



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

Will we ever learn?

As one who has vivid memories of the Terence O'Neill campaign against Bible Protestantism in the early and mid-60s, I see much that is reminiscent of that time of betrayal, which was seeded by the foolish notions of the ecumenical church leaders back then.

In the 1960s, the institutions of the state were mobilised against those who raised their voices in protest against the foolish thesis that peace and reconciliation could be promoted only by placating the increasing militancy of resurgent Irish Republicanism through the curtailing of all expressions of Ulster Protestantism.

The RUC was in the vanguard of that campaign of suppression.

Thus the efforts made by unionist leaders to ban loyalist parades and gatherings and protests was at the dictates of an insatiable Irish Republicanism. O'Neill, Chichester-Clarke and Faulkner all employed this "medicine".

But the medicine did not work then any more than it will work now.

Irish Republicanism, fed by the spirit of cowardly compromise on the part of Stormont's unionist leaders, kept demanding more and more suppression of Ulster Protestantism and this in turn aroused Protestantism, largely put to sleep by years of ecumenical propaganda and false teaching, and resistance of this suppression increased.

One great difference between then and now was that there was a man who was prepared to take the lead in front of those he called out to protest. That man was Ian Paisley. Irrespective of the political somersaults of the last 10 years, in the 1960s he gave bold leadership.

If such leadership had been given by those who called for protests at Ardoyne, in the aftermath of the Parades' Commission directive, then perhaps the scenes of riot, born out of a leaderless crowd being encouraged to gather without plan or purpose, might well have been avoided and Ulster loyalism might have been spared this further humiliation.

Of course, it is not too late yet for such leadership to be shown.

It will require an honest acknowledgement of the shameful wrongs on the part of Unionism in recent days, for it is guilty of the very placating of militant Irish Republicanism of which it has accused the Parades' Commission.

When the DUP entered a coalition with Sinn Fein/IRA was it not, just like the Parades' Commission, seeking to buy peace by giving into the militancy of the IRA?

Until that is acknowledged there is no way forward for Unionism. The compromise with Sinn Fein/IRA which is embodied in the power-sharing deal must, like the Parades' Commission, be replaced by true democracy.

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