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Local & National

McCord loses bid to head up victims' body

'He didn't know enough about Troubles'

Tuesday, April 24, 2007

By Chris Thornton

The dad who defied loyalist gunmen to see through a devastating investigation into his son's murder has been rejected as Northern Ireland's next victims' champion - because he doesn't know enough about the Troubles.

Campaigner Raymond McCord's application to be Victims' Commissioner was rejected by Government officials without an interview.

He says they told him he had shown insufficient awareness of the conflict and inadequate PR skills - reasons described as "utterly contemptible" by an MP who has worked with him.

Mr McCord defied UVF death threats to mount a media campaign pointing out links between police and the loyalists who murdered his son in 1997.

His work led to a Police Ombudsman's report that concluded there had been collusion between police and the killers.

He was also once severely beaten for defying murdered UDA leader John 'Grugg' Gregg.

North Down MP Lady Sylvia Hermon said the reasons given for rejecting Mr McCord for the post were "insulting".

"Through the horrific murder of his son by the UVF, Raymond has not only a very real awareness of conflict but he also has a deep compassion for other victims of our decades of bloody mayhem," she said.

"His understanding of their needs and pain is genuine, not manufactured.

"As for PR skills, Raymond is a natural media performer, and never a spin doctor."

A public relations professional who knows Mr McCord rated his media skills as "excellent".

"One of the things in PR is that when you have a story you get it out once or maybe twice, then people aren't interested," he said.

"Raymond McCord managed to keep his story going for years. That's quite unusual.

"He also managed to form relationships with lots of journalists and maintain them - some very hard-bitten and cynical journalists.

"And he managed to get them to listen and care. He's got the right instincts. He's basically very good with people."

Mr McCord, who said he had applied for the job to help other victims, was surprised at the grounds on which officials rejected him for the post.

"I'm not saying I'm the best person for the job, but I thought the reasons they gave were ludicrous," he said.






"My son was murdered by the UVF, I've been threatened by that organisation for daring to ask questions about the murder, and I've been left for dead by the UDA - but I'm not aware of the conflict?"

The First Ministers' Office said it could not comment on individual applications.

A total of 46 people applied for the Victims' Commissioner job when it was advertised in January.

Thirteen people have been interviewed, but no appointment has been announced.

Officials confirmed that the final appointment will be a matter for First Minister Ian Paisley and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, after they are confirmed in their jobs on May 8.


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