



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

Police duplicity

The following report from 'The Belfast Newsletter' will vex and shame many in the ranks of the Police Service of Northern Ireland! Faithful members, who have, and still do, face the threat of terrorism from Republicans, will doubtless be angry at the senior members of the force who are to blame for this political and cowardly inactivity in the face of blatant breaches of the law. The police were swiftly sent against those deemed less likely to arouse any political 'backlash' but have, it would appear, not been allowed to act against the highly published breaches by hundreds of Sinn Fein members, including Michelle O'Neill and other senior members of the IRA-supporting party.

Doubtless, the inactivity arises from the realisation of the 'embarrassment that will arise should O'Neill and Co be brought before the courts. Republicans have, and still do refuse to recognise 'British judicial jurisdiction here in Northern Ireland. Just how O'Neill and her party would cope with that since they are part of a British devolved government, would raise great difficulties for all concerned!

The silence of their 'power-sharing' co-partners in the Executive, especially the DUP, is deafening!

How shameful is that silence on the part of the Unionist members of this 'dog's breakfast' of a coalition that supposedly governs Northern Ireland. When Unionists ought to be shouting aloud in protest at this evil complacency by the police, they are silent.

The maintenance of the Executive and their salary is of upmost importance to these 'time servers'!

Shame on them all!

Police still haven't even spoken to Michelle O'Neill, almost five months after Bobby Storey's funeral – while fining students and black protesters

Almost five months after Michelle O'Neill joined thousands of people at the vast funeral of IRA commander Bobby Storey, the police have still not even interviewed her, it can be revealed.

By Sam McBride, Wednesday, 18th November 2020, 6:48 pm



Michelle O'Neill was present at a vast funeral which broke public health advice or law in at least ten separate ways

The PSNI, which asked Deputy Chief Constable Mark Webster of Cumbrria Constabulary to investigate the issue in July, refused to say anything at all about the situation and would not even clarify whether it will be able to bring a charge against the deputy First Minister if it does not do so within the next six weeks.

However, Sinn Féin confirmed that its lawyer had contacted the police "to arrange dates" for a police interview.

That slow police response to a very public situation where the facts are not in dispute is in contrast to how police have acted swiftly against others.

Last week the police broke up a house party of students in the Holyland area of Belfast, handing out 42 on the spot fines – fining some of them twice when they restarted the party later that night.

And just three weeks before Ms O'Neill's presence at the funeral, the PSNI issued 68 fines to Black Lives Matter protesters who gathered in what they argued were socially-distanced outdoor protests against the killing of George Floyd.



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PSNI Assistant Chief Constable Alan Todd defended that action, saying: "These are no ordinary times".

However, at the end of that month the PSNI stood back and did nothing to prevent huge crowds gathering for Mr Storey's funeral.

Amid public anger, two months ago the PSNI said 24 mourners had been identified as potentially having breached coronavirus regulations at the funeral and had been asked to attend a police interview, with each person given 14 days to respond.

On Monday the News Letter asked the PSNI if after all this time it has fined, arrested or charged a single individual in relation to this event, and whether it had even interviewed Ms O'Neill.

The PSNI said: "As this matter remains a live investigation it would not be appropriate to comment at this time" – despite Chief Constable Simon Byrne having previously commented on the investigation in some detail.

When asked if Ms O'Neill or any other Sinn Féin member had been interviewed by police and whether Sinn Féin had done anything to delay the police in conducting and concluding their investigation, the party said in a one-sentence response: "We can confirm that the party's legal representative has been in contact with the PSNI to arrange dates."

The law at the time said that no one could leave the place where they lived without "reasonable excuse". A reasonable excuse for leaving home was defined to include "to attend a funeral of a member of [your] household a close family member", or if no member of the deceased's household or close family member was able to attend then it was possible to attend the funeral of a friend.

Ms O'Neill and others were present as a friend of Mr Storey, despite the presence of his family.

The law said that someone who without reasonable excuse contravened the regulations "commits an offence" and that "an offence under this regulation is punishable on summary conviction by a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale [£5,000]".

As a summary offence, any proceedings would take place before a District Judge sitting in the Magistrates' Court without a jury – the same process for someone being prosecuted for driving without insurance.

However, generally prosecutors only have six months in which to bring charges for summary offences. When the PSNI was asked to commit that it will ensure that any prosecutions under this legislation will not be thwarted by police failing to bring them within the statutory limit, it declined to comment.