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From: sbwhoep [redacted]
Sent: Monday, March 8, 2010 1:12 PM
To: H
Subject: H: latest news on NI. Empey Dumpty... Sid

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UUP policing meeting with McGuinness breaks down after three minutes

Latest row comes on eve of critical vote in Stormont assembly on transfer of justice powers from London to Belfast

- [Henry McDonald](#), Ireland correspondent
- [guardian.co.uk](#), Monday 8 March 2010 17.36 GMT
- [Article history](#)

A meeting between the Ulster Unionists and [Northern Ireland's](#) deputy first minister aimed at securing the party's support for the devolution of policing and justice broke down in acrimony this evening.

The encounter between [Martin McGuinness](#) and a UUP delegation lasted all of three minutes at Stormont.

The latest row comes on the eve of a critical vote in the Stormont assembly on transferring justice and policing powers from London to Belfast. The UUP has indicated it will not support the last act of devolution because they believe the entire power-sharing executive is dysfunctional.

Sir Reg Empey, the UUP leader, told the Guardian last month his party would not support the transfer of these powers unless it obtained concessions on education – specifically the retention of academic selection to grammar schools at 11. Following the aborted meeting today, the UUP released a statement condemning both McGuinness and Peter Robinson, the first minister, who is leader of the rival Democratic Unionist party. The UUP claimed it had been ejected from the deputy first minister's office.

A UUP spokesman said: "An ill-tempered deputy first minister attempted to aggressively lecture the Ulster Unionist party on policing and justice. He ridiculously accused us of being an anti-agreement party. Our delegation robustly reminded the deputy first minister that we were the party which brought power-sharing government to Stormont.

"Quite clearly dissent and disagreement are unacceptable to [Sinn Féin](#) – unfortunately for Mr McGuinness, a party voting against a motion with which it disagrees is basic, normal democratic politics."

The spokesman added that McGuinness's "angry and aggressive attempt to lecture" the UUP was "wholly unacceptable". "When challenged on his tone, the meeting broke down. The UUP will not take lectures on our commitment to devolution from Martin McGuinness.

"If this is how Sinn Féin understands power-sharing, then it is small wonder that the [Northern Ireland] executive is dysfunctional."

If the DUP and Sinn Féin press ahead with the vote it is highly likely that the leader of the centrist, non-sectarian Alliance party, David Ford, will become the first justice minister for Northern Ireland.

The SDLP will back the transfer of policing and justice powers in the Assembly tomorrow. However the nationalist party is angry that it is not being offered the justice ministry. Under the rules governing the hand-out of ministries in the power-sharing government the SDLP are officially entitled to choose the next ministry.

The party opposes the appointment of Ford as justice minister but will still support the transfer of these powers as they want to be seen to continue to back the power-sharing arrangement.

US Congress warns Cameron over danger of failed Ulster police deal

Yes vote on Hillsborough agreement would see policing and criminal justice powers devolved to Belfast next month

- [Nicholas Watt](#), chief political correspondent
- [guardian.co.uk](#), Sunday 7 March 2010 22.12 GMT
- [Article history](#)

US secretary of state Hillary Clinton is said to be concerned at Cameron's apparent failure to exert pressure on his UUP partners. Photograph: Karim Jaafar/AFP/Getty Images

[David Cameron](#) has been given a stark warning from Washington that dissident terrorists will be "emboldened" to intensify their attacks in [Northern Ireland](#) and millions of dollars of US investment will be threatened if he fails to persuade the Tories' Ulster Unionist partners to endorse the final stage of the peace process.

In a sign of deep unease in Washington at the Tories' electoral pact with the UUP, a bipartisan group of [US Congress](#) members have demanded Cameron must "aggressively" encourage his partners to endorse the deal in a vote in the Northern Ireland assembly on Tuesday.

"At this defining moment in the peace process, it is crucial that all the political parties speak with one voice about their shared future," the members of Congress wrote in a private letter to Cameron.

Without a unanimous vote, they said, the province's elected officials would be sending the wrong message to the people they represent, and to the world.

"Dissidents are trying to destabilise the political institutions and turn the clock back ... These dissidents will continue to be emboldened if they sense there is no political unanimity on the way forward ... The challenge of bringing good jobs to Northern Ireland will be made more difficult if potential investors do not believe there is political stability."

The letter by congressional leaders of the 41 million-strong Irish-American community has been passed to the Guardian before the crucial vote on last month's Hillsborough agreement between Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionists.

A yes vote would see policing and criminal justice powers devolved to Belfast next month in what the British government has dubbed the final piece in the jigsaw of the 1998 Good Friday agreement.

The congressmen and women, whose views reflect the private misgivings of the US secretary of state, [Hillary Clinton](#), wrote to Cameron after learning that his electoral partners in Northern Ireland were voicing doubts about endorsing the deal. Clinton is said to be alarmed that Cameron has either failed, or not bothered, to warn the UUP of the dangers of obstructing the deal.

A Tory source said: "David Cameron has consistently made clear that we support the devolution of policing and criminal justice powers ... We welcomed the agreement between the DUP and Sinn Féin. The final details are for the parties in the executive, working as a four-party coalition, to decide. We hope that between now and Tuesday any outstanding issues can be solved."

The Hillsborough agreement was brokered last month under a system endorsed by the UUP when it was the largest party in Northern Ireland. This says that any change must have the consent of 50% of both the nationalist and Unionist communities and 50% of the assembly.

Sir Reg Empey, the UUP leader who was one of the architects of the Good Friday agreement, will meet his party's executive tomorrow night to decide how to vote.

The deal could still be passed tomorrow without the support of the UUP because the DUP's 36 assembly members account for more than 50% of the unionist bloc. But there are fears in Washington that a no vote from the UUP, seen as a moribund force until Cameron breathed new life into it, would destabilise many members of the DUP and undermine support for the devolution of policing and criminal justice powers.

US eyes on Northern Ireland in countdown to crucial peace vote

Hillary Clinton, the White House and Congressional leaders look for a yes vote in Belfast

By Nick Watt
Guardian

For a few hours tomorrow, the United States will turn its attention to [Northern Ireland](#). Democratic and Republican leaders will both be watching to see whether all mainstream political parties endorse the final stage in the implementation of the [Good Friday Agreement](#): the devolution of policing and criminal justice powers.

[Sir Reg Empey](#), the leader of the Ulster Unionist party, is meeting his executive tonight to decide whether to vote yes. Empey has severe doubts about the deal between [Sinn Féin](#) and the [Democratic Unionist party](#). This would see policing

and criminal justice powers devolved to Belfast next month – a key nationalist demand – in return for the long-standing unionist demand for a review of the way in which contentious parades are run.

Intense pressure is being placed on Empey to fall into line. Hillary Clinton, the US secretary of state who has taken a keen interest in Northern Ireland since the peace process was launched in the early days of her husband's presidency, spent 15 minutes talking to Empey by phone, according to BBC Northern Ireland.

But transatlantic pressure has also been brought to bear on the other side of the Irish Sea. I reported this morning that a group of bipartisan US Congressmen have written to David Cameron asking him to use his influence with the UUP, which recently formed an electoral pact with the Tories, to vote yes.

The unease among the US Congress members is shared by Hillary Clinton. She is said to believe that Cameron would be well advised to follow the example of John Major, who was respected as an impartial referee.

The concerns in the US will raise questions about claims made in private recently by William Hague. The shadow foreign secretary is saying that, despite their political differences, he is forging a strong bond with Clinton.

But all sides need to be careful. The Tories, who support the deal between Sinn Féin and the DUP, believe that ministers need to be careful about frightening the UUP with too much political pressure. The government was this morning trumpeting a poll, commissioned by them, which showed overwhelming support among UUP voters for a yes vote. But, as Sluggie O'Toole notes, there is some debate about the methodology.

"It almost feels like the government want the UUP to vote no so they can draw one of Gordon Brown's beloved dividing lines and say we are to blame for it all going wrong," one Tory tells me.