

# Political Parties in the Northern Ireland Assembly – The Traditional Unionist Voice Party

## KEY:

JA: Jim Allister

JA: I'm Jim Allister, I am the leader of Traditional Unionist Voice, commonly referred to as TUV, and I'm the MLA for North Antrim.

*What does your Party stand for?*

Well, as a Unionist Party, we of course support the Union with Great Britain... Believe that's for the best social and economic interest of Northern Ireland. Within the Stormont set-up, we are effectively the voice of opposition in Stormont. Despite the lack of apparatus for an opposition, TUV has been the effective voice of opposition, holding to account DUP/Sinn Féin misrule in Northern Ireland, and that I suppose is our central thrust and purpose in being here.

*How has your Party changed since it was formed?*

TUV is a young party, we were only formed at the very end of 2007, so, and this is our first spell in the Northern Ireland Assembly, but I think we've made our mark. People now know and recognise the brand as the voice of opposition to what's been happening, or not happening, in Stormont.

*Do you think the Assembly and Executive are effective?*

Absolutely ineffective. They are constantly mired in deadlock, log-jammed, failing to deliver. And that's a failure of the system, no surprise to me. I say again, if parties don't have to be agreed about anything in order to be in government, when they are in government they won't agree. So if we want to solve the problem, then we have to solve the problem with Mandatory Coalition. That means getting rid of it, replacing it by Voluntary Coalition and an Opposition.

*What challenges face your Party moving forward?*

The system is of course conspiring against the growth of alternative parties within either faction, the faction of nationalism or unionism, because of the carve up that lies at the heart of the system and this absurd situation which came about after St Andrew's; that instead of the biggest tradition, which was the original Belfast Agreement, providing the First Minister, the biggest party provides the First Minister. And therefore, that creates the spectrum, which the DUP seeks to exploit, of a Sinn Féin First Minister, even though they are the smaller tradition, and that makes it more difficult for alternative Unionist parties to flourish and to grow, because of that tribal perpetuation of that situation.

### *Corporation Tax*

Stormont can't handle the powers it's got. Who in their right mind would think of giving it fiscal powers? Who in their right mind would let Stormont politicians put their hand into anyone's pocket, be it a business' pocket, or an individual's pocket? We could not afford the luxury of Corporation Tax, in those terms of what it would do to the Block Grant.

### *Voting at 16*

Well, I'm sorry, but I think that 18 is the appropriate age and, I think, it reflects a level of maturity. Not in all people, there's some very, very mature 16 year olds, and there's some very, very immature 26 year olds. But, I think, a society has to strike a balance and I think 18 is, or about, the right balance.

### *Academic Selection*

Not all kids are academically brilliant. Some kids are brilliant in terms of technology, in terms of what they can do with their hands, they're not blessed with huge academic capacity. Those kids do need to be encouraged. But those who are academic... I think it, holds both the non-academic and academic back if you don't recognise the reality that there are different potentials, and you need to develop them in different ways. And therefore, in short, I favour academic selection.

### *Student Fees*

Therefore, to have student fees, it was right to peg them as they have been pegged in Northern Ireland. It throws up discrepancies with the rest of the United Kingdom and problems there, but it's better than charging our students nine/ten thousand pounds a year, to have them pegged where they are.