# Stormont officials spark anger by attending parade with anti-Catholic songs on day of Pope's death



The attendance of several senior members of a prominent unionist party at an Apprentice Boys parade in Lisburn on Easter Monday has ignited outrage, particularly with the disturbing backdrop of anti-Catholic songs being played on the same day Pope Francis passed away.

Stormont's Education Minister, along with other party officials, was present amid the cheers of participants as the band performed divisive anthems like “No Pope of Rome” and the “Billy Boys.” Footage published by The Irish News has thrown the spotlight on this event, raising urgent questions about the responsibility of elected officials in such contentious settings.

In the wake of this incident, Sinn Féin has called for immediate debate in the Assembly to confront what they are framing as “blatant sectarianism.” West Belfast MLA Danny Baker highlighted the crucial need for political leaders to unequivocally condemn such displays. “This is a pivotal moment for those who attended to publicly renounce this behaviour,” he stated, underscoring the alarming rise in sectarian incidents across Northern Ireland, including Lisburn, Belfast, and Derry. This calls for a united front against such divisive actions.

Ironically, just prior to this parade, the same members had denounced another band for playing “No Pope of Rome” at a different event, branding it “distasteful.” In reaction to Sinn Féin's condemnation, a spokesperson for the party dismissed these claims as “hypocrisy,” insisting that they have a long-standing commitment to denouncing sectarianism in all its forms. Yet, they celebrated the thousands of participants who behaved appropriately, attempting to pivot attention away from the few who sullied the occasion.

Defending the absence of accountability, an MLA argued that elected officials should not be judged by the actions of a crowd in a public space. Moreover, he claimed that the criticisms from opposing parties are attempts to “delegitimise the cultural identities of the loyalist community,” making it clear that their party will stand firm in its support for such parades and the heritage they represent.

This incident underscores an ongoing clash within Northern Ireland's fraught political landscape, where the issues of cultural identity and sectarianism are far from resolved. The criticism of such displays reveals a need for a more responsible approach to governance—one that reflects the evolving sentiments of the electorate and rejects divisions that threaten to derail progress.

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

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/sectarian-music-played-by-parade-band-near-church/28921079.html> - This report details an incident where a band played sectarian music near a Catholic church during a Remembrance Day march, leading to public outrage and police investigation.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-18848591> - This article covers the controversy surrounding a loyalist band playing sectarian tunes outside a Catholic church during the Twelfth of July parade, with reactions from the Parades Commission and the PSNI.
4. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/standoff-at-glasgow-catholic-church-after-re-routing-of-apprentice-boys-parade-HEPLPZC4CVCQDKJPLV3JX3KWTI/> - This piece reports on the re-routing of an Apprentice Boys parade in Glasgow after protesters blocked it from passing a Catholic church, highlighting tensions over such parades.
5. <https://belfastmedia.com/cara-slam-easter-monday-parades-decision> - This article discusses the criticism from the Crumlin Ardoyne Residents Association (CARA) regarding the Parades Commission's decision to allow a controversial loyalist band to march past Ardoyne on Easter Monday.
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7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/sinn-fein-to-highlight-dup-mlas-controversial-parade-attendance-in-assembly-GYAPUNE6G5HU7I2QIHRIXAQIVI/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data