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## In face of injustice pursuit for the truth will rage on

(Tom Kelly, [Irish News](#))

There was an air of unreality to last week. On Monday I was sitting in the home of the recently deceased former Newry and Armagh assembly member John Fee, speaking to his mother and wife about the shock of his untimely death.

The awfulness that John had actually died did not sink in until the following day during the eulogy by Seamus Mallon surrounded by SDLP veterans such as Joe Hendron, Eddie McGrady and John Hume.

The awful reality that such a young and talented individual was denied the opportunity to live, to love and to give for many more years than the mere 43 years allotted to him by life's lottery.

The incredulity of the day did not end at the wet and windy Crossmaglen graveyard because political values such as those held by John Fee do not get buried with the body; they live on and are passed on.

Proof, if proof is needed that the ideals of truth and justice march on was ably demonstrated on the BBC Spotlight programme which focused on the murder of Paul Quinn.

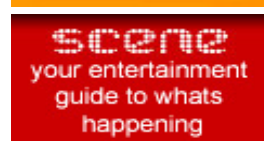
The hurt of his family was evident. To his mother and father he was simply their son. The brutality of Mr Quinn's murder stunned an entire community and to judge by the reaction of Jim McAllister brought about a belated but nonetheless welcome reality check to any warped notion of justice via physical force republicanism.

Many have suffered the Mafiosi type of justice meted out to those brave enough to speak out or stand up against paramilitary barons.

No-one living in a nationalist area is in any doubt about the dire consequences of standing up, not only, against these overlords, but also of falling foul of their wider family circle.

The Quinn's, like the McCartney family, now know the stark reality of living in the darkness of IRA shadow-land.

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It was good that Sinn Féin condemned the killing and asked people to cooperate with the police.

But this condemnation was undermined by some Sinn Féin representatives apparently besmirching the character of the late Mr Quinn by suggesting he was involved in criminality and that his death was the result of a criminal feud.

If he was a criminal – and there is no evidence to say he was – his lifestyle suggests he would be a minnow but even that is irrelevant.

MP, Conor Murphy was adamant there was no republican involvement in the Quinn murder either sanctioned or privateering and the DUP seem content with that answer.

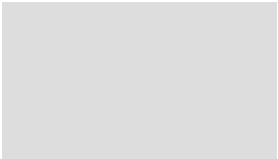
But can anyone seriously suggest that justice and policing should be devolved to a northern administration while the mindset of 'qualified murder' remains fully commissioned within the two main parties? To me, justice is supposed to be blind but not blinded by massive logs in the eyes of those administering justice. If we pursue the devolution of justice and policing not guided by standards of impartiality and truth; what follows will be more tarnished than what went before.

Reading *Les Miserables* and Victor Hugo's masterful attack on Napoleon, it stuck me that in J'accuse for the unknown fallen soldier at Waterloo, his words have much resonance with the life of John Fee and the search for justice for both Paul Quinn and Robert McCartney and so I end with them:

*If anything is frightful, if there be a reality which surpasses dreams, it is this: to see the sun, to be in full possession of manly vigour, to have health and joy, to laugh sturdily, to rush toward a glory which dazzlingly invites you on, to feel a very pleasure in respiration, to feel your heart beat, to feel yourself a reasonable being, to speak to hope, to love, to have a mother, a wife, to have children, to have sunlight, and suddenly in a moment, in less than a minute, to feel yourself buried in an abyss, to fall, to roll, to crush, to be crushed, to see the grain, the flowers, the leaves, the branches, to be able to seize upon nothing... to strike about you in vain, your bones broken by some kick in the darkness, to feel the heel which makes your eyes leap from their sockets, to stifle, to howl, to twist, to be under all of this, and say: just now I was a living man.*

The pursuit of truth is timeless and justice will always need a voice.

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