

Apprentice Boys 1/2

A man starts to speak that the Apprentice Boys have eight parent clubs that form a general committee. This committee is chaired by the governor which is the man that is speaking. Since this man doesn't reveal his name, he will be referred to as governor. The camera only shows this man, but around the 20th minute it zooms out to show that another man is sitting next to him.

00:00 The camera is being fixed while the governor speaks. He mentions who the other people involved in the meetings are, what their position is, and where they would normally sit during the meetings.

1:40 Governor: "The Apprentice Boys of Derry is not a kick-the-pope organization, we're not here to wave flags in people's faces, we're here to commemorate the seeds of Londonderry which took place from 1688 to 1689 and lasted for 105 days. We're also here to commemorate the action taken by 13 young Apprentices who closed a gate of the city which started the seeds. The gate that was closed was Fergie Gate."

2:35 Governor: "The seeds lasted for 105 days. And it wasn't just the citizens that lived in the city. Protestants have lived in the outskirts, feared for their lives, and got in before the gates closed. That is what we're about."

3:05 Governor: "Up until about 10 years ago, the Apprentice Boys always met in the hall and they were classed as a secret organization. We just want to rectify that by taking the association outside this room." He then explains that, as opposed to some critics, the Apprentice Boys have a right to march as well as anyone else who would want to. "It's part of our heritage."

4:20 The governor explains that at the first parade or celebration, there were just families on a day out of the house. "That's basically what the Apprentice Boys are formed for."

4:50 Question: "You have chapters in other places. Can you tell us something about other chapters and how they relate to what happened here? Because you have chapters in Canada and all over the place."

5:05 Governor: "Well, we have branch clubs in Scotland for example. They come in December and August and take part in the parades. Last weekend I was in Scotland attending the May Day Rally in Edinburgh. The May Day Rally is a parade organized by the Scottish Apprentice Boys under the the Scottish committee. Our branch club over there is given the honor of hosting this rally. It's a different branch club every year. We have members from America. We've got members in Canada. And the reason is because sometime in history, Irish people left the shores of Londonderry and traveled to Canada, America, New Zealand. We have about 10,000 members."

7:05 Question: "Can you tell us how the parades went last year? We heard some things on

the news about some controversy about last year.”

7:25 Governor: “I was elected governor in November. The first Saturday in December is the day that we hold the December parade. It’s the opening of the gates.” He then describes the process of how he was elected governor.

8:50 Question: “Were there any problems last year?”

8:55 Governor: “Have you heard of the Rangers and Celtic match taking place? I expected problems, there was a few problems. But I’m glad to say that the problems were not caused by the Apprentice Boys.” He mentions when the Apprentice Boys were going either to or from the soccer match. “As we were passing the Richmond Center there, there was a parade of young lads with Celtic tops on. And they were having a go at the police. There was a disturbance, but it was minor. Actually, the Apprentice Boys were congratulated by Sinn Fein for the way they handled themselves. Even the police congratulated us. But the parade went off very well. The media sometimes blows things out of proportion, but it went very well.”

10:40 Question: “You said earlier on that the organization isn’t for flag waving and whatnot, but you are a parading organization. I haven’t seen video of your parades, but I have seen some for the Orange Order which seems to do a lot of flag waving. Where do you draw the distinction in what you do?”

11:05 Governor: “Well I can’t speak for the Orange Order. Flag waving is walking along and there are people on the street waving flags. We carry flags. It might blow in the wind, but they’re not waving.”

11:45 Question: “Can you explain what goes on over the course of your parade?”

11:55 Governor: “The committee opens in the mornings. In the August parade at about 10 or so, I will go along the walls and form up with 8 parentals behind me and one band. An we will march around the walls. This is a tradition for the Apprentice Boys to do. And it used to be that the whole parade went around the walls, but we met with the town management and we came up with a solution. Then we break again until we form up to go to the cathedral.” He then goes in depth about the route that the Apprentice Boys take for their parade. “I will then lay a wreath and that wreath is left in honor of Catholics and Protestants who took part in the first and second world wars.” He would then lead the parade back to the cathedral where the Thanksgiving service will take place. After the service they will march some more until he stands while the groups pass and the parade will end.

17:15 An audience member then asks what the band plays during the parades.

17:20 Governor: “The band plays music, sometimes they play hymns. They are all songs that are part of the tradition.” He then talks a bit about the large size of the drums.

18:15 Question: "I hope this isn't an unfriendly question, but feel free to tell me if it is. I'm wondering, why is it important to continue to commemorate the Apprentice Boys in 2003?"

18:30 Governor: "It's not an unfair question. My answer to you is because it's a thing that took place in the city and to me it's remember your past and your history. That's why it's important to me." He then brings up Independence Day and how the United States remembers that day.

19:35 Then it seems like someone else arrives next to the governor for the interview. The new gentleman is then asked for his permission to be videotaped and he says yes.

20:15 Question: "I understand the importance of history. I was wondering if you were making a cross-community effort between Catholics and Protestants to share the celebrations or to include them for another march."

21:10 Governor: "The Apprentice Boys have reached across to the other community and they have done this in various ways." He mentions the Apprentice Boys' festival week which takes place in the first week in August. This event is open to anyone in the city. He says that if Catholics were invited to march in their parade, they probably wouldn't show up.

21:55 Question: "How about inviting a woman to march?"

22:10 Governor: "This comes up quite a lot. Why are there no female Apprentice Boys? Well, they're not boys, they're women, so you couldn't call them Apprentice Boys (a few people laugh at this, but the governor doesn't). Women are involved with this organization in that they organize parties. They come the night of our election and they set up fruit for the members. So they're involved in that way."

23:15 Question: "Along the lines you were talking about integrating societies, I remember last year, you would talk about some of the school children. Would you talk about that?"

23:20 The man on the governor's left begins to answer the question. This man's name has not been mentioned, so he will be referred to as the man on the right (MOTR).

23:25 MOTR: "We still do that actually, it's a very important role that the Apprentice Boys have undertaken. Within the secondary schools in the city within the year 9 curriculum, they learn about the Siege of Derry. So for an end of year project, we have invited all of the school children. We bring them together and ask that if there was a newspaper during the Siege of Derry, what would be included in it? The children have gotten involved and it's a cross-community exercise where they include within the newspaper what may have been taking place within or even outside of the walls of Derry during that period. To give the kids a flavor, we invite them to the memorial hall, we put on an exhibition for them, we have various activities for them, and that gives them motivation to include aspects relating to the Siege of Derry."

"Over the years we have recognized that many of those who oppose our parade on the 12th of August and the parade in December are kids. So we firmly believe that if we educate

those children, if we can make them recognize cultural diversity, then they will recognize that we have a right to our culture when they grow up.”

26:15 Question: “Could you talk about how it was to march 10 years ago and the efforts that you went through to make marching a more peaceful process.”

26:35 MOTR: “Framework is part of the culture of the Apprentice Boys. For example, walking the walls is very much our tradition and it has been since the 12th of August in 1689. So through the years, the Apprentice Boys have always walked the walls. It’s part of their tradition, culture, and heritage.”

“In the early days of the Troubles, back in the mid-1970’s, the walls were closed off because of the threat of bombs. The Apprentice Boys accepted that because we realized it was for security and for the safety of lives. So we acknowledged that we would have to dispense with the main part of our culture.”

28:05 MOTR: “However in 1995, with the first IRA ceasefire, the walls were reopened again and we in the association decided to apply for walking the full circumference of the walls. Prior to the Relief of Derry celebrations, what happened was that all of the clubs and bands that came to Londonderry to take part in the parade all assembled on the walls. And at the finale of the parade, every band and club would do a complete circuit of the walls. So when the walls were closed off, we recognized that wasn’t possible. But after 25 years, our organization had grown considerably. So we recognized that it would be impossible for every club and every band to assemble on the walls. And we also recognized that, for security reasons, it would be impossible for every club and every band to partake in the full circuit.”

29:30 MOTR: “The eight parent clubs are clubs that sit within this building who are all people from this city. We believe that the eight parent clubs had a right to commemorate their tradition and their heritage by parading the walls. The grand finale may not have been possible, but we believed that it was feasible for those eight parent clubs with their bands to walk the full circumference of the walls at a time that would create the least inconvenience for everyone that lived in the city.”

30:40 MOTR: “But at that particular time, we also witnessed the growth of residence groups throughout Northern Ireland. Residence groups were groups that were primarily formed by Sinn Fein. And those groups were formed to oppose the culture and the traditions of the Apprentice Boys and the Orange Institution. And in Londonderry, we saw the growth of the residence group called the Bogside Residence Group which was across the wall. And they opposed our right to walk the full circumference. They said that the area that overlooks the Bogside area of the wall was a contentious area. We believed that we had a right to walk. But we recognized their concerns and we recognized the problems they had with our institution. We made a number of offers of compromise, such as only taking one band during the parades instead of eight. But they rejected our proposal. And on the night before our parade, several hundred of them took over the walls sat there all night and opposed our parade. Because our parade was authorized, the police came in early the next morning and removed those people from the walls.”

“However in doing that, we recognized that there had to be some means and some method that we could ensure the Nationalists and the Roman Catholic population that they had nothing to fear from the Apprentice Boys Association, that we were merely out to commemorate our history and our culture and our traditions. So we embarked upon a policy that we would talk to as many people from the Nationalist population as possible. We endeavoured to talk to the SDLP counselors in the city. SDLP is mostly a Roman Catholic political party. We talked to their counselors, we talked to many priests from the Roman Catholic churches throughout the city, we talked to various cross-community groups, and we talked to anyone that wanted to listen to us. And I’m pleased to say that in doing that, many individuals and groups from the Roman Catholic population believed that what we were doing was sincere, honest, and merely our way of expressing our culture and our traditions.”

34:00 MOTR: “However, the Bogside Residence Group controlled by Sinn Fein and the IRA still opposed our parade. John Hume, who is the leader of the SDLP, offered to share meetings between the Apprentice Boys and the residence group. We agreed to take part in it and we were probably one of the first Loyalist institutions that went into dialogue with the Nationalist residence groups. But we didn’t recognize that no matter what suggestion that John Hume put forward, many of which we agreed with, the residence group didn’t want to agree to any suggestion. Basically, that would have given John Hume and his party, the SDLP, recognition that his group achieved understanding between a loyal order and a residence group. So the residence group always opposed anything that John Hume put forward.”

36:50 MOTR: “Sadly, the negotiations for that talk broke down, However, there was a number a number of other initiatives brought up by various individuals. All of them failed again because political pressures from one side made the residence groups oppose everything that was put forward.”

“But what took place was that a number of business people under an initiative (the initiative’s name was too difficult to hear) convened quite a number of meetings which we attended. Most of the businesses in Londonderry are owned by Roman Catholics.” He mentions that these business owners saw violence and other things attached to the Apprentice Boys’ parades. He is interrupted by a phone call, but he returns to his talk. “The business people said, quite clearly, that their trade was affected by this continuation of violence which took place in the city. And after a number of discussions and meetings, an understanding was reached with the Bogside Residence Group that allowed our parade to take place in its normal ways.”

39:20 MOTR: “Now many people have asked us why we went into dialogue with those opposed to our culture. The reason why we went into those discussions was because we recognized that the city that I live in is 80% Roman Catholic. But within this Roman Catholic area is the area where all of my culture is.” He then names a few places and locations that is where his culture lies. “Now the Orange Order can parade wherever they want, but the Apprentice Boys Association believe that there is only one place to commemorate our history and our heritage. We recognize that this area was 98% Roman Catholic, and unless we had the good will of the vast majority of the Roman Catholics, we would never walk inside the walls of Derry. That’s the reason why we met so many people from the Nationalist community. We

wanted to continue with our heritage and our traditions, but we wanted to do it in a means that created offense to no one and had the good will of the vast majority of the population.”

42:00 Question: “We thought about how you have taken measures to ease the tension surrounding these marches. We’ve also heard from elsewhere about a feeling of hurtfulness during the marches from the Nationalist residents. I understand that you’ve taken measures to look at that, but I was wondering, during your community outreach meetings, is that something you keep a focus on?”

42:45 MOTR: “Well first and foremost, there's hurt in both communities. There is a lot of hurt in the Protestant community. If we go back 25 years ago, there was 20,000 Protestants that lived in the west bank. Today there are about 800. So this city has witnessed a mass exodus of Protestants. Our parade on the 12th of August is more than just a parade. Our parade is more than a celebration or a commemoration, our parade gives confidence to those Protestant people and it gives hope to them that our culture and our traditions are still welcomed. So there is hurt in both communities. And hurt can't be measured. But I recognize that there is fear in the Nationalist community, just the same way that there is fear in the Protestant community. But I'd like to think and hope that the war is over. And I believe that there is room for two cultures in Northern Ireland.” He goes on to explain that this is why he encourages the Apprentice Boys to get involved in a festival that reaches out to the Nationalist community. He then elaborates about this encouragement of healing. And then he goes on that the Apprentice Boys are reaching out to the other side but that they wish to continue their recognition of culture. Also, the same goes for the other community as well.

49:25 Question: “I don't know if you can speak generally as for the political affiliation of your leadership and your officers.”

49:35 MOTR: “The Apprentice Boys of Derry has no association to any political party whatsoever. We are simply an organization that was formed to commemorate the seeds of Derry. We are a historical and a cultural organization that is to primarily and solely to commemorate two dates in the calendar in the Siege of Derry on the 12th of August and on the 18th of December.”

50:20 Governor: “I wouldn't want you to go away from here thinking that the Troubles started because of the Apprentice Boys. I remember, as a young lad, roaming around and the IRA were active.” He explains that, at 11, he participated in many activities by the Bogside. “The Troubles really started when the civil rights took to their own. The IRA and Sinn Fein saw the potential, and that's when it really exploded. But the Troubles didn't start because the Apprentice Boys were marching.”

52:00 Question: “You've distinguished your society as a historical society and the Orange society as more of the political society. Can you also talk about the Black Institution? Could you explain that distinction?”

52:15 MOTR: "Personally, I wouldn't want to talk about the Orange Institution or the Black Institution because I would probably get it wrong. I have no problem talking about the Apprentice Boys, but I would emphasize that the association in which I'm the general secretary of was formed to commemorate the Siege of Derry. We are a historical group and we have no input whatsoever into politics and politics is not permitted to be spoken of during our club meetings. We do recognize that within our ranks we have members from all political parties with many different viewpoints. However, those viewpoints are not permitted to be spoken about within our club meetings. I wouldn't want to talk about the Orange or the Black because I don't know enough about them."

54:00 Question: "I had a question that has just a little bit to do with politics but it is focused on the Apprentice Boys. Let's say that the election actually comes out in the fall. And let's say that the DUP and Sinn Fein are in the first minister and the deputy first minister's office. What kind of impact do you see that having on the commemorations that you will hold if that is format in the government? Or do you think there will be any impact at all?"

54:45 MOTR: "I believe that during the last five years that myself and other colleagues have gone out of our way to meet as many people as we possibly can to explain what the Apprentice Boys is about. And I believe that we have created a lot of good will in this city. I believe that through our dialogue and through our discussions and through the May Day festival that we have created an understanding within Londonderry that people now recognize that the Apprentice Boys of the Derry Association have a right to their traditions and their culture. I also recognize that there are many people within this city who hate us and will do everything in their power to prevent us from marching. But I still believe that because of the work we have done, those people from the Roman Catholic community will ensure that my community has a right to commemorate my tradition. And I believe that will happen irrespective of which party holds power."

56:30 Question: "Is there any significance with why certain letters are written in red (the question is referring to a flag hung up out of the frame)?"

56:40 MOTR: "It's just a list of names."

56:45 Question: "How has does one become a member of the organization?"

56:50 MOTR: "To become a member of this association, someone has to approach it and request to join. There are clubs of the Apprentice Boys of Derry throughout the United Kingdom and in Canada as well. But before anyone can become a full member, you have to come inside this building and become initiated as a member. You can be an enrolled member. If you were from Scotland and you joined the Apprentice Boys club, you would become an enrolled member. By being an enrolled member, you can't hold office within your club. You can't vote within your club on resolutions or propositions until such time that you come to Londonderry and become an initiated member."

58:00 Question: "One of the complaints that I heard was that a lot of people who came to the parades don't have a lot of it in their heritage. You mentioned these groups in Canada. These people that are in these groups and actually come here, although they may be Protestant, if this isn't actually in their lineage, do you feel that it wasn't justified for those people who were able to march in the parade?"

58:30 MOTR: "In 1688, there were only two towns that held out against James' army. One was Londonderry and one was another. But prior to the sieges of those two towns, there were many battles fought in many other villages and towns along the countryside. And the Protestant community who were fighting against King James' forces suffered many defeats and fled to Londonderry. So because of that history of Protestants fleeing after defeats, that's part of our tradition today. Those people from outlying towns and villages from many places in Northern Ireland come to Londonderry because Londonderry is a city of refuge. And they come to recognize that their town was defeated but that they found refuge in the city of Londonderry. They come to commemorate that and they come to give thanks. Part of our traditions during both the relief celebrations and the shutting of the gates is that we go to the church where the people in the walls prayed for deliverance." And they still go to that church to this day. "So we do believe that people have a right to come from anywhere to take part in this tradition."

The tape ends.