

RELEASE IN PART B6

From: sbwhoeop [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, March 31, 2010 9:06 AM
To: H
Subject: H: NI fallout continues. Sid

B6

New blow for Conservative alliance with UUP as assembly member quits party

Alan McFarland follows MP Lady Hermon in resigning from Ulster Unionists to sit as independent

- [Henry McDonald](#), Ireland correspondent
- guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 31 March 2010 09.48 BST

The Conservatives' alliance with the Ulster Unionists has sustained a second blow in North Down after last week's resignation of the sitting MP Lady Hermon.

Assembly member and former army major Alan McFarland announced today that he was leaving the UUP in protest at its pact with the Tories.

It is expected McFarland will now work for Hermon's re-election as an independent against the official UUP-Tory candidate.

A UUP statement said the timing of McFarland's announcement was "disappointing". He has been a UUP member of the Stormont assembly for 12 years and was once a loyal ally of Lord Trimble, Northern Ireland's former first minister.

Trimble has been one of the driving forces behind the UUP-Conservative alliance.

Last night McFarland resigned his membership of the party and said he would now sit as an independent member of the assembly.

"With the recent confirmation of candidates, including the imposition of a Conservative candidate in my own North Down constituency, it is clear that the party is determined to continue down the Conservative road," he said in a statement.

"I do not wish to join them. I am sorry to leave a party that contains many good friends, and greatly regret that events have developed in the way they have."

Last week Hermon, the MP for North Down, said she would run in the general election as an independent unionist.

In a statement, the Ulster Unionist party thanked McFarland for his service, but said the "electoral pact has the potential to transform politics in Northern Ireland in a manner not previously witnessed" in Ulster.