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- Other Titles**

[Home](#) > [News](#) > [Politics](#)

Politics

Cost of inquiries 'horrify' Tories

Friday, February 15, 2008

By Sam Lister

Tory politicians are "horrified" at the spiralling costs of inquiries into the past, the Shadow Secretary of State has revealed.

Owen Paterson said there were growing concerns among the Conservative rank and file about the amount of cash being ploughed into the investigations, particularly for the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, where the bill has now reached £181m.

He was speaking after a visit to Ulster to meet Lord Eames and Denis Bradley, who head the Consultative Group on the Past.

Mr Paterson said: "There is more than a feeling of unease in the Tory party. People are horrified at the costs of the inquiries and wonder what other good could have been done with this money.

"For example the Police Federation are having problems getting money for people who need psychiatric help to deal with the past.






"There is a feeling that well-heeled London lawyers are the ones benefiting the most. There is a case for a low key approach to getting to the truth. I do fear the present is being swamped by the past.

"There are huge present needs that the police face but they have to spend 40% of their time on the past."

His comments come on the back of reports that Shadow Defence Secretary Gerald Howarth claimed the Saville Inquiry "should be scrapped and any money still to be spent devoted instead to something worthwhile, like police pay".

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