



NO LINK:
At no time has funding for loyalist bands or loyal order events and festivals been linked to the content of the music played by the bands while out on parade

Condemnation of chants not telling the whole story

FOR just over three decades, Féile an Phobail has provided the people of west Belfast with something of which to be very proud.

The festival's organisers are renowned for their boundless energy and vision, with concerts, parades, debates, discussions, tours, exhibits as well as sporting and cultural activities, catering for all ages.

A pre-eminent theme remains that of providing space to voices articulating opinions and narratives not common to the local largely republican and nationalist community. This includes regularly giving platforms to prominent unionist politicians and commentators, as well as inviting loyalist bandsmen and ex-prisoners to discuss a breadth of issues, which this year included educational underachievement.

There is nothing remotely approaching an equivalent to Féile emerging from within unionism, and Protestant working class communities are the poorer for that, as indeed is unionist political culture.

Féile concluded this year with what has become a customary finale concert by the Wolfe Tones, a nod to the republican roots of the festival and local community. The subsequent furore over chants about the IRA made by a small group of people attending the concert was predictable, yet raises a number of intriguing questions.

The DUP's north Belfast councillor, Dale Pankhurst, loudly condemned the concert whilst his colleague, Brian Kingston, called for funding to be withdrawn from the festival.

A week later, DUP councillor, John Kyle, issued a tweet proclaiming that it was "glorifying terrorism and the indoctrination of young people." He concluded with the statement that "it is no way to create a peaceful future."

There are many people in our society who will be deeply uncomfortable with young and old gathering to listen to music associated exclusively with one tradition, commemorating battles and conflicts whilst also celebrating combatants. It is quite the

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understatement to say that the full picture of Irish history will not be told on such occasions.

The day before the Wolfe Tones concert loyalists also gathered, not in a park located in a predominantly unionist district, but rather in the centre of the overwhelmingly nationalist city of Derry for an Apprentice Boys parade.

In advance of the day, the William King Flute Band based in the city, shared a tweet linking footage from the parade a number of years ago. On that occasion, one flute band was led by someone holding a Confederate Flag, whilst another band can clearly be seen and heard playing a UDA anthem whilst some supporters sing the words, which include a reference to "Fenian b**tards."

Of course, this is nothing new. Loyalist bands are formed for the specific purpose of playing loyalist music at loyalist events. Amongst the repertoire of songs played by such bands will be anti-Catholic tunes including The Famine's Over and No Pope

in Rome, which imagines a world with no Catholic chapels, nuns nor priests. Many bands will also play a wide range of songs lauding loyalist paramilitary groups as well as sectarian slaughter, such as that which occurred at Dolly's Brae.

On the day in which the PUP's John Kyle issued his tweet about Féile an Phobail, bands were gathering for a commemorative parade in Belfast to remember the UVF's Samuel Rockett.

An even greater number of loyalist bands are due to gather later this week for a parade to recall the UVF's Brian Robinson, who was killed by a British soldier moments after he had himself murdered an innocent Catholic man.

What is noteworthy is that the loyalist bands participating in these parades are the very same bands amongst those accompanying Orangemen and Apprentice Boys when on parade. A large number of these loyalist bands wear costumes that have been paid for through public funding schemes and many of the instruments which they use to play their loyalist tunes - be they anti-Catholic, in praise of loyalist paramilitaries or others - have also been paid for by public funds.

At no time has funding for the bands, Apprentice Boys' events nor the Orange Order's Twelfth parades and festivals, been linked to the actual content of the music played by the bands while out on parade, nor indeed the response it elicits amongst spectators. Anyone who has seen footage from Belfast's Twelfth will recognise why that would be an appalling vista for the Loyal Orders.

Then there is the small matter of the BBC providing live commentary and highlight programmes each year from July 12 parades featuring the very same loyalist bands playing the same loyalist tunes to commemorate an historic battle that led directly to the Penal Laws and subjugation of the country's majority Catholic population.

Did someone mention glorification and indoctrination?

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ON THIS DAY

AUGUST 30 1921

Derry Rejects Partition

AT A special meeting of Derry Corporation yesterday, Alderman Cahal Bradley (Sinn Féin) proposed the following resolution: "That, as a majority of the people of Derry city have expressed in election their determined opposition to a so-called Northern Parliament and have declared they will refuse to recognise its authority, such authority could only be exercised by force and coercion. We refuse to consent to any such separation from the rest of Ireland and to make the fullest use of our right to nullify it."

Alderman Bonner seconded. Derry city, he said, rightly belonged to Donegal. The resolution was carried by 18 votes to 15.

Minister Attacked over Catholic Appointment

Mr E M Archdale, Minister of Agriculture for 'Northern Ireland', was again on the stool of explanation at Brookeborough where he attended a meeting presided over by Sir Basil Brooke. The chairman referred to the criticism levelled against Mr Archdale 'for accepting a Roman Catholic in the Northern Department of Agriculture and said the gentleman in question was a loyalist and not only that, but he knew his job. He [Sir Basil] considered the criticism as wrong in every way.'

The right hon. E M Archdale said the people who made these criticisms did not know the facts of the case. He knew Mr Coyle, the gentleman whose appointment was criticised, for 25 years as an expert in the Department of Agriculture [in Dublin] and no more efficient man could be found. He had been requested by several people to resign over the appointment but he had no intention of doing so.

Tyrone Bandsman Shot Dead

The death occurred in the Mater Infirmary Hospital of John O'Neill, the young farmer of Annaghboe, County Tyrone, one of the victims of a shooting outrage at Coalisland. Mr O'Neill was a member of a Nationalist band that was returning from a hospital fete at Donaghmore and about a mile outside Coalisland shots were fired at it with the result that O'Neill was wounded in the chest and abdomen and another man, Bernard Donnelly, shot in the foot.

A member of the band named John McGrath stated that as the band were passing through Coalisland main street playing Nationalist airs, a young man appeared at a window and fired four shots, one of which hit the bandsmen. (A shy, self-effacing Fermanagh landlord, Archdale was shocked to find himself under fire for appointing a Catholic official. Ironically, he was defended by his successor, Basil Brooke who, as Minister in 1933, would urge Protestants not to employ Catholics who were '99 per cent disloyal'. Brooke's reward was the Premiership.)

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