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A chance to bury our differences

THE phrase "over my dead body" is now making the rounds in blogosphere.

Made famous by DAP chairman Karpal Singh more than a decade ago to underscore his aversion to Pas' pursuit of an Islamic state, the phrase recently returned to Karpal's lap.

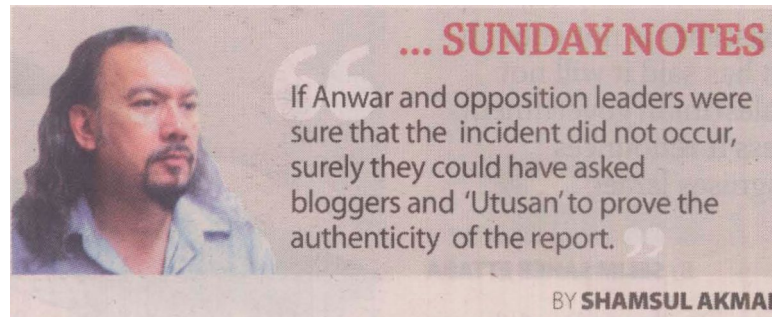
Kota Baru member of parliament Datuk Wan Abdul Rahim Wan Abdullah's use of the phrase was not in defence of Pas' goal of an Islamic state or the religion but, instead, to defend Karpal from attacks.

It may sound weird or far-fetched for a Pas politician to "offer" his life to defend someone who is against the formation of an Islamic state, but politics is stranger than fiction.

The current controversy over the phrase is about opposition to religious incongruity, similar to what Karpal had raised.

Simply put, if Karpal was prepared to put his life on the line to oppose the setting up of an Islamic state, there are those in blogosphere who are ready to do the same if there are attempts to supplant Islam with Christianity as the official religion of the country.

Several blogs had reported that a



group of pastors who attended a Jelutong DAP dinner had pledged to make Christianity the country's official religion and get a Christian to become prime minister.

Utusan Malaysia picked up on the reports and ensured that they became a national issue, attracting responses from across the political divide.

Opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, however, was defensive.

Instead of determining if the "congregation to make Christianity an official religion" had really been held, he lambasted the report, saying that it had been manipulated by the news-

paper and Umno.

He reproduced, in his blog, a joint statement by opposition leaders on Sept 8, 2008, which affirmed their commitment to the Constitution, including upholding the position of Islam as the official religion of Malaysia.

However, the issue remains: did the pastors make the pledge?

Secondly, if Anwar and opposition leaders were sure that the incident did not occur, surely they could have asked bloggers and *Utusan* to prove the authenticity of the report.

People's scepticism about media reports won't let them believe the incident without proof.

They can also vilify newspaper and bloggers to no end and that, too, is not something Anwar and the opposition are unfamiliar with.

However, what if there is truth to it?

Again, neither Anwar nor opposition leaders need to be upset about such an idea as it may have originated from zealots who, in the name of the religion, were prepared to undermine the Constitution.

If Anwar and opposition leaders are also jealously defending the Constitution, they, too, would want to get to the bottom of the issue and expose these zealots, if they existed.

Also, Christian leaders would want to denounce these zealots and condemn them for attempting to undermine the Constitution.

They would have no choice because if they didn't, they would incur the wrath of the government, Anwar and the opposition.

In fact, this is one issue that will bring together those from different political parties.

There is a precedent. When the Al-Maunah extremist group committed an act of terror in 2000, all politicians condemned the group and many dis-

tanced themselves from the group and denied any association with it.

Zealots are zealots. They lurk in all corners, waiting for the opportunity to spread their tentacles.

Even though these windows of opportunities, real or perceived, are created by events or encouraged by political posturing, the fact remains that they have no place when good sense prevails.

The question is whether good sense will prevail.

Or, given the fact that everything that moves is tied up in politics, then each suggestion will probably be twisted, even when the sanctity of the constitution and the position of religion in the country are in jeopardy.

If political considerations and political gains are of essence, then zealots need not lurk in the dark.

They can come out and choose the side that best serves their interests.

That being the case, there's nothing surprising if more politicians challenge opponents to walk over their dead bodies.

This issue, if not resolved quickly, will emit a terrible stench.