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## Local & National

### Hoey challenged on Omagh inquiry call

Thursday, January 03, 2008

By Deborah McAleese

The man cleared of the Omagh bomb was challenged today to co-operate with a public inquiry into Northern Ireland's worst terrorist atrocity.

Sean Hoey, who was cleared of all 58 charges against him, including the murders of 29 people, has offered his support to the families in their call for the British and Irish governments to establish a public inquiry.

In an interview with the Irish News he said: "The families and my own family deserve to know the full truth and only a proper cross-border public inquiry will get to the truth. I want to know what the British and Irish governments are afraid of from an inquiry."

He also said he remains angry that he was forced to stand trial and was used as a "scapegoat".

"If it hadn't been for the dedication of my legal team and the support of family and friends I could easily have been spending the rest of my life behind bars for something I had absolutely nothing to do with.

"I have been fully cleared and would ask that people respect that. All I want now is to get on with rebuilding my life. I will support the Omagh families for as long as it takes," he said.

However, Michael Gallagher, who lost his 17-year-old son Aidan in the blast, said today he would like to know if Mr Hoey would be willing to give evidence at a public inquiry.

He said: "He did not enter the witness box during the trial. If there is a public inquiry will he completely co-operate?"

Mr Gallagher added that the Omagh families have called for a meeting with the Secretary of State to discuss the trial.

"None of these people - chairman of the Policing Board Sir Desmond Rea, Sir Hugh Orde or the Secretary of State have contacted the families to ask our views as to how the trial went."

The Policing Board was due to meet Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde today to discuss scathing criticism of the investigation into the bomb. Mr Justice Weir was critical of police evidence, saying two officers were guilty of a "deliberate and calculated deception". He accused some officers of showing a "thoughtless and slapdash" approach to the collection and storage of exhibits.

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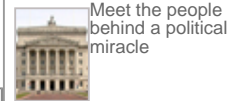
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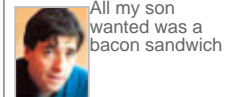
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