirety, not political policing, civil policing, or whatever they want to paint a picture of. It's policing in its entirety. I believe that there are interesting days ahead. I believe that where we have probably had to change some of the policies which we have had with regards to accepting them into institutions, but I think that Sinn Fein have had to give a lot more than what we

have. To be honest, I don't understand why they have done some of the things and agreed to some of the things they have agreed to. It's not to their benefit. If you look at the policing and justice, where they have said that they will be the minister for policing and justice, they sold it to their electorate at their election. The Irish language act that they have sold. They have said they are getting the Irish language act. It won't be. Because unless we agree to it within the structures that are there within the executive and assembly, they won't have an Irish Language Act. But the policing and justice can never happen because it has four hurdles to overcome, and that is if Sinn Fein were to ever happen to get the Minister for that department. There first has to be an agreement between the first and deputy first minister to devolve the institution to start with. It has to then go to the executive for the executive to approve it. And the executive ministers within our party, using the veto that it has forces it to the assembly. The assembly then has to approve it. The fact that we have the majority of Unionists votes and we don't need the UUP's votes to stop it means we can block it there. But if it were to get passed all those things, say we decided that the policing and justice that it was time to do it, there has to be an agreed minister with the first and deputy first minister agreeing with this person. And there is no way that the DUP will agree to Sinn Fein becoming that minister. And therefore, they never can have that office. So by them telling their community that this is what they are achieving, I don't know what they are actually going to have achieved, other than getting into government. But really, they haven't achieved anything for their negotiations. I yet am waiting to see what they have achieved out of their negotiations, because when you look at it, realistically, their accountability is lost, the rogue ministers is lost, the total block against anything they put forward is there. And so I don't see what benefits they have.

Interview with Daithi McKay  
Sinn Fein MLA  
April, 16 2007  
Stormont Office

1. *Would you mind starting with some things about yourself, perhaps what led up to you getting involved in politics?*

- I always hate these questions! Well, I was born in Ballymena, North Antrim, which is considered Ian Paisley's heartland. We lived there for a couple of years then left for a place called Recharde. It was really nice. It was a Republican area. Went to school in Ballymena and technical college after that.

It's hard to put the finger on what spurred me down the political route. Ballymena always had a reputation of being a violent, sectarian place. It still does to some extent. The experiences at that time in school, there was that sectarian thing. If you went to the bus station, or certain parts of the town and you were wearing your uniform, you became a target. So maybe that had something to do with it.

I joined Sinn Fein about six years. I more or less threw myself into the party at that stage. He had our own emphasis, our own target of achieving a united Ireland. A united Ireland based on equality, and certainly a big issue in North Antrim is equality and sectarianism and sectarian attacks. Just three days ago, or perhaps last week, there was a factory in Ballymena was raided by the police. One of the managers there had been keeping information on Republicans and brought ammunition with him into the factory. That factory has a bad employment record of Catholics and the very fact that he felt safe to store that information and ammunition speaks volumes for itself. But certainly a number of our members were called by the police over the weekend in regard to that in that their information was stored there. The man concerned, he's only been charged at this stage, has been charged with UVF membership. It's shocking, but it's not surprising, certainly from where we come from and certainly every year, even last year you have attacks in Ballymena town. And you have those attacks and instances occurring on an ongoing basis. From the local perspective, we want to see the big moves made by the DUP in terms of power-sharing and signing up to equality in these institutions. We would like to see that farther down in society and in their own community so all of this sectarianism and attacks of the past can come to an end.

2. *Do you do a lot of cross-community work yourself?*

- We do, certainly. I'm still kind of new to being a political representative. I've been a councilor for two years at Ballymena. And obviously, I've only just been elected to the assembly here. But, you know we were at a Presbyterian Church function a couple of weeks ago. We were made very welcome. And obviously being a Republican, we believe in equality, no difference between Catholic, Protestant or anything else. That's the kind of Ireland we want to promote, one based on equality. That's something we are certainly working on. We've now appointed a unionist outreach spokesperson. What we have to try and do now is reach out to Unionist communities which have stereotypical images of ourselves. We need to go in there and dispel certain myths about Republicans and we need to improve community relations and I think that the first major steps have now been taken. It has been a case in the past that we have sent correspondence in the past to certain churches within in my own area to see if we could have a meeting to see if we could try and resolve issues within the community. There was either no response or one that said we do not wish to meet with ourselves at this time. So hopefully we'll see the barriers come down, much more so now after the events of recent weeks.

**3. *Is the current set of political arrangements between Sinn Fein and the DUP stable enough to maintain in this executive?***

- I think it will be. I think looking at how the UUP approached power-sharing from 1998 onward was one foot in one foot out. And I think that many in the Unionist community interpreted that as weakness. So I think that is why Ian Paisley and the DUP have crossed the river now and they are doing so in a clear cut fashion. Certainly the press conference between Gerry Adams and other members of our party demonstrated that. I think that thing has been crossed now and I don't think there is any going back, which is a good thing. I know that the DUP has been making certain comments over the past few weeks about how Sinn Fein will not be able to do anything without our say so as we have a veto over this that and the other. But you know it's symmetrical. The DUP won't be able to do anything without our say so within the executive. The end result of all of that is that there will have to be ongoing negotiations and political meetings within the executive. We'll have to work together as a collective unit. And in reality, two, the office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister, both are equal positions as a partnership. Ian Paisley is not anymore senior than Martin McGuinness. The only difference is the name and the title. So when the DUP accepts equality in these institutions, it's a massive step forward in our point of view. We'll accept that at this point.

**4. *Would there be any certain spoiler for the entire process as you see it now?***

- I think there are a lot of subjects that are going to be spoilers. But it seems to be mainly bread and butter issues. I mean education is obviously a big one. We are opposed to academic selection we as the two Unionist parties are not. And it seems to have cut down the political lines between the two nationalist republican parties and the Unionist parties. But obviously we have the minister for education, it was our first choice. Martin McGuinness did a lot of good work which was acknowledged throughout the community

in his tenure as minister. We want to continue where we left off with in that regard. So there are going to be difficulties over education.

There are also going to be difficulties over the Irish Language and a Bill of Rights and so on. I think that we are still moving forward. There are many within the DUP who want to see this process move backward and in the opposite direction and that just is not going to happen. Within the working of the assembly, farther process will be made. Perhaps at this stage I can't predict the pace of that, but it is certainly going to move forward.

**5. *Is there any one issue which would cause you to leave your seat and leave the Assembly?***

- There are none that I can see on the political horizon which would make me do that at this stage. I think the strategy we are taking at this moment; there are problems around the policing issue. We'll see how that goes in the forth coming month. But I think in terms of the Republican/Nationalist community they understand what are strategy is about. And they understand what this is about that in the end of the day this is about taking power away from the British government and the British security forces which have been the cause for collusion. Obviously, we are a Republican party and we will try to farther our all-Ireland policies within this assembly. And even the DUP has recognized that there are benefits to all Ireland cooperation. They will be taking there places within those institutions also. In terms of any possible hiccups which would make me leave the party or the assembly, I can't see any at this stage.

**6. *There has been a lot of talk about a split within the DUP. What do you think about this? Is this something Sinn Fein is looking forward to or trying to avoid?***

- Well in terms of the DUP split, it has been most visible in my own constituency of North Antrim. There have been a number of councilors, five or six, which have left the party. We would prefer it that the DUP has taken this step and recognized our mandate and our right to exercise power within these institutions; we would prefer that the whole of the Unionist community accepted that as well. A split, especially in North Antrim, isn't going to be beneficial for Sinn Fein. There are many difficulties there, as everyone has outlined, in terms of sectarian attacks. And also the parades issue and so on. They only way to resolve those issues is through dialogue and mutual respect. And obviously those people who left the DUP are definitely opposed to all of that. So I don't think that it will benefit us in that regard.

**7. *Are there any external factors which are going to exasperate the situation of this newly forming executive, perhaps barring the influence of the British government?***

- I can't think of any. I was going to say the British government, but you've taken that out of the equation. I think most of the matters can be resolved internally within the assembly. Obviously we would like to remove the external influence of the British government as well as the British agencies such as MI5 and MI6 who still have their own agendas to play in all of this. We are also aware of the fact that MI5 are building

buildings in the north here. But regardless of that, we realize the fact that MI5 will be here anyway, regardless if there is protesting here or not. But we will continue to work to make sure that they go home and across the water again. In terms of other external factors, obviously the United States has been one of the major external players. Particularly during Bill Clinton's tenure and less so now that George Bush is in charge. And obviously from that point of view, the likes of George Mitchell did have a positive role to play and he wouldn't have had any vested interest. Obviously the British governments like to portray themselves as a peace keeper. Or they like to portray the situation as a war between two communities, when it's been proved that the British army and British government was as much a player as anyone else. I mean, when the British army came here in 1969, they came here under the Stormont administration and to quell this civil disturbance. And before that for fifty years since the establishment of this state, the British government did nothing when inequality and discrimination was made out against the Catholic community. They can't wash their hands from all of this. So obviously the American government and other external bodies and groups which have no vested interest, I think that if they do become involved or if there is a need for them to become involved, I think that would be pretty useful. Certainly not from anyone who had a vested interest in the conflict here.

**8. *Is there any wish by Sinn Fein to completely overtake the SDLP or do you see any need for these two parties? Would it be easier to rid the executive of two parties which are seemingly without much say and instead centralize the power with the DUP and Sinn Fein?***

- I think that at this stage, the people have spoken. There is a mandate for all of the different parties. Obviously, we have gained seats, to the detriment of the SDLP, but also to the Unionist parties who lost 6 to Sinn Fein as well. And I think that there are always going to be people voting for the SDLP or the Ulster Unionist Party and I wouldn't sign the death nail for those particular parties just yet. But obviously we look forward to working with all the parties in the executive. And as long as it is on the basis of mutual cooperation and respect, we will have no problem with that. I think, from my own personal point of view, the SDLP still focus solely on Sinn Fein and anytime we are working with the SDLP on a local level, they are attacking us just as much as the DUP. And for us, the focus has to be on parties which are a front for the British governments and in terms of the DUP and UUP. The focus has to be on them. Obviously there are times and there are differences between us and the SDLP that we will obviously speak to those. We don't see any benefit in antagonizing the SDLP all the time. We should be working closer together. We don't have a lot of friends within the political parties. Obviously the Unionist parties have always been opposed to us, and will continue to be so. The DUP have recognized the reality now that our mandate and our representation aren't going to go away. We're just going to have to deal with that. But I think we have shown the way in terms, we are an all Ireland party. We are the only all Ireland Party. We recognize the fact that parties like the green are going towards more all Ireland cooperation. And we would like to see parties like Fianna Fail if they call themselves Republicans, to start organizing themselves here as well. We think that that would be beneficial in helping to achieve a United Ireland. We would ask that parties like the

SDLP and Fianna Fail certainly look at those options. But obviously it's a case of parties on both sides of the border playing off each other. If there is an election in the North, it's kind of weird. You've got Fianna Fail, the progressive democrats and the greens all canvassing for the SDLP. You've got four different political parties. We wouldn't have any association with them because we disagree with their policies. Were as the SDLP sees it as somebody from down south, regardless of their political background, would just rule them out. Particularly given some of the right-wing policies which the Progressive Democrats have, I think that it's bizarre that the SDLP are willing to mate up here.

**9. *Do you have any other political aspirations other than just being an MLA, or are you thinking of perhaps moving on to a higher seat?***

- I don't really have any political aspirations. I never really aspired to be a councilor or an elected representative. But then, here I am. The way I look at it is you have to keep your feet on the ground, because the people vote for you. They can vote you in and they can vote you out. Besides from that there is a bigger game at stake. Obviously we are playing for a united Ireland based on equality and social justice, and mutual respect. So we have to remain focused on that goal. In terms of my involvement with Sinn Fein, I will do what my ability dictates. If that's as an elected representative, or if that is a job behind the scenes or if that's just as a Sinn Fein activist at the local level, that's what I'll be doing. Because, in our party, we don't get the full wage from the assembly. The party gets the wage and cuts it. We only make the average industrial wage. All the other parties get the big, over 30,000. We just get the average industrial wage. So we're definitely not in this for a career.

Interview with Martina Purdy  
 Political Correspondent  
 BBC Northern Ireland  
 BBC Headquarters, Belfast  
 April 13, 2007

**1. *To begin with, could you tell me your name and perhaps a little bit about what you do here at the BBC?***

- My name is Martina Purdy, like the shotgun. And I am the political correspondent, one of two. I have worked here since about 1999. Grew up in Canada. I've written a book called "Room 21: Stormont Behind Closed Doors" which looks at the rise and fall of the last power sharing executive. So that's basically it. I've been a journalist since 1991. I did undergrad at university of Toronto and post-grad at Roush in Toronto. And then I did a bit of training here. And so I've been back and forth since 90-91 and then I just settled here in 91.

**2. *You have recently been working on the current political context at the Northern Ireland Assembly. Could please tell me some more about that work?***

- Yes. I mean my job in politics started about the same time as the multi-party negotiations in 1996. I covered those talks. So we've been covering the ups and downs of the peace-process and obviously this new attempt to have a power-sharing government in place by May 8<sup>th</sup>.

**3. *What exactly are your thoughts on this new power-sharing government? Does it stand a chance to last longer this time around?***

- I think that it does stand a good chance. It depends really on the attitudes of the two main players and if they are committed as they say they are to making this work, then there shouldn't be any reason why it isn't stable. The previous administration fell in part because the people who were pledged to make it work were fighting. Mainly, Sinn Fein was fighting constantly with the Ulster Unionist leader over the issue of decommissioning. Policing issues tensions were still there. So big issues. These two twin peaks of decommissioning and policing weren't settled. So that last administration was basically built on a fault line. Adding to the problems, another fault line, you've got policing, decommissioning and there is a lack of trust there. And you also have the DUP outside, half in and half out, agitating, fighting for political advantage. I don't think they wanted to bring it down, as much as improve their own position by keeping it a float. So they kept the pressure on all the times. But I wouldn't credit the DUP with pulling it down because there were other pressures there. There was obviously

this issue. When Trimble took over, he was still fighting a war on two fronts. He was fighting the DUP, but he was also fighting with his new partner in government because he hadn't settled. Yet he wasn't satisfied in his own mind that republican leadership was committed and he wanted the decommission issues. So, then you have the whole issue of the ongoing IRA in the last administration and Columbia three and all the other messing that went with that. Now we still haven't established what was going on there, but was it a case of the IRA hadn't concluded its journey or still trying to keep its options open? It seems the issue of armed struggle has now been closed out as an option and Sinn Fein are now on a purely political path. But, you just never know what banana skins lay on the road. And, you know three is still an element and some people say that Sinn Fein may want to split the DUP. So they will bed down for awhile, but there may be troubles down the road, because cohesive unionism is not may be in their interest. Because as the DUP continues to grow and there is still that split in nationalism between the SDLP which hasn't been seen off, is that to Sinn Fein's strategic advantage to drive a wedge between Unionism again and have them fighting with each other and weak. Because if Northern Ireland works and you have all of this stability, how do you achieve Irish Unity? On the other hand, people say no that's not the strategy. The strategy is to make sure the Ian Paisley sells peace, sells power sharing, beds down this agreement and you use Stormont as a stepping stone to Irish unity defacto United Ireland with ministers on both sides of the border. And Sinn Fein is still obviously seeking power in Dublin, but trying to establish a situation where they are running Belfast and Dublin. I can't tell you which one of those is an accurate scenario, but the way it seems now is that Sinn Fein seems to be very happy that the DUP are committed to this. Ian Paisley is a more confident unionist. He's taking his people with him. He's had some causality but nothing major. Where as, Trimble, he was in a much more difficult position. He didn't always play his cards in the best ways. Because, if you recall, he met Gerry Adams in the aftermath of the Omagh bomb and in the aftermath of the Clinton visit in September 1998, and on the back of that he did agree to meet Adams, but it was behind closed doors, no cameras allowed. So it was treated as if it was something to be ashamed of, this peace keeping and peace-making. And I don't think that helped his credibility, because Unionists were made suspicious then, like he's obviously not sure himself. So he kept sending out mixed signals. You know, but again, Sinn Fein are doing a lot more, Republicans are doing a lot more for Ian Paisley than they ever did for Trimble. Now is that because they didn't trust Trimble? Didn't like the way he was handling things? Didn't think he could deliver? Or was it because they too were in a situation where they were not in the driving seat. They still had to see off the SDLP. So Sinn Fein, by continuing this battle with Unionism was fostering a certain amount of resentment within Nationalism that things weren't working and that did drive their political voting powers up. From that point of view, Sinn Fein might have done more had they been in the Deputy First Ministers office, had they been working with Trimble. But they were only a junior party then and maybe Adams didn't have the clout that he had subsequently as the largest party here now. So, I think there are a lot of games being played. A lot of strategies being played out. Now you have a situation where you have these two power blocks are more confident, they have more or less seen off their opponents. Their opponents aren't out but there down. And they could very well make it work. And certainly the Chemistry already seems to be better between Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley than it was between Mallon and Trimble. Although I would stress there was also a honeymoon period in the last administration.

**4. *Would you agree with the statement that the UK government and the Irish government have helped to push the DUP and Sinn Fein respectively into the role of the two largest parties?***

- Well not entirely. I think it is more complex than that. And sometimes I think Blair was kinda of pushing the DUP in the direction that Sinn Fein wanted them to go. So I think Sinn Fein would have been well disposed at times to number 10 Downing Street. Again, Bertie Adhern, smoothing some DUP feathers while ruffling some Sinn Fein ones. So I think it was a bit more complicated. Because I remember during the Trimble years Bertie Adhern formed a very strong alliance with David Trimble to the annoyance at times of Sinn Fein. It's almost like you stole our guy, he's supposed to be my guy. So it's not so straight forward as London simply pushing Unionism. They do push their respective caps. But again, it is in both London and Dublin's interests to have a good relationship with the other party. So you had this historic meeting again with Bertie Adhern and Paisley But again if you're sitting in Dublin and you're the Taoiseach there's no good in just forming a positive relationship with Nationalism. And if you do want stability on your doorstep and you do want to reunify Ireland, then you're going to need to have a good relationship with the leaders of Unionsism as well.

**5. *Is reunification a feasible idea?***

- Well, it depends really. I mean, I think the jury is still out on this. What the Good Friday agreement did was create a level playing field. So unionism didn't necessarily have a leg up anymore. Basically the fate of Northern Ireland is now in the hands of its people, very firmly. And so instead of fighting one another with war machinery, you've got a situation now where the two tribes have to charm and disarm is what I like to call it. The IRA has disarmed, the loyalists haven't yet, but you've got them saying that they are committed to a very peaceful path and their principles are of a purely democratic method. So what they have to do with each other is charm each other. So Gerry Adams has to charm a million Unionists towards Irish unity and convince them that is where their fate lies. And similarly, unionism, if it wants to survive, has to build such a little palace in the North of Ireland, or Northern Ireland, that nationalists don't feel the need to go. Why change the status quo? I think that it depends on a lot of factors. Republicans are hoping that through working through the institutions and through more North-South cooperation and through moving away from this reliance on London and maybe resenting the fact that London isn't being finically supportive. I'm thinking more along the lines of Irish unity and how to build economic relationships on the Island. But unionism will no longer want to thrive and basically what would be the logic of it? But it's a bit naive to think that people who see themselves as British are going to abandon their nationalism anymore than a Republican is going to abandon theirs. But since the end of the troubles, I do notice this blurring of the edges where you meet Catholics who are nationalists who are dyed in the wool over this whole issue of unity. I'm sure in the troubles people get entrenched. So I'm sure if you would have asked them, in 1990 do you want Irish unity? They would have said, yes I'd vote for it in the morning. But now, 15 years on, their life is good. They feel they have equal status. Do they feel they want to go down south and lose some

of their benefits, or do they want to align themselves with a health service that is going to charge them for scans? I think it's going to come down to a lot of purely pragmatic issues. Romantic ideals will be there, but a lot of it depends on economic progress. Again, you're looking at the Celtic tiger. Increasingly there is a lot of envy in the business working class. So there are a lot of factors that will drive this.

**6. *Do you feel that either the DUP or Sinn Fein is pushing to minimize the coalitions and minimize the UUP and the SDLP? How long do you feel it will take to completely minimize the other two parties?***

- Yes. Well I think that is the goal of each of those parties. Whether they succeed or not, they won't do anything in the immediate term because they need this thing to bed down. So there is going to be at least one term where you're going to have a four party executive. But do they then start paring them back? I think ultimately we have too many departments. And if you going to bring in a justice department and the target date next year, and your going to get rid of one of them, and that is going to be employment and learning right there. So the Ulster Unionists aren't going to have two ministries for long. So there is going to be a bit of argument about that. I think those two will carve it up as best they can. On the other hand then, do the other two parties then go into the opposition? See a weakness of the current administration is that there is no serious viable opposition. Therefore parties will get away with an awful lot. And all of this collectivity leads to don't leak anything on me and I won't leak anything on you. I think they will pair it down. I'm not entirely convinced that they will see off their rivals so easily, because if the rivals go into a period of opposition and Sinn Fein and the DUP are increasingly judged not on the Constitutional issues, on who is greener and who is more orange, but on bread and butter issues, then people, the fickle public, do get annoyed if you're closing their hospital. So I think the longer term prospects of these two parties isn't as bad as some people might think if they can get their acts together. It's going to very much depend on how the new ministers will perform. And if Sinn Fein and the DUP prove that they can deliver very well on bread and butter issues then they probably are not going to be around.

**7. *How do you cover a subject like the politics in Northern Ireland which is very emotionally charged and how do you not allow your own personal prejudices shine into your reporting?***

- That a difficult questions. It's difficult. I think all journalists have that problem. But it is particularly pronounced in a divided society. Going through the Canadian journalist thought, if your mother tells you that she loves you, check it out. Clearly you have this healthy skepticism. But on the other hand, I think the difficulty is here, people don't necessarily want objectivity in their reporting. They want your sympathy. This is very difficult because people want to know what box do you neatly fit in? Are you from a unionist family, a prominent Republican family, are you nationalist, you know, where are you from? They don't need to ask you either. They can just work it out. So sometimes you're in this box which you then have to work from that position. You have to build

trust. Then you have to get people from your own community to not necessarily assume that you automatically in their camp. So there is that aspect. And when you are reporting on a divided society, there is no agreement on language, and language is very important. You take the other main city, some call it Derry, and others like the Unionists call it Londonderry. So the minute you say Londonderry and you immediately are offending one side of the community and making the other side happy. We have a rule in here that it is Londonderry first then Derry after that. But again, there is no agreement during the conflict if it was a war or if it was a terrorist campaign. Now everybody calls it a war, but during the troubles you weren't allowed to call it a war. The other thing is that nobody could agree on the causes of the conflict. The DUP and the unionist all thought that it was the IRA's fault. The IRA blamed the British and the Unionists. You also just don't have an agreement on the causes of it. This also makes it very difficult. It hasn't been an easy situation and I think journalists have done a fairly good job.

8. *Do you feel that you side or have more sympathy towards one side or the other?*

- No, I do not. I consider myself an observer, one who is from outside of here, but still lives here. I don't think any journalist has any business siding with one side or the other. Good journalists have strong views, but you have to be conscious of your own biases.

Interview with Sue Ramsey  
Sinn Fein MLA  
Stormont  
Monday, April 16<sup>th</sup> 2007

**1. *Would you mind beginning by telling me a little bit more about yourself, including where you are elected from?***

- Well, my name is Sue Ramsey. I'm an MLA for west Belfast. I've lived in West Belfast all of my life. I was born in Springhill. Then my family moved to Timbrook just before the start of the second hunger strike in 1981. I've lived there ever since.

**2. *Do you see this new executive working? Will this executive work longer than the previous executive? Why or why not?***

- Yes I do. Not only lasting longer, but I see that there will probably be better outcomes this time around. In saying that, the last executive, I wouldn't say that it was a forced coalition, was made up of two of the parties, really all for, but mostly the SDLP and the Ulster Unionists who tried to cut out the other two parties which is ourselves and the DUP. The reason that I say I wouldn't call it a forced coalition is that it's an extension of the Good Friday agreement. It was an agreement by all of the parties with the exceptions of one or two. It's just a pity that we weren't there a good ten years ago. And that is why I don't see this as a forced coalition. It's people coming together for the common good. Possibly from different ends of the political spectrum, but for the common good.

**3. *Is there any one issue that you see being a spoiler for this executive causing it to fall?***

- Well I think that you need to compare the social justice politics with the political politics if you want. The social justice politics affect everybody. Whether you are from a deprived area or an affluent area or a middle of the road area, whether you are from a Nationalist or a Unionist area. And that all ranges from the issues of children's rights to facilities to play to water charges to people with benefits, people accessing proper resources whether that is health or education. And then you have the political politics. We are living in a different world now. In my view as an Irish Republican, the only way ahead for this country is to be united. And that will have a positive impact on the daily lives of man, woman and child, Catholic, Protestant, and dissenter. And the sooner people realize that the better. An example is that this country cannot continue to spend the amount of money that it spends with two health systems, two education systems, and all of that stuff. And I had a meeting earlier on today. There are only five beds in the North of Ireland for psychiatric children patients. We are not even able to access them. They are shipped off to England. That itself is a problem. But there's another one in the 26 counties, and they are shipped off to America. Which this is all sill you know and why

can't we get our heads together for the common good in all of this? We should be putting our resources into proper quality care and proper quality resources so that the people are getting the quality of service that they deserve.

**4. *There has been a lot of talk about a split within the DUP. Is this likely to occur and this being a major factor in whether this executive will work?***

- I don't know. I don't want to speak for the DUP because I am not a member of *that* party. But what I can say is that people automatically think that the Sinn Fein leadership has brought the Sinn Fein supporters and the Nationalist community with them, which is true. But it wasn't just for the sake of bringing people with them. The people who vote for us are the people who represent us are not just sheep. Our leadership and our structures actually took us through this process, brining people to get engaged in the community and done all of that stuff. So you know that there wasn't two people waking up in the morning and saying that there was going to be a power-sharing executive. We took people through that process and allowed them to make up their own minds based on the information that we had available to us and the information which we were able to give. So I think that was useful. Some people don't see that and only see Sinn Fein as following behind the leadership of Gerry or Martin, and it's not that. We are strong, independent people and we have our own views. But there are some people are going to have problems with some parts of the process. That's fair enough. We're not clones we're not robots. The DUP, I think, probably need to do that at a constituency level. If there is a split, we need to deal with it collectively. We need to give the DUP space to deal with that. But I wouldn't like to be negative and say that if there is split that this will happen and that will happen. We'll not know. I think that everybody here just want to work towards the executive and getting the all Ireland institutions all up and running and collectively work for the common good.

Interview with Peter Weir  
 DUP MLA  
 Stormont  
 April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007

**1. *If you do not mind, please start of by telling me a little bit about yourself, what got you into politics and who you represent.***

- Ok. I've been involved in politics for about 20 years. Previously I was with the Ulster Unionist party and was actually elected to the assembly as an Ulster Unionist in 1998. Whenever I was elected some of us were quite hostile towards the Belfast agreement which eventually led to a split between myself and the Ulster Unionist party in 2001 and 2002. I joined the DUP and I've been an elected representative for the DUP ever since, for about the last five years or so.

**2. *What was the catalyst for you moving from the UUP to the DUP?***

- I guess in the short term, I was actually kicked out of the Ulster Unionist party. That was one of the catalysts. I think that the attitudes between towards the Belfast agreement created a fracture in Unionism. In particular it created a crack within the heart of the Ulster Unionist party in which the splits over the agreement of that become more and more acrimonious between people. For a long period there was almost an undeclared civil war between the Ulster Unionist parties. There was a period which it was unclear who was going to emerge triumphant. It became fairly clear in the end that there was a majority of people within the party that was for David Trimble's policies. It became less and less credible for people to remain in the Ulster Unionist party. Consequently, the people who were in objection to the agreement defected and got out.

**3. *Do you feel that there is a need to minimize coalitions in the sense that the UUP and the SDLP need to be eliminated from government? Do they still serve a purpose with such an overwhelming mandate as the DUP and Sinn Fein have?***

- I think that was is the case is I would say that it is wrong to say that there isn't a need. I think that both of those parties are trying in many ways to find a purpose for themselves. I can think at one level, they are lacking a strategic vision as to make them or differentiate themselves from the other parties that are there. Clearly take for example the SDLP point of view. The more that Sinn Fein move towards being constitutional nationalists and without the added baggage of their direct involvement in terrorism and criminality, it marginalizes the SDLP. And similarly the UUP have and are lacking a particular vision for the way forward. I think that at one level they have taken the soft option. They are going to look at internal party reform while at one level ignoring the need to develop in terms of policy. Having said that and from an Ulster Unionist

perspective it is very difficult to see precisely what niche they can carve out for themselves that necessarily gives them a better way forward.

**4. *There has been a lot of talk about a potential DUP split. Is this going to happen as you have described for the UUP over the Good Friday Agreement?***

- No. I think that this is a different situation. A couple of reasons for this. First of all I think that the UUP became a coalition of interests. And consequently, even before the Belfast Agreement, there was a high level of under-current, strong differences of opinion, personality clashes. It hadn't become as manifest as need. I think particularly that created a situation in which the split within the UUP was about adopting policies that only about 60% of the Ulster Unionist party would be comfortable with. I think the contrast with the DUP and even similarly Sinn Fein have looked and definitely are moving forward in a particular direction. It needs to be one that can carry the vast numbers of its membership along. And consequently the comparison was that whenever proposals were put forward to the DUP, the DUP put forward its own proposals. In March of this year, it had an executive that endorsed that, with a little over 90%. By contrast the Ulster Unionists were prepared to start off in a position in which about a third of their party was hostile from day one which then because of subsequent events grew. So I don't think that the two are in any way bearing any sort of comparison.

**5. *So is it fair to say that the DUP has brought its people with them in this new effort?***

- Yeah. I mean, I think that there are obviously concerns which will need to be worked out over time. But as to the scale of things, I think that there is a vastly difference in what was there with the Ulster Unionist party.

**6. *There is a lot of talk about the UUP had given up too much in the Good Friday agreement. Do you feel that the DUP has brought Unionism back to its rightful place?***

- I think that we brought a certain amount of that back. I think the problem was that we were starting in a position which certain things and many things had already been given away. Which then they couldn't necessarily be retrieved. So for example with regards to the Belfast Agreement, it has become essentially a historic event. The most obvious example which many people were uncomfortable with was early prisoner release on both sides and also some of the changes involved with policing. Those at one level became things that were irretrievable very quickly. I think on some of the constitutional side of things, the accountability mechanisms, the insistence, in particular those who encourage terrorism needed to demonstrate upfront clear commitments through peaceful democratic means. I think we did hold out for those and we were able to retrieve those. I think that there was always a large element, and I know that everything got can be entirely perfect, but with the UUP they were so keen to make things work it was a question of jump, keep your fingers crossed, and everything will be alright. Were as we have tended to take the view that is things are going to be stable, things need to be sorted out from the start. I think it is also the case that one of the criticisms which was made internally within the Ulster Unionist party at that time was that the leadership was settling for too low a price

and indeed pressure was maintained on Sinn Fein and certain things could be delivered politically, for example in terms of decommissioning and the police. But there was a very different tactic employed by David Trimble which was to try and draw Sinn Fein into the process which would eventually lead to them taking these actions. Now I think that Sinn Fein were prepared to duck, as is the case with most political parties. Once they had achieved what they wanted to achieve, they were prepared to duck anymore of the more difficult questions. That was part of the problem.

**7. *Come power-sharing and devolution on May 8<sup>th</sup>, is this an executive that is going to last and be stable?***

- It seems to be that the structures are fairly stable. Now, whether or not in its existing form, one that carries on precisely in the existing form, for the long term can be questioned because I think that there are certain things in maybe the longer term which may show that it is not an ideal system of government. You have a system which doesn't particularly promote a great deal of opposition within the system. And consequently I suspect that some of that will internalize and you will get a situation where there are struggles within the executive and within the assembly. However, I think that the overall structure is that barring actions from an external nature, it is a lot more likely to be longer lasting than what was there before. We are not going to have this sense that this is going to work on the events of future events going our way. We have tried to get that right from the start. And consequently it is a much more stable structure.

**8. *Is there an issue which will cause people or yourself to step away from the table and the executive?***

- It is difficult to see that immediately. I suppose the one thing that makes it a possibility, but it seems that a lot of that is now moving away from it is in the past there have been various acts of bad behavior on behalf of Republicans in that they have essentially walked away. Now I think that structures have been put in place and indeed getting things upfront which shouldn't allow it to happen. I suspect that there will be a number of issues in which there are very difficult political impasses. But, I think that it is ones that are not going to wreck the entire system. And it will be, largely divisions on key bread and butter issues be it in education or local government, those types of things. Those are going to be quite difficult to solve. I think it is going to be difficult and I think that there is always one thing that is slight a bit hairy for stability. But, whether there is a wee bit of pressure to find resolution on is on the parading issue. Hopefully with the new review body on parades that can lead to the start of taking some of the heat out of parades. But at least there is an opportunity to bring tension. I doubt that it will bring down the executive, but I think that it has the potential to poison relationships.

**9. *Do you feel that violence has been completely taken off the table?***

- It certainly looks like that it is on the way out. It would be stupid for me to predict to say that it is completely out of the way. However, I think first of all that the longer the peace is developed and the absence of violence is developed, I think the less toleration in the

community there is for a return to violence. And consequently, even any of the groups which have been involved with violent behavior, are tended to be very much at the margins. Now there is now simple answer. Whether this is a question of this is a lack of community support of it, if you look at the republican side and the violence that has taken place on it, there has been stuff that has potentially been life-threatening. But, as I'm sure they have accesses to guns, they have not gone out and shot a member of the security forces. Now, ones got to question why that is. Ultimately there is realization that they are to some degree going through the motions of private resistance. I think that there may be a realization that actions in that nature would not be tolerated by the wider community. Similarly as there has been levels of low level violence on the loyalist side, again, the potential for sectarian murders that have been there in the past have not occurred. And consequently, it seems that the loyalist side is more of a front for some people protecting criminal empires than a strong desire from a sectarian point of view.

***10. What do you see being as the program for government in this new executive?***

- Well broadly speaking, I think that there is going to be a problem in terms of getting things put together in a very quick period of time. I suppose we are looking to see better delivery for the people of Northern Ireland. I think there is a central, I mean you can pick out particular issues like the need to deal with water charges or the need to deal with the issue of education. I think there is a big challenge for the DUP and others onboard, that when devolution occurred last time around maybe it was in part to the stop start nature or maybe enough thought had not been given to it, was that people did not see enough positive differences in their lives. I think that is the main challenge is now. And consequently, whenever the assembly collapsed in 2002 there weren't exactly riots in the streets calling for the return of Stormont because people had not seen a positive enough benefit to their lives. I think that one of the other key things is going to be the economic side of it. The economy is first too heavily dependent on the public sector and need to create a situation where you improve and increase the role of the private sector of Northern Ireland. It's going to be a very tough challenge. Also we are going to face the idea of how much we spend, in that there is a desire to do a lot of things but at the same time being under very heavy constraints. So far the treasury has not given that much of a package for this yet.

