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'Don't mention the war' campaign does little for victims

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Sinn Féin West Belfast MLA Jennifer McCann has said that unionists political point scoring does little to advance the debate about how we deal with the needs of all victims equally.

Commenting on a DUP Assembly debate about the conflict Ms McCann said:

"I doubt the sponsors of this motion really care about how the conflict we have all been through is described.

"It wasn't so long ago they were calling on the IRA to say the 'war' is over. When it suited their political interests they had no problem using the word 'war'; now it seems to be a case, like a scene from Fawlty Towers, 'don't mention the war'.

"But what I am mainly concerned about is the relatives of all those who have been killed in this conflict. Not for the first time unionist parties in their endeavours to score points against each other have brought motions to this Assembly which have more to do with courting the unionist electorate than improving the quality of people's lives.

"Sinn Féin and the constituency we represent have an entirely different view on the origins of the conflict and the reasons why we ended up in a conflict situation which resulted in so many people losing their lives. To nationalists and republicans the core problem in this country is partition and the British government's historical occupation of Ireland.

"I know those opposite think we lived in a wonderful little place before 1969 and for them that's their reference point. This simply ignores the reality of the injustices of unionist, one-party rule which treated nationalists and Catholics as second class citizens in their own country. The unionist parties are living in denial about the role unionists played from partition and their responsibilities for the conflict.

"The sponsors of this motion also need to be mindful that the language they use can be deeply offensive to the relatives of

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those on the republican side who lost loved ones who were members of the IRA. As far as I am concerned those who died on the republican side were noble, brave people.

"I am not asking anyone else to accept my views. What I am asking them to do is respect the relatives of those who died; realise they have feelings, that they are grieving for a lost member of their family.

"I have no difficulty accepting that relatives of those killed who were members of the crown forces are hurting because of what republicans did on them. I would not for one minute consider making remarks which would cause them offence.

"To the relatives of those who lost a loved one in the conflict, war, troubles, call it what you will, their loss is the same. Will it really matter to the people out there who are looking in and hoping that this Assembly will help them with their problems if this motion gets through this chamber today? I very much doubt it." ENDS

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