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Scrap Sunday inquiry now, says Tory MP



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By Staff reporter

The British shadow defence secretary last night defended comments he made in a national newspaper where he called for the Saville Inquiry to be scrapped before it delivers its verdict in a bid to reduce costs.

Conservative MP Gerard Howarth was quoted in a British tabloid saying the Saville Inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday in 1972, "should be scrapped and any money still to be spent devoted instead to something worthwhile, like police pay."

Speaking to the "Journal," Mr. Howarth, MP for Aldershot, said he believes the money spent on the inquiry led by Lord Saville - believed to be more than £170 million - "could be spent better almost anywhere else."

Mr. Howarth claimed the inquiry was set up as a "sop" to republicans and questioned what it would achieve. "My opinion has always been that Tony Blair set up this inquiry as a sop to republican opinion. There can be no winners. If Saville finds in favour of the families will the issue end there? I don't think so. I think there will be people who want trials or compensation and who will want to take this further. If Saville finds in favour of the soldiers then the families will say it was a whitewash. It is so long ago and it seems to me that Northern Ireland is at long last emerging from a very dark trough and I don't know what will be achieved by spending this amount of money," he said.

Mr. Howarth acknowledged Bloody Sunday was a "dreadful tragedy" but added that many families in England had suffered as a result of the Troubles. "Of course for all these families that has been a dreadful tragedy, just as it was for all of the United Kingdom. Every situation where civilian life is lost through the intervention of the armed forces is a tragedy. Thousands of families have suffered and are suffering still as a result of what has euphemistically been known as the Troubles," he said.

Mr. Howarth represents the garrison town of Aldershot and some of his constituents include former paratroopers who were in Derry on Bloody Sunday. The headquarters of the parachute regiment in

Aldershot were targeted by an Official IRA bomb several weeks after Bloody Sunday. The attack killed four female cleaners and a British Army chaplain.

Mr. Howarth said the suffering of families in his constituency is the same as that of the Bloody Sunday families. "There are a lot of families who have suffered, including the families in Londonderry who suffered. But they are not the only ones. I feel that no amount of money is going to change that suffering. There are families of soldiers in my constituency, who did their duty to the best of their ability, who lost their lives. The people of my constituency know all about that. We lost six people, including civilian cleaners and a chaplain, in Aldershot in an IRA bombing in response to Bloody Sunday.

"I don't want to appear unsympathetic to the families who lost loved ones on Bloody Sunday because I am not; I just think the money could be better spent," he said.

The full article contains 534 words and appears in Journal Friday DER Edition newspaper.

Last Updated: 31 January 2008 5:25 PM

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Derryman007a,

01/02/2008 10:01:34

I wouldnt of even printed this idiotic article

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2

sammy toaster,

01/02/2008 21:44:11

but really, it has to be put to bed. i agree the british army were responsible, is it all down to compensation now? well why not? if my father in law can get Â£20k. for being in a christian bro. inst. in 1948 then the victims of bloody sunday,s relations deserve compensation.

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3

,

02/02/2008 11:40:33

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4

Mo Chara,

Inverness 03/02/2008 17:41:16

Totally agree with Hugh on this subject. If the sequence of events, that unfolded in Derry on Bloody Sunday, have had unfolded anywhere in England, the world would still be hearing the resonance of the media not to mention the public unrest which would undoubtedly be triggered.

It seems that Britain's policy makers have a vested interest in getting involved in warfare that, the majority of their own population don't believe their troops should have to be committed to.

Give the victims their answers, so what price do you put on life Mr Howarth??

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5

Derryman007a,

03/02/2008 18:12:44

There's a taboo issue among some of the families involved over money, if the truth is properly declared, the families will benefit financially greatly, Some of these people have re-married so have made some steps in dealing with this genocide, families I know go on paid holidays funded by the state every year, At the time mass funds were raised in UK, America for these families, so their burden was eased at the time, I don't think the families should receive blood money or compensation as it wouldn't bring them back.

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