

BELFAST TELEGRAPH

Belfast Telegraph
Calendar 2007

[Click here](#) to order your copy

ADVERTISEMENT

Belfast Telegraph - IPR Website of the Year

[Search Site](#)

[Advanced Search](#)

- [Loadzajobs.co.uk](#)
- [Propertynews.com](#)
- Belfast Telegraph**
 - [Home](#)
 - [News](#)
 - [Breaking News](#)
 - [Northwest Edition](#)
 - [Business](#)
 - [Business Telegraph](#)
 - [Sport](#)
 - **Features**
 - **Daily Features**
 - [Travel](#)
 - [Health & Beauty](#)
 - [Food & Drink](#)
 - [Motoring](#)
 - [Columnists](#)
 - [Entertainment](#)
 - [Homefinder](#)
 - [Weather](#)
 - [Archive](#)
 - [Calendar 2007](#)
- Inside Belfast**
 - [Jobs](#)
 - [Training](#)
 - [Dating](#)
 - [Gaming](#)
 - [Reader Offers](#)
- Services**
 - [RSS](#)
 - [Media Kit](#)
- Other Titles**
 - [Sunday Life](#)
 - [Ireland's Saturday Night](#)

[Home](#) > [Features](#) > [Daily Features](#)

Daily Features

The home truths ...

Saturday, January 27, 2007

By Alf McCreary

"The community must be grateful to the Police Ombudsman for doing that most difficult of jobs - helping us to look at something we find it difficult to reflect on."

These words, from the Church of Ireland cleric the Rev Earl Storey, neatly underlines the sense of dismay at the findings of Nuala O'Loan's report, which outlined a grisly tale of collusion between a minority of the RUC and the UVF paramilitaries in north Belfast during the Troubles.

His comments are important for another reason, too. Here is a Protestant cleric telling it the way it is, in difficult circumstances - but, then, Earl Storey is no ordinary clergyman. Some years ago, he wrote a brave and a definitive book about the Orange Order, suggesting how it might improve its image. He is now the director of the Church's anti-sectarian Hard Gospel Project.

Storey makes the point that "the alleged actions of certain police officers acting in collusion with paramilitaries is shocking". So it is, but it is important that these words are coming from a senior Protestant clergyman. His comments are also backed up by another statement from an even more senior Church of Ireland cleric, Bishop Michael Jackson, who says that Mrs O'Loan has done an important service to Irish society, North and South, by publishing her findings.

He states that "her references to collusion cannot but cause alarm to everyone who today seeks the confident assurance that the rule of law € holds sway in policing". These comments, like those of Mr Storey, would have the unquestioned support of all nationalist people. However, they would have a mixed reception among Protestants.

The majority, one hopes, would admit that the findings are incontrovertible, but others would dismiss the Ombudsman's report as just another attack on the RUC, and by implication an attack on the Protestant community itself.

One woman said to me this week, in effect: "Why can't they leave the RUC alone?" You may not agree with of her sentiments, but they were real. She implied that people in her community could not bear to hear the latest details about a rogue Special Branch within the RUC, even if it was regrettably true, and that the bravery of so many officers in that force was being overlooked because of the malpractice of a small minority.

This is why so few unionists were prepared to come forward to try and defend, not the indefensible behaviour of the RUC Special Branch, but the reputation of all those in the RUC who tried hard to provide good policing for everybody.






The harsh truth is that the RUC was locked in a dirty, vicious war on both sides, with some of the worst paramilitaries imaginable, and there is a bitter irony in watching a Sinn Fein leader ask for Sir Ronnie Flanagan, the former Chief Constable, to be sacked.

God only knows what he and his republican friends were up to in the darkest days of the Troubles.

There is much hand-wringing and moralising about the inexcusable wrongs of a minority of the RUC. But this debate requires more balance and perspective. It is important that senior Protestant clerics like Michael Jackson and Earl Storey, both Fermanagh men who know about border and inter-community situations, have the courage to confront people with some unpalatable home truths, while underlining at the same time, how much Mrs O'Loan's revelations have saddened the majority of decent officers in the old RUC and the PSNI, as well as the community at large.

It is one thing for a senior Catholic cleric to speak his mind about policing, and Father Dan Whyte, whose honesty and courage I have long admired, did so this week. He warned that the Ombudsman's investigation has heightened wider suspicions about the policing of loyalist groupings.

However, there is not much mileage for Church of Ireland clerics in drawing attention to the shortcomings of a minority in a courageous police force which most Protestants (and many Catholics) rightly regarded as the last bulwark holding out against the worst of paramilitarism.

-  Email Article
-  Print Version
-  Search
-  +Most Emailed
-  +Most Read

Advertiser Links

Meet Local Musicians - BandMix.Co.Uk
UK musician classifieds. Brand new. Meet local bands and mus...
bandmix.co.uk

Don't miss ...

Too much homework?


 Excessive studying 'can turn kids off education'

Hamster crash

 Top Gear jet car smash was

'Hammond's fault'

Shark!

 The great white fight and the creature from the deep

Jagshemesh!

 Borat creator Cohen makes most powerful men list

ADVERTISEMENTS

Loadzajobs.co.uk
Your search ends here

Belfast Telegraph



Online Cinema Listings
[Click here](#)

ADVERTISEMENTS

Perhaps the best that can be said of the past few days is that the Ombudsman's report has provided an opportunity for the release of some more of the poison from the system in Northern Ireland, and has allowed many people to confront painful home truths and to try to move on.

It may be that other Protestant clergymen will speak their minds in public about these matters, but in the meantime Bishop Jackson and Mr Storey have shown courage in being the first to put their heads above the parapet.

More articles in Daily Features

- [Shark! The great white fight and the creature from the deep](#)
- [Apocalypse soon?](#)
- [Art of the matter](#)
- [Secret and lies: John Anderson](#)
- [Stylist up close with style icon](#)

