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Concerns within the DUP



DUP MEP, Jim Allister

DUP MEP, Jim Allister has voiced serious scepticism about the St Andrews Agreement. The MEP, who is a barrister, is the first top-ranking party member to reveal his concern over significant aspects of the proposed deal. Doubtless, others share his concerns.

There was speculation about what Mr Allister's view may be, as he is very much viewed as the hard line of the DUP.

It was also notable at the Press conferences held at St Andrews, when talks ended on Friday, that the MEP did

not join his colleagues in the hall – preferring to watch proceedings on a monitor outside the auditorium.

At this stage, he stresses, he is not rejecting the package.

He remains absolutely committed to the DUP strategy and attempts to improve the new agreement, in the Preparation for Government Committee over the coming days.

Mr Allister said he was going on record to prompt healthy debate in the unionist community and with party colleagues.

But, if the deal is not improved, in key areas from a unionist perspective, it seems likely that he will say “no” to it when decision time comes on November 10.

What impact that would have on the unionist community view or opinions inside the DUP would remain to be seen.

Speaking last night, he said: “I am very much up for engaging on the issues within the party and outside the party. That’s healthy.

“But, also, the last thing we want to do is put ourselves in a situation which we subsequently regret.

“There are many negatives in this agreement which we need to address and the unionist community must be very clear about them.”

Among his concerns are that there remains no mechanism to evict Sinn Fein from government should it default in some way (as the IRA has done before).

He also is worried about the Irish Language Act being used as a vehicle to erode Britishness in Ulster, the plan to allow senior Irish civil servants to apply for government jobs in the Province and what side deals have been done with republicans.

Perhaps, most notably, he says that if the IRA Army Council is not disbanded (by January, the time of the next IMC report) or the March 26 deadline for restoring government, the deal must be off.

He said: “We cannot, for instance, even consider going into government with Sinn Fein in a situation where the IRA Army Council still exists and the IRA military structures are, therefore, still intact.



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“We cannot countenance government with Sinn Fein in those circumstances.
“That’s the litmus test. The IRA has to go. There can be no suggestion of government with people at the beck and call of terrorists.”