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A 'damp squib' financed by greed!

So another week begins and that with the 'blaring trumpets' of another example of the blind stupidity of a people misled and deceived as **this Belfast Newsletter article** demonstrates.

It is a case of what the Saviour said, all over again: "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch," Matthew 15:14.

It was the businessmen of Ulster largely who campaigned for 'no border' between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, despite the existence of an international border there already. They did not want any difficulties for them trading their goods with the Irish Republic, which was in the EU, and themselves once Brexit happened and the UK left the EU!

Now it appears that some, at least, of these same businessmen, still acting behind the scenes, 'cloak-and-dagger like', are alarmed at the 'new border' that they by their earlier complaining helped to erect between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. The 'new border' means that goods going to and from one part of the UK must be treated as goods going to and from a foreign country!

The businessmen actually helped put Northern Ireland 'out of the UK'. Now they are paying the price and wish others to plaster up posters secretly, voicing THEIR complaints about the situation which they were the chief means of creating! **See here.**

Shades of yet more 'Grand old Duke of York' manipulations!!

These brazen-faced hypocrites are now openly complaining about the very border they helped to create.

It would be hard to feel any sympathy for them even though it is us, the customers, who will pay the price of their folly rather than the greedy businessmen!

What moved them to act first one way and now in the opposite direction? GREED!

It was the fear that they would lose money with a real border between the EU and the UK along the international border which presently separates Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. Now, having obtained what they wanted, they, with utter dismay, have discovered that they have engineered a border between themselves and the rest of the UK!

I am reminded of David's desire regarding those who vexed and grieved him. "Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap," Psalm 69:22.

Such is the outcome of the greedy, wicked schemes of men moved only by their earthly appetites.

This latest attempt to turn things in their favour is doomed to failure as are all the carnal contrivances of those driven by swinish ravenings!

New loyalist group says it is behind anti-Irish Sea border posters across Northern Ireland – and says businesses funding are funding it

A new loyalist group which says it has erected many of the anti-Irish Sea border posters appearing across Northern Ireland has claimed that businessmen are helping to fund it.

Hundreds of posters have gone up since the new border began on January 1 and there has been speculation about whether it involved loyalist paramilitaries, Orange lodges, or some other organisation.



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Unlike some of the graffiti which has appeared in Larne and elsewhere around the Province, the posters do not threaten those carrying out the border checks.



Some of the anti-Irish Sea border posters which have been appearing across Northern Ireland over recent weeks

Alliance MLA Kellie Armstrong last week dismissed the “pointless posters” and said that “anonymous posters plastered over any lampposts are wrong”.

In a statement to the News Letter, the ‘United Unionists of Ulster’ said that local groups had sprung up over recent weeks and that they had now come together to coordinate a campaign against what is now happening at ports such as Larne and Belfast.

The individual who issued the statement – who only gave his first name – said that not all of the posters across Northern Ireland are the work of his group, “but most of them are”.

Last week Ladyhill Flute Band said that it erected 100 posters in Co Antrim and a Facebook page ‘Unionists Against Northern Ireland Protocol’ has been fundraising for posters.

The man who contacted the News Letter insisted that those behind the poster campaign believe in “peaceful and democratic means”. However, the statement issued by the group does not appeal to unionist politicians but to the Loyalist Communities Council (LCC) to take unspecified action.

The LCC is a legal umbrella group of both illegal loyalist terrorist organisations and individuals such as former Ulster Unionist chairman David Campbell and Tony Blair’s former chief of staff Jonathan Powell. One of its stated aims is to steer paramilitary groups away from criminality.

Last month the PSNI said that they were monitoring unionist and loyalist anger on social media and that there would probably be street protests by now if the pandemic restrictions were not in place.

The man who contacted the News Letter said that political parties “didn’t listen” to anger in their constituencies and so are being bypassed.

He said that about 200 people were involved in local groups across the Province and that they have now amalgamated into the ‘United Unionists of Ulster’ (UUU). He said: “The unionist community’s crying out for leadership. There’s just white noise from politicians.”

The man, who said he had been involved in the flag protests eight years ago, said that some of those now in the group were “people who never really had a political bone in their body” but were now angry.

Some of those funding the posters were firms who are financially losing out as a result of the border, he said.

When pressed on whether loyalist paramilitaries are involved, he said: “No, from what I can see... but there are always going to be rogue elements.”

He said: “We’re not loyal to Boris Johnson, but we’re loyal to the Union.”

The statement described the UUU as “a group of the pro-Union individuals who seek peaceful and democratic means to achieve what we believe our people within our communities have asked for”.

It said that they “have continually watched bit by bit our culture and identity being pulled from under our feet little by little while our elected representatives in our unionist parties make little or no challenge around key issues”.



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It went on: "We are not a political party nor a militant organisation; we are simply a group that are uniting under one common name and agenda for the good and future of our people and our country. What is clear to us is that our unionist leadership has failed us all."

The statement said they had attempted individually to lobby unionist politicians to call a 'unionist convention' – a long-standing request of the UVF-linked PUP – but that "as the three main unionist parties have failed in signing up to such a convention we then encourage our local communities to show their elected representatives that they are not listening and that we are not happy, through peaceful non-confrontational means".

It set out three core objectives: Uniting all unionists regardless of class, complete removal of the Northern Ireland Protocol, and "full withdrawal of support for the Good Friday Agreement".

They urged the LCC "as defenders of the community to stand up and take action" – but, having earlier said only peaceful means were being considered, did not clarify what "action" meant.

Another source told the News Letter last week that young loyalist bandsmen were among those involved in the campaign, something which the man said was correct.

He accepted that the group appealing to the Loyalist Communities Council "might seem quite concerning".

Asked about the group's view of violence, he said that "lawful options would be looked at first" and that there "could be a march in due course" – although they were attempting to respect the Covid regulations which rule that out.

He said that the group had members in areas such as south Armagh, Larne, Belfast, Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus.

Analysis

By Sam McBride

Six weeks into the Irish Sea border, some people will dismiss posters and vague plans for a march as evidence of how limp unionist opposition to that border is.

Alliance MLA Kellie Armstrong last week sarcastically responded to an image of one of the posters: "There's another blow for the Prime Minister. Posters in Moneymore – that will cause consternation in Westminster."

In many ways, she's right – and even though those erecting the posters appear to be politically inexperienced, they must also be aware that signs on lampposts are not going to remove the EU-UK deal.

Putting up posters is easy; leadership, organisation and political strategy are far harder. This group may fizzle into nothing and join the vast list of failed unionist organisations.

But the flag protests demonstrated how a decision far less consequential than the new internal UK trade frontier led to groups emerging within weeks and mass protests which ultimately ended in violence and shut down swathes of the commercial heart of Belfast.

Here there is a confluence of the pragmatic and the constitutional, in a way that the purely symbolic restriction on flying the Union Flag from Belfast City Hall never had.

The fact that those behind this campaign have no links to the main unionist political parties, and the language they use, speaks to the disdain many unionists and loyalists now feel for their leaders.

The individual to whom I spoke viscerally expressed a sentiment now commonly discussed across a swathe



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of pro-Union opinion – unionism is in a mess and few believe that the people who got unionism into this position will turn things around.

Some senior government figures are privately alive to the potential for anger to emerge on the streets and were alarmed at the tone of last week's EU statement which conveyed the sense that the border was here to stay and there was no point talking about any serious alterations.

These individuals say they want to talk, although there are menacing hints in some of what they say. Two factors will determine that – whether these people can show any popular support, and whether there is anything to talk about.