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Features

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The elephant sitting in the corner is collusion

Hain criticised as families come together at the Hilton Hotel

North Belfast News

By Michael Kenwood

23/02/2007

Geraldine Finucane and Raymond Mc Cord Snr have joined together in a public meeting to expose police failure in addressing collusion.

The event, called "Collusion – The elephant in the room", was held in the Hilton hotel to coincide with a three day policing conference hosted nearby at the Waterfront Hall. The Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan also attended the meeting.

Mrs Finucane, whose husband Pat, was murdered by loyalist paramilitaries acting with Special Branch, told the packed Hilton Lagan suite: "The bottom line is the state does not want collusion discussed. The treatment of my family is testament to that. The Inquiries Act of 2005 is a total departure from all that has gone before. It removes independence which is fundamental to any fair inquiry."

She added: "A truth commission concept has been bandied about, but it's only talk. It is a delaying tactic. I would like the talk to stop, and the process to start, so others can follow. The British government do not want anything discussed. The issue is hot at the moment, so they will try to pacify for the moment. And a few years down the line people will realise that nothing has happened"

Raymond McCord Snr told the gathering that before the murder of his son by the Mount Vernon UVF he had thought that collusion reports were republican propaganda. He said: "I don't think that anymore. Paisley, Donaldson and the rest are in denial. I have accepted that collusion went on in both communities."

He called upon unionist leaders to explain the Protestant body count after the IRA's 1994 ceasefire: "There are around 20 headstones that prove there was collusion. If that wasn't collusion then I want the politicians to explain to me what was."

Susan McKay, a Derry born Dublin journalist, was another key speaker. Having attended Peter Hain's introduction to the police conference next door she noted: "Our free public meeting was not even mentioned in the secretary of state's self-congratulatory speech.

"All he said of the collusion issue was 'let not the efforts of the many be tarnished by the failures of the few'. He is endorsing the completely discredited idea of a few bad apples in the RUC."

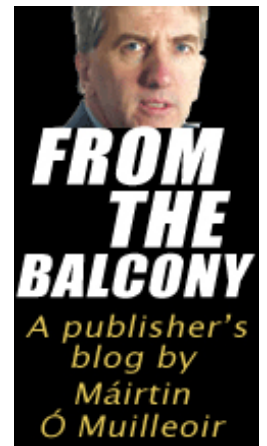
Alan Brecknell, whose father was killed in a south Armagh bar attack involving loyalist paramilitaries, the RUC and British soldiers, told those assembled: "The British government has to be honest. For the PSNI to

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really police the future it must offer an honest reckoning of the past." He suggested practical measures for families of those who were killed as a result of collusion. "I advise the families to get together documents and memories in order to plan a case. A community approach, as in Ardoyne."

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