

Rantzen - NI addicted to hatred

Television presenter Esther Rantzen has defended remarks about Northern Ireland people being “addicted to hatred”.

She made the comments on the BBC’s Question Time about a spate of attacks on Romanians in Belfast in recent days.

Ms Rantzen said Northern Ireland had offered the world “a gleam of hope” but “suddenly in that society there erupts this new racism”.

“It’s as if it gives them a sense of identity because they only know who they are if they know who they hate.”

The attacks met with widespread condemnation throughout Northern Ireland.

Ms Rantzen said she had been suggesting that “there may be people who miss the old days, that violence has become addictive”.

“Why do they feel uninhibited enough to turn racial prejudice into violence? You see a lot of prejudice in the rest of the UK, but why turn it into violence?”

“Is violence something which is so fresh in people’s memories that they remember it with affection?”

The former That’s Life presenter last month announced she was considering standing for election in the seat of Luton South, in protest at revelations surrounding the expenses claims of the local Labour MP, Margaret Moran.

Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/8110100.stm

Date: 19 June 2009

Viewpoint: Spread of racism in Northern Ireland must be halted

There is a quotation from the Bible which sums up the very essence of Christianity.

It reads ‘For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me?’ The members of the City Church in Belfast’s University area — along with other people of good will — lived up to those words last week when they took in Romanian families who had been terrorised by thugs, fed them, gave them drinks and also welcomed them.

For their Christianity they have been targeted by vandals who caused widespread damage to the church.

The racist thugs have scored another notable victory. Some 100 of the terrorised Romanians have now decided to return to their homeland.

They left Romania to come to Northern Ireland to try to build a better life for themselves, but instead ended up being the target of threats of the most vicious order.

Now, understandably, they prefer the safety of their own land to the hopes they once harboured about life in this province.

The poison of racism is also spreading.

Foreign nationals living in Moygashel in Tyrone had windows in their homes and vehicles broken in a series of attacks.

Anna Lo, the Chinese MLA who has been to the forefront in condemning the racist attacks in Belfast, has been sent hate mail, as has another anti-racism campaigner, Paddy Meehan.

All these incidents combine to sully the reputation of the province at a time when it is hoping to attract tourists and businesses.

That job is made all the more difficult when words and images of the thuggish side of life here wings their way around the world in minutes thanks to modern technology.

Source: www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/viewpoint/viewpoint-spread-of-racism-in-northern-ireland-must-be-halted-14356467.html

Date: 24 June 2009

Racism in Northern Ireland

More than 100 Romanian people have fled their homes in Belfast, saying they feel intimidated after a series of attacks.

When the police in Northern Ireland started recording racially motivated crime in 1996 there were just 41 incidents. Last year there were nearly 1,000. In part the increase in the number of incidents can be explained by the increase in the ethnic minority population. There was a growth in the number of migrants coming to Northern Ireland following the paramilitary ceasefires and the accession of central and eastern European countries to the European Union.

Northern Ireland’s established Chinese, Indian and Vietnamese communities were joined by thousands more ethnic minorities from across the world. However there is also the suggestion that a legacy of Northern Ireland’s sectarian conflict is a “culture of intolerance” that leads to violence against people not just of a different religion but also those of a different ethnic background. Neil Jarman from the Institute for Conflict Research in Belfast has conducted several studies of racism in Northern Ireland.

He said that alongside what might be called “standard racism” there is also the legacy of sectarianism which has created a sub-culture where “anyone slightly different becomes a target for intimidation.”

Some media reports have gone as far as branding Belfast the race hate capital of Europe.

Academic Peter Shirlow, from the School of Law at Queens University in Belfast, said this was misleading. Dr Shirlow said: “We need some balance here. You used to have at local football matches the booing of black players and that has disappeared. “We have second and third generation immigrants who feel much more comfortable living in Northern Ireland.” However he said more needs to be done.

“It is a very significant problem and it is an issue not being dealt with adequately.

“If this violence succeeds in the Lisburn Road area it tells others: ‘If you do that you get rid of these people.’”

Source: *extracts from* http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/8104978.stm

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