**LEGACY CONFERENCE**

Dear Friend,

A Legacy Legislation conference is being organised for Saturday 3 March 2018 in the Harberton Room at Malone House in Belfast's Barnett’s Park.

The event will be semi-public and open to those invited or who have requested to attend.

The room is booked from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Lunch and refreshments will be provided at a probable overall cost of £25, otherwise a £10 fee for tea/coffee and attendance will be charged on the day.

Invitations are being issued to about a hundred people who are mostly sympathetic to a more complex legal view of the Past, and who are opposed to the rewriting of history and to moral equivalence between the state’s legitimate actions and those of paramilitaries.

**Please put the 3 March date in your diaries and if you would be interested in speaking, get in touch soon.**

Our proceedings would be within the government’s consultation period if the proposed Westminster Legacy Bill is published shortly.

Indeed Vincent Kearney of the BBC is reporting (24 December 2017) that, *“Secretary of State James Brokenshire will finally launch his long-promised public consultation on how to deal with legacy issues early in the New Year. It will include a question about a possible statute of limitations. The consultation will not tell him anything he and the parties do not already know. It is likely to simply reinforce how contentious the past remains, and how far apart the parties are. The prospect of an agreement on how to move forward on the issue is remote.”*

Whether the BBC is aware of or interested in other views remains another matter entirely. There is no quango, university or human rights body that would even contemplate consideration of the proposed Legacy Bill, or these issues generally, from anything approaching a fair or liberal perspective. Nor indeed one that properly puts the events of the Troubles in their historical context.

There is much that has not been said about the various proposals, particularly the Historical Investigations Unit (HIU), and Article 2 of the ECHR and the continued separate existence of inquests.\*

(They will be continually re-opened for decades to come if no opposition is mounted to their exclusion).

Other topics for discussion include the security files question; HIU (see attached legal view of its inherent dangers); the demise of HET; Dublin’s role in these matters; ‘collusion’; a statute of limitations; and the Police Ombudsman’s powers (attached also is the judge’s summary on the recent and, perhaps historic, NIRPOA judicial review).

Another approach to these can be mapped out at Malone House.

Even if the Bill has not been published by March, there remains a need for a balancing process, given that almost all public discussion and publishing on legacy, especially out of the local universities, takes a single position.

Other aspects, some controversial, will be aired and discussed at the meeting. A small number of officials, and interested MPs and MLAs will be invited and asked to offer their view.

Changes and amendments to the legislation as it progresses through Westminster may require a continued Legacy Working Group that can be set up at the conference.

Please circulate widely and advise the email address of anyone else who may be interested in attending or who wishes to be put on a circulation list.

Most importantly, if wanting and willing to speak, could you provide an outline of a topic within the broad theme of Legacy, be it historical, legal, political or human rights-angled so the programme for the day can be drawn up?

Happy to meet up and discuss these issues and arrangements while welcoming organisational support.

Very best wishes,

Jeff Dudgeon (Belfast City Councillor for Balmoral, and one of the two UUP representatives at the Haass Talks)

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\*See the unique series of articles in the News Letter May by solicitor Neil Faris questioning the dogma on the ECHR’s Article 2 and inquests:

<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/opinion/legacy-inquests-article-2-of-the-echr-and-the-right-to-life-1-7964676>