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**Transcript of Gordon Linney
Liveline
Wednesday 13th May 1998**

Doireann Ní Bhriain:

Arch Deacon Gordon Linney good afternoon to you. Now you spoke yesterday at the Church of Ireland synod and you were very critical of what you called the outrageous moral fudge of the Government announcement that anybody convicted of the murder of Detective Garda Jerry McCabe would not be released from prison. Outrageous moral fudge, they are strong words.

Gordon Linney:

Well it was in the context of the attitude to say the murder of two police men in Lurgan a year after that, that it appeared to me there was a double standard being advocated. As if there, I think I heard one politician describe the murder of Garda McCabe as criminal and I would support that. But there seemed to be an implication in that statement that what happened in Lurgan was not. And the danger of this kind of ambivalence that the events in the North is that I believe it doesn't first of all represent the views of people in the South.

Consistently through the nightmare of 30 years of violence one of the things that has made me proud to be a citizen of the Republic has been the fact that people have been so massively opposed to violence and I believe that is still the position and yet at the weekend we had this flaunting of people who had been convicted of terrible crimes at the RDS, with gross insensitivity to the families of the victims and the Taoiseach was critical, initially not of that event, but of those who expressed concern about it. I see ^{he} has gone some way towards ~~pressing~~ ^{pressing} the balance there, but behind all this is this ambivalence about violence, which appears to be represented by the present political establishment and incidentally I don't for one moment believe that the Taoiseach or anybody else associated with him is anything but a person of peace and committed to peace and I applaud their efforts in the North. But the signals we are sending North, through our political leaders at the moment I think are at best

ambivalent and I don't think that morally is correct and I certainly don't think it represents the minds of people in the South.

Doireann Ní Bhriain:

Can we talk for a moment, we can talk about what happened on Sunday in a second. But going back to the business of the policemen North and South. Does the general public in the Republic view the Gardai as a police force we will say to whom they relate on an everyday basis and see the RUC with more distance in some way?

Gordon Linney:

Well I don't think the general public, it's very difficult to assess that, but I am really talking about from a moral point of view. I remember when the Pope was here in 1979, he said murder was murder. And I know people can get into areas of whether the police are acceptable or not, but that's a very dangerous principle to establish you know.

Doireann Ní Bhriain:

Oh I am not for one moment suggesting it.

Gordon Linney:

Parts of inner city Dublin for instance where I work and certainly where the police were not acceptable to some of the residents at any rate, people who were un-welcoming, there was certainly a no go area in one area where I worked at one time, it's a fairly dangerous road to go down. The simple fact is that the police both North and South have made enormous sacrifices to enable us to retain any semblance of decency or democracy on this island over the last 30 years and to suggest that there is a distinction in the value of the life of policemen because he is wearing a uniform in the North or one in the South, I find morally offensive.

Doireann Ní Bhriain:

Yes. The fact of the matter is of course that something like 300, more than 300 RUC personnel have lost their lives since

Gordon Linney:

And many more maimed.

Doireann Ní Bhriain:

Indeed, indeed. So that the comparison to the number of Gardai who would have lost their lives on duty here, I mean the figures speak pretty clearly, don't they.

Gordon Linney:

Oh they do, but I think, you know, when you take it individually for their families the scale of loss is the same in each family and whether it's Garda McCabe's family or the victims as I mentioned the case in Lurgan.

Doireann Ní Bhriain:

And do you really believe that that ambivalence is widespread? I know you say it doesn't represent the people that you have lived amongst, but do you believe that that ambivalence is actually still there?

Gordon Linney:

No. I am making the point that I believe that people throughout Ireland, North and South, the vast majority of them have been utterly opposed to all forms and manifestations of violence and I do not believe that the political establishment in the South at the moment is accurately reflecting that.

Doireann Ní Bhriain:

You think they are out of touch?

Gordon Linney:

I think and I recognise the political sensitivities, I do and I applaud Bertie Ahern and others for the tremendous work done on the agreement and I am largely sympathetic to all they have done, I want to make that quite clear. But certainly the negative affects in the North, of and certainly, incidentally at the Synod yesterday the reaction to my remark show that people felt that what I was addressing was a concern to them and you know, certainly over half the people here would be from Northern Ireland. I believe that the damage, the actual damage that this hesitance over, or lack of clarity on this issue is doing is having on the possibilities for the outcome of the voting in the North. In fact I think it has already seriously damaged it.

Doireann Ní Bhriain:

Do you think people don't stop and think enough, before, even the way we use language here is different in many ways and that assumptions are made?

Gordon Linney:

Well we are all prisoners of you know prejudices and false assumptions and all the rest of it, no, but, look I have lived and worked North and South. I am a Dubliner, but I lived and I lived for seven years at the most difficult time in the North and I can testify to the basic goodness of people North and South, where I lived and worked, of all communities and the one thing I was absolutely certain of was their total opposition to any manifestation of violence and can I say the danger, there is an enormous danger in this. If we quietly now somehow give the signal that there is this distinction between killing South and killing North, we are already preparing the ground work for the next generation of violent people and we need to be absolutely clear that those, and I welcome Sinn Fein coming into the political process by the way. I think, you know, that's a wonderful step forward. But the mind of the people is that we are going to live and work together in terms of peace and without threat and without violence and we are not going to glorify what in fact we all roundly condemned, ~~sensitise~~ *sanitise* the past as it were, which is as I said yesterday could well make us accessories to violence after the events. And I certainly don't want to be identified with that.

Doireann Ní Bhriain:

You referred to what happened on Sunday last, when the released prisoners appeared on the platform with Sinn Fein. Now the Taoiseach did say yesterday that he felt that could have been handled in a calmer way, can you understand how it came about, how that audience response came about?

Gordon Linney:

Yes I can, but, and I don't want to get into the politics of it, I want to stress the moral dimension of this, but I would say this I just wonder the quality of advice is available to the Government about the way they handle their relationships with the Northern situation and I have to say, I felt the Taoiseach's comments were rather naive that and apparently he was in some way involved in consenting to this and not to see and recognise the enormous damage that would do and I come back to what I am saying it's sending a wrong moral signal that somehow, somehow the Government here is at least neutral in terms of the violence and I know that's not to be true incidentally, I know that's not true, but that is the signal and certainly that is the way it's been read in the North.

Doireann Ní Bhriain:

You were saying that what, about 50% of the people at the Synod would be from Northern Ireland.

Gordon Linney:

Yes.

Doireann Ní Bhriain:

How do you read their mood, your Church Members at the moment?

Gordon Linney:

Well the Bishop of Derry, Bishop Mahaffy, who has really been one of the most courageous leaders and I think would know people right across the divide in the North and would be highly regarded as a man of peace, he expressed concern, deep concern that all the confidence building measures in the North were one sided and I know ~~Jim Hassey~~^{Jim Hume} for 30 years and for him that is the most, an incredibly strong statement and I deeply long to see the people North and South living in peace and at whatever level of corporation they agree. But when I hear someone like him coming to the rostrum and making a statement like that yes, I really do wonder how much in touch I hear politicians down here that's saying you know some of my best friends are Unionists, rather like you know some of my best friends are Protestants or some of my best friends are Catholics, you wonder what that says, but the reality is I would have to ask about the quality of the advice they receive or perhaps they receive it and don't accept it, but I come back to the main point I was talking about is about violence, Church men really mustn't get too involved in the political arena, I come back to the moral thing and I know the Irish people do not approve of violence, have not approved and we mustn't start a process, with sanitising that memory or somehow appearing to indicate that some of the people who have perpetrated these terrors on both sides are now somehow more acceptable and maybe what they did in the North wasn't as bad as anything that would be done down here.

Doireann Ní Bhriain:

Arch Deacon Gordon Linney thank you very much indeed for talking to us this afternoon.

ENDS.