

Message to the BBC Radio 4 TODAY Programme about Northern Ireland

John Humphrys aligned his approach to the killings in Northern Ireland with the rabid reaction of most newspapers by trying to force Sinn Fein into a corner.

John O'Dowd [Irish Republican Sinn Féin politician in Northern Ireland; a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly for Upper Bann] and Shaun Woodward [Northern Ireland Secretary in the Brown Government] in their different ways explained how foolish this attitude is.

Northern Ireland has moved forward to an extraordinary extent. I remember a former ambassador friend telling me there would never be peace in a province where there was a marching season. But there is. There is, however flawed it may be.

The media, including most regrettably the Today Programme, has its own agenda: to generate a story, to try to inflame emotions, express outrage and rouse the baser instincts of ordinary people.

That foolishness must not be allowed to prevail. Thank goodness for John O'Dowd and Shaun Woodward. Please will the Today Programme, the BBC, behave responsibly and follow a better agenda: to stand firm in support of the men of goodwill who wish to build on the progress made so far, however shaky the foundations may be.

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