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# UNITY

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## Time for reflection

AS the North continues with its inevitable malaise one thing becomes increasingly clearer.

The failure of government in this part of Ireland led by the DUP and Sinn Fein has demonstrated the folly of trying to reach a shared dispensation when the fundamental feeders of conflict have not been addressed.

20 years after the GFA, society here looks more polarised than ever and the political movement by republicans in many areas has seen little reciprocation from unionism.

Sinn Fein at least produced a strategy to deal with sectarianism and yet unionism struggles to come to terms with the end of the orange state.

A media frenzy around the arrival of the Taoiseach and Teresa May suggested that an agreement to resurrect Stormont had been agreed and the usual honourable fudge had been reached to get around the thorny issue of language and culture.

Even after all of this it became clear that the DUP negotiating team had not brought their grass roots with them.

As the media pundits pondered over the prospect of a language act and other bills to address Ulster Scots and culture it became

**By Mel Corry**

clear from the phone ins to *Nolan* and *Talkback* that it wasn't going to wash with grass roots loyalism.

Even the moderate leader of the UUP Robin Swann said it wasn't acceptable.

Arlene Foster pulled the plug and told us all that no agreement had been reached even though we all saw the draft agreement leaked by Eamon Mallie.

No surprise here as accountability has never been a strong point for the DUP.

Sinn Fein has maximised the opportunity to turn the screw.

Gerry Kelly revealed on the BBC that they had secured a side deal that would have released funds for legacy inquests, poor Sir Jeffery was caught on the hop and the British didn't deny that it was talking to Sinn Fein.

All of this takes place against a background of continued division which the current impasse has widened.

The Irish Language community will soldier on without an immediate Act. The Ulster Scots lobby will benefit in tandem.

Those campaigning for marriage equality and free safe legal abortion will continue to fight for those

rights and the families of those bereaved through the conflict by all combatants will continue to seek truth and closure on their suffering.

All this is taking place against a backdrop of daily announcements of job losses, crises in our public services and widening inequality in society.

Two British politicians, Owen Paterson and Kate Hoey have declared the GFA dead.

It would be easy to dismiss this view as going nowhere but the opportunity afforded us of a review by this milestone anniversary should not be wasted.

Whilst we still give qualified support to GFA as a mechanism to move us beyond violent conflict, we should consider the failure of politicians and civic society to adequately address sectarianism, its root causes and its continued impact on our lives.

As anti-Catholicism becomes less fashionable these days it has been replaced by anti-Irishness, a concept that serves only to embarrass liberal secular unionists.

The refusal of the unionist leadership to accept any idea of meagre recognition of an Irish Identity is in one hand a threat to the terms of the GFA but ultimately a threat to their own precious union, if they're not careful.

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**Editorial**

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## *Blame game*

*FORMER Secretary of State Peter Hain was quoted in the Irish News warning about the peace process “unravelling” due to the deadlock in restoring power-sharing.*

*Like a breath of fresh air he didn’t put any blame on Brexit. That was left to former Foyle MP Mark Durkan who claimed that Brexiteers have “betrayed” the Good Friday Agreement.*

*His statement followed on from comments made by two Tories, MEP Daniel Hannan and Owen Paterson and Labour MP Kate Hoey criticising aspects of the GFA.*

*Not to be outdone Fine Gael deputy leader Simon Coveney rowed in with the same nonsense.*

*Of course the common denominator for the three critics is that they all support Brexit so that is enough for those who have constantly argued the betrayal line.*

*Equally not to be outdone was Tony Blair who claimed the British government is sacrificing the GFA so that it can leave the Customs Union.*

*Day after day these horror stories are rolled out and pro-EU newspapers like the Irish News are only too happy to print them.*

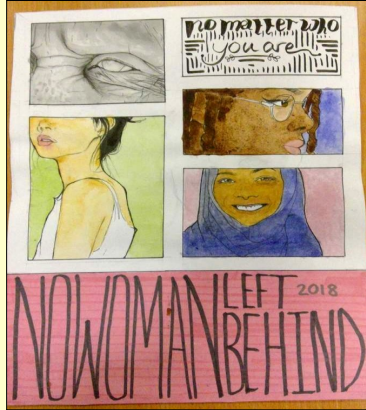
*There is a reason these people keep plodding the Brexit threatens GFA line as it means they don’t have to explain what the arch neo-liberal EU Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker meant when he said, in relation to Greece, “To suggest that everything is going to change because there is a new government in Athens is to mistake dreams for reality. there can be no democratic choice against the European treaties.”*

*However it is not just these people who have delusions about the EU and we would be at one with the statement put out by the political committee of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) where they criticised the stance of parts of the labour movement who they accused of failing working people by striving to undermine the vote to leave the EU.*

*As the statement said, “Echoing the fears of aspirations of the CBI and the City of London casino is not the same as speaking up for working class interests.”*

*The same can be said of those who fail to see the real threat to the GFA and instead constantly raise the spectre of an imaginary one.*

**Annual International  
Women’s Day March,  
and Rally, Belfast  
Saturday 10th March  
Theme this year is  
‘No Woman Left B hind’.  
Gather at Writers  
Square,  
Donegall Street 11am  
before marching to City  
Hall for speeches  
Organised by Reclaim  
the Agenda**



**Unity  
Appeal Fund**

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