



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

A bumbling but dangerous fool!

At the risk of wearying you I send out this news report from the **Belfast Live news website** (February 12th, 2021) which I must say rejoiced my heart.

Like many I have squirmed in vexation to near 'bursting point' as I have heard the various reports on the incident referred to in this item.

Here in Ulster, we have had some 'dodos' hold the office of Chief Constable. Like everything else in our sinking society, things sank really low when this man was appointed.

He came here after a far from illustrious time in England and upon his arrival he has maintained his afore-said record.

Simon Byrne is an English man with little or no understanding of the situation here in Ulster and it is clear that he cares little about anything other than 'keeping in' with those, Sinn Fein/IRA, most likely to challenge his authority!

Please read - **Simon Byrne timeline: PSNI chief's tenure marked by setbacks.**

Police clash with PSNI Chief Constable Simon Byrne over 'public shaming'

He was told: 'You don't care about officers one jot'

Jilly Beattie. 05:00, 12 FEB 2021



PSNI chief constable Simon Byrne (Image: Liam McBurney/PA Wire)

Northern Ireland's under-pressure police chief has been directly challenged by his officers in a no-holds-barred confrontation, Belfast Live can reveal.

PSNI Chief Constable Simon Byrne has been battling tough questions over his decision, before any investigation, to immediately suspend one constable and have another relocated following an incident in South Belfast.

In a meeting with officers of varying ranks, he was accused of "publicly shaming" two of his officers and told that: the PSNI leadership does not care about the lower ranking officers morale is seriously damaged, and his actions could only be perceived as an attempt to placate Sinn Fein.

During last week's incident, a Troubles survivor was arrested by an officer ordered to attend a scene to deal with Covid restrictions adherence.

Mark Sykes had attended a memorial on the Ormeau Road to mark the 29th anniversary of the UDA's 1992 Sean Graham bookmaker atrocity in which five people were murdered and Mr Sykes himself injured.

Social media footage showed police attended the area and Mr Sykes, 52, was handcuffed.



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He was placed in a patrol car and driven to Musgrave Police Station, where he and two officers remained in the car before he was released a short time later.

Sinn Fein members, led by Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill, claimed a nationalist crisis of confidence in policing after the incident and said: "Unjustified heavy handed tactics have been used towards relatives laying flowers, including the arrest of one of the survivors."

The Chief Constable held a rare Saturday media briefing and apologised for the situation.

But on Monday, Mr Byrne faced the wrath of his own officers, who told him he also faced a crisis of confidence amongst the PSNI rank and file.

He was attending a meeting at 1.30pm on February 8 with a number of colleagues in an online Q&A session entitled Better Kit, Better Workplace, where the attendees were identified by their names.

Mr Byrne addressed the officers and said: "After what has been a very challenging few days for policing, I felt it was more important than ever to hear your views and answer your questions."

The theme of the session was intended "to focus on the need to balance modernisation against budget cuts in the year ahead".

But the meeting took off on a very different tangent with the first question by a male officer.

He demanded of the Chief Constable: "Sir, what is your plan for lifting morale amongst the ranks after you publicly shamed two colleagues in what can only be perceived as an attempt to placate Sinn Fein?"

"For the rank and file, your public shaming of two colleagues only further strengthens the understanding amongst constables particularly, that the leadership of this organisation does not care about them one jot."

Before Mr Byrne got a chance to answer, another officer asked him if he felt he had the confidence of the service.

The second officer said: "There is a considerable degree of anger in police officers who I have spoken with regarding the incident on the Ormeau Road. Do you believe that you have the confidence of your police officers that they will be supported in performing their role?"

Sources in the PSNI say anger is at boiling point within the service.

One explained: "This was the first time Simon Byrne had done an internal Q&A with these officers in this format and it didn't quite go to plan.

"The anger is palpable, not just with the Chief Constable but with other senior officers and they didn't hold back.

"We have been assured that the officers on the ground were directed to take this action by a senior officer over the radio. "They apparently questioned it but were told to go ahead.

"If that is accurate and comes out of an investigation, we feel Simon Byrne's position, in light of him suspending this constable, would be untenable."

Another PSNI source said: "Simon Byrne does not have the confidence of the men and women of the PSNI.

"He has done little to build it in the couple of years he's been chief and his reaction to the Ormeau Road incident has cemented the view that he and many of the senior team have little consideration for the officers they send out to do a difficult and dangerous job.

"The two officers involved in this incident have relatively short service and as would be expected, were work-



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ing under orders and with advice of a senior officer. They were sent in to do a job, they followed the orders.

“They might have imagined, in fact expected, to be supported by senior officers.

“The message they received was, you’re on your own – good luck.”