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May 2015

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Dear Editor,

Tomorrow’s election gives Unionist voters a chance to broaden their representation at Westminster, particularly by changes of personnel in the two marginal seats of Upper Bann and South Antrim.

At present the only Unionist party in the House of Commons is the DUP. Its MPs are of one mind on those many areas where Northern Ireland electors have a multiplicity of views.

Indeed most Unionist voters are not much different from their equivalents in England or Scotland – fair minded and tolerant of difference. They are accepting of diversity on the big issues that concern so many of our, often less politically-minded citizens. Those DUP MPs, up to now, have not displayed any such characteristics, only a uniformity of view that is incomprehensible to many in Britain especially on so-called moral issues.

However because the DUP is an organised and disciplined group, they can get MPs elected. In consequence, they have a range of view that is exceptionally narrow, in both senses of the word. There are straws in the wind that that monolithic view is changing - Gavin Robinson, the DUP’s candidate in East Belfast, did attend a Gay Pride event to argue his corner when Lord Mayor. However without the spur of losing a couple of seats to the Ulster Unionist Party, in a fair and even fight, they will continue to put party unity before the reality of a modernising world.

Unionism has historically been a movement which allowed a breadth of views at Westminster which included, for example, the North Belfast MP, Montgomery Hyde, who was a fearless and almost unique campaigner in the 1950s for homosexual law reform and an end to capital punishment.

The needless intervention by the First Minister, Peter Robinson, in the discussion on the proposed legislative change regarding fatal foetal abnormality is indicative of the uphill struggle within our dominant unionist party to get alternative views mainstreamed. Electing Jo-Anne Dobson in Upper Bann and Danny Kinahan and South Antrim could break that mould as nothing else can.

Yours faithfully

Jeffrey Dudgeon