# DUP leaders face backlash after attending Apprentice Boys parade with sectarian anthems on day of Pope Francis’s death



Footage has surfaced showing three senior members of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)—Stormont Education Minister Paul Givan, Assembly Speaker Edwin Poots, and MLA Jonathan Buckley—attending an Apprentice Boys parade in Lisburn where a loyalist band performed sectarian anthems. This parade took place on Easter Monday, coinciding with the day Pope Francis died in Rome.

The videoclips depict onlookers singing the controversial lyrics of two songs: "No Pope of Rome" and "The Billy Boys," as a member of the band vaults into cartwheels along a street crowded with spectators near Lisburn Orange Hall. These anthems are historically associated with unionist gatherings and carry derogatory sentiments towards the Catholic faith. "No Pope of Rome," for instance, features lyrics that advocate for a Protestant-dominated community, dismissing Catholic symbols and reverence. "The Billy Boys," linked to a figure with ties to far-right groups, includes violent imagery.

In the wake of this incident, DUP representatives, including Upper Bann MP Carla Lockhart, expressed positive sentiments about the event, describing the atmosphere as "first class" and lauding the "great crowds." However, this juxtaposition has led to criticism and calls for accountability from political opponents. Alliance MLA David Honeyford remarked that the presence of DUP leaders at an event characterised by sectarian music during such a significant moment only exacerbated communal tensions. He stated, “The footage compounds the hurt and pain already caused by those deeply offensive actions,” while emphasising that the party leaders need to address their participation.

Honeyford further articulated concern over the adverse effects of such actions, suggesting they tarnish the reputation of the representatives and highlight ongoing societal divisions. His remarks align with increased scrutiny of the DUP's stance on sectarianism, particularly given recent criticisms of a rapper group associated with republican sentiments.

In response to inquiries about the event and the implications of the anthems performed, a spokesperson for the DUP reiterated their previous statement, commending the Apprentice Boys for their parade but denouncing the "distasteful actions" of certain individuals involved. They urged a respectful consideration of the grief surrounding Pope Francis’ death.

Meanwhile, police in Northern Ireland (PSNI) were contacted regarding the matter, and a spokesman confirmed that, after reviewing the video evidence, no criminal offences had been identified. They also noted that they had not received any formal reports concerning the parade.

As scrutiny continues, the DUP’s leadership stands at a crossroads, balancing the support of their loyalist base while navigating the complexities of communal relationships within Northern Ireland.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/psni-stands-by-its-handling-of-apprentice-boys-parade-despite-unionist-anger/38398138.html> - This article discusses the PSNI's defense of their actions during the Apprentice Boys parade, including the escorting of the Clydevalley Flute Band due to the display of Parachute Regiment insignia, which is considered contentious in Derry due to its association with Bloody Sunday.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-49317031> - This report covers the PSNI's defense of their approach to the Clydevalley Flute Band during the Apprentice Boys parade, highlighting the contentious nature of the Parachute Regiment insignia in Derry and the potential for raised tensions.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-49335894> - This article features DUP leader Arlene Foster's criticism of the PSNI's handling of the Apprentice Boys parade, stating that the policing was neither proportionate nor balanced, and discussing the controversy over the display of Parachute Regiment insignia.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-66509054> - This report details an assault on a Londonderry businessman during the Apprentice Boys parade, which was described as 'serious and concerning' by a DUP assembly member, highlighting the tensions surrounding the event.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-14527159> - This article discusses the criticism of the PSNI's handling of the Apprentice Boys parade, including the failure to address violence during the event and the subsequent disorder in the city.
* <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/row-erupts-over-licensing-of-street-traders-in-derry-after-uvf-flags-sold-at-apprentice-boys-parade/42150381.html> - This article reports on the controversy over the sale of UVF and Parachute Regiment flags at the Apprentice Boys parade, leading to a row over the licensing of street traders in Derry.
* <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/dup-mlas-present-as-loyalist-band-plays-anti-catholic-anthems-on-day-pope-francis-died-UMV3OZHCE5A6TM35AIACDLRCJE/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data