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Belfast's Sinn Fein Lord Mayor is side-stepping the row over Sunday's armed forces homecoming parade in the city centre, it emerged last night.

Veteran councillor Tom Hartley will walk away from potential embarrassment by instead attending the Indian festival of lights — called the Diwali — in north Belfast around the same time as the controversial march.

Instead the formal salute outside the City Hall will be taken by this year's High Sheriff, DUP councillor Margaret

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McKenzie.

What are these?

The first citizen's alternative whereabouts emerged as Sinn Fein renewed its criticism of the tribute and repeated its demand for the parade to be cancelled.

Assembly member Jennifer McCann dubbed the parade an "insult" to the nationalist community of Belfast.

"It's not about not welcoming these people home, but they don't have to do it in a coat-trailing exercise," she said.

However, DUP deputy leader Nigel Dodds said the event was for everyone. "On that day we will not only show our appreciation and support for the bravery of our troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, but we will also remember those who did not return home alive from theatres of conflict," he said.

"This is an event to show them that we care deeply about the sacrifices that they have made."

And the North Belfast MP said he believed the parade should be broadcast live by both BBC and UTV.

"People from all around Northern Ireland will want to watch as we pay tribute to our soldiers returning home from such difficult and hazardous missions. Therefore I am calling upon the BBC and UTV to broadcast this event live on Sunday morning," he added.

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So, um, why is it that Belfast's Lord Mayor side-stepping the row over homecoming parade? Could it be because it is an opportunity to thank our troops for their brave efforts in bringing 'peace to an unstable land - plus rooting out, fighting and defeating terrorism'?

To be fair to him, the irony is clearly not lost on our SF/IRA Lord Mayor...

Posted by mickey | 29.10.08, 13:25 GMT

"Double standards from them and thats why there will never be peace in NORTHERN IRELAND"

Horse manure Bobby. There IS peace in Northern Ireland save for a tiny handful of hatefilled bigots, whose numbers are decreasing not generation after generation, but week after week. Let these people be exposed for what they are.

They deserve our pity, not our rage.

Posted by mickey | 29.10.08, 13:07 GMT



What is sinn fein on about, they dont want the Queen as they wont take the pledge to the QUEEN from which they should be fined or stripped of being an MP, they dont want the British and they dont want to welcome the RIR for their bravery IRAQ & AFGHANISTAN, but they will take the benifits and money even as it has the QUEENS head on the notes and coins. Double standards from them and thats why there will never be peace in NORTHERN IRELAND. I served in BOSNIA & IRAQ AND PROUD OF IT, GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

Posted by Bobby | 29.10.08, 12:31 GMT

SF is a joke. Why did they go and beg like slaves for permission from the British in the first place to protest in their own city? Now they are tough again because of the pressure they are under from nationalists and republicans. They are fooling no one in nationalist or republican areas. I only wish there were elections tomorrow so that we can kick SF out for become the new Gerry Fitt party.

Posted by no longer fooled republican | 29.10.08, 11:10 GMT

If you can't stand behind your troops, feel free to stand in front of them.

Posted by Robert | 29.10.08, 02:30 GMT

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