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## The need for inquiries is all part of peace process

(Susan McKay, [Irish News](#))

It is always worth quoting Maya Angelou's great lines: "History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived. However, if faced with courage, it need not be lived again."

There was an embarrassing high-handedness to Maurice Hayes's comments about truth and the past last week and an embarrassing lack of understanding to John Dunlop's.

There is a lack of rigour to their arguments and both have undoubtedly hurt and angered people who have suffered more than enough hurt and anger for a lifetime.

Dr Hayes lectured in Derry against "picking at sores", "raising old ghosts" and "scrabbling in the underground". The present democratic institutions were a "delicate graft on a rootstock riddled with memories". The Saville Inquiry would not find the truth about Bloody Sunday and it had been far too expensive. You'd never think he had once recommended setting up the office of the police ombudsman.

Hot on his heels came John Dunlop, who told the Presbyterian General Assembly that Saville and other inquiries into the past could "destabilise the future" and should be shut down "straight away".

Judge Peter Cory had called for inquiries but he had "no competence" as to the political implications and the British had agreed "in a thoroughly spineless way".

Of course there was no need for the Saville Inquiry. We know what happened. All it took was for those responsible for ordering soldiers to shoot unarmed civil rights marchers to admit they did so and to tell us why. All it took was for them to admit that they then faked a story which made the dead out to be terrorists and that they then set up an inquiry which compounded the original lie.

But that didn't happen. And so the families of the dead have had to devote more than 30 years of their lives trying to clear the names of their loved ones and to get the British to take responsibility for the massacre of citizens they claimed as their own.

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The cost was, indeed, a disgrace – but that is a separate argument.

Other ways must be found.

Anyway, it is proving costly to get the truth about the role of the British in the conflict because they are willing to go to any lengths to cover it up.

John Dunlop should know that the Cory inquiries are part of the peace process.

Judge Cory was appointed as a result of a political negotiation involving the British and Irish governments and the northern political parties. This was one of the steps taken to bring us to where we are now.

His remit was to examine grave allegations that the British and Irish states had colluded with paramilitary murderers and, if there was credible evidence, to recommend it be investigated. As part of the deal, the governments agreed that if he called for them, they would set up inquiries.

In the case of lawyer Pat Finucane, murdered by a loyalist gang almost entirely made up of people in the pay of British secret agencies, the British have already reneged. So much for 'spineless' acquiescence.

In the case of Billy Wright, is it not in the public interest to find out how, in a 'high security prison', paramilitaries can have guns, clip their way through rooftop fences and carry out the murder of an enemy, all unwatched and unrecorded?

Does Dr Dunlop really believe that Nuala O'Loan should have sent Raymond McCord packing, as the PSNI did, instead of finding out that police agents had involved themselves in paramilitary murders right into the 21st century?

Many years ago, Eamonn McCann described in his book War and an Irish Town how, at the start of the Troubles, the police ran amok on a Bogside street. Someone went to phone the police before suddenly realising that nothing could be more pointless.

We need to know our history and that involves researching and scutinising the facts, even the carefully hidden ones.

There are people in Northern Ireland who saw their relatives murdered and have then been thwarted and let down by the normal investigative and judicial processes which are

available to citizens of proper democratic societies.

If they want to draw a line under the past, then they may do so.

However, if lies have been told and they want the truth, nobody has the right to deny it to them.

If our brave new northern Irish democracy isn't strong enough to give it to them, then it isn't strong enough.

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