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Re Parades '97.

News extracts

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Hr Coughlan D/Taoiseach

Section
C056/3

Short Title: **Interview with Gerry Adams**

Marian Finucane:

Now, I don't know if you were watching Prime Time last night, included in the programme, did they did a profile on orange protests and referring to the fact that the marching season will start again at the end of the month. Drumcree, what's happening in all of the various areas including Harryville and so on and so forth and included in the programme was a definite statement that Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein were in fact the manipulators who had manipulated and controlled and exploited the feelings that are there already in order to bring about the kind of thing that happened at Drumcree last year. Now Gerry Adams is on the line. Gerry Adams, good afternoon to you.

Gerry Adams: (Sinn Fein)

Good afternoon Marian.

Marian Finucane:

Is that true?

Gerry Adams:

No, not at all.

Marian Finucane:

Did you make the speech in Athboy?

Gerry Adams:

Well, my remarks in Athboy were unscripted but I have said on a number of occasions and on public occasions, remarks which certainly contained the sentiment of the work that was

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done by local communities, by activists over a long time to stand up for their rights of people of here, to stand up for what both Governments have already agreed should be norm.

Marian Finucane:

You were quoted as saying that Drumcree didn't happen and Drumcree and its likes didn't happen by accident. It came about by three years hard work by activists and fair play to them.

Gerry Adams:

Absolutely, I applaud.....

Marian Finucane:

And that is your view?

Gerry Adams:

Yes and let me say this and this is.....

Marian Finucane:

So Drumcree's a good thing?

Gerry Adams:

No, no, Drumcree is not a good thing.

Marian Finucane:

Well, this is what you were talking about, this situation didn't occur without preparation going into it and fair play to the people who brought it about.

Gerry Adams:

Well let me first of all if you will, get a little bit of space to respond to what you're saying. The programme last night said that there was evidence that Sinn Fein infiltrated many residence associations. It then went on to say that events of last summer were a result of Sinn Fein setting up residence associations....

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Marian Finucane:

No, it didn't say that actually.

Gerry Adams:

Well. I'm only after listening to a video of the programme a second before I came in to do this interview.

Marian Finucane:

Yeah.

Gerry Adams:

And I wrote down what it said. Now let me finish what I'm saying please. First of all Sinn Fein has the right to be involved in upholding the rights of both sections of our community in the north or any other part of this island to equality of treatment. Secondly, I have said in conditions which were not favourable to this been said that the orange men have the right to march, that I respect their right to march **(30 seconds missing off tape)**.

Marian Finucane:

.....our benefit for Sinn Fein.

Gerry Adams:

Not at all.

Marian Finucane:

In the sense that you get all the sympathetic coverage, how dreadful, how dreadful and it gives you status within your own community as these great activists that put in the three years work that led to that kind of confrontation.

Gerry Adams:

Well, we are involved in this situation Marian. because we live in these communities.

Marian Finucane:

Yes.

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Gerry Adams:

And if RTE never existed or if RTE programmes like the one that was shown last night were fair and balanced programmes, these situations would still exist on the ground and RTE has the disreputable reputation and broadcasters in it have the disreputable reputation of placing censorship for over two decades.....

Marian Finucane:

Grand, that's history Gerry.....(both shouting together)...that's a waste of air space at this stage. The arguments about section 31 have been hashed out until we're all blue in the fact and it's ancient history as we speak.

Gerry Adams:

Are you going to let me speak?

Marian Finucane:

Yes I will if you address the you know, fair play to them, they brought it to this after three years hard work.

Gerry Adams:

They brought it to a situation where no longer, after seventy-five years of the type of disgraceful bigotry and supremacism that we have seen in this part of this island, no longer are ordinary Nationalists going to stand up for that and what do we want, we want equality, we want, and we're very tolerant by the way of these thousands of Orange....Marian, please let me finish.

Marian Finucane:

Well not thousands, we weren't talking about thousands in all occasions that were going to walk down the various roads.

Gerry Adams:

I'm sorry, there are thousands, if you listen to what I'm saying, there are thousands of parades through the six counties every single year and we put up with it and we're tolerant of it and we generally are good humoured about it, these contentious parades, I mean I was on the Lower Ormeau Road, you weren't, I was held by the RUC for three and a half hours last July

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and some of your TDs from, indeed from Dublin, were there as well and witnessed the hemming in of people there, the curfew of people there but....

Marian Finucane:

Yes, but you said fair play to the people who brought it to that.

Gerry Adams:

I'm saying fair play to those people who in a dignified, passive and peaceful way, using democratic means, stood up for the rights of their own communities, I mean the greatest....

Marian Finucane:

No, but I really want to get to the nub of the point, you were saying fair play to the people who brought it to the point of Drumcree last year.

Gerry Adams:

Well the nub of the thing is this.....No I didn't say that, I said fair play to those people who in pacifistic way, and I've made these remarks publicly, I mean the civil rights struggle in the North which people in the establishment of RTE may resent was commenced by people, fair play to them, who went out in their ones and twos standing up for the right to civil rights, the folk memory may be of thousands of people on the streets but I know from my own experience that it was one or two, it was Brigid Bond in Derry, it was Mrs. Githernew (pho) in Tyrone, it was the one of two individuals who put in the hard work, now let me.....

Marian Finucane:

No, we're getting a history lesson again.

Gerry Adams:

Marian, you are missing the point, the point is the programme....

Marian Finucane:

No I'm missing the point, fair play to them for three years work.

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Gerry Adams:

No, the programme alleged last night, alleged last night that Sinn Fein had infiltrated these residents associations and that is a lie and that is the type of disreputable journalism which makes the situation here worse, without a shred of evidence, they just denuded and undermined and subverted the real crisis and fear for those of us who live in the six counties and by the way....

Marian Finucane:

No sorry, I have a caller on the line. Brendan O'Brien, disreputable journalism.

Brendan O'Brien:

Yes, well I've been listening to this, I'm actually on a mobile phone....

Marian Finucane:

Well I hope it doesn't break down.

Brendan O'Brien:

Driving down here, I mean I'd like to just make two points, I got a hold of Gerry Adams' speech verbatim and he is addressing this, I would have to say, in a more honest way than some of the people have done over the last number of hours, he has accepted that Sinn Fein has an involvement in what has been going on in the residents associations and the confrontational situation, but I would just say this, I mean I can dismiss the question of disreputable journalism and all the rest, I don't accept that but we don't really need an argument....

Gerry Ryan:

Why didn't you come to me Brendan and make these allegations instead of putting it up, why didn't you come along? You are patronising me and the Sinn Fein organisation and the residents association by your opening remarks, Sinn Fein have never made any secret of the fact, I met the Lower Ormeau Residents Association, I was interviewed by RTE last week, I met the people on Garvaghy Road last week also, I was on the Lower Ormeau Road, we were part of the movement to keep the calm in the situation after the British Government caved in and instead of trying to, which we are trying to do, is to avert Drumcree mark three, you are patronising us and it is disreputable journalism. Why didn't you come along and say to me or someone in my office, these are remarks which we think that Adams has made, we want to put this inference on it, have you got a response to that?

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Brendan O'Brien:

Well the report last night was done.....

Gerry Adams:

Was trying to ambush us Brendan, you tried to ambush us and.....

Marian Finucane:

Well no, just hold on a minute, Brendan, no just hold on the bell a minute, can you explain why those particular lines were included in Prime Time programme last night? "Ask any activist in the North did Drumcree happen by accident and they will tell you no, talk about the three years hard work and fair play to them".

Brendan O'Brien:

Well it's obviously directly relevant to what's been happening there and I mean patronising or not, you can put any interpretation on it. Gerry Adams has accepted that they see as valid an involvement by their organisation and you see the last line of what was quoted on the programme, can I just finish.....

Marian Finucane:

Will you just let him finish, we have enough time, we have enough time, sorry Gerry Adams, excuse me please, could we have a little bit of cool, we have enough time. I will come back to you, Brendan will you finish what you were saying?

Brendan O'Brien:

Just on a factual point, you've quoted a few things, but the last line of what was quoted on the programme is really the point that I think Gerry Adams needs to address and I hope in a reasonably balanced fashion, to use his own word, his words were "and they are the type of scene changes", that's scene, "scene changes that we have to focus in on and develop and exploit". Now that's an active involvement, the programme was not saying, and I would not be saying, that Sinn Fein created Drumcree, but what is true is that when you look at the strategic thinking of the Republican Movement and it's there in writing in their various theoretical publications and all the rest, they work to expand what they call their basis of resistance and this is an area where they are developing their basis of resistance and...

Gerry Adams:

That is dirty journalism Brendan.

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Marian Finucane:

Okay, so let's take that point about.....

Brendan O'Brien:

Well I'm just using your own terminology.

Gerry Adams:

No Brendan, you're using your terminology.

Marian Finucane:

Let me take the point, they are scene, on this scene changes, that these are things we must focus in on and develop and exploit, are they things that you view as matters to be focused in on, developed and exploited?

Gerry Adams:

Well first of all what I want.....

Marian Finucane:

Yes or no?

Gerry Adams:

Well let me please give you an answer to the question, it wasn't a yes or no question.

Marian Finucane:

Do you see, it is a yes or no question.

Gerry Adams:

No it isn't because people have the right to equality of treatment, I mean the two Governments failed to bring about a system of equality of treatment which is for the Irish language, which is for an end to discrimination, which is to be properly policed, which is to an end of triumphalistic marches, then communities.....

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Marian Finucane:

Yes, we've heard all these things before.

Gerry Adams:

I'm sorry, your viewers have only heard about it recently.

Marian Finucane:

No, but do you believe that they are things you must focus in on, develop and exploit?

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Gerry Adams:

I think there's a duty on me, on you, on John Bruton, on everyone, to focus in on issues of inequality, I've already called for the Government to send observers into these issues of vexed and contentious parades and part of the problem with the programme you see is this, I meant last week to meet both the main residents associations with a view to trying to avert the crisis of last year, with a view to averting Drumcree mark three and because the programme last night said there was evidence that Sinn Fein had infiltrated many residents associations, which first of all puts those residents associations on Loyalist death lists, secondly it is totally and absolutely untrue and thirdly, it allows the Unionists, who don't want equality of treatment, to dodge the issue.

Marian Finucane:

Okay, Brendan O'Brien?

Brendan O'Brien:

Well you know it's, this is killing the messenger and the reality of situation is more or less as Gerry Adams himself has described it, you can put various shoes on it. Leaving aside...

Gerry Adams:

What's the evidence that we have infiltrated residents associations?

Brendan O'Brien:

Well.....

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Gerry Adams:

Give me the evidence Brendan.

Brendan O'Brien:

Well you were addressing.....

Gerry Adams:

That's the allegation you made on your programme, was in Marian.....

Marian Finucane:

Just let Brendan O'Brien come back in.

Brendan O'Brien:

Let's deal with the facts of it, this is a wide ranging speech and there are other elements in it which are in your favour and there are other elements in it which are to your disadvantage.

Gerry Adams:

I'm not looking for any favouritism.....

Marian Finucane:

No, will you just let him finish the point.

Brendan O'Brien:

Dealing with the facts of the situation. you used, these are your words which you yourself used in the context of having come out of workshops discussing all of these issues at Athboy and you said, and you were making the point that Sinn Fein was being active on the ground and.....

Gerry Adams:

I also went up to Dublin Centre, are we responsible for the drug problem?

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Marian Finucane:

Will you just let him finish the point.

Brendan O'Brien:

Ask any activist in the North and the word activist normally refers to people within the Republican movement who are working actively for the Republican movement, ask any activist in the North did Drumcree happen by accident and they will tell you no, three years of work on the Lower Ormeau, and you listed a number of areas, Portadown, Fermanagh.....

Gerry Adams:

.....you're suggesting that misrepresentation of what I said is the evidence that Sinn Fein infiltrated many residents associations.

Brendan O'Brien:

Well what does this mean and they are the type of.....(inaudible conversation, both speaking together).....

Gerry Adams:

...well why didn't you invite me to.....these remarks to me as a decent journalist, bring those remarks to me and ask me about them?

Marian Finucane:

Okay well I'm putting them to you, so what did you mean by the sentence that says "these are the scenes that we have to focus in on and develop and exploit"?

Gerry Adams:

Because we need to bring about a system of equality of treatment in this part of this small island and in the absence of the Governments bringing it about and in the face of resistance by the Unionists, even to talk, and sometimes even to talk to their own constituents, like the situation in Dublin Central, the only focus that came on the drugs problem in those areas was when the local communities went out and worked and took action themselves, totally legitimate.

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Marian Finucane:

Can I come back to the point that if, if the context of what you were talking about was Drumcree and fair play to the activists that had put in the work and the three years hard work and that these were scenes that one should focus in on and develop and exploit, where does all that knit in with reconciliation and everybody's right to be at the table and so on and so forth?

Gerry Adams:

Well because Marian, I'll tell you where reconciliation starts, it starts with equality, don't ask the people of Garvaghy Road or Dunloy or Derry or anywhere else, or even the people affected by the drugs disgrace in Dublin Central, to reconcile themselves to the epidemic of sectarian bigotry in the North or to the drugs scourge in Dublin. What we need first of all is a system of equality and this issue of Orange marches in Derry.....

Marian Finucane:

Yes, well some people use guns....

Gerry Adams:

Marian sorry, let me finish.

Marian Finucane:

No, some people use guns to do that, other people use civil unrest, are you saying that Drumcree moves that along?

Gerry Adams:

Well the people who use guns have now got a whole range of targets identified for them by that scurrilous programme last night.

Marian Finucane:

Ah that's outrageous, I have to give Brendan.....

Gerry Adams:

Is it outrageous, I am a person who has been at funerals of activists and of activists wives and of activists children and that is the type of disgraceful, that is the type of irresponsible

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reporting last night which makes our job in the North, those of us who live there, makes our job more difficult.

Marian Finucane:

Okay, I just want to give five seconds because I'm over my time, I want to give five seconds to Brendan O'Brien, five Brendan.

Brendan O'Brien:

Well all I would say is that at the time when Drumcree was happening the IRA were preparing a bombing offensive in Britain.....

Marian Finucane:

Okay, I'm sorry, I know that it's complex but I'm going to have to leave it there.

Gerry Adams:

Brendan is away off on his own agenda.

Marian Finucane:

I'm going to have to leave it there, we're out of it for today.

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'Primetime', 5 March 1997

Reported comments by Gerry Adams in Athboy, November 1996

Adams: And I will tell you no, three years of work in the Lower Ormeau Road, Portadown, in parts of Fermanagh and Newry, in Armagh and in Ballahy and up in Derry. Three years work went into creating that situation and fair play to those people who put the work in. These are the type of scene changes that we have to focus in on and develop and exploit.

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