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Contributing to the topic of 'Leadership and Transformation' I cannot fail to register the point – that a Leadership which does not heed or take account of a genuine community desire to regain self respect through Transformation is not worthy of holding the mantle of Leadership.

Therefore it is also worth saying that there has to be true value in replacing the road blocks with the building blocks capable of paving the way forward for transition into social mobility which in turn restores respect and improves the prospect of attaining better opportunities in employment, in family welfare, education and good health by virtue of transforming a community spirit. That has to be the outcome and real reward resulting from transformation being purposely driven by positive community Leadership.

So where are we at and where are we going?

- Transformation or ghettoisation
- Transformation or disillusion
- Transformation or regret
- Leadership or silence
- Leadership or bluff
- Leadership or division

These questions identify the quandary and the dilemma – it is time we set about finding solutions and fixing the problem. Looking back to move forward is not always a positive – but sometimes learning from past mistakes can help ensure that the same errors are not repeated.

In 1974, the Ulster workers strike delivered a victory for the Union – it brought strangers together on the streets – it boosted confidence and it gave a whole new meaning to protest from a pro-union perspective. Sadly those who created its success were to seemingly play a role in destroying its momentum.

I was only a young fella then and I wish that the Leadership of that era had taken the opportunity to transform unionism and convert Leadership into a legacy, which my generation would inherit and follow.

How I wish that Protestantism – Unionism and Loyalism – respectively and collectively had conversely handed over a political and social charter for future generations to use wisely as their blueprint for unity – for secure tenure in preparation to judge and handle the outcome of change which was inevitable and which we today wrestle with. In saying thus – I want all Unionists to respond to the challenge of Leadership and Transformation as it confronts us today in circumstances when the strengths of 1974 are no longer and the Government has no reason to hear us as they did then.

Our objective should be to give good reason to be heard!

Today's Government have made law abiding Unionists irrelevant in their own country. Loyalty as Tony Blair sees it is something to reject. Unionists have nothing to trade or barter with – the deals Blair and Hain have in mind are only with Republicans.

So when we debate or think of 'Leadership and Transformation', let us put the subject into a proper perspective. Can Leadership and Transformation combine to protect the integrity and maintenance of the Union, will we learn from the past and to whom can we look to trust and guarantee our Britishness.

In a best selling international book, the former Mayor of New York, Rudy Giuliani dedicates his work on the subject of LEADERSHIP to all the people quote "Whom I leaned on and learned from – it was from them that I derived the strength to lead" unquote!

Giuliani has this to say on Leadership – "In any Leadership role, one must deal with all types of people. Obviously as often as possible, one should confine dealings to people one trusts completely. There are plenty of times when a Leader is forced to deal with those he is not sure about or perhaps whose company do doesn't enjoy. You have to set at least minimum standards – trust but verify."

Giuliani concludes – "There used to be a rule in politics, which I am not sure exists anymore and it's a shame that it doesn't – 'to rise in politics you have to be a man of your work!' You can be a liberal, a conservative, a radical or a reactionary. You can even be a crook but when you make a deal you keep to it."

Rudy Giuliani hadn't Unionists in mind when writing those words – but he forcefully nailed a Unionist sentiment – "to rise in politics you have to be a man of your word".

We seldom replace Leaders as a result of their incompetence or stupidity. Usually we decide that they are no longer men of their word. Harsh judgement when the real culprits are those who repeatedly go back on their word and put you in the noose for trusting them in the first place.

As with our current circumstances, lack of trust and disbelieving has turned anger into militancy, protest into violence and objection into hostility. Despite various initiatives and political experiments – Unionists have been hard pressed to approve of any settlement because support for recognising the aspirations of Nationalists, whilst given at times was gradually eroded and the initiative floundered.

Unionists have never been comfortable with the list of initiatives proposed by the Government as an alternative to and a replacement of the Anglo-Irish agreement let alone coming to terms with the return of majority rule being totally demolished by Westminster decree.

Today the key word is Process! And it applies equally to the standards of Leadership required of Unionism as it does of Nationalism and Republicanism. Transformation is route one basic thinking for everyone. The trick it would appear is knowing whether to embrace the outcome of process or to reject it prior to participating. To date all Unionists have wandered into a process be it at Western Park or Leeds Castle knowing full well what the Government considered to be a satisfactory outcome, but not knowing how to expedite an exit strategy.

Without a private army or a mafia organisation mainstream Unionists have had no real access into a peace process. The only avenue open to us for negotiations is through a political process, which is currently shut down until the Government find a way to reconnect Republicans back into it – that means waiting until January on the IMC to give Republicans a clean bill of health. Having satisfied Tony Blair on clearing the decommissioning hurdle the outstanding issue is for Republicans to jump through the decriminalising hoop.

So setting our sights on next January, what will be the role of our Leadership, will an internal process of Transformation be underway and will Unionists have prepared themselves for tough decisions and new demands applying pressure from the Government. Will the Unionist Leadership settle for punitive direct rule eventually leading to another form of joint authority.

Will division continue to undermine a united approach of reinvigorated determination which can transform Unionism into a cohesive force, attracting recognition and benefits as a realisable local asset working within the United Kingdom in a neighbourly fashion with the Republic all in a positive manner which brings virtue and respect and strengthens our Britishness.

If Unionists and when I say Unionists I refer to all Pro-Union supporters not all of whom are Protestant and Loyalists – I mean the voices of an all-inclusive Unionism – if that impressive Unionist bloc cannot respond to Transformation by giving strong and effective Leadership then the honourable thing to do is to halt any raising of expectations which cannot be delivered.

You see I happen to believe that Unionists are cleverer than Republicans!

I look at the colossal electoral support these nomadic Republican freedom fighters camped here have achieved in under a decade – and I am puzzled over the astuteness of Irish Republicans who willingly surrender weapons in order to meet Unionist demands and rolled over into a partitionist state to justify a right to Ministerial positions in a devolved Government at Stormont which administers British Rule under Her Majesty's sovereignty. On the face of it they appear to the outside world to be more Unionist than Unionists are.

Then I pinch myself again and say to myself and anyone who will listen to me 'not only are we cleverer than Republicans! But crucially we have no choice other than we must

at all times make sure that we are cleverer' we cannot afford to drop the ball – we must remain vigilant and alert – do not break the will that is already within us, do not break the backs of Unionists when denying opponents their way, do not put clear blue water between this family unless you can walk across it to greet a friend.

Transformation can be a means to an end – let us work together toward that end.