**Thursday, March 3, 2011**

**A Unionist voice in the Seanad?**

[**The Seanad Éireann**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seanad_%C3%89ireann) ("Senate of Ireland")) is the upper house of the Irish parliament, performing a similar, although more restricted, role as the UK's House of Lords.The system by which Senators are selected/elected verges on the Byzantine, although several worthy people fron Northern Ireland, including Gordon Wilson and Seamus Mallon, have been chosen by the Taoiseach over the years. None (as far as I'm aware) have been elected...[so far](http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/local/historic_uup_bid_for_seanad_1_2457693):

A MEMBER of the Ulster Unionist Party has announced his intention to run for the Irish senate, the News Letter can reveal.

Jeffrey Dudgeon – who once worked for UK Unionist MP Robert McCartney – will this week submit his nomination papers to Trinity College Dublin to compete for one of the university’s three seats in the Republic’s upper house.

Mr Dudgeon, who took the European court case which led to homosexuality being decriminalised in Northern Ireland in 1982, said that he felt the voice of a Northern Ireland unionist is conspicuously missing from the Seanad.

“The senate has provided, over the decades, a unique platform and protection zone for the state’s minorities, its non-conformists, dissenters if not its dissidents, as well as differing voices from Northern Ireland,” he said.

“But all the previous senators from Northern Ireland have been nominated and were not fully representative of the people of Northern Ireland and in particular of those who define themselves as Ulster Unionists.”

There are two ways (from a Unionist point of view) of looking at this:

* We don't need to have a voice in another country's legislature.
* It's not"our business" to be involved in their "business".
* By participating in the Republic's parliament, we implicitedly acknowledge the claim that not only is Ireland a geographical single entity, but also a political one.

...or:

* We need to spread our beliefs and opinions to as many people and in as many forum as possible.
* The Republic is not "just another" country, it is the only nation with which the UK shares a landmass and. more importantly, it's a nation whose history, culture and economy is intertwined with our own.
* With the influx of  new Sinn Fein representatives into the Dail and the inevitable cranking up of that organisation's anti-Unionist/British black propaganda ops, Unionism needs to launch an effective counter-attack in the ROI.

My own instincts, like Jeff's, would veer towards the second set of opinions and if elected, I'm sure he'd be more than capable of performing the necessary:

“In a real sense, we are heading back to a time before partition when the differences between the two parts and the two peoples of Ireland, particularly southern Catholics and northern Protestants, are not as extreme as they became.

“I am asking the voters to make history by electing an Ulster Protestant who is a liberal unionist thus allowing that voice to be heard for the first time for decades."

**Update:**

Largely welcomed by the denizens of [Board.ie](http://board.ie/)[boards.ie](http://www.boards.ie/vbulletin/showthread.php?t=2056196931&page=3)!