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BRADLEY PLEDGES CONTINUED SUPPORT TO QUINN FAMILY

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SDLP Newry and Armagh MLA Dominic Bradley said Sinn Fein's attempt to hijack the Quinn campaign meeting in Crossmaglen is turning the family's tragedy into their own low political farce.

He said: "Sinn Fein politicised this murder before Paul's body was cold. While Cllr Geraldine Donnelly and I were at the Drogheda Hospital at the request of his parents, Conor Murphy was rushing to his press office to slander the dead boy. While the Quinns were preparing to bury their son, Conor Murphy was in consultation with the leaders of the Provo gang in South Armagh, getting 'very solid assurances' to suit his political purposes.

"First they tried to turn Paul into a criminal so they could say he was killed by other criminals. Briege and Kathy Quinn put an end to that lie with a few simple words of truth. Then they tried to demonise the chairman of the Support Group, to drive a wedge between the Group and the family. But the family stood strong and made clear that it is their Support Group, meeting in their kitchen and doing their work.

"When they had lost all their arguments Sinn Fein bussed in their muscle and their enforcers to intimidate and shout down the Quinns and the campaign team, but that ploy failed too in the face of a 400-strong crowd of outraged local people and a range of political observers from the south. They couldn't call Paul a criminal in front of all those people who knew him and his good family. They couldn't even say the Provos didn't kill him, because they would have been laughed out of the place. In fact, they barely mentioned the murder, and focused instead on their favourite topic, Sinn Fein's victimhood. Finally, in desperation, they rounded on the SDLP and laid all their rage at our door.

"We have never for a second hidden our support for the Quinns and their committee. We are supporting them for the simple reason that the family has asked us to support them and because it is the right thing to do. We will continue to support them in every way we can until Paul's name is cleared in public and until the family get the justice they deserve.

"Cllr Terry Hearty harangued the meeting because he had been accused of staying silent on the murder for six weeks. That is just the truth, but let him produce a statement from a local paper if he can.

"Bussing people in to hijack the meeting shows just how far all wings of the Provisional movement have lost the run of themselves in this case. They will have to learn that not everything is about them and their needs, there is a community here too and it must be listened to. The community is saying very clearly that they have had enough, that the killings and beatings must stop - and stop now. They can either dismantle their killing machine or it will be done for them by public humiliation."

ENDS
16.12.07

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