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Fury over Sinn Fein visit to massacre site

By Margaret Canning
Thursday, 8 January 2009

Education Minister Caitriona Ruane will this weekend address an event organised by the youth wing of Sinn Fein which includes a visit to the scene of the IRA murder of 18 soldiers.

According to organisers Ogra Shinn Fein, Ms Ruane and West Tyrone MLA Barry McElduff will speak at a separate event in Newcastle on Friday night on the theme of republicanism from prison to politics.

Ms Ruane is not expected to attend on Saturday when delegates travel to Narrow Water near Warrenpoint, where 18 soldiers were killed by the IRA in a double bomb attack on August 27, 1979.

DUP South Down MLA Jim Wells accused Ogra Shinn Fein, which organised the weekend's events, of "gratuitously offensive behaviour" by organising a visit to the site of the massacre.

"They are attempting to glorify what was a cold-hearted and heinous act of murder carried out by wicked terrorists," Mr Wells said.

Fra Cochrane, the chairperson of Ogra Shinn Fein in Newcastle, described the Narrow Water excursion as a "historical visit".

"We want to discuss the conflict itself, and Narrow Water is one of the things which happened in South Down during the conflict."

A spokesperson for the Department of Education said Ms Ruane's participation in the event was "a party matter".

Ms Ruane could not be reached for comment.

A Sinn Fein spokesman in South Down said: "I can't speak for Caitriona but from the party's point of view, it's a legitimate visit."

"The whole idea is to educate and discuss significant events in the conflict and Narrow Water was significant. No-one is going there to gloat, but to point out and educate young people about events that happened, and hopefully will never happen again."

The massacre at Narrow Water was the biggest single loss of life for the British Army since the Second World War and the biggest loss of life in the Troubles to that point.

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Northern Ireland Troubles Gallery



David Trimble -Drumcree 1996

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Shin Fane cause trouble when the Orange Order celebrates their victory on July 12th. Maybe there should be some demonstrations about THIS.

Posted by Stu. | 08.01.09, 23:23 GMT

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What does Ruane get paid to do apart from cause controversy job?

Posted by soarer | 08.01.09, 16:53 GMT

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Because it was fully captured by television cameras and, the incident has been described as one of the "most dramatic and harrowing images of the conflict", perhaps the Belfast taxi/bus tours could take in the location where the two innocent corporals were dragged from their car by the local community and IRA men, beaten and then shot dead.

Perhaps our Culture minister should consider this.

Would the local residents object? Why? Its just "reflecting on the war"....

Posted by mickey | 08.01.09, 14:07 GMT

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Storm in a teacup. And more predictable hysteria from unionists

Why on earth should republicans not be allowed to narrow water to reflect on the war??

The British forces and their unionist paramilitaries as well as republicans killed people. Should we now set boundaries where former combatants should never go??

Posted by gearoid | 08.01.09, 12:24 GMT

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If no-one is "going there to gloat" no doubt they would be happy for an independent / neutral observer to attend?

No, didn't think so.

Posted by Richard | 08.01.09, 10:34 GMT

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What's all the fuss about? We all know how sick IRA/SF is. It's like the leaders of the Taliban going to gloat at the site of the World Trade Centre. Do we really expect anything else from IRA/SF?

Posted by mickey | 08.01.09, 10:19 GMT

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