

Agenda for Government Clár Rialtais

Sinn Féin Assembly Election Manifesto 2003

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Equality agenda is central to building a new Ireland

A Chara,

Sinn Féin's Agenda for Government is the most comprehensive manifesto ever produced by our party. It sets out our policies for the incoming Assembly and Executive and our action plans in terms of the peace process and Irish unity and independence.

It also reflects our time in Government, on the Executive, the all-Ireland bodies and the All-Ireland Ministerial Council and the lengthy negotiations which have taken place with the Irish and British governments.

At the core of our Agenda for Government is one simple word - Equality. Equality of opportunity and of outcome is central to our priorities in terms of the peace process, investment in public services, tackling the crisis in rural communities, ending child poverty and in bringing an end to years of structural inequality in many urban and rural communities and West of the Bann.

As republicans we are totally committed to ending inequality and to bringing about a society where all are treated equally.

Tá sé derún againn mar poblachtánaigh chun deireadh a chur le éagophromas agus sochaí úr a chur í gcrích sa dóigh go nmeidh gach duine glactha ar bhun combhionannais

Sinn Féin is determined to see the Good Friday Agreement implemented. In the last year the British government brought down the political institutions, removed your right to vote and undermined key parts of the Agreement. Through all of this we never gave up. We have

continued to negotiate with the two governments and the unionists to restore the political institutions. We stand firm. Sinn Féin will continue with this approach to get the Agreement implemented, to secure equality, a new beginning to policing and further all-Ireland progress.

Your vote counts.

You can strengthen our negotiating hand, deliver real change and advance the peace process.

Le tacaíocht s'agat éireoidh linn níos mó a dhéanamh. Neartaigh ár n-áit sa tionól. Vótáil Sinn Féin.

In this election I am asking you to vote Sinn Féin.

Is mise,

Gerry Adams MP



Making a Difference

Ag Déanamh an difir

Sinn Féin Delivers



Sinn Féin — Making a Difference

Over the last five years, Sinn Féin has consistently delivered in government, in our communities and in negotiations on the peace process. We took innovative and far-reaching decisions in the Departments of Health and Education, in Alex Maskey's role as Mayor of Belfast, and in support of the peace process. Our overall approach has been rooted first and foremost on equality but we also advanced an agenda based on openness, accountability and inclusiveness. This is an approach we will go forward with in the next five years.

Peace Process

Sinn Féin's strategy of negotiation has given rise to:-

- Ongoing, robust negotiations on policing, justice, equality and human rights;
- The Assembly elections now being held;
- Initiatives to ensure momentum in the peace process;
- The political engagement with unionists, including the ground-breaking work of Alex Maskey as the first republican Mayor of Belfast;
- The advances secured for the Irish language;
- The IRA's engagement with General de Chastelain and putting arms beyond use.

All-Ireland developments

Sinn Féin has:-

- Put the publication of a Green Paper on Irish unity on the political agenda;
- Advanced an all-Ireland approach in Health and Education;
- Actively participated in all-Ireland bodies and the All-Ireland Ministerial Council;
- Published an all-Ireland *Rights for All* document;
- Promoted proposals for balanced development

along the border corridors;

- Successfully campaigned on Northern representation in the political institutions in the Oireachtas;
- Led the way in securing Irish passport services in the North.

Policing

- Sinn Féin put acceptable, accountable policing on the political agenda and has ensured that it stays there until we achieve a new beginning to policing;
- We secured major advances on the Mandelson Bill in 2000, at Weston Park in 2001, and in negotiations earlier this year in terms of democratic accountability, plastic bullets, demilitarisation, the Special Branch, and the transfer of powers of policing and justice.

Equality

Sinn Féin has:-

- Put equality at the heart of the negotiations;
- Argued for a more proactive implementation of the TSN legislation;
- Pushed for rigorous equality proofing of legislation under section 75 of the NI Act;
- Brought forward proposals to address flaws in the Human Rights Commission;
- Published proposals on a Bill of Rights.

Education

Sinn Féin has led the way in:-

- Tackling discrimination and inequality in education;
- Ending of the publication of schools performance 'league tables';
- Abolishing the Transfer Test (11-Plus);
- Making a massive investment in our schools.

Health

Sinn Féin has:-

- Initiated a far-reaching evaluation of every aspect of the health service;

- Placed a far greater emphasis on the maintenance and promotion of health;
- Invested massive resources in acute services;
- Upgraded vital equipment;
- Provided resources to replace the ambulance fleet;
- Created additional residential childcare places;
- Developed all-Ireland co-operation in healthcare;
- Established 15 new local health and social care groups.

Economy

Sinn Féin has:-

- Highlighted and tackled inequality
- Succeeded in getting the Executive to challenge the inadequate and unfair Barnett formula used by the British Government;
- Promoted resource allocation based on social need;
- Advanced plans for the development of the North-West and border regions;
- Placed all-Ireland economic co-operation centre stage;
- Advanced research on the social economy and campaigned for the ring-fencing of statutory support for community-based enterprise projects.

Regional development

Sinn Féin has:-

- Promoted the redistribution of economic activity;
- Led the way in opposing water charges;
- Supported community-based public transport systems;
- Been at the forefront of redeveloping 'Brown Field' former industrial sites;
- Opposed the misdirected DRD 'Regional Transportation Strategy';
- Initiated waste management targets and recycling projects;
- Promoted frameworks for integrated regional development in the border corridors.

Agriculture and rural development

Sinn Féin has been working for a new deal for rural Ireland; We have:-

- Argued for full decoupling as part of CAP reform since the beginning of the CAP talks, resulting in Minister Joe Walsh overturning his government's position;
- Opposed plans to concentrate dairy production in the hands of a small number of farmers;
- Brought forward proposals opposing attempts to introduce GM (Genetically Modified) food and crops into Ireland;
- Pursued the spending of rural development money in rural areas and lobbied intensively to have PEACE II money spent;



- Articulated the ways in which British agricultural policy is detrimental to Irish farming;
- Demonstrated the inordinate cost of running the Six-County agricultural department;
- Highlighted the failure and the unwillingness of DARD to properly eradicate both TB and Brucellosis.

Irish language, arts and culture

Sinn Féin has:-

- Made Irish language promotion and rights a central concern in the negotiations;
- Established Comhairle na Gaelscoilíochta and Iontaobhas na Gaelscoilíochta to put Irish-medium education on a secure footing;
- Promoted bilingualism in all political institutions;
- Improved viability criteria for Irish-medium schools.

Women

Under Sinn Féin Ministers:-

- The Education Department put in place an equality scheme to implement equality policies;
- The Health Department implemented new, flexible, family-friendly working arrangements, gender-proofed policies and monitored their application;
- Made nearly £1 million available to women's groups over the last four years;
- The Health Department prioritised support for marginalised women, supported healthcare training for Traveller women, and worked in partnership to develop best practice in combating domestic violence;

In addition, Sinn Féin MLAs have been a voice for equality in all the Assembly committees.

Children

Sinn Féin has:-

- Worked to secure the appointment of a Children's Commissioner;
- Ensured a substantial increase in the number of pre-school places for three-year-olds and four-year-olds;
- Bolstered extra funding for children's services;
- Promoted all-Ireland registration and vetting of child-sex offenders;
- Established an all-Ireland Centre of Excellence in the education of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders;
- Secured an inquiry into residential and secure accommodation for children.

Housing

Sinn Féin has:-

- Secured support for proposals to tackle inequalities in housing;
- Promoted, as part of the Executive, the setting of measurable targets in relation to housing poverty and homelessness;
- Led the way in the commissioning of two reports into homelessness.

Environment

Sinn Féin has:-

- Promoted alternative energy use such as hydro-electricity;
- Joined in the flotilla opposing the transport of dangerous nuclear waste through the Irish Sea;
- Made a submission to the British Government's energy review in relation to nuclear power;
- Secured all-party support for the development of a nuclear-free and sustainable all-Ireland energy market.

Multiculturalism

Sinn Féin has:-

- Brought forward major initiatives to tackle sectarianism and racism;
- Launched an anti-racist charter and are seeking to have it introduced in councils across the country. Demanded and promoted equality for all cultural traditions;
- Resolutely defended the right to freedom from sectarian harassment.



Building an Ireland of Equals

I dTreo Éire Chothrom a Thogáil

Priorities 2003 - 2008

2



Sinn Féin's Priorities for 2003 - 2008

Sinn Féin is committed to building an Ireland of equals and will pursue policies to bring this about in the Assembly, Executive, All-Ireland Ministerial Council and the Oireachtas.

Peace Process

- Re-establishment of political institutions;
- Implementation of Good Friday Agreement;
- A new beginning to policing, including transfer of powers;
- A new criminal justice system;
- Build on our ground-breaking talks with Ulster Unionists.

All-Ireland developments

- Preparation and publication of a Green Paper on Irish Unity;
- A broad campaign to create an 'Alliance for Irish Unity';
- Expansion of the areas for all-Ireland implementation and co-operation under the All-Ireland Ministerial Council;
- Representation in the Dáil and the Seanad and voting rights in Presidential elections for Irish citizens living in the North;
- Promoting balanced integration along the border corridors;
- Intensification of the political engagement with unionism.

Policing

- Creation of an acceptable, accountable, representative and unarmed policing service;
- Banning of plastic bullets;
- Ending of the use of repressive legislation;
- Effective inquiries into the killings of Pat Finucane, Rosemary Nelson, the Brian Nelson affair, and multiple allegations of collusion;
- Root and branch reform of the justice system;

- Transfer of powers on policing and justice to the democratic accountability of the Assembly.

Equality and human rights

- Establishment of a Department of Equality;
- Single Equality Bill to be rapidly progressed;
- Restore momentum to the implementation of the equality agenda;
- Restructuring of the Human Rights Commission;
- Establishment of an all-Ireland Constitutional Court to protect rights enshrined in a Bill of Rights;
- Bill of Rights based on an all-Ireland charter of human rights;
- Timetabled, monitored measures to eliminate the differential in unemployment rates;
- Economic development targeted towards areas of greatest need;
- Adequate legal assistance for those taking discrimination cases.

Education

- A significant increase in funding for education;
- Ending of academic selection;
- A sustained investment in Early Years Education;
- Making equality central to education provision;
- Resources deployed to promote access to education;
- Promotion of Irish language and culture;
- Building links and harmonising provision on an all-Ireland basis.

Health

- A significant increase in resources for the health service;
- Amalgamation of Belfast City Hospital with the Royal Group of Hospitals;

- Ensure that the health needs of people living west of the Bann are met;
- Development of a cross-border network of hospital services;
- Setting up of the proposed Regional Authority under the control of Health Departments, North and South.

Economy

- Develop an all-Ireland economy with one tax regime and one currency;
- Support the adoption of the euro in any future referendum;
- One over-arching economic development agency;
- An all-Ireland economic growth and development strategy;
- Redirect resources for Britain's war machine into a peace dividend to rebuild communities damaged by conflict;
- New mechanism for calculating the block grant for Assembly;
- Support the introduction of tax varying powers within the North

Agriculture and rural development

- All-Ireland co-ordination of agriculture and rural development;
- A long-term all-Ireland agricultural development strategy based on higher value

added production, with the removal of 'UK' status on food exports from the North of Ireland;

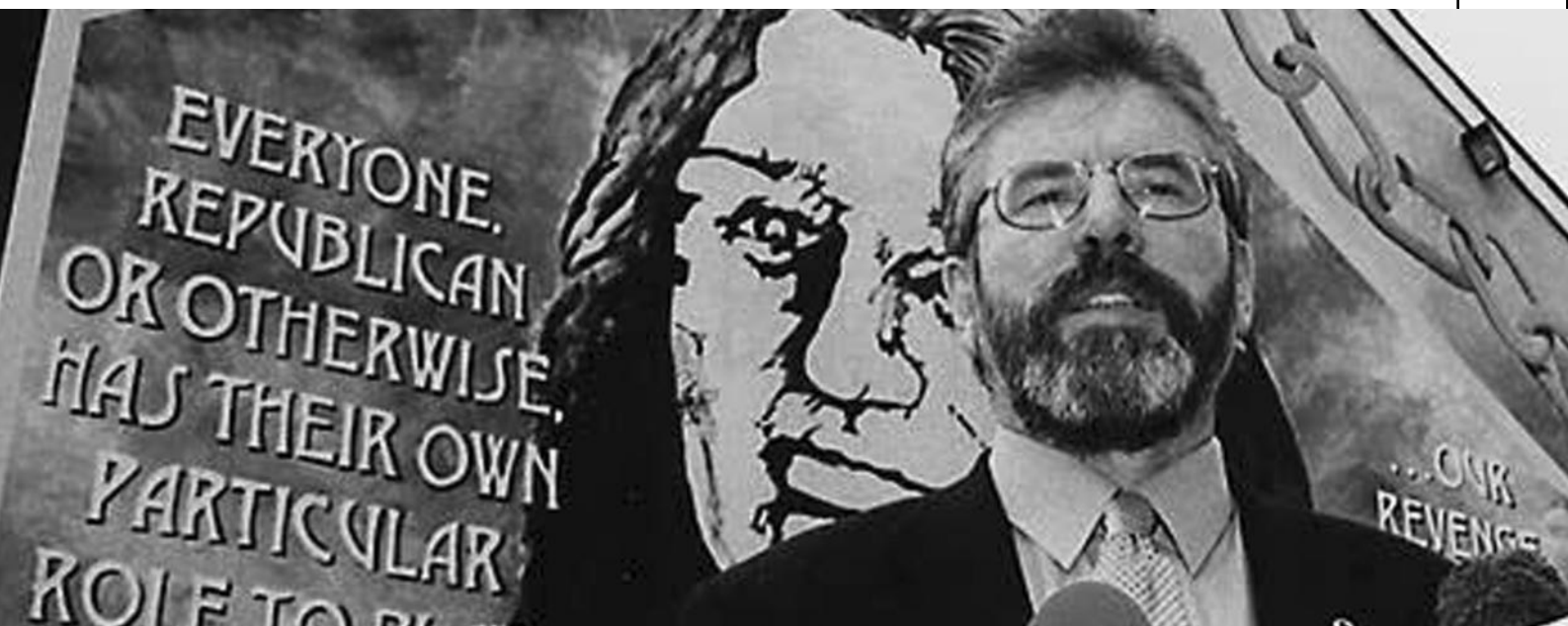
- Introduce early retirement schemes;
- A coherent strategy for rural economic development;
- Full decoupling of all EU farm payments;
- End to cutbacks in the provision of public services to rural communities.

Regional development

- All-Ireland transport policy;
- Prioritise investment in the key transport corridors;
- Harmonisation of Irish fuel taxes;
- Investment in public transport and in our inadequate water and sewage infrastructure;
- Oppose the introduction of water charges;
- Ensure the integration of the *National Development Plan* in the 26 Counties with *Shaping our Future* in the Six Counties to provide the basis of an all-Ireland implementation plan.

Irish language, arts and culture

- Develop an all-island policy approach to arts and culture;
- Designate St Patrick's Day as an all-Ireland public holiday and day of national reconciliation;
- Redress biased nature of Arts funding;



- Establish an all-island soccer team;
- Adequate resourcing of Foras na Gaeilge;
- TG4 to be accessible across the North;
- Immediate appointment of a Commissioner to oversee the promotion of Irish language measures within government agencies and departments;
- The enactment of an Irish Language Bill to give Irish an equal status to the Welsh and Scots Gaelic languages;
- An integrated approach to the funding of the arts through the medium of Irish.

Women

- Targets and timescales for achieving equality of representation in public life;
- The National Plan for Women in the 26 Counties to have an all-Ireland focus;
- Gender-proofing in appointments and policies for all public bodies;
- Quality, widely accessible childcare system.

Children

- Appoint a Minister for Children and Young People;
- Development of realistic and measurable targets for the eradication of child poverty;
- All-Ireland co-ordination of child protection policies and procedures;
- Expansion of funding for statutory and voluntary children's services.

Housing

- Housing as a right to be enshrined in the Bill of Rights;
- Development of a properly funded social housing programme;
- Enforcement of enhanced legal protection for tenants;
- Development of a statutory integrated approach to tackle housing poverty and

homelessness.

Environment

- All economic activity and policy decisions to be environmentally proofed;
- Continued support the campaign for the full closure of Sellafield;
- Rejection of all forms of incineration;
- Promotion of an all-Ireland waste management strategy;
- Invest the resources required to bring water treatment plants up to standard;
- Full reform of local government;
- A major overhaul of planning laws throughout Ireland.

Multiculturalism

- All political parties to sign an anti-racist pledge;
- An all-Ireland policy for asylum seekers and refugees to be developed within the framework of the all-Ireland bodies;
- Responsibility for asylum seekers and refugees to be devolved to the Assembly;
- Adoption of an all-Ireland Citizen Traveller Campaign;
- Transfer of responsibility for Traveller accommodation from local councils to the Housing Executive should be speeded up and fully resourced financially.

Making peace a reality

Síocháin

Peace Process

3



Sinn Féin and republicans have taken huge risks for peace. We know where we are going and we have the road map to get there.

Sinn Féin has taken initiatives to advance the peace process. When others gave up it was Sinn Féin who returned to the negotiations time and time again to ensure that the elections went ahead and that the promise of the Good Friday Agreement is delivered

We secured commitments from the British Government on policing, criminal justice, equality, human rights, Irish language and demilitarisation.

We engaged in ground-breaking dialogue with Ulster Unionists and, despite current difficulties, this is the key to future political progress and we intend to build on it.

Making a difference

The last ten years have been a time of huge change and for the majority of people the Ireland of today is a much better place in which to live.

In that time we have worked with five British Secretaries of State and two British Prime Ministers. We have seen the removal of the Government of Ireland Act, withdrawal of British troops from the streets, re-opening of hundreds of border roads, beginning of demilitarisation, release of political prisoners, establishment of the new political institutions (including the historic all-Ireland Ministerial Council), ending years of British direct rule, recognition of the Irish language, the beginning of a peace dividend delivered through Peace I and II funding.

Republicans led the way in bringing about these changes through our peace strategy. It is this

strategy which delivered:-

- The Irish Peace Process;
- IRA cessations - now maintained for almost ten years;
- The Good Friday Agreement, offering us a road map out of conflict into a new Ireland based on equality and justice for all.

Sinn Féin is committed to the implementation of the Agreement

The focus of republicans over the past five years has been to see the Good Friday Agreement implemented. This commitment was seen in our work in the Assembly and the Dáil, our negotiations with the two governments and the many unilateral initiatives taken by the IRA in support of the process itself. Specifically we have seen:-

- Innovative and challenging policies from our ministers;
- Leading the way in the All-Ireland Ministerial Council and all-Ireland bodies.

Sinn Féin's strategy of negotiation has given rise to:-

- The Good Friday Agreement;
- The all-Ireland dimension to the Agreement;
- Ongoing, robust negotiations on policing, justice, equality and human rights;
- Defence of the Agreement at Weston Park and in the negotiations earlier this year;
- Giving effect to the demand and democratic imperative that Assembly elections be held;
- The continuing hope and expectation generated by the maintenance of political momentum;
- Political engagement with unionists and the ground-breaking work of Alex Maskey as the first republican Mayor of Belfast;
- Advances secured for the Irish language
- The IRA's engagement with General de

Chastelain and the putting of arms beyond use.

Difficulties remain

Despite all of this progress, the process has been dogged by difficulties including a failure by other parties to uphold commitments and demonstrate that politics can work. We are not naïve about this. We have always recognised that there would be resistance to change from political opponents and elements in the British system who seek to achieve through the peace process what they could not achieve in 30 years of conflict.

Sinn Féin has resolutely refused to be deflected. Instead, we have vigorously brought the agenda for change to the doorstep of opponents of change.

Negotiations will continue

Throughout all of these difficulties, Sinn Féin did what we do best — we kept the demand for justice and equality at the centre of the political agenda in Ireland and Britain and in the White House. We continued to negotiate, determined to deliver the rights and entitlements that you voted for and deserve. We worked to ensure that:-

- The progress of recent years is advanced;
- The elections go ahead;
- Society returns to the promise of the Good

Friday Agreement.

In this we have been successful. But there is much more to do.

Where now?

We go into these elections on November 26th confident that we can achieve much more. Our commitment to you, the voter, is to see:-

- The political institutions re-established;
- The Good Friday Agreement implemented;
- The work and remit of the all-Ireland bodies expanded;
- A continuation of our dialogue with Ulster Unionists;
- An all-Ireland Constitutional Court and Bill of Rights;
- A genuine new beginning to policing, including the transfer of powers;
- Northern representation in the Dáil;
- A new criminal justice system;
- The overhaul of the Human Rights and Equality Commissions;
- The defence and realisation of the right to freedom from sectarian harassment;
- The protection of national and democratic rights in domestic and international forums.

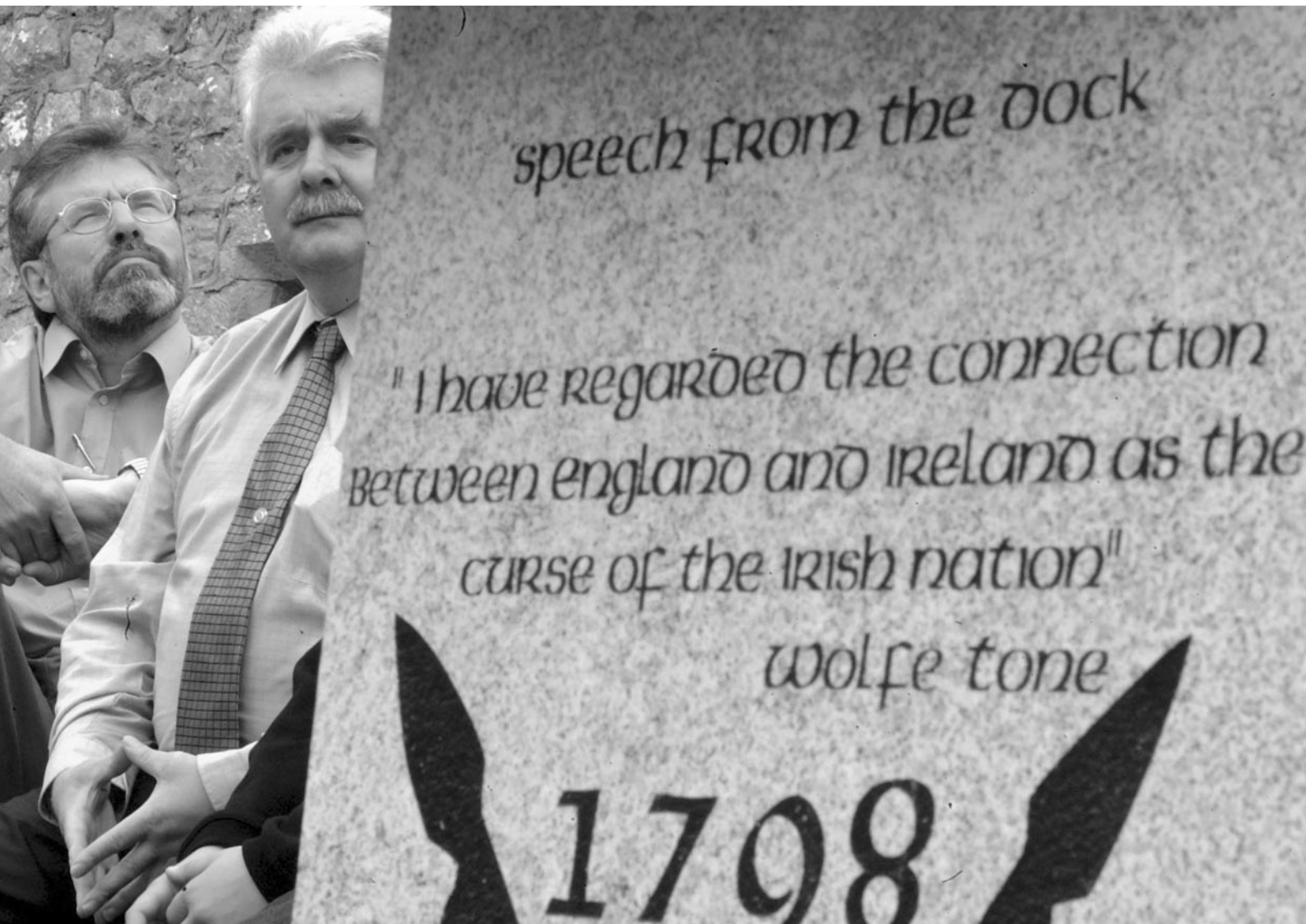


Building Irish Unity

Uile Éireann

4

All-Ireland Development



Preparing for Irish unity

Sinn Féin is a republican party. We are the only all-Ireland party. We believe that an end to partition and the establishment of a real national democracy is the way forward to political progress, social and economic justice and lasting peace on this island we share.

Sinn Féin is the only party with a strategy and policies for achieving Irish unity and independence. We are the only party that people can vote for, whether they live in Derry, Kerry, Wexford or Antrim. We are the only party bringing a distinctly republican and socialist analysis into the heart of Irish politics.

We are working to make Irish unity a reality in our time.

We have put the development of all-Ireland structures and the mandate for reunification at the top of our political agenda.

We have consistently promoted an island-wide approach in key policy areas including the economy, health, employment, agriculture and tourism.

We have given practical expression to this through the work of our ministers in the Executive and the All-Ireland Ministerial Council.

In the Assembly and in the Dáil, Sinn Féin representatives have continuously pressed the need to sustain and develop the all-island approach enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement.

Good Friday Agreement

The Good Friday Agreement is an all-Ireland Agreement. Our priority is to see that

Agreement bedded down, implemented fully, and the peace process stabilised. Sinn Féin will continue to actively develop and advance the potential of the all-Ireland institutions and implementation bodies. We will work to ensure that the necessary financial and other resources are available so that substantial progress can take place. Sinn Féin is calling for:-

- Preparation and publication of a Green Paper on Irish Unity by the Irish Government;
- A broad campaign alongside other political parties, community groups, trade unions and other interested sections of our society in creating an 'Alliance for Irish Unity';
- Expanding the island-wide approach in key policy areas, including the economy, health, education, employment, agriculture and tourism;
- Establishment of the all-Ireland Inter-parliamentary Forum;
- Establishment of the all-Ireland Civic Forum.

Expanding all-Ireland structures

Sinn Féin successfully campaigned for the all-Ireland bodies to be established and the All-Ireland Ministerial Council is one of the key elements of the Good Friday Agreement.

Sinn Féin is committed to the development of all-Ireland structures to foster an Ireland of equals. In particular we will seek to:-

- Widen and deepen the co-ordination of the Six Areas of Co-operation;
- Establish new Areas of Co-operation, including Community Development, Art and Heritage, Economic Co-operation and Public Investment;
- Expand the remit of the six existing all-Ireland implementation bodies;
- Create further implementation bodies (e.g. Policing, Justice, Agriculture, Rural Development, Social Economy, Pollution

Control, Mental Health, Further and Higher Education, Communications Infrastructure and Energy);

- Use our representation within the All-Ireland Ministerial Council to effect co-ordination and integration of policy-making and programmes of work across the border and throughout Ireland.

Promoting balanced integration along the Border Corridor

The Border Corridor is one of the most deprived areas of Ireland. The border impedes development and impacts detrimentally on the quality of life of those communities and businesses who live and work adjacent to it. The border has been independently acknowledged as an impediment to the social and economic development in that geographical area. Sinn Féin recognises that insular regional development will not work.

- Only co-ordinated integration that creates common systems and shared infrastructure and services will deliver the balanced development needed for people living within the Border Corridor;
- As such, the most appropriate frameworks for regional development must be integrated and inclusive — encompassing all the counties of the Border Corridor;

- Sinn Féin’s representatives on the three Cross-Border Corridor Groups, in Council, in the Assembly and in the Dáil will continue to promote sustainable cross-border integration, linking up services and infrastructure across the border;
- Sinn Féin will lead the way in arguing for and constructing a meaningful grassroots campaign, building a ‘community for integration’, promoting balanced regional development involving all the counties of the border corridor.

The All-Ireland Bill of Rights

The Good Friday Agreement committed the two governments to establishing an All-Ireland Bill of Rights. Five years on, we still await its arrival. Sinn Féin has been to the fore in arguing that the Bill of Rights must be enforceable. Parity of esteem, equality of treatment and full human rights must be guaranteed for all the people of Ireland.

- Sinn Féin is in the process of publishing a Rights for All Charter and we will consult as widely as possible on it.

The All-Ireland Civic Forum

The Good Friday Agreement committed the two governments to establishing an All-Ireland Consultative Civic Forum. Again, five years on, it has not yet been established. Such a forum



would offer local communities, trades unions, voluntary groups, women and youth organisations and local businesses an opportunity to become involved in decision-making on an all-Ireland scale.

- Sinn Féin will vigorously campaign for greater participative democratic platforms allowing grassroots involvement in decisions affecting us.

Northern representation

“It is the entitlement and birthright of every person born on the island of Ireland, which includes its island and seas, to be part of the Irish nation. That is also the entitlement of all persons otherwise qualified in accordance with law to be citizens of Ireland...”

For many years now, Sinn Féin has been lobbying intensively for Northern participation in the political life of the nation. It is a logical extension of the outworking of the Good Friday Agreement and is something that will bring considerable benefits to all of us living on the island. Sinn Féin is calling for:-

- The recommendations of the All-Party Oireachtas Committee concerning democratic representation in the Dáil and the Seanad for Irish citizens living in the North of Ireland to be implemented;
- Voting rights in presidential elections for Irish citizens in the North of Ireland.

A new relationship between Ireland and Britain

The process that we are involved in is about creating the conditions for a new, democratic, pluralist dispensation on the island and a new relationship between Ireland and Britain. We want to end British jurisdiction in Ireland. We want to initiate a process for discussing, negotiating and agreeing the future form of all-Ireland government structures.

Engaging with unionists

Over the years, Sinn Féin has intensified its engagement with unionism at all levels of society — civil, religious and political.

Last year, Alex Maskey, as the first republican Mayor of Belfast, held out the hand of friendship to the unionist community and proved by his actions that he was indeed a mayor for all of the people of Ireland’s second city. The work initiated by him is being continued in councils across the North by people such as Anne Brolly, the first republican and first woman Mayor of Limavady.

We are individually and together going through a period of change in our society. It is important that unionism joins with the rest of us in managing that process.

While nationalists, republicans and unionists are engaging in a process of change, so too must society change to accommodate all of us who live on the island. A united Ireland must be inclusive for all and must guarantee the rights and entitlements of unionists so that they have a sense of security and a stake in the new Ireland.

**It's time to deliver a new
beginning to Policing**

Póilíneacht

Policing



What Sinn Féin has achieved on policing

Sinn Féin has been central to discussions relating to the future of policing in Ireland. We first put it on the agenda of the negotiations in 1997 and were key to negotiating those sections of the Good Friday Agreement which related to policing in 1998.

We compiled detailed submissions and amendments to legislation and ensured that it was part of every negotiation from the Good Friday Agreement being signed right up to the present day. We continued to pursue the agenda of radical change, when others set their sights too low, and settled too soon for too little. While we have yet to achieve Patten, there has been substantive movement or commitment to movement on key issues by the British Government. These commitments have been achieved as a result of consistent efforts on the part of the Sinn Féin negotiating team.

2000

In May 2000, when the Mandelson Bill gutted the Patten proposals, the SDLP accepted this position and supported the Bill in its first reading in the House of Commons. Sinn Féin refused to accept it. Our analysis of the Bill showed that of the 175 recommendations, 89 weren't adopted. Only 11 were implemented and it proved impossible to qualitatively comment on the remaining 75. Sinn Féin challenged the British Government, publicly and privately, and published a list of amendments. While there were some improvements, deep flaws remained. It was our view that substantive amending legislation was required.

2001

Prior to the negotiations at Weston Park in the

summer of 2001, the then SDLP deputy leader claimed that it was no longer possible to deliver amending legislation. Sinn Féin refused to accept this and made policing a central issue during these talks. It was at this time that the British Government accepted that the Police Act did not deliver Patten and that amending legislation would be necessary.

The amendments secured at Weston Park were an advance but did not in themselves deliver the Patten threshold. Sinn Féin continued to engage with the British Government in a bid to get policing right.

2002/2003

On September 30th 2002, Sinn Féin made a submission to the British Government on the issue of policing. At the core of it was the need to ensure that the policing service is democratically accountable and representative. We have made steady progress, building on the advances made at Weston Park. In addition to the raft of legislative amendments secured at Weston Park, our discussions with the British Government this year have secured additional amendments including:-

Democratic accountability

- Requires the British Secretary of State to consult with the Ombudsman, the Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission on key areas of policing objectives;
- Requires the same consultation process in respect of Codes of Practice over which the British Secretary of State formerly had a blank cheque;
- Ensures that the Belfast sub-groups are placed on a par with the District Policing Partnerships.

These are important additional aspects of accountability, particularly in respect of the Belfast sub-groups where areas like West Belfast will be pivotal testing grounds in any new beginning.

Plastic bullets

We have now achieved a conditional commitment from the British Government to remove these lethal weapons from service by the end of 2003. This is an advance on the position of the SDLP and the Policing Board, who accepted that plastic bullets would remain in use until *at least* the end of 2005. We want to see plastic bullets banned with immediate effect.

Demilitarisation of the PSNI

This was a recommendation of Patten which has largely been ignored. The PSNI is an armed force, operating from military-type barracks in heavily-armoured vehicles. This is not acceptable. Our negotiations with the British Government have centred on getting them to commit to an accelerated process to achieve a demilitarised policing service.

Special Branch

The corrosive position of the Special Branch at the core of the current policing arrangements has to end. There can be no part in a new beginning

to policing for the 'force within a force' which has, as a matter of policy, been involved in the targeting and murder of citizens.

We have received commitments from the British Government regarding the roles and powers of the Special Branch.

Transfer of power

Sinn Féin first raised this issue with the British Government over two years ago. It is our belief that the transfer of the powers of policing and justice to the Assembly, the Executive and the All-Ireland Ministerial Council is a necessary component of a new beginning to policing.

Sinn Féin has now secured a commitment from the British Government to transfer these powers and we are currently engaged with the other parties to work out the detail of this.

Sinn Féin continue to work to secure a new beginning to policing

Sinn Féin continues to engage on policing. We are still working to bring about this 'new beginning to policing' promised in the Good Friday Agreement. Sinn Féin's priorities in relation to policing include:-



- The creation of an unarmed policing service;
- The banning of plastic bullets;
- Bringing an end to the use of repressive legislation;
- Effective inquiries into the murders of Pat Finucane, Rosemary Nelson, the Brian Nelson affair, and multiple allegations of collusion between British forces and unionist paramilitary gangs;
- Root-and-branch reform of the justice system;
- Transfer of powers on policing and justice to the Assembly.

Proper policing = safe communities

Republican and nationalist communities have never experienced proper accountable policing. Sinn Féin is committed to achieving safe communities through the achievement of an acceptable policing service. This means:-

- Developing the community-based policing approach demanded by Patten;
- District Policing Partnerships becoming mechanisms for community accountability;
- Continuing to support community restorative justice schemes;
- An end to the British Army patrolling our streets.

Respecting human rights

The policing experience in the Six Counties has been one of human rights abuses. Sinn Féin is committed to a policing service which has respect for human rights at its core.

Collusion

Sinn Féin was the only political party to raise the issue of collusion between the British state and the unionist paramilitaries. We presented a

dossier to Tony Blair in 1998. The recent limited publication of the Stevens Report confirmed what Sinn Féin had been saying since the 1970's. Sinn Féin:-

- Supports the families of those killed in their demands for an international public inquiry;
- Demands the removal of the Joint Services Group (the FRU's replacement) from the Six Counties;
- Demands the removal from the PSNI of those involved in the targeting and murder of citizens.

Conclusion

Sinn Féin wants to see proper policing. Sinn Féin wants to be part of proper policing structures. That is why we have sought to ensure that the British Government returns to the threshold of Patten and deliver the new beginning promised in the Agreement. That has been our focus in recent years. It will continue to be our focus in the time ahead. We will not accept anything less than first-class policing for our communities.

Equality will remain centre-stage in the negotiations

Ceartas sóisialta

**Equality and
Human Rights**

6

Measuring Equality
INN FÉIN EQUALITY CONFERENCE 2003



EQUALITY

Sinn Féin has and will continue to put the issue of equality at the centre of the negotiations. We will work to challenge inequalities and to ensure the delivery of equality and equity for everyone in Irish society.

Among our priorities are:-

- Social and economic equality;
- Rights of vulnerable communities;
- Language rights;
- Victims;
- The use of symbols and emblems for public purposes;
- Equality for former political prisoners;
- Strong mechanisms and legislation;
- An end to discrimination in the funding of political parties;
- The repeal of the national security aspects of the present fair employment legislation.

Equality mechanisms

If the equality agenda is to have any chance of success then the mechanisms established under the Good Friday Agreement need to be an effective vehicle for change.

Sinn Féin calls for:-

- The establishment of a Department of Equality;
- The Single Equality Bill to be rapidly progressed and for it to be the strongest anti-discrimination legislation;
- Effective mechanisms to restore momentum to the implementation of the equality agenda and ensure that equality gained becomes equality sustained;
- In particular, the Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission needs adequate powers and resources;
- Timetabled, monitored measures to eliminate the differential in unemployment rates between Protestants and Catholics;
- Economic development targeted towards areas

of greatest need;

- The two governments to progress and provide funding for capacity building in civil society to enable effective participation in the implementation of equality schemes;
- Adequate legal assistance for those taking discrimination cases;
- Implementation of commitments in respect of the Irish language.

Parity of esteem

- The Irish language, heritage and culture requires a strong legislative framework — as well as other specific measures — to guarantee parity of esteem and equality of treatment;
- Sinn Féin will press the British Government to honour its commitments in relation to the Irish language under the Good Friday Agreement and to endorse stronger and more comprehensive clauses of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;
- The inequalities that exist in failing to provide equal expression to nationalist and republican sentiments around flags, emblems and monuments in public places and in buildings needs to be addressed and legislated for;
- Workspace and working environments need to be governed by the principle of equality or neutrality.

Victims

Even victims of the conflict are the subject of discrimination. We need to follow international best practice with regard to victims and reconciliation. There must be an end to the hierarchy of victims. The allocation of resources to and the design and adoption of measures for victims must be on the basis of equality.

Many victims and survivors of the conflict believe that some formal collective examination

and acknowledgement of the past is necessary for them to find closure.

Sinn Féin calls for a focused debate and political engagement with all relevant parties on the timing and purpose of truth recovery processes.

Unemployment differential and the benefit trap

Unless targets and timeframes are set to progressively eliminate the differential in unemployment rates between Protestants and Catholics — as promised under the Good Friday Agreement — then Catholics will continue to be twice as likely to be unemployed as their Protestant counterparts.

Sinn Féin calls for:-

- Timetabled measures and targets with built-in accountability mechanisms to eliminate the differential in unemployment rates between Catholics and Protestants by targeting objective need;
- Imaginative and flexible measures to tackle the barriers facing the unemployed and long-term unemployed in the North, and in particular the benefit trap.

HUMAN RIGHTS

In the North we have a unique opportunity to move from being known worldwide as a place where human rights are abused to being one where the state protects and upholds people's

rights.

The establishment of a fair and equitable system of justice is central to the building of a just society and the development and maintenance of a human rights culture in Ireland.

The Six-County state is synonymous with the abuse of human rights, injustice and oppression. Every major human rights agency in the world, from Amnesty International to Helsinki Watch, has indicted Britain for torture, summary execution and extensive violations of human rights.

The establishment of a fair and equitable system of justice is central to the building of a just society and the development and maintenance of a human rights culture in Ireland.

Civil and political freedom can only be achieved if people have economic, social and cultural rights. These must be firmly rooted in legislation.

Bill of Rights

Sinn Féin is campaigning for a comprehensive and inclusive Bill of Rights in the North and for the maximum protection and harmonisation of rights throughout the island which, under the Good Friday Agreement, will be contained in an all-Ireland Charter of Rights, including social and economic rights.



Given the effect of 30 years of conflict, a strong Bill of Rights is required to provide citizens, especially those most vulnerable sections of our society, with the means to avail of their rights.

In our wide-ranging submission to the Human Rights Commission, Sinn Féin called for a comprehensive Bill of Rights for the North as a first step towards the fullest harmonisation of rights standards throughout the island.

A Bill of Rights must be people-centred and rooted in impartial implementation and enforcement mechanisms.

Human rights abuses

Human rights abuses must be well publicised and the state should be held accountable for upholding the law, implementing legislation and investigating abuses in an open and accountable fashion.

Delivering justice

The British and Irish governments should move to ratify international human rights treaties that they have failed to ratify so far. In particular, they should accept the individual complaints mechanism of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). This would allow individuals to take complaints directly to the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations.

Public bodies must become champions of human rights, basing all their actions and policies on international instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; the European Convention on Human Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Good Friday Agreement explicitly accepted that policing, repressive legislation and a comprehensive review of the justice system had to be addressed in tandem if justice is to truly be the outcome.

The delivery of justice and the protection of human rights must include equality before the law. It must be evident in all the institutions of a justice system which conforms to the highest standards of international human rights and the removal of repressive legislation.

The victims of state violence and their relatives have specific needs in terms of access to justice and truth. The failure of the Director of Public Prosecutions to prosecute crown forces personnel for the use of lethal force is well documented.

The willingness of the British Government to issue Public Interest Immunity Certificates to thwart prosecutions and investigations and to tolerate crown forces perjury within the criminal justice system has meant the denial of justice in the Six-County state since its inception.

Constitutional Court

For rights to be promoted and protected there must be impartial implementation and enforcement mechanisms.

To this end, Sinn Féin has called for the establishment of an all-Ireland Constitutional Court.

After 30 years of conflict and human rights abuses, clearly any Bill of Rights, if it is to be effective, must be linked to radical changes in the criminal justice and policing systems.

Human Rights Commission

The Human Rights Commission is a key

component of the Good Friday Agreement which Sinn Féin strongly argued for and supported. We are very concerned at the Human Rights Commission's approach to a number of issues such as fair employment and the Chief Commissioner's inappropriate behaviour in the Holy Cross School case. We approach this issue on the basis of wanting the best possible Human Rights Commission.

The Chief Commissioner's actions in respect of Holy Cross — particularly his correspondence with former PSNI Chief Ronnie Flanagan — has undermined public confidence. The Chief Commissioner has not dealt satisfactorily with these concerns about the way the Commission has developed under his stewardship.

- We need to restructure the Commission, including the composition, the appointments process and the powers and resources of the Commission;
- An Independent Selection Panel should be established to oversee that process and further appointments to the Commission should be made after this has happened;
- The British Government needs to put in place measures to guarantee the integrity, independence and effectiveness of the Commission;
- The Human Rights Commission needs to be governed by the United Nation's Paris

Principles so as to guarantee sufficient and appropriate powers, resources, independence and balanced representation of its membership;

- Repressive legislation must be rescinded and the limiting remit and powers of the Human Rights Commission must be expanded to instil public confidence in its ability to champion and protect the human rights of all citizens.



Equality for all our children

Oideachas

Education

7



Martin McGuinness — Action for Education

Since Martin McGuinness took office as Education Minister in December 1999, and in spite of a number of interruptions in the work of the Good Friday institutions, he has been widely acknowledged one of the most energetic and effective ministers.

Not only has he started the process of reversing decades of chronic under-funding in our schools, but he has also initiated the widest education debate in 50 years on our post-primary education structures.

Following extensive research, debate and discussion, and consultation at all levels of the education systems, and the carrying out of a household survey, Martin McGuinness moved in October 2002 to abolish the 11-Plus. The last test should be taken in 2004; by September 2006, a new, non-selective system should be put in place for all our children. Sinn Féin is actively participating in this ongoing debate and advocates equality for every child.

In government, Sinn Féin has delivered on:-

- Tackling discrimination and inequality in education;
- Ending of the publication of school 'league tables';
- Abolishing the Transfer Test (11-Plus);
- Making a massive investment in our schools.

Investing in our future

- Massive increase in Early Years provision (by October 2002, practically all four-year-olds had a nursery place);
- Developing Special Needs Education;
- A £420 million investment in our schools — the largest capital investment programme ever in school buildings;

- Ground-breaking development of the information technology infrastructure of schools, backed up by massive investment;
- Established an Independent Inquiry on Pay and Conditions of Teachers;
- Viability criteria improved for Irish-medium and integrated schools.

All-Ireland co-operation

- Task forces set up, North and South, on autism and dyslexia — conferences held on both issues.
- Funding for the establishment of an all-Ireland Centre of Excellence for Autism in Middletown, Armagh;
- Improving pupil exchanges and teacher mobility: funding for cross-border youth and school co-operation;
- Addressing special educational needs on an all-Ireland basis;
- Improving child protection by developing all-Ireland strategies to register sex offenders.

Equality and human rights

- Building a 'Culture of Democracy and Human Rights';
- Model consultation around the review of post-primary education;
- Human rights education promoted with major conferences, the production of curriculum resources and the appointment of specialist teachers;
- Adoption of an Equality Scheme and the setting up of an Equality Division in the Department of Education.

Assembly Education Committee

Sinn Féin has also made an impact on education through its two MLAs on the Assembly Education Committee, Gerry McHugh and Barry McElduff (replaced in June 2002 by Mitchel

McLaughlin). They have argued for the implementation of measures to bring about equality such as the abolition of the II-Plus and increased funding for social need.

Sinn Fein's priorities for 2003-2008

Sinn Féin wants to see the improvement in educational standards continue, driven by increased core funding targeting disadvantage, and by ever-increasing quality of delivery. Sinn Féin will campaign for and support:-

- a) A significant increase in funding for education;
- b) The ending of academic selection;
- c) A sustained investment in Early Years Education;
- d) Multi-agency and community-based approaches in schools with disadvantaged populations;
- e) Determination, imagination and funding aimed at defeating the unacceptably high level of adult functional illiteracy;
- f) Resources being deployed to promote access to education;
- g) Promotion of Irish language and culture;
- h) Building links and harmonising provision on an all-Ireland basis.

Schools as learning

organisations in a 'Learning Neighbourhood'

Sinn Féin will support and work for the development of an education system that is characterised and governed by the principles of organisational learning. Such a system would be made up of meaningful and effective partnerships between local education providers and the community with whom they work in the development, maintenance and ongoing improvement of 'Learning Neighbourhoods'.

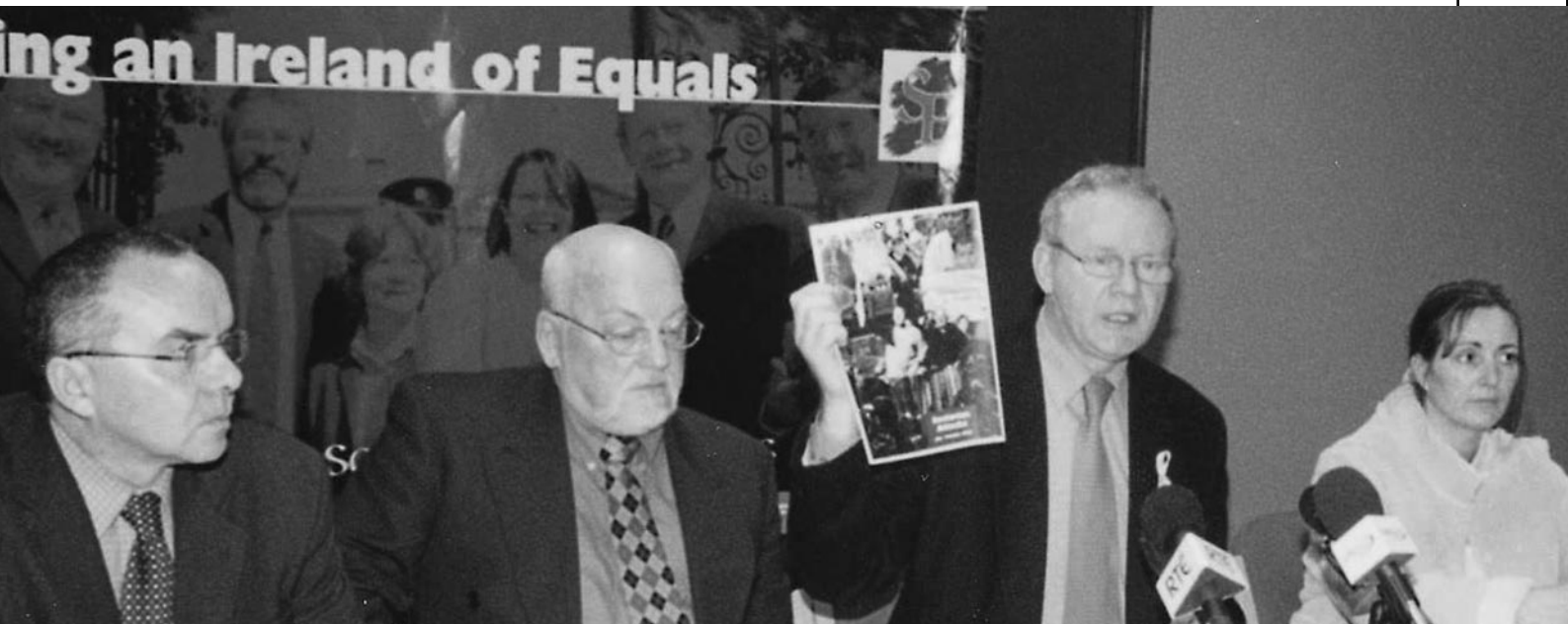
Tackling disadvantage

Sinn Féin will support and work for an all-Ireland approach to identifying, targeting and redressing disadvantage in education. In particular, Sinn Féin advocates significantly increased funding for education in areas of greatest disadvantage, and focused intervention at the earliest possible stage.

The Irish language

Sinn Féin will support and work for increased availability and better resourcing of Irish-medium education and for significantly strengthened recognition of the essential place of the Irish language in an Irish education system.

Towards an education system for the island of Ireland



Sinn Féin will support and work for an all-Ireland education system. We believe that the system of education is central to that transformation of society. To that end, Sinn Féin will campaign for all-Ireland implementation of the Right to Education from Early Years to 18, and harmonisation of the two systems based on principles of equality and inclusion.

Such harmonisation necessitates increased sharing of resources and expertise. It also requires significantly greater ease of contact and mobility between and among institutions, partners and personnel involved in education.

Priorities into practice — What Sinn Féin campaigns for

Early Years

Universally available, publicly-funded early childhood education with appropriate resources to facilitate on-site work with parents and accommodate the earliest and most effective detection of Special Educational Needs.

Primary level

Primary schools that are centred in the community, reflective of the community, that share information and expertise with local nursery schools and post-primary schools, and have the most generous possible pupil-teacher ratio to facilitate development and learning at this crucial stage.

Post-primary level All-ability

Substantially increased support for pupils and teachers in second-level (11-18) schools with adequate resources to encourage team work, the sharing of information and experience, greater

collaboration within and between post-primary schools, their feeder primary schools and local third-level institutions.

Third-level and further and higher education

Education and training to be an entitlement for all, made possible by adequate grant-aid and support mechanisms, and the provision of focused access programmes for schools that currently have a low take-up of third-level places.

Adult and community education

An all-Ireland adult literacy campaign with a clear objective of reducing adult functional illiteracy to under 10 per cent within four years, and a system of adult and community education that reflects and meets the diverse needs and interests of adult learners.

Youth provision

Promotion of a young-person-centred approach and a youth service that can genuinely engage all young people through innovative and diverse programmes of informal learning.

Irish-language/Irish-medium

Improved provision of naíscoileanna (naíonra) where there is a demand, with viability criteria that realistically reflect the needs of local communities. An increase in the number of Irish-medium teacher training places.

Curriculum

The development of a broad and balanced curriculum that addresses the needs of the whole child, recognises the diversity of learning abilities and intelligences among young people, and develops the interests of learners in the world around them together with a culture of human rights.

Special needs education

Appropriate provision of supports within mainstream classrooms for children with a learning disability, together with a joint departmental and governmental approach to the early detection and remediation of special educational needs

Tackling disadvantage

The implementation of integrated responses to the needs of students who are educationally disadvantaged and at risk of under-achievement in school. This is to be based on a joined-up approach by schools, parents, local community organisations and agencies and the statutory sector.



One Healthcare system for the Island

Sláinte

Health



Ending inequality in healthcare

Sinn Féin embraced the challenge of taking control of a health service in the North that was suffering from the sustained under-funding to the tune of £190 million a year and a policy drift that was destroying local hospital services.

Bairbre de Brún ended compulsory market testing and initiated a far-reaching evaluation of every aspect of the health service in the North, from ambulances to acute hospital services to mental health, cancer services and children's services.

The results have laid the foundations for the transformation of the health services in the North. Under Bairbre de Brún, Sinn Féin's health strategy has seen real improvements in healthcare through:-

Upgrading services

- a) £58 million to develop a new regional cancer centre in Belfast;
- b) £17.6 million to upgrade Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry;
- c) £15 million for over 100 additional beds in the Mater, Craigavon and Antrim Hospitals;
- d) £4 million for two new operating theatres in Musgrave Park Hospital in Belfast;
- e) £10 million to bring forward the essential redevelopment of the Ulster Hospital;
- f) £8m for a new local medium-secure unit at Knockbracken Healthcare Park.

Upgrading vital equipment

- a) Replacing outdated diagnostic imaging equipment at the Erne, Lagan Valley, Royal Victoria and Tyrone County Hospitals with modern equipment;
- b) A new CT scanner at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children;

- c) A new Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) service at Altnagelvin Hospital;
- d) A new multi-slice CT Scanner at Belvoir Park Hospital and additional MRI scanners;
- e) Upgrading the CT scanner at Antrim Area Hospital;
- f) A new CT scanner at Daisy Hill Hospital in Newry;
- g) The launch of the world's largest mobile blood donation unit;
- h) Two information and communication projects to modernise computer systems in GP practices, leading to the direct booking of hospital services.

Investment in services

- a) £11 million invested in the development of two new units in Muckamore, and the complete replacement of Stradreagh in Derry with state-of-the-art facilities, including a 43-bed in-patient treatment and assessment unit, a 20-place Challenging Behaviour Unit and a 5-place Rehabilitation Unit;
- e) £2.66 million to provide a new purpose-built 18-bed rehabilitation unit at Altnagelvin Hospital for young people with physical disabilities;
- f) £3.53 million to upgrade the acute admissions unit and the interim rehabilitation and challenging behaviour service at Holywell;
- g) Reducing care costs for people who pay for their care in nursing homes;
- h) Providing an additional 1,000 new community care packages;
- i) A new publicly-funded fertility service.

Investment in the Ambulance Service

- a) Over £14 million spent to make progress on the Ambulance Strategic Plan;
- b) More than 150 ambulances purchased since 1998/99, replacing two-thirds of the fleet;
- c) A further £16.2 million secured to replace 115 vehicles, a further additional 20 vehicles, a centralised control centre, new medical equipment, estate upgrade and additional ambulance locations.

Investment in cancer services

- a) A new local chemotherapy unit, providing an integrated service for oncology patients in a unit with its own dedicated staff with accommodation for 10 patients and support accommodation for patients and relatives at Antrim Hospital;
- b) A new £4 million day hospital and out-patient suite for cancer patients as part of the first phase of the development of a regional cancer centre at the Belfast City Hospital site;
- c) Developing a standard electronic patient record system for the four regional Cancer Units.

Investment in childcare provision

- a) Major improvements in residential childcare provision;

- b) An additional 77 places in residential children's homes;
- c) 70 places to replace below-standard accommodation;
- d) The building of 22 new children's homes at a cost of £8.5m, increasing total provision from 332 to 409.

Transforming primary health care

- a) The development of new 15 new Local Health and Social Care Groups
- b) A new £2.7 million integrated Primary Health and Social Care Centre in Kilkeel
- c) £5.8 million to develop two Health and Well-being Centres in North Belfast and the upgrading of Everton complex to a co-ordinated 'one-stop shop' model with a full range of health and community services being delivered from four Health and Well-being Centres strategically sited across North and West Belfast.

All-Ireland developments

In government, Health Minister Bairbre de Brún and Sinn Féin have led the way in the development of all-Ireland co-operation in healthcare in:-

- Cancer research;
- Accident and emergency services;
- The use of high-technology equipment;



- Emergency planning;
- Health promotion.

Preventative healthcare — Increasing life expectancy

- Coronary Heart Disease in the North is at its lowest level for 25 years;
- The Six Counties now has the highest survival rates for breast cancer of anywhere in Europe;
- £1 million a year to help smokers quit;
- £1 million for the Physical Activity Action Plan;
- Food and nutrition — an 80-school pilot scheme of providing free fruit to children;
- Alcohol and drug misuse — since 1999, over £4.5 million for 36 projects and £2 million to tackle drug and alcohol misuse in the community for 41 projects;
- Sexual health — £250,000 to support 32 teenage pregnancy projects.

Working with the community

- a) Sure Start has been one of the greatest successes of the Sinn Féin approach to public health. Thousands of young children now benefit from targeted action to enable them to make the best start possible;
- b) Local communities have been given a key role to play in developing the Investing for Health strategy, which aims to reduce health inequalities and improve the health for all and cuts across all departments;
- c) Almost 30 different community projects received grants to help improve the health and well-being of people in their areas as part of £2.5 million Investing for Healthier Communities Grants Programme;
- d) Over £15 million for projects and innovative schemes supporting children in need and youth at risk.

Challenges ahead

There are many challenges ahead and a fundamental problem which remains to be overcome is under-investment in health and social services. No half-measures or short-cuts will put it right. The problems facing our health services require a substantial injection of resources.

Sinn Féin's three main priorities central to our vision for the future are:-

- 1) An all-Ireland health service;
- 2) The public health agenda;
- 3) Transforming health services.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003-2008

All-Ireland co-operation

- a) The development of a cross-border network of hospital services;
- b) Greater co-ordination in the provision of primary care services;
- c) The setting up of the proposed Regional Authority under the joint control of Health Departments — North and South;
- d) The expansion of the cross border Co-operation and Working Together model of working across borders;
- e) The reform of accreditation procedures to allow for the free movement of staff throughout the island;
- f) The establishment of joint training strategies for healthcare workers;
- g) The harmonisation of child protection policies and the establishment of a common sex offenders register;
- h) The establishment of cross-border initiatives in relation to drugs awareness;
- i) The gathering and collating of health statistics;
- j) The development of a dedicated all-Ireland service for young people with arthritis.

Public health agenda

- a) A total ban on tobacco advertising and further restrictions on smoking in public areas;
- b) Increased funding for services to help people quit smoking and an increase of the age limit to 18 years for the purchase of tobacco;
- c) The extension of free fruit to all primary-school children;
- d) Major restrictions on the advertising of unhealthy foods targeting children;
- e) A ban on alcohol advertising and a ban on the sponsorship of sporting events by alcohol companies;
- f) Action from every area of government to tackle inequality and poverty.

Transforming our hospital services

The reform of healthcare structures is essential and long overdue. Sinn Féin proposed an end to the confusing layers of health bureaucracy and an immediate scrapping of the four Health Boards with the creation of a single strategic body to co-ordinate services and workforce planning. Bairbre de Brún initiated the end of the internal market by setting up Local Health and Social Care Groups that will provide the basis for new structures as we move away from the purchaser models.

Future healthcare structures should not be confined by the border but should be configured to reflect the needs of communities.

The modernisation of services will cost £1.2 billion over a ten-year period. This sum needs to be made available in full and from the public purse rather than relying on public-private partnerships, which will result in future service cutbacks to meet loan repayments and limit future service development.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 -2008

- a) An immediate and significant increase in resources for the health service;
- b) The amalgamation of Belfast City Hospital with the Royal Group of Hospitals;
- c) Securing sustainable acute services in the Mater Hospital;
- d) The re-balancing of services West of the Bann;
- e) The decision of British direct-rule Health Minister Des Browne to locate almost all



acute hospital services West of the Bann on the Erne site has seriously diluted the balanced package of hospital services for the area initially proposed by Bairbre de Brún;

f) The people of County Tyrone and South Derry have a right to proper access to acute services. Sinn Féin is proposing a new build acute service hospital on a green field site and convenient to the three existing hospitals. While this is our preferred option consideration should also be given to the provision of acute services at an existing hospital in the area or a combination of hospitals in the area. In the interim period, it is important that existing services should be maintained and developed. We are therefore calling for:

- The maintenance of extant and emergency services;
- The maintenance of extant maternity facilities;
- The re-opening of operating suites in Dungannon for protective elective surgery and the siting of a midwife-led maternity unit in the Tyrone County Hospital;

g) Build upon Minister de Brún's work in relation to the sexual health of young people by further investment in appropriate projects, including those run by voluntary organisations. Also to invest in genito-urinary medicine to ensure an efficient and accessible response to the growing threat of STDs;

h) The development of a diabetes strategy constructed to reflect the underlying principles for diabetes services identified the report of the Taskforce on Diabetes, including the establishment of an implementation group.

i) The development of an arthritis strategy aimed at ensuring that people with arthritis have the care, treatment and support

required to live positive and productive lives.

Making the all-Ireland economy a reality

An Geilleagar

Economy



Sinn Féin's vision for a just economy

Sinn Féin wants to build an all-Ireland economy where everyone can have a dignified and productive working life, a fair income and a good quality of life.

We want to see the transformation of the war economy in the North of Ireland and the elimination of the economic distortions created by conflict, partition, under investment and policies of discrimination.

We want to see the positive redistribution of resources to eradicate economic marginalisation and social exclusion by investing in the health service, education, housing, infrastructure, pensions and child welfare.

Securing economic development and facilitating business growth is a vital priority.

An all-Ireland economic growth and development strategy is needed to tackle declining manufacturing industries and agriculture, and to foster indigenous industry and reduce Ireland's over-arching dependence on a few large foreign direct investment companies which are in process of shifting their economic base away from Ireland's shores to cheaper labour sources in Eastern Europe and the Far East.

A human-rights-based economy must realise the human right to productive and well-remunerated employment for all. Economic strategic planning to address rising unemployment levels across an all-Ireland economy, and the steady collapse of manufacturing capacity in the Six Counties are priorities for Sinn Féin.

Infrastructure and investment must be based on the guarantee of universal access — whether it is

in energy, roads, public transport, information and telecommunications or social, health and educational resources and facilities.

Making the all-Ireland economy a reality

Through the Assembly, the Dáil and the all-Ireland bodies, Sinn Féin has successfully promoted economic development in an all-Ireland context. Sinn Féin supports:-

- The development of an all-Ireland economy with one tax regime, one currency and economic strategies that benefit the island as a whole, particularly SMEs and indigenous industry;
- The expansion of the number of areas of co-operation under the All-Ireland Ministerial Council with all-Ireland bodies created for agriculture, education, health, energy, the social economy, transport and telecommunications to harmonise policy development and decision-making;
- All-Ireland infrastructural development strategies, particularly in roads, rail, power and telecommunications;
- One agency to deal with all the indigenous businesses in Ireland. A single development agency to end separate and competing development strategies;
- The integration of the workings of DETI and DETE to harmonise employment and investment strategies.

InterTrade Ireland

- InterTrade Ireland (ITI) is a key all-Ireland implementation body running 40 separate projects on the island. In bringing together the IDA, Shannon Development and Invest NI to create the new Agency Forum to discuss strategies for the island as a whole ITI has begun to realise the potential of economic thinking on an all-Ireland basis;

- Sinn Féin wants to build on these small steps by working towards the expansion of InterTradeIreland to consolidate this progress, to end the wasteful duplication of activities and competition between agencies;
- The adoption of a public enterprise strategy which will develop public sector entrepreneurship enabling the provision and expansion of public sector services and provision

Challenging failed economic strategies

Despite many advances in recent years, serious structural weaknesses and significant deprivation continue.

Persistent unemployment blackspots remain. The Six-County economy is heavily dependent on the low-wage economy and public sector employment. Inward investment is at a ten-year low, nearly 4,000 manufacturing jobs were lost last year alone and manufacturing employment has fallen below 100,000 for the first time. Sinn Féin wants:-

- Creation of a mixed economy, the development of a more diverse economic base with particular emphasis on indigenous industry and SMEs and the social economy;
- Research and Development support for Small and Medium Enterprises and community

enterprise businesses;

- Inward investment policies combined with social responsibility obligations to ensure that large scale industries and global companies help drive the economy as a whole and develop infrastructure;
- The promotion of all-Ireland sectoral clustering to ensure benefits arising from an all-Ireland scale are fully exploited;
- The development of mutually beneficial bilateral economic ties with developing countries.

A genuine peace dividend

- Sinn Féin is calling for resources earmarked for maintaining the British war machine in Ireland such as expenditure on military installations, security operations, policing and prisons to be transferred for special job creation measures in areas of high unemployment, for supporting the social economy and in rebuilding communities damaged by years of conflict. The total budget for the MoD and NIO (PSNI) is £1.4 billion.

Tackling the British Treasury

Sinn Féin successfully campaigned to ensure the Programme for Government had an agreed alternative to the flawed Barnett Formula for the



block grant allocation of financial resources.

- We are calling for a new mechanism for calculating the Block grant that takes these factors into account and ensures the allocation of funding on the basis of need and a fairer distribution of resources.

Greater economic sovereignty

Sinn Féin wants to see the introduction of an unrestricted borrowing facility as opposed to the Reform and Reinvestment Initiative (RRI). The RRI is no substitute for a peace dividend as it must be repaid through rates increases and the imposition of water charges, neither of which deal with the core problem of the Barnett Formula or the legacy of under investment in the Six Counties.

- Sinn Féin supports the introduction of tax varying powers within the Six Counties to develop and target tax incentives towards areas of high unemployment, encouraging small businesses and other specific sectors such as social economy initiatives;
- Sinn Féin calls for the harmonisation of tax rates across Ireland at a progressive level adequate to sustain equity and enforcement to ensure compliance by all our citizens;
- Sinn Féin supports greater control over the setting of our objectives and goals for public service expenditure and investment

Privatisation and Private Finance Initiatives

PFI/PPP are not a good deal, either financially or in terms of public ownership and control of public assets.

The privatisation agenda within the Six Counties has its origins with an Executive, where Sinn Féin was a minority, who failed to learn the lessons of being locked into poor contracts as witnessed by the high energy costs resulting from the privatisation of electricity.

Sinn Féin consistently argued, both within and outside the Executive that all options for public finance be fully considered. While there was agreement in principle the Executive refused to adopt this policy in practice. Sinn Féin is calling for:-

- An adequately financed peace dividend, tax varying powers, economic sovereignty, unrestricted borrowing and other mechanisms to raise money for investment expenditure to negate the wholesale reliance on private finance and the consequential privatisation agenda.

Jobs and equality

Through a mixture of unionist resistance and the British Government's failure to implement key areas of the Agreement Catholics are still twice as likely to be unemployed as their Protestant counterparts. Monitoring data also show that Catholics are underrepresented in both the public and private sectors.

- Sinn Féin has and will continue to make the issue of equality central to the Agreement and central to ongoing negotiations;
- Proper research and monitoring data must be put in place to ensure an outcome of fair participation in the workforce.

Rebalancing economic development

There is a significant East-West prosperity gap within the Six Counties that is replicated on the wider all-Ireland basis. There is an imperative to rebalance economic development and distribute economic opportunities and resources fairly.

- Sinn Féin supports the development of an integrated regional development strategy to redress the legacy of neglect and under investment that has left the North-West an economically neglected and peripheral region

of Ireland.

Poverty and inequality

The new Targeting Social Need initiative has neither defined poverty nor set proper targets for its eradication. With more than 25 per cent of Six-County households living in poverty and deprivation higher in nationalist communities, we need to address the barriers that create and reinforce poverty, particularly in relation to vulnerable sections of society, the elderly, the sick and disabled, children and young people and lone parents.

- Sinn Féin is committed to focusing and mainstreaming all aspects of government policy within the equality agenda, including setting real goals and timetables to eradicate poverty and reduce the differentials in poverty, low income and unemployment across the board;
- Fuel poverty — the North of Ireland has the highest energy costs in Europe. 203,000 (33 per cent) households are fuel poor. Young children, the sick, the elderly and lone parents are particularly vulnerable. A cross departmental Ministerial Task Force must be established immediately to ensure full commitment to eradicating fuel poverty across all government departments and agencies to ensure that companies fulfil their social responsibility obligations.

- Child poverty — 37 per cent of children in the North of Ireland live in poverty. This is unacceptable. Real goals and timetables must be set to eradicate child poverty. NTSN spending needs to be ring-fenced with meaningful and enforceable targets

Gender budgeting

Economic and fiscal planning has traditionally failed to assess the impact of economic measures upon women. Women are at greater risk of poverty than men. This inequality can only begin to be tackled if the gendered effects of government economic measures are taken into account. Sinn Féin will press for gender budgeting to become part of the process of economic planning.

Sinn Féin's Priorities for 2003 - 2008

More support for small businesses

We need greater investment in and expert guidance for small business ideas at the embryonic stage. While such businesses may generate small profits they can create significant



local employment, this must be fully recognised and supported. The current DETI plan to encourage 6,000 new business start-ups over the next three years is insufficient. Sinn Féin believes that a much more ambitious start-up programme is required. Furthermore it needs to recognize the contribution and potential of SMEs in the social economy and co-operative sector

Developing new local brands

With the right guidance and support small businesses that may themselves be unable to enter export markets, could through joint ventures develop, produce and market products outside Ireland. There is huge potential for this to be done in a non-exploitative and mutually-beneficial manner through bilateral agreements.

Match funding for local business

Industrial development agencies should provide the same level of support for indigenous business as is currently provided to larger inward investment projects.

Providing long-term support

Long-term stability is more desirable than short-term 'boom and bust' approaches and indigenous businesses require long-term support. This investment should be focused on developing infrastructure and enhancing skills and technological capacity of our labour force, in which we have so marked a comparative advantage Ireland wide.

Supporting the social economy

Many communities have ideas that can be developed to create socially valuable local businesses and micro enterprises. This is a key part of the modern economy and needs active support. Social economy is not just a means to

redress disadvantage, but it is a key pillar of the modern economy, and it requires proactive financial and advisory support from government.

Trade union recognition

Sinn Féin will make grants and assistance to businesses conditional on the acceptance of the right to trade union membership and representation.

All grants should be recoverable where businesses close operations in Ireland inappropriately.

Funding a return to education

Sinn Féin wants to see a commitment to retraining and education and support for business start-ups in areas hit by job losses.

Support for agricultural diversification

Funding should be made available to farmers wanting to diversify, particularly to support young farmers remaining on the land, and create rural jobs.

The rates review

The current system of valuations is outdated and the rates system leads to an inequitable distribution of rates payments that impact disproportionately on areas where deprivation levels are highest. We call for rateable valuation to be based on an up-to-date property valuation as opposed to a rental basis.

Insurance costs

High insurance costs are damaging SMEs. In some cases, businesses are unable to reinsure and there are gaps appearing in the ability to secure public liability cover. These issues need to be urgently addressed. If the insurance industry is unable to self regulate then there must by regulation introduced with strong guidelines on

premiums policy and monitoring of increases. Sinn Féin calls for research into the viability of a state-run insurance cover.

Industrial de-rating and vacant property rating

Ending industrial de-rating and the introduction of vacant property rating for non-domestic property must include a proper reflection of how best we can support our local businesses and their vital role in the local economy. The objective should not be to wipe out support for our local manufacturing base or to introduce taxation mechanisms that mirror those that have existed in England and Wales.

The removal of industrial de-rating should create opportunities to bring forward proposals for a relief scheme for all small businesses and not just those concerned with manufacturing. Small firms require hands-on support in terms of finance and back up. Rates bills are the big issue for small business.

The Vacant Property Rate needs greater consideration and a period of extended consultation is required. Twelve weeks is insufficient. It should be linked to an incentive programme for regeneration and an appeals mechanism for those who wish to rent their

property but who cannot find a tenant. However, those who are land banking in vital town areas need to be pressed into developing it.

Equality in the workforce

Sinn Féin will continue to work for equal representation in the workplace. The Equality and Human Rights Commissions have a central role in fulfilling obligations to promote equality and human rights throughout the public and private sectors. We will continue to demand action to address failings within both commissions and to ensure that they are capable of efficiently, impartially and effectively carrying out their remit.

A track record to be proud of

Sinn Féin has consistently challenged the Barnett Formula and PFI through the Executive and through committees in the Assembly.

Through the Assembly Finance and Personnel Committee, your Sinn Féin representatives, Francie Molloy and Alex Maskey, have promoted resource allocation and investment based on social need, developed the all-Ireland perspective (particularly on the rates review) and put forward alternatives to PFI.

Through the Assembly ETI Committee, your Sinn Féin representatives, Pat Doherty MP and



Dr Dara O'Hagan, have played an active role in shaping the development policies of the Six Counties, scrutinising and criticising the top-down approach of Strategy 2010 for continuing the failed policies of the past and in initiating far ranging inquiries into Strategy 2010, Tourism and Energy.

Gerry Adams MP has led the way in securing a task force to address the jobs crisis within West Belfast.

Sinn Féin has consistently highlighted the need for an all-Ireland solution to the structural discrimination against the West and North West. We were instrumental with the restructuring of the IDA, NITB, IRTU and LEDU into a single economic development Agency Invest NI. While this fell short of what republicans were demanding it is clear that there have been benefits arising from consolidation

Sinn Féin Sligo Mayor Seán McManus has hosted a major economic conference, bringing together for the first time all of the chairpersons and mayor of the councils and corporation of the 18 north-western councils.

Through your Sinn Féin representative on the Assembly Regional Development Committee, Pat McNamee, Sinn Féin has attacked the DRD over its failure to address the problems of social exclusion and unequal development through policies on transportation, spatial development and physical planning. Sinn Féin has been particularly critical of key DRD strategy documents which reinforced past patterns of inequality and unequal development.

**Harmonising infrastructure
on the island is essential**

Forbairt na Reigiún



Regional development

For Sinn Féin, regional development has two goals: one economic and the other social. Through policy on roads, transport, water services and alternative energies we are able to promote economic activity and enhance quality of life.

Building an alternative

- Sinn Féin has promoted the redistribution of economic activity throughout the country and in cases away from the major metropolitan areas or towards areas of high social need;
- Sinn Féin has always supported community based public transport systems such as the 'Black Taxis' in Belfast and Derry. We also support community based rural flexible transport initiatives aimed at marginalised groups and isolated townlands;
- Sinn Féin has been at the forefront of redeveloping 'Brown Field' former industrial sites for economic and social benefit in areas of social need. For years we have promoted the re-use of historic facilities such as Conway Mill in Belfast and the Gasyard in Derry;
- We have been at the forefront of campaigns to improve transport and regional infrastructure and opposed the misdirected DRD 'Regional Transportation Strategy';
- Sinn Féin has initiated waste management targets and recycling projects at district council level for many years;
- We have promoted alternative energy use such as hydro-electricity or wind farming while working at district council level and we have consistently opposed the British nuclear power industry on the grounds of safety and waste management.

Ending inequality

Under the DUP ministers, the major Northern initiatives in regional development have been the

formulation of 'Shaping our Future' and the 'Regional Transportation Strategy'. Sinn Féin believes that vital opportunities have been lost and that social exclusion and inequality have not been adequately addressed. Integrative investment in the transportation infrastructure have been delayed considerably under DUP ministers. Furthermore the regional development plans produced were originally blind to the presence of the 26 Counties. Sinn Féin has highlighted and begun to redress this situation.

Regional development and spatial planning has a fundamental contribution to make to the equality agenda as outlined in the Good Friday Agreement and provide a basis for tackling spatial/geographic inequalities in employment opportunities.

In basic terms, we need better regional infrastructure to increase economic activity in areas of high unemployment such as Strabane, Derry, West Belfast, Mid-Ulster and elsewhere.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008 Transport

- Sinn Féin is committed to harmonising transport policy across the island. We will also initiate the co-ordination of roads agencies, North and South; roads development strategies; traffic signage and notation;
- Sinn Féin will overhaul the 'Regional Transportation Strategy' which proposes to leave Fermanagh, Tyrone and South Armagh with little or no public transport and abandoned the North-West Transportation Strategy;
- Sinn Féin will prioritise investment in the Key Transport Corridors of Larne-Belfast-Newry-Dublin-Waterford; Belfast-Derry; Waterford-

Cork-Limerick-Galway-Sligo-Letterkenny-Derry; Derry-Dublin; Galway/Sligo-Dublin; Limerick/Cork- Dublin;

- The Northern regional transport routes of Coleraine-Cookstown-Dungannon-Armagh;Dungannon-Aughnacloy-Monaghan;Cookstown-Omagh-Donegal-Sligo-Enniskillen-Cavan will also be enhanced.

Transport taxation

Sinn Féin will work for the harmonisation of Irish fuel taxes to prevent the cycle of boom and bust on either side of the border associated with filling stations, etc. Sinn Féin wants the control of key elements of taxation devolved to the Six-County Assembly.

Investing in public transport

- We support the use of public transport and the maintenance of a quality railway. Sinn Féin will invest in the existing rail network, and look at imaginative additions to the existing infrastructure, such as rail terminals at the International Airport (Aldergrove), Derry Airport and Belfast and Derry Harbours (Freight), all of which are close to the existing main lines;
- The DUP ministers had proposed to only invest in the rail lines south of Ballymoney, which basically abandons the Portrush and Derry lines in the long-term. We will end

this policy and seek to reduce journey times and increase quality of service. The current single-track railway provision is inadequate and requires major capital investment if any attempt to promote the railway as a source of public transport is to be successful. We will continue to support the integration of bus and rail timetables, etc.

- Sinn Féin will continue to support the installation of Quality Bus Corridors on the main arterial routes in Belfast. We will initiate similar routes in Derry and other urban centres;
- Sinn Féin supports community-based public transport systems such as the 'Black Taxis' in Belfast and Derry. We will support community based rural flexible transport initiatives aimed at marginalised groups and isolated townlands.

Alternative energy

- The effects of global climate change should inform spatial planning and the DRD has a statutory role in promoting alternative energy use. We will press for the implementation of alternative energy strategies and targets on an all-Ireland basis. Sinn Féin supports the continued development of discreet hill-top wind-farms. We will initiate programmes to



develop energy from coastal wave power and ensure that there is continued support for biomass, solar and heat-pump technology through initiatives such as 'Clear Skies'.

Water and drainage

- The drainage infrastructure, much of which dates from the Industrial Revolution, requires a thorough overhaul and a full analysis of existing provision should be undertaken. Sinn Féin will invest in our inadequate water and sewage infrastructure, which is in breach of various European guidelines;
- Sinn Féin opposes the introduction of water charges, which are little more than a form of double taxation;
- We will look to re-use waste and mainstream the pilot projects being undertaken into bio-mass energy, methane energy, fertiliser production and similar technology that makes use of our waste.

'Brown Field' sites

- Sinn Féin has been at the forefront of redeveloping 'Brown Field' former industrial sites for economic and social benefit in areas of social need. The double benefit of creating economic activity and cleaning contaminated sites is something that should be encouraged.

Development control

- The full planning of community infrastructure and diversity of uses needs to be monitored to prevent the situation whereby vast areas of the city centre have only commercial development and we have over-intensity of residential development with inadequate economic and social infrastructure;
- Local environmental impact of development needs to be carefully considered and it is essential that local consultations takes place;
- Economic impact studies should be undertaken in relation to new multi-national

retail proposals in order to assess potential affects on the existing market, in particular on local indigenous and community-based commercial outlets.

- In many areas, apartment developments have appeared in recent years. Sinn Féin supports the integration of housing types rather than single-type developments.
- In scenic coastal areas and other small towns new developments have priced local people out of the housing market. We will initiate legislation to ensure a better mix of development so as to respond to all local needs and not solely developers' profit.
- All aspects of social, economic, recreational, environmental and cultural activities and development opportunities should be assessed and agreed from the outset in all areas of new large-scale developments. This should not be done in the zoned approach (which has led to the problems associated with Craigavon, etc). but should be local, defined and small scale. These types of integrated community 'villages' will serve better the requirements of society at large.

Regional tourism

- Sustainable tourism development needs to involve close community consultation and participation. The focus must be to build on existing all-Ireland initiatives and institutional links, but there is also scope for collaboration with Scotland and Wales;
- The potential for tourism in cities is obviously considerable, playing on the historical significance of cities like Armagh, but also on the vitality of local cultural festivals such as Féile an Phobail in Belfast, Halloween in Derry, etc;
- The contribution which cultural businesses can make to economic development in areas of high unemployment needs to be recognised. Outside the cities, the tourism

circuit in Ireland tends to concentrate on the West Coast, linking West Cork, Killarney, Clare, Galway, Mayo and Donegal. The natural extension to this route is into traditional tourist areas like Fermanagh and the North Coast;

- Tourism is already promoted on an all-Ireland basis. A tourism infrastructure, with common objectives, needs to be clearly established.

Rural areas

- Sinn Féin is opposed to the 'City State' mindset that has driven most of the Belfast-centred investment over many decades and continues to exist in the Roads Service and Water Service;
- We will promote rural economic diversity and address the immediate and longer-term crisis of agriculture and the associated issues of sustainability of rural communities. Alternative energy, agricultural diversification and tourism, if developed in a coherent manner, all have a valuable contribution to make towards creating viable rural economies;
- The use of private cars is more essential outside urban areas and any attempt to curb car use should recognise the 'quality of life' implications for rural communities. We encourage the promotion and increasing use of rural transport projects designed to reduce isolation.

Belfast

- In Belfast we support more investment in public transport including community-based transport such as the 'Black Taxis'. We will extend the Quality Bus Corridors into the north and west of the city. We want to see a complete overhaul of the antiquated public drainage system.
- Our party is concerned that the plan to streamline the Westlink by means of flyovers has not been properly debated within the city and the adjacent communities which will be most affected. Sinn Féin will ensure that these measures are not imposed without proper consultation.
- Sinn Féin, the Assembly Committee and Belfast City Council are all opposed to the Port of Belfast privatisation plan. We support the extension of the existing Trust's powers.

Derry

- The main Derry-Dublin road is used as a local distributor for agricultural traffic, etc, which conflicts with the Euro-route status of the road south of the border. The Derry-Belfast road consists of a series of bottlenecks without any separation of local and regional traffic beyond the termination of the M2/M22 motorway at Randalstown. We will initiate a phased programme to establish a dual



carriageway/motorway from Derry to Belfast and on the Derry-Dublin Road.

- Sinn Féin promotes a partnership approach to the marketing and management of both City of Derry Airport and the Harbour involving statutory and private sectors.

Making it happen

- Sinn Féin is committed to ensuring that the 26-County 'National Development Plan' and the Six-County 'Shaping our Future' are integrated and implemented together. We also support the inclusion of some Roads Service and Water Service functions in the re-organisation of local government;
- Sinn Féin will fully engage in government at Six-County, 26-County and at All-Ireland Ministerial Council level. It is this level of engagement that will lead to joined-up-government and the ability to deliver on creative responses to the transport, waste and energy issues outlined in our manifesto;
- We are committed to the restoration of full self-government to the Irish people. The devolution of key taxation powers is critical to proper and equal regional economic development. We will fight for this initial step to be taken as soon as possible.

Breaking the cycle

Athfhorbairt tuaithe

**Agriculture and
Rural Development**



Breaking the cycle

The agriculture industry and rural life in Ireland have been damaged by government, the EU and world economic policies. It is a national disaster that requires an urgent all-Ireland response.

Sinn Féin is committed to keeping farming families on the land and ensuring a good quality of life for everyone living in rural communities. We support agricultural diversification in mixed and organic farming as well as off-farm employment, training and developing rural communities. We believe that agriculture in Ireland can be sustainable with an all-Ireland agricultural policy.

Sinn Féin wants to see viable rural communities with access to all public services, a strong community infrastructure and a sustainable future. Sinn Féin has put the need for a more coordinated and coherent strategy for the agriculture and fishing industries and sustaining rural communities, developed on an all-Ireland basis, high on the political agenda in the Assembly, Executive and the Oireachtas.

Fishing communities in decline

Irish fishing is suffering as a result of continued cuts in fishing quotas. There is insufficient support to allow fishermen to leave the industry and little incentive for new entrants. The fishing boat decommissioning scheme has not solved the difficulties facing fishing communities.

Farming in crisis

The number of people employed in agriculture has declined rapidly. And while the average farm size is above the EU average the reality is that 88 per cent of farms are small or very small — seven out of ten are in less favoured areas.

Farm incomes plummet

Irish farms are largely family businesses. There is little capacity for structural change, even in the face of enormous economic pressures.

Technological advances have increased production, exchange rates have hit farmers hard and farm incomes have plummeted to the lowest levels for 10 years. Consumer confidence in agriculture is at an all-time low as is the unit price of most farming produce sold at the farmgate.

Yet the current approach to food production is not without its hidden costs as BSE and Foot and Mouth has shown us. The implication of rising oil prices on food transport costs over the next two decades remain uncalculated.

Many in the farming sector are now more dependent on off-farm employment or on EU transfer payments. And with the decline of farming, we have seen the erosion of other cornerstones of rural communities such as schools and post offices.

Both agriculture and rural development policy must become more integrated with other agencies and departments.

We have consistently highlighted the increasing levels of animal diseases such as brucellosis and TB particularly in border counties where British Army patrols going across farms are spreading disease. We have demanded tougher action that operates across Ireland.

CAP reform

Sinn Féin has led the way in Ireland in arguing that full decoupling is probably the best way to provide a future for Irish farming in the context of major CAP reform. Full decoupling of all EU farm payments will enable farmers to move away from the current system and plan production on

the basis of demand. This should lead to higher quality and have beneficial effects on farm incomes. We therefore welcome the decision by Irish Agriculture Minister Joe Walsh to back full decoupling but this decision must be followed by:-

- Negotiations at the earliest opportunity to ensure that it is implemented within a single all-Ireland framework;
- A major shift away from the red tape and paper work that has created so many problems for the farming community.

Any failure to develop the single all-Ireland framework for decoupling could prove to be very damaging. The artificial border can no longer be used to create winners and losers within the farming community.

Sinn Féin is also calling for:-

- Immediate talks between the two ministers and the inclusion of all the all-Ireland stakeholders within the farming community on the island of Ireland;
- The framing of a radical, new, long-term strategy for Irish farming, a key element of which is the promotion of higher quality - higher value added production;
- The future of Irish farming to be planned on an all-Ireland basis with close co-operation between the two departments, North and South.

A GM-free Ireland

The British Government's own GM crop trials throw serious doubt on any decision to introduce commercial GM crops into Ireland. There are too many unanswered questions, not least the findings that GM crops have an adverse impact on levels of bio-diversity in the vicinity of GM crops.

Many have questioned the validity of these farm-scale trials, the largest anywhere in the world to date. There is also new evidence that contamination cannot be controlled with the British Government announcement that GM oilseed rape had cross-pollinated with non-GM rape at a distance of over 16 miles.

Sinn Féin is totally opposed to the introduction of GM food and crops. This is an issue that will impact on Ireland's clean green farming image and has implications for farmers across the island of Ireland.

We see no environmental, economic, nutritional or consumer benefits from GM or improvements for Third World countries in Genetic Modification. The only beneficiaries from GM will be companies who want to own the patent on a sizeable proportion of the world's food.



A New Deal for Rural Ireland

Sinn Féin

Since legislation on the regulation of genetically modified food and feed was passed by the European Parliament, the European Union has rolled over to the threats of the US and the profit-hungry GM companies.

- Sinn Féin believes that across the island we need one policy on this — a GM-free Ireland — because cross-contamination of hybrid plants and crops could contaminate the whole island.

Speaking out for rural communities

In the Assembly Sinn Féin has asked serious questions about price fixing and cartels operated by processors and retailers. We have challenged red tape and argued for a definitive split with a British farming policy that has failed farmers in the North.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

- All-Ireland co-ordination of agriculture and rural development;
- Removal of 'UK' status from food exports from the North;
- Full decoupling of all EU farm payments;
- A long-term agricultural strategy based on high value added production;
- A return to genuine co-operativism in the processing sector;
- All-Ireland integration of the agri-food industry and agricultural services;
- The development of an all-Ireland agricultural body that can effectively:-
 - negotiate with the World Trade Organisation and Europe and mediate between EU policies and their impact on Irish farmers;
 - establish an all-Ireland food promotion agency;
 - support social infrastructure;
- disseminate latest technological and scientific research results and ideas;
- regulate food prices,
- sort out the problems of farm debt and
- facilitate integrated services to rural communities;
- Comparable all-Ireland statistical information on farming;
- An all-Ireland strategy to promote animal health and consumer confidence;
- The streamlining of all procedures for processing farm subsidies and financial support as part of a wider programme of cutting departmental red tape;
- Decentralisation of DARD central offices in tandem with a wider programme of decentralisation of offices;
- Strategies to ensure that farm families have a decent income and recognition of farm-family income as providing the most appropriate means of measuring income distribution;
- Compensation payments that are linked to farm income rather than production;
- Training in marketing skills for farm owners and full-time agricultural degrees to provide new entrants with another skill to assist them supplement farm income;
- Services to farm families, especially small farms, to assist them assess how to maximise family income through work on and off the farm;
- Liaise with other departments to ensure training programmes for those who wish to work off the farm;
- Practical early retirement schemes that address the problem of one farm trying to support two generations;
- Development of a food safety strategy;
- Response to the serious health costs crisis facing the agriculture and fishing with the establishment of an all-Ireland animal and plant health agreement;

- A strategy supporting the role of women in rural development and for the provision of proper childcare in rural areas to enable women to access training and employment;
- Sustainable agricultural, fisheries and forestry programmes that are environmentally sensitive.

Rural development

The future of farming is very uncertain and this has consequences for the future economic shape of not just our rural communities but also urban communities.

Sinn Féin recognises and supports people's right to live in rural areas. We are committed to keeping farming families on the land and ensuring a good quality of life for all those in rural communities.

Sinn Féin will begin by commissioning an all-Ireland Rural Green Paper, recognising the different needs of all those living and working in rural areas on the island.

A lot of rural development policy is driven by the Common Agricultural Policy which directed financial support towards securing economic and social cohesion.

Europe provided funding for programmes which encourage greater participation in making plans and programmes work. These programmes are

central to rural community networks yet many of these are pilot programmes, not guaranteed long-term funding.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

- A coherent strategy for rural economic development;
- An end to cutbacks affecting vital services in rural communities;
- Facilitation at a local level to assist farm families to apply to the Rural Development Programme;
- Ensuring reliable and robust statistical information exists which will inform rural development policies and that it is done on an all-Ireland basis;
- Secure long-term funding for development of rural community infrastructure;
- The transformation of existing short-term, pilot rural development initiatives into a mainstream programme for rural development;
- The lessons of the Leader Programmes to be integrated into a long-term national strategy. In particular the need for an integrated development strategy which includes farmers, local business, communities and their representative organisations;
- The creation of secure employment for people employed in rural development and



- community initiatives;
- Proper remuneration for people involved in rural community initiatives;
- Close links between these departments and co-ordinated programmes with the relevant all-Ireland implementation bodies.

Promoting language rights

Cultúir

Arts, Culture and
the Irish Language

12



Irish language, arts and culture

There is considerable potential for the development of arts, cultural and leisure sectors across Ireland. The all-Ireland nature of the Good Friday Agreement opens up previously untapped opportunities in these areas.

The cultural, sporting and artistic communities across the island can make their contribution to the economy as well as encouraging an inclusive society.

The Irish cultural experience has had a revival in recent years. The changing patterns of interaction, North and South, and on an international plane have served to reveal the uniqueness and richness of Irish society and its heritage.

More integrated, imaginative and innovative arts and culture policies have created the potential for opening up opportunities, including market potential, which could serve to continue to regenerate and reinvigorate Irish culture in general.

The sports, arts and culture sectors can also provide a means for developing our pluralistic and intercultural experiences as a forward-looking and confident people.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

Economic development

- a) Developing cultural and tourist industries in the context of economic regeneration. Ensuring that the unique heritage that exists on the island of Ireland is promoted worldwide. Matching the experience of those

continental administrations which dedicate one per cent of their governmental expenditure to cultural and artistic aspects of the economy;

- b) Focusing on the Irish heritage in the indigenous business and craft sectors. These sectors have enormous potential and should be recognised as small business networks;
- c) Increasing investment in community festivals, which have the potential to aid not only economic development but also social development and generating cultural awareness;
- d) Prioritising archaeological and ecclesiastical heritage as central to the regeneration of all-island Irish cultural industries.

Expanding all-Ireland co-operation

- a) Developing an all-island policy approach to arts and culture with co-ordinated investment in sporting activities;
- b) Encouraging the media to dedicate more time to Irish arts and culture. With the 26 Counties already accessing Northern TV and radio, the transmission systems of 26 County television and radio stations should be boosted to cover the North;
- c) Designating St Patrick's Day as an all-Ireland public holiday and day of national reconciliation;
- d) Promoting tourism internationally and presenting Ireland as an all-island destination with a single agency for tourists to liaise with.

Driving the equality agenda

- a) Developing an action plan and timetable to fully implement existing strategies to alleviate poverty throughout the island and placing equality legislation, North and South, at the heart of arts and culture policies;

- b) Mainstream funding has, in the past, clearly been allocated on a class biased and (in the North) sectarian manner, away from activities that reflect or promote Irish culture. The biased nature of funding should be confronted and redressed;

Sport

- a) Promoting Gaelic games and encouraging the Gaelic sports authorities and local authorities to invest in schools and 'centres of excellence' throughout the island;
- b) Establish an all-island soccer team that could not only encourage investment in the sport in Ireland but also break down the sectarian perceptions of the sport that have developed in the Six Counties over the years;
- c) Encouraging and investing in women's sporting activities on an equal basis with men's sporting activities.

Arts policy

- a) Arts Councils, North and South, to work for better co-operation in project co-ordination and strategic development;
- b) Community arts provide individual development and community empowerment and should be given a special designation within arts and culture policy and budgeted for accordingly;

- c) The Arts Councils to work from the principle of 'interculturalism' and not from the negative perceptions that arise from treating policies as targeting two, or more, communities;
- d) Ensuring democratic accountability and representation on Arts Councils;
- e) Developing a comprehensive disability arts programme;
- f) Working to ensure ethnic minority participation in the arts;
- g) Cable and digital companies proactively encouraged to offer programming in languages other than English;
- h) Irish-language artists to be given grant aid to support their medium and disciplines;
- i) Promoting tourism internationally and presenting Ireland as an all-island destination with a single agency for tourists to engage with.

Irish language

Sinn Féin has been to the forefront in promoting the importance and safeguarding the position of the Irish language and culture during the negotiations leading to the Good Friday



Agreement, and since, on an all-Ireland basis.

Sinn Féin was instrumental in bringing about the establishment of Foras na Gaeilge, the all-Ireland body with responsibility for promoting the Irish language. Sinn Féin was successful in the fight to restore the budget to Foras na Gaeilge following government cutbacks last year.

Martin McGuinness, as Minister for Education, established Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta (Irish-Medium Schools Trust) and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (Irish-Medium Schools Council), which have revolutionised the development of the Irish-medium education sector in the North.

Sinn Féin also sought and was given a range of commitments of action in relation to the Irish language by the British Government which have been enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement. Sinn Féin has raised the issue of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, and has campaigned relentlessly for its adoption and full implementation in all relevant sectors throughout the North.

In addition, Sinn Féin has sought, both within the Assembly and the Executive, to ensure that the Irish language is accorded the status it deserves and that Irish and the use of Irish are facilitated and promoted at every opportunity.

Within his remit as Minister for Education, Martin McGuinness has delivered the most favourable criteria for the establishment of new Irish-medium schools and the sustaining of existing schools. He has ensured that his Department worked consistently with those charged with the promotion of Irish-medium education.

Within her Department of Health, Minister

Bairbre de Brún sought to promote the use of Irish both within the department and in the department's dealings with the public.

Sinn Féin raised the question of funding for Irish language television training and production during talks with the British Government. We received assurances regarding the reception of TG4 and funding for the training and production of Irish language programmes.

Despite the repeated delays by the British government, Sinn Féin continued to lobby for these promises to be delivered. We welcomed the announcement in May 2003 of a £12 million fund for Irish language television, radio and film production and training.

Much remains to be done to ensure the new beginning promised for the Irish language and culture in the Good Friday Agreement. The commitments given by the British Government need to be delivered upon.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

- a) Adequate and increased resourcing of Foras na Gaeilge;
- b) A strengthening of the clauses chosen by the British Government in Part III of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages;
- c) Delivery on the Irish Language Rights Act in the South in a way that safeguards the constitutional position of Irish;
- d) The immediate appointment of a Commissioner to oversee the promotion of Irish-language measures within government agencies and departments.
- e) The enactment of an Irish Language Bill to give Irish an equal status to the Welsh and Scots Gaelic languages.
- f) The establishment of a properly resourced

Irish-language film, television and radio fund in the North;

- g) The British Communications Act should be amended to give formal recognition to Irish on a par with Welsh and Scots Gadhelic;
- h) A commitment to establish an initiative in relation to the development of Gaelic games on a par with the initiative for the promotion and development of soccer;
- i) Speedy delivery on the promises to make TG4 readily accessible in all areas of the North;
- j) The delivery of Irish-language policies which seek to ensure the rights of Irish speakers and the promotion of the Irish language at all levels of administration in the North;
- k) A proper and integrated approach to the funding and promotion of the arts through the medium of Irish.



Equality for women

Ceartha na mBan

Women

13



Promoting gender equality

Sinn Féin is actively committed to promoting and supporting women within our party and at all levels of society. We had the best representation of women MLAs in the outgoing Assembly. Our ministerial representation on the Executive was fairly divided. We aim to have even more Sinn Féin women elected to the new Assembly, having introduced concrete policies to ensure a significant increase in the number of women candidates standing for winnable seats. However, we recognize that women's participation in politics is not just dependent upon selection and election — women also need to feel that engagement in political activity is compatible with the other activities in their lives. Through the auspices of our Equality Department, Sinn Féin has initiated a rolling training initiative designed to foster a culture in the party that is welcoming to women.

Sinn Féin argued strongly for a dedicated Department of Equality in the negotiations leading to the Good Friday Agreement. The relegation of Equality to junior ministries within the Offices of the First and Deputy First Ministers (and the subsequent poor progress in implementing equality measures, including gender equality measures) vindicates Sinn Féin's position and calls into serious question the commitment of other parties to real equality for all our citizens.

In the Assembly, Sinn Féin has been leading by example. The Education Department now has an approved equality scheme and Equality Branch to implement equality policies within the department and the schools system. Martin McGuinness appointed the first-ever female Chief Education and Training Inspector. He also issued new guidelines on relationships and sexuality education.

Internally, Bairbre de Brún's Department of Health implemented new, flexible, family-friendly working arrangements, gender-proofed policies and monitored their application. Nearly £1 million has been made available to women's groups over the last four years. The department has prioritised support for marginalised women, supported healthcare training for Traveller women to work within their communities, produced a strategy for carers, and worked in partnership to develop best practice in combating domestic violence. Sinn Féin MLAs have been a voice for equality in all the Assembly committees, as time and time again other parties have prioritised business interests at the expense of the less-well-off, disadvantaged and the marginalised.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

Equality

- a) Targets and timescales for achieving equality of representation for women in public life, and equality of outcome in employment, education and training;
- b) Gender-proofing in appointments, policies and resource allocation must be obligatory for all public bodies. Specifically, Sinn Féin will work to ensure that the introduction gender-proofing measures are a core aspect of the Review of Public Administration;
- c) Women's groups in the community sector must be properly resourced.

To achieve this, human rights mechanisms are needed. There are no human rights without women's rights. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) is such a mechanism but its implementation requires resources.

Women are under-represented in the political and civic spheres, in large part because they are so heavily discriminated against. To be a true instrument of gender equality, the Bill of Rights must incorporate not just political and civil rights but economic, social and cultural rights.

Safety

- a) Increase resources for education designed to prevent domestic violence;
- b) Increase resources for training in recognition and appropriate response for all health, police and social services personnel who may come into contact with domestic violence victims.

All-Ireland developments

An all-Ireland perspective is also key. The National Plan for Women in the 26 Counties is a step forward and should be broadened to have an all-Ireland focus. A representative monitoring body should be appointed to oversee its implementation.

Policing and criminal justice

The current policing and criminal justice systems fail women, particularly with regard to violence against women. An integrated approach must be taken and proper resources given to eradicating violence against women. These would include adequate refuge, after-care and housing

provision, support for community initiatives, and rehabilitation projects to ensure that violent men take responsibility for and cease their criminal behaviour.

Accessible childcare

A quality, widely accessible childcare system is essential to enable women to be more economically active. Women are disproportionately represented in badly-paid, part-time jobs. Apart from being a human right, equality for women in employment is vital to pull many women out of poverty and would also enable many men to participate more in family life.

Tackling poverty

Women are more likely to experience poverty in our society and often bear the brunt of it within poor families. Lifestyle and environment are also central to good health. More resources are needed to promote a preventative approach and to support the community and women's groups sectors in promoting women's health.

Access to education and training

Equality of access to education and vocational training is essential for women to participate fully in society. Teenage mothers must be fully facilitated in remaining in mainstream education.



The development of anti-sexist training and resources should be prioritised. Women wishing to return to education must be facilitated in terms of childcare, access to a wide range of subjects and financial support.

Ending discrimination

Women who are also members of minority groups such as the Traveller community, refugees and asylum seekers and the lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community suffer significant added disadvantage and discrimination.

Gender equality cannot be separated from equality generally. This underlines the need for an integrated, human-rights-based equality agenda which is properly resourced and harmonises best practice on an all-Ireland basis.

Cherishing all the Children of the nation

Páistí

Childrens Rights

14



Promoting children's rights

Sinn Féin has a vision in which all our children can live happy, healthy and fulfilled lives, free from poverty and abuse.

Sinn Féin has worked to draw attention to the needs of children, in particular those who live in poverty or suffer from abuse. One in three children in Ireland lives in poverty and we have one of the highest rates of child abuse in Europe.

During Sinn Féin's period in the Assembly we have constantly sought to bring children's issues to the fore and to ensure that legislation designed to help children has been on the agenda. Sinn Féin ministers have:-

- a) Been at the forefront of work to ensure the development of legislation to appoint a Children's Commissioner to address the needs and rights of all children;
- b) Ensured a substantial increase in the number of pre-school places for three-year-olds and four-year-olds through the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme;
- c) Abolished the 11-Plus selection test in schools;
- d) Bolstered extra funding for children's services through the Executive Programme Fund for Children;
- e) Worked to ensure that all of the children on the island of Ireland are better protected from abuse by promoting all-Ireland registration and vetting of those who have committed offences against children;
- f) Provided greater safety for children through the development of the Children and Vulnerable Adults Bill;
- g) Established an all-Ireland Centre of Excellence in the education of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Middletown,

County Armagh.

Sinn Féin members on the Assembly's Health Committee ensured that the first inquiry that the Committee undertook was into residential and secure accommodation for children. Another inquiry was underway when the British Government collapsed the institutions.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

- a) A Minister for Children and Young People so that they have political representation in the corridors of power;
- b) An all-Ireland register of sex offenders;
- c) A review of, and co-ordination of, child protection policies and procedures on an all-Ireland basis;
- d) An expansion of funding of both statutory and voluntary children's services;
- e) Increased funding for the development of a comprehensive counselling service for school children;
- f) The development of realistic and measurable targets for the eradication of child poverty, along with actions to achieve those targets;
- g) An expansion of traffic-calming schemes in residential areas, including the introduction of a 10-mile per hour speed limit to reduce road traffic accidents involving children;
- h) A review of service provision for disabled and young people, with special reference to the transition to the use of adult services;
- i) A strategy to promote positive parenting skills, particularly highlighting the dangers of smacking and shaking babies;
- j) Full implementation and funding of the Review into Residential Care and Secure Accommodation undertaken by the Health Committee of the Assembly;
- k) Tax breaks for pre-school childcare fees;
- l) A special scheme of financial support for

farming families to ensure that they can afford childcare away from the farm because working farms can constitute a dangerous environment for small children.



Housing is a right

Tithíocht



Housing

Sinn Féin believes that proper accommodation is a basic and inalienable right. Social policy should be centred on delivering this basic right.

Legislation should promote and safeguard the entitlements of tenants and home buyers rather than the rights of property speculators exploiting people's essential needs.

Housing — a human right, not a commodity

Reflecting a general British Government strategy, the Housing Executive has been focusing on owner-occupation rather than increasing its social housing stock. Levels of social housing under the remit of the Housing Executive has dwindled significantly from 157,000 in 1991 to 118,000 in 2000.

Alarmingly, at time when more and more people are presenting themselves as homeless or in 'housing stress', the Housing Executive has jettisoned its programme of social housing, leaving that responsibility to housing associations that are not subject to equality duty and largely unaccountable.

The dwindling number of social houses for rent reflects the broader trend of privatisation by the back door.

Sinn Féin is not against mixed tenure housing estates or the right of a tenant to purchase their own home. However, we are concerned about the impact that the decline in social housing will have in areas of housing stress where there are also high incidences of social deprivation.

Sectarian inequality in housing

Housing in the Six Counties continues to be an area of sectarian inequality. The case of North Belfast graphically illustrates that the Housing Executive has failed to solve the problem of sectarian inequality.

The Housing Executive's over-reliance on a tinkered points system that still perpetuates gross inequalities flies in the face of Section 75 and the equality agenda. There is an urgent need to examine types of affirmative action to create the equality promised under provisions of the Good Friday Agreement. This must also include a focus on Section 75 in order to tackle the disproportionate levels of poverty in the nationalist community.

Housing as a right

Sinn Féin helped craft a Programme for Government 2001-2004 which has a core commitment to tackle inequalities in relation to poverty, health, housing, lack of educational and economic opportunity and disability. In addition, the executive in the Six Counties set measurable targets in relation to housing poverty and homelessness with specific reference to:-

- 1) Accessing decent, affordable housing;
- 2) Securing permanent tenancies for the homeless;
- 3) Increasing the number of properties to meet special needs;
- 4) Raising the quality of existing accommodation;
- 5) Improving the living conditions of Travellers.

The Committee for Social Development (co-chaired by Sinn Féin) commissioned two reports into homelessness in the Six Counties. The report was highly critical of the proposed draft Housing Bill 2002 on a range of issues. Sinn Féin understands that we need to address the present housing crisis from a number of access points.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

Housing as a basic right

- a) Housing as a right enshrined in the Bill of Rights along with associated human rights consistent with tackling poverty as a denial of human rights.

Social housing

- a) Development of a properly funded social housing programme;
- b) Rigorous use of equality legislation to ensure fair and equitable access to social housing by all sections of the community;
- c) Targeted social housing proportionate to the levels of income and income deprivation, reflective of personal needs and consistent with the preservation of human dignity;
- d) A multi-agency strategy to eradicate damp and inadequate heating in social, voluntary/non-profit and private housing.

Private rented sector

- a) Promotion of a system of regulatory rent control in the private sector;
- b) Enforcement of enhanced legal protection for tenants to stop them becoming homeless through arbitrary rent hikes.

Role of co-operatives

- a) Co-operative partnerships should be established between state-run financial institutions and the more progressive financial institutions (such as local credit unions) to regulate or provide more effective avenues for lower income households to purchase their own home if they choose to do so.

Tackling homelessness

- a) As an interim priority, the provision of additional government subsidies for temporary accommodation;
- b) The provision of appropriate transitional housing and hostel accommodation – including hostels for young people with on-site access to specific support services and/or information;
- c) Increased funding for the 'Supporting People' programme and the inclusion of Housing Poverty/Homeless NGOs on the Supporting People Project Board;
- d) The development of a statutory integrated multi-agency approach to tackle housing poverty and homelessness that is preventative, innovative and flexible in securing interim and permanent accommodation;
- e) At a grassroots level, the creation of caring, preventative and integrated community-based support mechanisms for the more



- vulnerable within the community who may become homeless and those who are being integrated back into the community after being periodically or persistently homeless;
- f) Drafting of more transparent and accountable procedures for appraising an individual application for homeless status, including the development of a sensitive outreach strategy for all those who are vulnerable;
 - g) Training for service providers and community leaders and workers regarding needs assessment as an important element of supporting those people who want advice, support, referral or general information;
 - h) Development of appropriate education modules (in collaboration NGOs and other relevant agencies) to deal with housing poverty and homelessness as a compulsory element of community leadership/development and community welfare training;
 - i) Supportive training and education courses for people who are homeless.

Special needs

- a) A review of the sections for accommodation and planning for Travellers under Promoting Social Inclusion and the promotion of centrally administered and facilitated programme under the aegis of the Housing Executive and in direct consultation and agreement with the Travellers' groups;
- b) A specific housing/accommodation strategy that seeks to address homelessness and attending problems within the asylum seeker and refugee community.

Sustainable housing development

- a) The commissioning of research into sustainable housing development;

- b) Alternative renewable energy methodology and practice;
- c) 'Close-looped systems' — recycling household waste and water;
- d) Sustainable building materials;
- e) Combining sustainability with urban planning and building standards.

Refuge housing

- a) A collaborative review with women's organisations of the level of refuge provision for domestically abused women and children, and a properly-funded increase of provision to meet any identified unmet need.

Protecting our environment

Imshaoil



Protecting our environment

Ireland's overall environmental quality remains relatively good in comparison with other European countries, but record rates of economic growth over the last decade have caused an acceleration of pressures on the environment. These include population growth, urbanisation, agriculture diversification, volume of industrial production and the growing number of vehicles on our roads. All of these pose a major challenge for environmental protection.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

- Develop our economy and society in a manner that protects our environment;
- All economic activity and policy decisions to be environment proofed;
- Prioritise local community based recycling and re-use projects to save the maximum level of scarce materials and to provide well-paid local jobs;
- Research and support the development of alternative energy technologies, in both producing power and saving it, with state funding to underwrite the employment of most up-to-date technologies so as to escape our existing dependence on fossil fuels;
- Effective actions to ensure that Ireland meets our obligations under current international standards, including the Kyoto Protocol;
- Ireland becoming an advocate for and partner in the championing of high environmental standards throughout the world;
- Devolving powers over the quality of life to local authorities accompanied by the provision of adequate financial resources to fulfil these responsibilities;
- Inclusion of businesses, local communities and interested groups in the planning and implementation of policy;

- The development of all-island co-operation on environmental strategies;
- Opposition to the development of lignite mining projects.

Climate change and energy production

There is increasing evidence that global pollution is creating unprecedented environmental change and that this is now leading to climatic change. Unchecked this will lead to changes in weather patterns, sea levels and food production. If the necessary international and local actions are taken in co-ordinated and planned ways the inevitable costs can be minimised.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

- Support for and implementation of strategies to tackle climate change;
- Backing for innovative, renewable energy schemes that are in keeping with the needs and character of local areas;
- Encouragement of effective public transport policies in urban areas and the development of alternative fuels for motor vehicles through favourable tax regimes for electric and hybrid electric vehicles.

Sellafield nuclear power

Sinn Féin is totally opposed to the continued pollution of Ireland and our waters by nuclear waste from the Sellafield nuclear plant and others in Britain and mainland Europe. The introduction of the Mixed Oxide (MOX) fuel reprocessing plant at Sellafield has increased the dangers facing our environment, our agricultural and fisheries industries and, most importantly, our people.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

- An all-Ireland campaign of public, political, legal and diplomatic pressure to force the complete closure of Sellafield;
- A concerted international move away from nuclear power generation and reprocessing towards the development of alternative means of sustainable energy production.

Waste management

There is a real waste management crisis in this country. Landfill sites are overflowing, and illegal dumping is widespread. We urgently require a properly resourced, effective waste management strategy based on waste reduction, reuse and recycling and acting at all levels in the waste production stream.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

- The rejection of any forms of incineration as a means of disposal of domestic, industrial or agricultural waste;
- The establishment of a Waste Agency responsible for the planning, financing and implementation of an all-Ireland waste management strategy, including an island-wide drive to research and establish markets for reclaimed materials;
- Legislation to allow government, local authorities and other public bodies to give preference to the procurement of recycled

- and re-used materials;
- Application of the 'Producer Pays' principle to encourage producers to minimise the waste generated by their production and packaging methods;
- Release of Green Taxes and central funds to local authorities to support effective reduction, recycling and reuse initiatives;
- The introduction of the Plastic Bag Levy, already enacted in the 26 Counties, to the Six Counties;
- A major public education programme to promote awareness of waste and resources.

Water and air quality

Successive British governments have failed to invest in the water and sewerage infrastructure in the Six Counties, particularly West of the Bann. This has led to a situation whereby our water quality has deteriorated and is in danger of infringing European water quality standards.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

- British Government to invest the resources required to bring water treatment plants up to standards required by European directives;
- Development of an all-Ireland water and air quality management strategy;
- Establishment of a regulatory body to set



targets for the reduction of particular pollutants over a period and ensuring that these targets are met;

- Increased powers of fishery and local government environmental protection bodies to investigate and enforce air and water quality standards;
- Encouragement of alternative farming practices to reduce the amount of run-off from farms into ground water and waterways.

Sustainable development

Reducing waste, avoiding pollution, and increasing resource efficiency have long brought financial and business benefits. But it can do much more.

The most clear-cut example is renewable energy, which would bring obvious improvements in environmental productivity, and also require investment in new skills, innovation and technology.

The same is true of information and communication technologies.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

- The development of an Environmental Productivity Index to map out the targets which should guide all aspects of government policy alongside the more traditional economic indicators and indices;
- A commitment to promote effective partnership approaches to the development of environmentally sound approaches to economic development;
- Promotion of alternatives to existing working models by bringing jobs to people ie the use of E-commerce and business models to encourage tele-working schemes;
- Encourage support for organic production in

farming and local sourcing of goods by supermarkets.

Protecting our natural environment

The protection of our natural environment and the life supported by it is vital. It requires an effective partnership with those who farm the land and depend on it for their livelihoods and the rest of society if the diversity and health of the countryside is to be maintained.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

- Co-operation between farming bodies and local community groups to ensure the development of the countryside in ways which provide sustainable livelihoods for farmers and access to the countryside for the community at large;
- The development, in partnership with farmers and local communities, of effective and enforceable provisions for the protection of Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) or other conservation areas.

Local government

Accountable and effective local government is essential to any democracy. At present, local government in the Six Counties is strait-jacketed by statutory limits on what it may do and what it may not do. These restrictions through the principle of 'ultra vires' should be replaced by a Power of General Competence, which allows local government to act in the manner considered best for its local community unless specifically restrained by national policy.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

- Full reform of local government designed to devolve maximum authority to the

- appropriate local level;
- Local authorities to retain revenue-raising powers;
- Local authorities to be free to act in the public interest and not overly constrained by the need to seek central government permission for innovative local solutions that do not run counter to regional policy;
- Return of powers currently held by quangos to local authorities with power to administer these in innovative ways suitable to local conditions;
- Promotion of regional and sub-regional co-operation on particular issues best dealt with at those levels.

- including the health and environmental impacts of new technologies;
- Sinn Féin will demand an audit of all existing mobile telephone base stations and antennae leading to a system of adequate control over radio frequency fields generated and the establishment of physical exclusion zones around such stations.

Planning

Sinn Féin believes that planning regulations at present do not allow for any effective local scrutiny of development plans.

Sinn Féin's priorities for 2003 - 2008

- A major overhaul of planning law throughout Ireland to balance the needs of national development with the local needs of communities including the need to protect the local environment;
- Local communities must have the right to full information about proposed developments



Promoting Diversity

Éagsúlacht



An Ireland of equals

Sinn Féin advocates the right to social, economic, gender and cultural equality. This encompasses equality for all, irrespective of race, age, marital or family status, sexual orientation, physical or mental capacities, ethnicity, social origin, political or religious affiliations or membership of the Traveller community.

Sinn Féin recognises that in order to create the conditions for establishing an equal society, we all must embrace the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-linguistic diversity in Ireland. It involves protection and promotion of rights and equality of opportunity for all persons who find themselves marginalised, isolated and unrepresented in Irish society.

Sinn Féin believes the Single Equality Bill and Bill of Rights must be strong and inclusive. The delays in developing these major pieces of legislation only serve to further demonise communities and haemorrhage their human rights.

Racism

There can be no doubt that racism exists in Ireland and threatens to grow in some areas. A commonly articulated view is that if groups or individuals experience racism in Ireland, then it is a result of some form of deficiency or lack of ability to assimilate into Irish society. This is a dangerous and erroneous attitude that must be reversed by the majority population.

Sinn Féin recognise that sectarianism and racism must be eliminated from society. Those who direct racism, whether consciously or otherwise, must understand that for centuries, Irish exiles were victims of racism.

The recent and ongoing abuse of the Muslim community and others' rights to live and worship free from threat must be challenged in order to prevent further racially motivated crime.

Sinn Féin believes that the responses to racism must be addressed at two levels: through local communities and at statutory level. Local communities should be at the forefront of the campaign to advance and implement the equality agenda. While statutory agencies must ensure that all policies and procedures ensure human rights are upheld and that staff are trained to implement them.

- Anti-racist and inter-cultural education is mainstreamed through the curriculum at primary, secondary and teacher training levels;
- Additional English-language classes are resourced for all minority ethnic children within the education system to ensure equality of opportunity;
- Interpreting and translation services and materials are made fully available within health and social services to ensure the equal access to care and support;
- All political parties on the island of Ireland sign an anti-racist pledge and make a commitment that they will not play party politics with the equality and ethnicity issue and they will not tolerate any form of racism within their party;
- The K-NO-W Racism Campaign should be extended to the Six Counties.

Asylum seekers and refugees

- Sinn Féin calls for an all-Ireland policy for asylum seekers and refugees to be developed within the framework of the all-Ireland bodies. This policy should address the negative consequences of the Dublin Convention for asylum seekers who cross into the Six Counties or from the 26 Counties and

find themselves in a bureaucratic nightmare in which many do not understand but has very serious implications for their cases;

- The Executive and the Assembly departments should produce a policy paper specifically addressing asylum policy and practice. All departments should examine their service provision to asylum seekers and refugees in relation to Section 75 requirements. The issue cannot continue to be dismissed as a Reserved matter;
- The responsibility for asylum seekers and refugees should be devolved to the Assembly;
- The detention of immigration detainees at Maghaberry Prison is a contravention of human rights laid down by the Geneva Convention and is tantamount to internment. Sinn Féin believes this practice should stop immediately.
- Sinn Féin believes resources should be made available for voluntary and community organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees;
- A co-ordinated all-Ireland approach supported by the all-Ireland bodies would ensure that services meet the needs of asylum seekers in the most appropriate way;
- All asylum seekers should receive legal representation and legal aid should extend to appeal cases. Resources should be made available to speed up cases;

- Sinn Féin believes that asylum seekers should be allowed to work while their cases are being heard. Currently, asylum seekers survive on 70 per cent of income support for indefinite periods of time. Many of these people have to report to Immigration services at Belfast International Airport on a weekly basis; the cost of transport creates even further poverty.

Travellers

- Sinn Féin believes that the Citizen Traveller Campaign piloted in the 26 Counties should be revived and extended to the Six Counties to work towards eliminating the discrimination and abuse of this indigenous minority community;
- We welcome the transfer of responsibility for Traveller accommodation from local councils to the Housing Executive. This must be implemented speedily and fully resourced financially;
- Sinn Féin believes there should be no further delay in implementing the recommendations of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers;
- A Good Practice Guide should be developed and implemented on the provision of health and social care for Travellers. All staff should be trained to ensure Travellers receive the care and treatment they are entitled;



- An all-Ireland strategy should be established to develop and ensure that Traveller children, particularly those who are nomadic, gain access to education. Resources should be made available for Travellers and Traveller support groups to develop alternative education programmes.

