

Sinn Féin

Nuacht ráiteas/News release

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Redouble Efforts in Week ahead

Note to Editor: Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams will today officially launch the west Belfast festival. Following a parade to the Falls Park Mr Adams will speak around 2.30 pm.

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams has called on everyone to "redouble their efforts in the week ahead to find an accommodation on the issue of controversial marches. There is a responsibility on the Apprentice Boys to enter into dialogue now with the host communities in those areas where the parades are in contention.

This is happening in Derry and I welcome the dialogue there. However the loyal institutions still refuse to talk to local nationalists in other areas. Those in leadership in the unionist and loyalist parties should urgently use their influence to persuade parade organisers to talk."

Mr Adams said:

"The siege of Derry, like the Battle of the Boyne and the Orange Order, are as much a part of Irish history and the diversity of our Irishness, as the Famine or the Easter Rising or the struggle for civil and national rights.

Despite having been trapped for over 70 years within a state in which we are the object of structured political and economic discrimination, and in which our culture and tradition is ridiculed by unionism, and denied by the British government, nationalists in the six counties have never sought to replace one form of injustice and inequality with another. We have no desire nor have we ever sought a resolution which simply puts the 'boot on the other foot'. That is a recipe for disaster.

On the contrary we seek an accommodation based on an inclusiveness which brings all of our people, nationalist and unionist, together on the basis of equality and in the spirit of reconciliation.

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Unfortunately, there are those who from ignorance or bias accuse nationalists of being anti-unionist or anti-protestant because we object to triumphalist marches parading through areas where the host communities clearly object. This is not true.

It is a fact that there are over 3000 orange marches each year - twice as many now as in the early 70s. Nationalists and republicans are very tolerant of these marches. Despite their record of being anti-catholic we accept and acknowledge that the Orange Order, the Apprentice Boys of Derry and the Royal Black Preceptory have a right to march.

Problems arise however when that right is abused and is elevated into a triumphalist show in which unionism seeks to label nationalists as second class. Obviously this is unacceptable and cannot be the basis of any resolution of this problem or of the wider political issues.

A real and lasting accommodation must be built on equality of treatment. The rights of unionists must be balanced with the rights of nationalists and each must respect the rights of others.

In the wider context of the search for a lasting peace it is obvious that the consent and allegiance of everyone is necessary to the construction of a permanent peace settlement. This will only be achieved through a real, open and honest dialogue.

Equally, in the specific context of controversial marches the consent of the host community through which these marches want to go is essential.

Next weekend the focus will be on the Apprentice Boys march in Derry. There is a need to focus also on the other marches on the Lower Ormeau Road, in Dunloy, Bellaghy and elsewhere.

The various loyal institutions need to recognise the rights of host communities and the centrality of dialogue with local communities as the only basis for progress on resolving this critical issue of marches through areas where their presence is resented and objected.

Progress is only possible if based on mutual respect. Our common endeavour in the days ahead must be to ensure an accommodation based on consent and equality. This is the only reliable guarantor of a peaceful future.