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McIlveen trial may deter others

Pro fide et patria
By Staff Reporter
28/02/2009

IT IS sad to think that there are people in our society who believe they can tell Catholics and Protestants apart simply by looking at them.

For someone to admit this belief at the public inquiry into the murder of Robert Hamill is more than sad. It is shocking.

Robert Hamill was, along with his cousin, kicked senseless and left for dead by a mob in the centre of Portadown in 1997.

He later died in hospital, his 25-year-old life cut short by the sectarian hatred that has bedevilled our society for centuries.

The ongoing inquiry seeks to find the

answers to a number of questions surrounding Mr Hamill's murder, including why RUC officers sitting in a nearby Land Rover did not intervene.

But perhaps this particular testimony illustrates perfectly why such attacks occur.

It is of course quite insulting to the intelligence of the vast majority of people when someone puts forward such nonsense, particularly as evidence in such an important inquiry.

Unfortunately it is also indicative of a certain attitude which has been for so long held by too many people in this country.

The sectarian murder in 2006 of Michael McIlveen has illustrated all too clearly that there is still the potential for such horrific events.

However, in the case of the Ballymena schoolboy a robust police investigation was followed by the bringing of charges and this week the successful prosecution of those responsible for Michael's death.

Hopefully the successful investigation and prosecution of Michael's killers will act as a deterrent and prevent future sectarian

attacks and murders.

Perhaps if the killers of Robert Hamill had been apprehended so swiftly and brought to justice then that deterrent might have saved the life of Michael McIlveen.

Nothing glamorous about drug abuse

DRUG abuse is often portrayed as in some way being an acceptable thing to participate in.

It is 'recreational'. It is associated with nights out with friends, with having a good time while doing no harm to anyone.

Yesterday a coroner, after hearing evidence about the death of a man with a cocaine addiction, said that the manner of the man's death should act as a wake-up call for anyone who harbours such glamorous notions about such drugs.

The partner of John Watters and his neighbours had nothing but kind words to say about the 41-year-old who died after taking a mixture of tablets and cocaine despite desperate efforts to save himself.

Mr Watters even tried to force a vacuum cleaner hose down his own throat in a bid to make himself sick and help himself to breath.

It did not work and he died shortly afterwards.

There is nothing glamorous about drug abuse.

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