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[Home](#) > [News](#) > [Opinion](#)

## Opinion

- Belfast Telegraph**
- Home
  - News**
    - Local & National
    - World news
    - Politics
    - Environment
    - Education
    - Letters
    - Opinion**
    - Technology
  - Breaking News
  - Northwest Edition
  - Business
  - Business Telegraph
  - Sport
  - Health
  - Features
  - Columnists
  - Entertainment
  - Homefinder
  - Weather
  - Archive
  - Calendar 2008
  - Telegraph Travel
  - Shopping Directory
- Inside Belfast**
- Jobs
  - Training
  - Dating
  - Casino
  - Bingo
  - Reader Offers
  - Diners' Club
- Services**
- RSS
  - Media Kit

### Why won't IRA tell all about its atrocities?

Wednesday, January 30, 2008

By Lindy McDowell

Even amid all the horror of the Troubles it ranks as one of the most senseless, sectarian and savage atrocities. Twelve people died and over 30 more were horrifically injured in the La Mon hotel bombing. They had been attending the annual dinner of the Irish Collie Club.

Whatever sick motivation lay behind the IRA's decision to target a group of dog lovers out for their annual 'do' that February evening 30 years ago we will probably never know.

But that's not to say there aren't people still around who could provide some answers.

People who were once at the very heart of the republican movement that planned and carried out that attack. And are now at the very heart of government in Stormont.

Take, for example, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness - is there information that these men could give that might provide clarity for the still grieving victims?

If the Sinn Fein leaders do know anything, they're not saying.

Despite being generally to the forefront when it comes to calling for full disclosure from others, the pair are oddly coy when it comes to any sort of disclosure whatsoever from the IRA.

They demand answers about 'state' violence.

Given the (paying) role they both hold in the Stormont Assembly, where Martin McGuinness is Deputy First Minister, surely they must now feel a similar duty to tell what they themselves know about republican violence.

Given that both men have supported the spending of mega millions on the search for truth about Bloody Sunday surely they believe it is equally pressing that no expense - or reputation - should be spared in the hunt for the truth about the equally terrible horror of La Mon.

Yet their silence on who did what, who ordered what within the IRA, has been deafening.

But then, where is the pressure on either of them to tell what they know?

There has been no media hounding, no documentary films about the horror of what happened at La Mon. Unlike Bloody Sunday, the massacre of La Mon and the search for truth about it did not inspire an international campaign for answers. Outside of Northern Ireland it has not become a 'liberal' cause celebre.

And even here, even among the politicians who could have campaigned for some sort of disclosure about who and what was involved, little pressure is exerted.

As he cosies up to his chuckling chum Martin at Stormont, Ian Paisley is well placed to ask a few pertinent questions in the right ear.

But how much chance of that these days?

The DUP may not be especially perturbed that some relatives and victims of the La Mon bombing are now demanding that the DUP leader stay away from an official commemoration to mark the anniversary.

But maybe they should be.

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For more than any recent development, that outpouring of anger speaks volumes about the unresolved grief and bitterness that haunts this place.

These victims of La Mon are not some bunch of mad extremists. They are what they were that night when murderous evil descended upon them. Decent honourable people targeted for no good reason other than the fact that they were an easy 'hit' for cowards.

They deserve answers in the same way that other victims deserve answers.

By appointing four victims commissioners, the Chuckle regime wants to be seen to be signalling that the search for truth will be all-encompassing, the treatment of victims fair and transparent.

In which case clarity begins at home. Up at Stormont.

There's a man sitting right at the heart of government who could surely supply some answers about atrocities like La Mon. But he isn't telling.

And there's a man sitting right beside him. Who isn't asking.

## What's the point, Hillary?

There are many reasons why I can't warm to Hillary Clinton. But one of her traits that annoys me most is the pointing thing. It's a trick she's lifted from her husband Bill.

She's waving to an adoring crowd when suddenly she appears to home in on a familiar face. She makes an 'Oh' with her mouth and points directly and excitedly into the crowd. You might even believe it was a genuine reaction if it happened, say, a couple of times per ovation.

Hillary does it every time a camera is pointed her direction.

In the great scheme of American politics it's possibly not the worst attribute. But come on Obama, I say.

## Showbiz gossip? I'm at loss

It's not just because of the absence of Oscars and other high-profile awards ceremonies, but overall we appear to be suffering a serious shortage of glamour these days.

Cheryl Cole's lost her man, J Lo's lost her waistline and Britney and Amy have lost the plot. Meanwhile, we've all lost interest in Posh and Jordan and Madonna and Kate et al.

How all those glossy gossip mags keep going these dull days, I can't imagine.

## Don't drink to this one

The car bomb is back in Belfast. Not the paramilitary version that killed hundreds of innocent people and maimed thousands more.

No. This new 'car bomb' is an alcoholic drink - a half of Guinness with a shot of whiskey topped with Baileys quite literally dropped into it.

It comes from America and it's being ordered in Belfast bars by gormless, insensitive visiting Yanks who think it's a fun thing to do in Belfast. Apt even.

Tasteless doesn't begin to come into it.

It's on a par with ordering a 9/11 in Manhattan.

What sort of moron doesn't realise that ordering such a drink in a bar in Northern Ireland might not go down terribly well with local people who have dark memories of the horror and barbarity that the real thing involved?

Maybe they should check with some of those families in America who have lost relatives to car bombs in Iraq where the deadly technology is still in regular use.

It should be stressed that the vast majority of US visitors to Northern Ireland would understand how appallingly offensive a car bomb cocktail would seem to so very many people here.

As for the others, like that concoction they order, the best word for their behaviour is sickening.

## McDonalds makes sense

McDonalds is one of a number of firms which will be allowed to offer qualifications equal to GCSEs, A-levels and even degrees. And why not?

Given the junk nature of many of the courses on offer out there, would the options being offered by Professor Ronald McDonald be any worse?

In fact, qualifications related to the job make a whole lot of sense. A degree in Big Macology could turn out to be as popular as a Happy Meal. Certainly with employers who will like the notion of students who've had some hands on experience.

McBScHons?

I'm lovin' it.

## A space oddity ...

A spy satellite the size of a bus is currently hurtling towards earth. Let's hope size is the only factor in common. You know that old line about buses? About how you wait around ages for one of them - and then half a dozen come along at once?

## Last word ...

Ah well. you can't win 'em all. and last week sadly none of us scooped any of the three big jackpots on offer. the £56m from the euro lottery. the £18.9m from the roll-over lotto. or the £3.7bn from the societe general bank.

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