

Would Sinn Fein leave rapist on our streets?

THERE are times when people in public life may find that their public positions clash directly with morality and even with common sense. The time has come when Sinn Fein should set aside its position on cooperating with the PSNI. A man who raped a 15-year-old child is at large in west Belfast. Sinn Fein is telling people to pass information to the family but the child's own mother has said she wants people to go directly

to the police. We need witness accounts that can convict but Sinn Fein is telling people to put information in the public domain. That would be hearsay and let the perpetrator know the progress of an investigation. Sinn Fein leaders have admitted that they would contact the police if they were involved in a road accident. Is protecting a no-claims bonus more important than protecting a 15-year-old rape victim?

People like this rapist can hide behind the lawlessness that results from such hypocritical attitudes. We have police accountability mechanisms already in place which are unique in scope and scale and people are crying out for law and order. Are we to leave rapists and murderers on the streets until Sinn Fein's agenda is satisfied? This man will in all likelihood rape again unless he is caught by the police very soon.

PATRICIA LEWSLEY MLA, Belfast



■ FOOTLOOSE:
A man chills out
in a lay-by on the north
Antrim coast
PICTURE: Brendan Murphy

Atheists are required to respect others too

HAD *The Irish News* printed my letter (July 30) word for word, it would have read: "How could we forget about Hitler and the Nazis who held no particular religious beliefs?" The word 'particular', which was left out, holds a lot of significance here and it is little wonder that William Burns (August 6) latched on to the seemingly absolutist statement published. The fact remains though that Mr Burns is not correct when he claims that Hitler "believed in God to his dying day" and that religion somehow drove him to kill those millions of people. Mr Burns uses a quote from Hitler to try to prove that he thought he was acting in accordance with God's will but allow me to give you another couple of quotes from Hitler. On October 14 1941 Hitler said: "The best thing is to let Christianity die a natural death... when understanding of the universe has become widespread... Christian doctrine will be convicted of absurdity." On October 19 1941 he said: "The reason why the ancient world was so pure, light and serene was that it knew nothing of the two greatest scourges: the

pox and Christianity." Finally, and corroborating my original sentence, Hitler stated on July 11 1941 that "National Socialism and religion cannot exist together". These don't particularly sound like things that a committed Christian would say. Indeed, if you think logically about the quotation from Hitler that Mr Burns uses, it does not make much sense at all. Jesus did not call for any slaughter or fighting of Jews. Jesus was himself Jewish! Besides, not only did the Nazis try to wipe out all the Jews in Europe, they made a point of killing many Jehovah's Witnesses, priests and ministers also. I am surprised that Mr Burns, who claims to be so 'rational and objective', did not discover the complete story here! Mr Burns didn't even deal with the other figure I mentioned in my original letter, Joseph Stalin. Or maybe he is going to break the news to us that this ultimate of atheists was also driven by religion to do the evil things he did? I have to say that Mr Burns is completely correct when he says that a tiny minority of "people

say and do terrible things in the name of religion". However, this does not mean that religion is inherently dangerous or evil as he claims. People say and do terrible things in the name of country but that does not make that country or its people inherently evil or dangerous. To suggest otherwise is wrong as is the idea that there are 'godly commands in the Bible' that tell people today to go out and kill. In fact, the messages that Jesus preaches to Christians are about as peaceful as you can get. I would hardly call "Love your neighbour as yourself" a dangerous or evil message. Mr Burns claims that I said he should have tolerance and respect for those with religious beliefs "as if (they) automatically deserve it". I said it would be nice if he improved on these things because it seems from his letters that he has little if any tolerance and respect for any religious believers. What is more, most religious believers happen to be good, upright people so why shouldn't they be treated with tolerance and respect?

You don't have to agree with a person's view to respect them! And another thing, I certainly don't just 'assume' that most religious people are critical of their faiths and have occasional doubts. I am fairly certain that this is the case since I know many people of different faiths who have said so in the course of discussing the topic. It is human nature to question such things. The issue at stake here though is whether people like Mr Burns can accept that other people find the answers to their doubts and questions in religion. If they cannot accept this, it would suggest a narrow-mindedness and dogmatism similar to that which he accuses religious believers of having. Of course, Mr Burns can still think himself correct but that does not mean that he should look down upon those who believe in God. This is not the right attitude for anyone to have no matter whether they believe in a god or not.

RATIONAL-THINKING CHRISTIAN
Derry

On This Day/August 16 1936

By Eamon Phoenix

'The road to hell is paved with Popery'

THE erection of an Orange arch in a Belfast street for the Twelfth celebrations bearing the inscription 'The road to hell is paved with Popery' led to the appearance of three youths at the Belfast Summons Court yesterday on a charge of being guilty of behaviour whereby a breach of the peace might have been occasioned.

The youths were William Bickerstaff, Coyle Street; Sydney McConnell, Upper Mervue Street and Robert Ashe, do.

The charges were dismissed on the merits.

District Inspector Shillington said that when it was discovered that the arch had been erected bearing an offensive inscription, the defendants were warned that if it was not removed they would be liable to prosecution.

In spite of the warnings from the police, the inscriptions remained on the arch. Sergeant Knox said that on July 11, as a result of a complaint, he went to Halliday's Road where he saw an arch bearing an inscription printed in silver, 'The road to hell is paved with Popery'. He spoke to several boys about the inscription and pointed out that they would be liable to prosecution.

Later Ashe and the other boys came to the barracks and said they had consulted some 'high up' people on the matter and had been advised to let the arch remain.

In reply to Mr Catchpole (defending), witness said that none of the persons who complained to the police about the inscription were in court. Some Protestant clergy had protested about it.

The arch was continuously under police observation.

Mr JH Campbell RM, before the hearing of evidence for the defence, said he was not satisfied that the inscription made by these 'embryo theologians' was likely to lead to a breach of the peace.

It was not enough to say that the inscription was offensive - it might have been treated as an absurdity. A great deal depended on the locality and as it was situated in a district frequented by intelligent Catholics he did not think a breach of the peace would have been caused.

He did not consider the case proved and dismissed it on the merits.

Belfast mill strike

THREE hundred weavers in the York Street Flax Spinning Company Limited, Belfast, who had ceased work on Wednesday, are still out.

According to Mrs Dunbar, general secretary of the Textile Operatives' Society of Ireland, one worker refused to work four looms instead of the customary three and the rest of the operatives came out with her. The company's statement is that the four-loom system has been in use in factories in Northern Ireland for some time past and was recently adopted in the York Street mill.

The strike is confined to a section of the workers engaged mainly in making cambric and sheet linens.