

21 October 2008

<http://www.uup.org/newsrooms/latest-news/general/sinn-fein-and-dissident-republicans-should-not-be-allowed-to-politicise-homecoming-parade.php>

Sinn Fein and dissident republicans should not be allowed to politicise homecoming parade



Amidst the growing controversy surrounding the decision by Sinn Fein and dissident republicans to protest at the homecoming parade for the Royal Irish in Belfast on 2nd November, UUP Policing Board member Basil McCrea has urged the entire community to reject the narrow sectarian agenda promoted by republicans. Mr. McCrea drew particular attention to the failure of dissident republicans to give the legally-required notification of their protest.

Mr. McCrea said, "The rule of law applies to everyone in our society. There can be no no-go areas. Whatever we might think of the Parades Commission - and there are certainly good grounds for criticising its approach to the parading issue - there is a legal obligation on parade organisers to notify the Commission of a parade. The refusal of dissident republican groups to do so requires a firm response from the police and the Commission.

"It is a matter of profound regret that Sinn Fein and the dissident republicans are attempting to politicise the homecoming parade. The Royal Irish Regiment represents generations of proud, brave military service by regiments from across the island of Ireland. As the Bishop of Lichfield stated at the parade for the Royal Irish last week in their garrison town of Shrewsbury, the service of the Royal Irish in Afghanistan modelled 'what it is like for Protestants and Catholics to work together'.

"When the cross-community background of the Royal Irish and its service in Afghanistan, defending a democratically elected government against extremists, is contrasted with the sectarian approach taken by Sinn Fein and the dissident republicans offers, it is clear which set of values offer a positive way forward for Northern Ireland. And it those values, embodied by the Royal Irish, which Northern Ireland must be allowed to respect and celebrate on 2nd November".