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## Hamill probe told of brawl over claim for compensation

By Lesley-Anne Henry  
Saturday, 21 February 2009

Ill feelings between the families of Robert Hamill and three people who were with him on the night he was attacked, became so bad they culminated in a street brawl, an inquiry heard yesterday.

Martin Hamill, a brother of the murdered 25-year-old, told the sitting at the Belfast Interpoint Centre how a rift emerged about two years after Robert's death, in May 1997, and led to blows at one point.

Mr Hamill recalled how a fist fight erupted between himself and a man, named only as witness D who had been with Robert Hamill at the time he was beaten, after it emerged D had made a claim for compensation.

Robert Hamill had been socialising with two cousins and one of their husbands when he was set upon by a loyalist mob in the centre of Portadown on April 27, 1997. He died 10 days later in hospital from his injuries.

Speaking yesterday his brother, Robert added: "It looked to me that they were more interested in getting money than us getting justice and getting to the truth of what happened."

In a statement for the inquiry made in 2008 Martin Hamill said: "After Robert died there was ill-feeling between my family and the family of D,E and F. He, D, would walk away from us and not speak to us.

"I assumed it was because D knew that I knew he had made a claim for his injuries and that he was ashamed of what he had done. I had no idea if E and F made a claim."

Mr Hamill also told the inquiry that at no stage had he ever blamed witness D for starting the fight that killed his brother.

"It never was anything to do with what happened to Robert. The reason that me and D ended up fighting was they sort of withdrew from our family. They didn't talk to us.

"I would have felt that claim would have been for mental stress, or mental injury which I didn't believe he had."

Also giving evidence yesterday was Lisa Hobson whose father had ended up on a life support machine after receiving a beating in Portadown. Miss Hobson, who had been 16 in 1997 alleged police did little to help her father.

"At the time my father was injured it was sort of a similar situation. "Nothing ever came of it. There was nobody ever arrested or questioned.

"As I said at the time I felt the police didn't do enough to help him."

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