



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

### Life-long friend says Paisley had doubts about going into Government

(Impartial Reporter, 21st September 2014.)

A life-long friend of Ian Paisley has claimed the former leader of the Democratic Unionist Party who died last week "had doubts" about going into government with Sinn Fein. The 88 year old, one of Northern Ireland's most prominent and polarising political figures of the last 50 years, died last week following a long period of ill health.

There has been much said in recent days about Dr. Paisley's life such as his decision to sit down with his former enemy Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams and agree to work together in a power-sharing executive following years of protests and hostility.



A Loyalist parade in the late 1960s

Rev. Ivan Foster, the retired former minister of Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church, knew Dr. Paisley for five decades but said this decision "was the one thing we did not agree on".

"I know that he knew I was right on what I said about the wrongness of what he and the DUP was doing with Sinn Fein because never once did the big man ever respond to the case that I made, the arguments I set out," Rev. Foster told The Impartial Reporter.

I spoke to him privately before it became public. I don't want to disclose anything that was private then, but the conversation I had with him would indicate very clearly that the fears I had he was well aware of, he had no answer to, and those fears and doubts, those questions

that were in his heart were overcome by others from a political point of view," he said.

"I don't want a public row with the family, but I have no doubt that he had doubts," reiterated Rev. Foster.

After being sworn in as Northern Ireland's first minister in May 2007 - and appointing a ministerial team which included Fermanagh-south Tyrone MLA Arlene Foster - Dr. Paisley developed a warm relationship with his deputy first minister, Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness.

Rev. Foster said his own friendship with Dr. Paisley suffered as a result of his work with Sinn Fein. "I remained Ian Paisley's friend because I loved him. I never once said anything harsh about him as an individual, I did say things about the DUP. I spoke with a broken heart and with tears at times. I can't say the friendship had the closeness it once had."

I didn't blame him," added Rev. Foster. "I was sad that circumstances had arisen that brought this about. I just wish the politics hadn't taken a permanent part of life as in the end it did," he said.

Looking back at Dr. Paisley's life, Rev Foster said he believes the politics of the founder of the DUP and the Free Presbyterian Church stemmed from his "ministerial instinct" .



Buckingham Palace protest with Pastor Jack Glass and Dr Paisley



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"Before politics he had gone here, there and yonder to preach at a meeting or a mission. During the IRA campaign there was a great need for someone to champion the cause of those on the Borders who found it difficult to highlight their needs without highlighting themselves and making themselves even greater targets.



Delegation meeting police on security.

"When the Troubles began in the 70s and the IRA attacked Protestant families in Border areas, and these attacks intensified, Dr. Paisley would have often come to me and we would have taken him to families in the Border area, such as Newtownbutler. He worked with security chiefs, political chiefs, the Northern Ireland Office and put pressure on to increase security on Protestant families, particularly UDR families. I have no doubt that when he came on the front line, as it were, there was a sincere attempt by police chiefs to close those gaps," he said.

Asked to describe the Dr. Paisley he knew, Rev. Foster said: "Ian Paisley was a most interesting person, a most enjoyable person, a most exciting person to be in conversation with, to be in the company of. He was exciting to talk to."

Asked if the politician deserved to be described as a "bigot" by some commentators following his death, Rev. Foster said: "Ian Paisley was a preacher of the gospel, preached what was in the Presbyterian confession of faith. He was never a bigot. I was in hair-raising situations with him with republican crowds, when we were in danger from Roman Catholics, but I never heard Ian Paisley ever say a word about a Roman Catholic as such."

The type of language that Dr. Paisley used during his "never never never" years to describe Catholics and republicans has also been discussed over the last week. Asked about a particular derogatory term that he apparently uttered about Catholics, Rev. Foster said: "I don't think that for a moment, that is not the language of Ian Paisley. He never spoke to the street level of language. He would have been scathing in his criticism of IRA murderers but he was directing his opposition and anger against murderers. He would have been just as scathing towards loyalist murderers," he said.

Prime Minister David Cameron and former American President Bill Clinton were just some of the many politicians who have paid tribute to Dr. Paisley, in addition to many more closer to home.

Enterprise Minister and Fermanagh-south Tyrone MLA Arlene Foster, who Dr. Paisley appointed to his first ministerial team in 2007, said she was "deeply saddened" to hear about his death. Taking to her Facebook page, Minister Foster wrote that Dr. Paisley "surrounded me with support in a way I will never be able to fully articulate".

"There were those outside the party who thought I wouldn't fit into the DUP; an Anglican from Fermanagh and a woman to boot! But he answered all when he appointed me as a minister in 2007. There was only one Ian Paisley and I am very glad that I knew him as a friend," she said.

Other politicians to pay tribute included local MLA Lord Maurice Morrow and Enniskillen born deputy leader of the DUP, Nigel Dodds who Dr. Paisley claimed back in January had ordered him to step down from the party, a claim denied by Mr. Dodds. Chairman of Fermanagh District Council Bert Johnston opened a book of condolence to his former leader this week, telling The Impartial Reporter: "I am so pleased that I met Ian Paisley. He pointed me to the One he is now with himself and I can truly say I will meet him again because of his faithfulness to me."



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