

Whilst watching the annual Whiterock parade in June 1970 Tommy Reid was struck by a missile thrown by republican rioters. The brutal murder of Tommy who was married with children makes you wonder if the mindset of nationalist/republicans has changed at all.

In 1970 they physically attacked our parades; in 2006 they continue to physically attack our parades. But what is more concerning is they also attack our parades by proxy through the Parades Commission.

The Parades Commission is supposed to reflect the make up of the society in which we live. But it doesn't, you cannot be an Orangeman and a member of the PC; although why any Orangeman would want to be a member of the commission is beyond me. But now you cannot even be an ex Orangeman and be involved in decisions in your own town. What a fiasco the Commission has become. Nationalist and republicans through the courts and the media have ensured there is an imbalance in the Commission.

Last year the good people of north and west Belfast suffered because of the decisions by the Commission. Last year the Commission whose make up was even worse then, acquiesced with the PSNI and local nationalist/republican community to show nothing had changed they STILL won't tolerate "a prod about the place". We all know what happened next, we witnessed and some experienced the unjustified attacks on fellow loyalists by "Hugh Orde's boot boys" across Belfast. Has anything really changed over the last 33 years?

Has the nationalist/republican community moved forward into the new 'shared future for Northern Ireland? Are they tolerant towards our culture? Do they want a Northern Ireland of equals? The answer to all of these questions is of course NO.

Here in east Belfast the nationalist/republican community go out of their way to be offended.

- Do they stay in their houses while a parade passes by? **No**
 - Do they take the dog for a walk? **No**
 - Do they go a drive in the car on a warm sunny evening? **No**
 - Do they enjoy a cool drink in the bar? **No**
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They go out of their way to watch our parades as they walk down OUR Newtownards Road. They make use of every vantage point as our annual Somme parade winds its way along OUR Albertbridge Road. Not only do they go out of their way to watch our parades, but they use camcorders to record the parade so that they can watch it over and over again. They skulk around in the grounds of St Matthews's chapel with their hoods up hiding their identity.

The same chapel that Billy McKee, Henry McIlhone and Denis Donaldson and others opened fire on this community killing Bobby Neill. An unprovoked attack by the sectarian killers of Sinn Fein.

The question has to be asked - will nationalist/republican community EVER change. They remain stuck in a time warp going back many, many years. In 1970 they murdered Jimmy McCurrie, Bobby Neill, Tommy Reid, Sandy Gould, Danny Loughins and Bobby Kincaid simply because they were Protestants.

It wasn't because they were doing anything wrong it was simply because the nationalist/republican community didn't "want a Prod about the place." Just like today, only today they use the failed Parades Commission to do their dirty work. As an organisation the Parades has failed our community by consistently finding in favour of the nationalist/republican community. We gathered here call on the Secretary of State to review the Parades legislation; to disband the Parades Commission and begin to show equality towards our cultural traditions.

To our fellow loyalists in north and west Belfast we wish you well tomorrow and hope and pray the brave "Whiterock 50" are allowed to walk their traditional route in safety and those who are inflexible and stuck in the past demonstrate peaceably, as is their right. If the parade passes off peacefully then it is right and proper our community expects that not 50 will walk the route, but entire District, bands and visitors.

To the families of Jimmy McCurrie, Bobby Neill, Tommy Reid, Sandy Gould, Danny Loughins and Bobby Kincaid we continue to offer our deepest sympathy and support at the loss of your loved ones so many years ago. The community has noted for 36 years no-one has ever been brought to face the full rigour of the law with regard to any of these sectarian murders.

We know that the PSNI Historical Enquiries Team have been in touch with the family of Jimmy McCurrie. As a Society we will co-operate fully with this team as they endeavour to give the McCurrie family some answers to their many questions. But we urge the Historical Enquiries Team to re-visit the all six murders and provide answers for all the families.

The East Belfast Historical and Cultural Society will assist the investigators in their enquiries if asked. We assure all those families who lost loved ones in June 1970 that we will help in anyway we can to bring the perpetrators of these sectarian crimes to justice.

In closing Ladies and Gentlemen the Society calls for unity amongst our people, unity amongst our political parties, unity amongst the loyal orders and the bands. It is essential that we all work together for our common good.

There are many out there who are willing to divide us or willing to encourage us to squabble amongst ourselves. We must not. - a unionist is a unionist is a unionist. It matters not what goes before or after the word unionist, we must work together to keep the union safe and secure.

In First World War thousands of Ulstermen left these shores and fought for King and Country. On the 1st July 1916 these men as part of the 36th Ulster Division launched one - if not the most successful attack by British forces against the enemy. Thousands died in matter hours.

They fought for our freedom, they fought and died that we might live in peace they fought and died that we would remain part of the UK 90 years later we must never forget that sacrifice. It must be ingrained in our memory and we must do everything in our power to follow their example of loyalty; courage & sacrifice so that in 90 years time future generations will reflect kindly on this generation.

The cry that many men made as they went over the top on that 1st July morning is as relevant now as is it was then.

Ladies and Gentlemen – No Surrender.
