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Justice for Bloody Sunday & The Need for Unity of Purpose

The Bloody Sunday March Committee (BSMC) has been organising the annual Bloody Sunday march and commemorative programme of events since 2013. Our ethos together with the background to how and why we formed and our contact details had been publicly available on our website, bloodysundaymarch.org. The range and calibre of our work is evidenced there in the video records of events and discussions we hosted.

In the run-up to this year's Bloody Sunday programme, back in late January, there were several hostile public statements issued on behalf of a number of republican organisations and from the family of one of the men wounded on Bloody Sunday. These statements attacked the legitimacy, work and membership of the BSMC and were as one in declaring their intention to boycott the march.

Central to these statements was an objection to this year's march poster and the allegation that BSMC is being controlled and manipulated by People Before Profit (PBP). When in reality, the committee is made up of a diverse group of individuals with differing viewpoints comprising: republicans, socialists, nationalists and human rights activists. It is important to add that we are an open, democratic and voluntary committee of individuals who share a collective desire to pursue our constituted aims. We are not infallible nor are we beyond criticism.

It was therefore regrettable that there was no actual attempt to contact the committee and express any such concerns face to face by any of these organisations. In light of this, the committee decided not to respond directly to the flurry of statements but rather to articulate its views and its politics through its own programme of events and editorial, which included the following:

"Everyone, irrespective of their political views, is invited to come to the events and offer their different views on how best to mark Bloody Sunday and on the connections between it and other State atrocities worldwide.

We don't have to agree on everything. It would be strange if we did in this argumentative city. But it's more important than ever that we stick together..."

Following our events in January we widened our annual post programme review to include 'critical friends' of the committee's work and regular attendees at our events. One of the agreed outcomes of the review (conducted in late April) was that the committee should seek to engage with the various parties that issued public statements.

Mindful of the hostile nature of the statements but in an attempt to try to establish some common ground on the issue of justice for the events of Bloody Sunday we contacted mutually respected republican socialist and trade unionist Tommy McKearney to act as an intermediary, an independent verifier of the process and to communicate our wish to meet with these organisations.

Tommy agreed and subsequently met with the organisations (held in early May) and put our request to them. To his dismay and disappointment all of the organisations present declined to meet with us.

Rather than engage with us directly the group presented a dossier of statements about the committee and its work, which eerily included a range of photographs of individual committee members taken from various social media sources all purporting to reinforce their PBP allegiance.

Given their decision to reject our invitation to meet, coupled with ongoing use of social media we can only infer that these organisations have their own agenda.

As the British State rallies for amnesties for the actions of its soldiers here, continues to protect the senior politicians and military figures who planned and executed "Bloody Sunday" and as it dithers and procrastinates on a decision to prosecute the soldiers responsible for the massacre we believe that it is imperative that we unite and focus on calling for due process, truth, accountability and justice

To that end we are now calling on all progressively minded: republicans, socialists, human rights activists and concerned citizens in this city and beyond to read the aims of our constitution, to which we will remain true, and come out in January 2019 and show your support for the BSMC's commemorative programme of events.

And moving forward from last year's controversy and cognisant of the issues raised we will now focus all of our efforts on developing a programme of work in readiness for next year's commemoration in pursuit of justice for the events of Bloody Sunday.

Bloody Sunday March Committee
bloodysundaymarch.org.

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