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# Is deception in the air with calls for a Truth Commission?

By Brian Rowan  
Thursday, 2 October 2008

Some are doubtful if Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams really wants a Truth Commission. How do you answer all the questions on Northern Ireland's past if there is no IRA leadership? It is something worth thinking about. In the absence of the Army Council, who would you ask?

There is, of course, another question.

Could it be argued that that leadership is still needed — that, indeed, it is essential to any process that is about the past?

If the IRA could be persuaded to participate, then it would unquestionably be a source of at least some more answers and some further explanation.

In the An Phoblacht newspaper last week, the Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams wrote in support of an Independent International Truth Commission — and he did more than that.

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He said its success would depend on the full co-operation of “all relevant parties”.

That has to include the IRA and its leadership and its Army Council among all of the other players in the past.

The IRA is certainly one of the “relevant parties” in the conflict — and it was the Army Council that directed much of the war.

This is where some — indeed many — of the answers will be found.

So, how does a process on the past work without it?

It doesn't. That is the simple answer.

There is some questioning of Adams' intervention at this time — and there are those who are deeply suspicious.

That could be heard in the response of Dawn Purvis, the leader of the Progressive Unionist Party, which has links to the UVF and associated Red Hand Commando.

She believes the only reason Adams has called for an Independent International Truth Commission is because he knows there is not going to be one.

The East Belfast MLA says the loyalists are not interested — and there is no chance of the Government fully co-operating.

But is that about Adams and the IRA avoiding the truth, or is it about others hiding from their pasts?

The way to test the sincerity and the commitment of republicans is for the other “relevant parties” to participate.

On at least two occasions Adams has met privately with Lord Eames in his role as co-chair of the Consultative Group on the Past.

The IRA has not met that group, but, for now, that doesn't matter.

The Eames-Bradley process is about consultation and then about recommendations.

In its proposals due before the end of the year it has to shape a process that leaves the door open for the IRA, the loyalists, the State and others.

It is about knowing what is possible and not closing doors.

Lord Eames will have learned enough in his conversations with Adams, and the Consultative Group will have learned enough in their wider conversations.

So, it is the next bit that is the important bit. Some type of Commission is likely to be proposed by the Eames-Bradley Group.

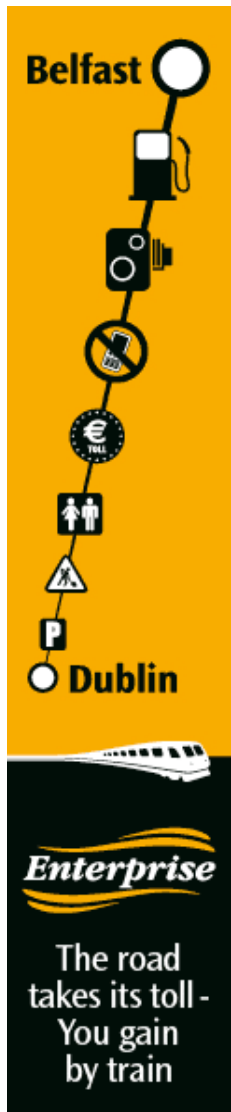
It may not be called a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but its proposed remit and make up are things that will be closely studied and will decide the next steps, a walk towards participation or a walk away. “Clearly the willingness of individuals to voluntarily participate will be greatly enhanced if the (Truth) Commission is seen to be independent, have an international dimension and be fair and equitable,” Adams wrote in that An Phoblacht article.

Individual republicans will take their lead from their leadership. That is the way the republican movement has worked throughout the course of the peace process. It is why, in the context of explaining the past, the Army Council is still important.

You cannot get to whole story or the whole truth unless you ask questions of the IRA.

Republicans accept they are one of the “relevant parties”.

So, is Adams hinting at some possible IRA participation in a process on the past?



It all depends on who else is coming to the table — and how that table is made.

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