**BALMORAL COUNCIL CANDIDATE**

**SELECTION MEETING SPEECH**

**[Speech not given as I was the only candidate]**

My purpose in seeking nomination by South Belfast UUA for a Balmoral DEA seat on Belfast City Council is to win it back.

This was the seat that used to be filled by Margaret Crooks and of course partly also by Bobby Stoker before the recent boundary changes.

It now encompasses the five wards of Malone, Upper Malone, Finaghy, Musgrave and Belvoir. Five candidates will be voted in.

In a sense, I will be trying to reverse the loss to the party that happened in 2005 when Esmond Birnie failed to take a seat by .9 of a single vote.

Winning the seat is more than just about advancing the interests of the Ulster Unionist Party; it is about protecting and enhancing the Union. That is why we exist. We are and were a movement before we were a party.

Every vote in the new council can assist in the struggle against Republicanism’s rewriting of history, and Sinn Fein’s unceasing efforts to strip Britishness out of the city.

That starts with Belfast City Hall where a Unionist majority has been whittled back, not least by voters switching to the Alliance Party. They promised consensus politics and when the first opportunity came to practice consensus the party abandoned it in a vote to take down the Union Flag. Alliance must always be reminded of that.

The DUP has chosen to abandon the city, taking their Castlereagh redoubt to the fastness of Lisburn. What a short-sighted view - putting the party before the Union.

Long-time members present like John Harcourt, our association President, a councillor from 1951 to 1973 (and Miss Roberta Flack of Windsor Branch who remembers Carson) can recall the glory days. In John’s time the party had a large majority of city council seats.

The return of the Union Flag to its rightful position, will become one degree closer and made more possible by a win for the party - against the trend - in Balmoral. Votes at local elections are the best way to democratically reverse that decision.

Obviously, if elected, I will serve the interests of all the voters, while always bearing in mind our first priority.

The policy aspects I would major on if elected to City Hall include enhancement of retail business, litter, policing and the curbing of burglary, and social inclusion.

We have a reasonable chance in Balmoral. One of my rivals will be Paula Bradshaw whom we all worked for in 2010 when she was our Conservative and Unionist Westminster candidate.

Apparently she is no longer either. The closest rival may be the second SDLP candidate whose party is led by Alasdair McDonnell MP. He is a leader who could find no fault with his Newry councillors naming a play park after a man who murdered soldiers, police and Protestants in South Armagh. Yet he relies on church-going Protestant votes to ensure he gets elected.

South Belfast, as we were reminded at the weekend with the memorial events at QUB and Stormont, has a sad record of UUP politicians being murdered: Edgar Graham 30 years ago in 1983 and Robert Bradford MP in 1981.

We will not forget them.

I was able to represent South Belfast UUA at Queen’s on Saturday when Dermot Nesbitt told of the moment Edgar was shot dead beside him.

Dermot’s watchword he said was *Carpe Diem* while ‘Keeping Alive the Light of Justice’.

In the current Haass process those are my watchwords too. The rule of law and respect for human rights guide me, as they did Edgar Graham, when an academic in Queen’s Law School and an Assembly Member at Stormont.

I assure you we won’t be endorsing show-trials for members of the security forces who gave their lives that we should be free.

In conclusion, I would say we are beginning to reverse the party’s decline in Belfast.

Although it will be a slow process I am optimistic that the worst is over for Unionism. In contrast to the east of the province, the UUP remains the strongest party in the south and west and along the border. That is the source of our continuing strength.

I thank you for the faith and confidence shown in me tonight.

Jeffrey Dudgeon

11 December 2013