

We Were Comrades When It Mattered

Today we buried another one, this happens all too often;

As old soldiers age and our health declines, our last rest is a coffin.

Then a debate begins about honouring our dead, about who is recognised, who is ignored and who turns up;

It's as if dead volunteers' struggle for the cause becomes devalued if they didn't sip from the peace cup.

We were comrades when it mattered, we saw injustice and did what was right;

We stood up and faced imperialism and discrimination when we joined the freedom fight.

Unity in a struggle is hard to harness when the guns go silent and the politics begin;

But dissenting on matters of principle should not decide who is out and who is in.

This is especially so when a comrade dies, a man or woman's contribution doesn't change;

Just because they didn't follow the popular path, just because they left the stage;

A flag draped coffin, a guard of honour just recognises their contribution;

Yet in this new age politic, a funeral can be turned into retribution.

Surely as Republicans we are better than this, surely we can show respect and bow our head;

We stood together and we fought together, so let us grieve together for our dead.

We are Republicans, not fascists, our new Ireland can accommodate all strands of opinion;

So let's unite in grief for a fallen comrade without judgement or discrimination, but in respectful communion.

Eamonn Lynch March 2021