



CNI

COMMENT -

Cost of violence at North parades should be borne by organisers

Patsy McGarry writes - I was in Belfast last month for the Twelfth “festivities”. It was awful. Those “festivities” were held on a Monday, as the Twelfth this year fell on a Sunday. Yet the awesome Eve of the Twelfth bonfires went ahead on July 11th. Those bonfires were another story.

For eight consecutive summers I walked with Orangemen on the first Sunday of July to Drumcree church and to barricades at the foot of the hill there. Year after year I witnessed the rioting supporters of the [Orange](#) Order at those barricades.

Drumcree played a direct role in the deaths of 10 people, nine of them Catholic. Included were Michael McGoldrick, [Robert Hamill](#), [Adrian](#)

[Lamph](#), Frank O'Reilly, [Billy Wright](#), the three Quinn children burned to death at [Ballymoney](#) Co Antrim in 1999, solicitor [Rosemary Nelson](#), and [Ciaran Cummins](#).

Loyalist paramilitary Billy Wright being the only Protestant among them.

The Orange Order never acknowledged responsibility for any of this. Or for the hundreds injured, the thousands intimidated out of their homes, the millions of pounds of damage done to churches, Orange halls, and other property, the millions of pounds spent on security.

I had thought violence of that sort associated with Orange marches was a thing of the past, apart from the odd skirmish in Belfast. Last month was a reminder of the dark underbelly that can accompany Orange marches and which the Order allows off the leash when it suits.

During the violence in Belfast on Monday, July 13th last, 25 police officers were hurt and a 16-year-old girl was lucky not to be killed. She was trapped under a car, driven by a man in Orange regalia, which mounted a pavement in nationalist Ardoyne. Police lifted it off of her. She seemed dead. Following the incident a man was charged with two counts of attempted murder.

The violence began when loyalists hurled beer bottles, full cans, steel bolts and stones at PSNI officers and reporters after returning Orange marchers were prevented from going past Ardoyne.

Later PSNI Assistant Chief Constable Stephen Martin, with remarkable restraint, described the Order's abdication of responsibility in marshalling the returning parade as "regrettable."

It was worse. The Order's deliberate lack of action unleashed the thugs once more, such thugs as bedevil both communities in Northern [Ireland](#).

On Sunday, August 9th nine police officers were injured after they stopped a republican Anti-Internment League parade from entering Belfast city centre. An hour later police deployed water cannon when republicans threw petrol bombs, stones and bottles at them. A man (53) and a woman (36) were later charged.

Writing in this newspaper on July 14th last Rev [Brian Kennaway](#), former convenor of the education committee of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, wrote "such persistent violence and bad behaviour continues to undermine both unionism and Orangeism."

It is true and it is up to unionism and Orangeism to end it. Similarly with republicans and republican parades.

As encouragement to both, the costs of all violence arising from such parades, when not properly marshalled, should be incurred by the organisers.

First published: Tue, Aug 18, 2015 in the Irish Times. Patsy McGarry is Religious Affairs Correspondent