



Sinn Féin Westminster Election Manifesto 2001

Building an Ireland of Equals

Introduction from Gerry Adams

A Chara,

The last decade has been one of delivering change and rapid growth for Sinn Féin across the island.

In the last ten years the Sinn Féin peace strategy has delivered the Irish Peace Process which led to the Good Friday Agreement. Since its signing we have worked to implement and expand the all-Ireland aspects of the Agreement. Our two Ministers, Baribre de Brún and Martin McGuinness, have brought an entirely new people-centred agenda to their ministries in Health and Education — they are delivering real change.

However, the potential to deliver the sort of fundamental changes still required is being threatened by the actions of the Ulster Unionist Party and the failure of the British Government to honour its commitments under the Good Friday Agreement.

Following these elections there will be important negotiations to ensure that commitments on policing, demilitarisation and equality are honoured. If these negotiations are to be successful then Sinn Féin has to go back to the negotiating table with an increased mandate. Every vote counts.

Tá seans agat do phairt a glacadh ag an am stairiúl seo.

By supporting Sinn Féin you can strengthen the search for peace and be part of the process of delivering real change. Is féidir leat cur leis an phrúiseas síochána ar fud na hoileáin ma thugann tú tacaíocht do Shinn Féin. Thig leat bheith pairteach ag tabhairt fíor athrú ar an sochaí seo.

Sinn Féin is the only all-Ireland party in this election. Whether in Derry or Kerry, West Belfast or Dublin South-West, people have the opportunity to vote for republicans. We are the only party with a vision which looks beyond partition and inequality and towards a new, independent Ireland based on justice, equality and prosperity.

On June 7th, I am asking you to join with us in delivering real change.

Tá a lán obair le déanamh againn bígí linn.

Is mise,

Gerry Adams MP

Delivering Peace

Sinn Féin is a republican party. We are the only all-Ireland party. Our goal is to see a united Ireland which delivers real social and economic change. We have been the driving force behind the Irish Peace Process.

The Peace Process grew out of Sinn Féin's peace strategy.

It has delivered the Good Friday Agreement and offered us a route map out of conflict and into a new Ireland based on equality and justice. The Good Friday Agreement is an all-Ireland agreement. It transcends partition and it offers a new opportunity for people across the island.

This potential, this opportunity, has still to be delivered. Yet despite all of the obstacles, Sinn Féin is committed and is determined to see the potential of the Good Friday Agreement realised.

Throughout this entire process, Sinn Féin has been the engine for change. We have given real leadership.

We have been both flexible and imaginative but all the time wedded to our belief that the changes which are clearly necessary and indeed promised under the Agreement must be delivered.

Sinn Féin has been consistent in demanding that the Agreement is implemented in full. Since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement we have been involved in a number of public and private negotiations with the two governments, with the other political parties and with the White House.

On the policing issue we have consistently demanded amendments to Peter Mandelson's Police Act. We have been in the frontline not just in demanding a decent police service, but on issues of demilitarisation, an acceptable system of criminal justice, equality and human rights for all.

We have honoured every commitment made under the Good Friday Agreement and we now demand that others do likewise.

Republicans have taken many risks for peace over the past ten years. The IRA has maintained cessations for almost six years. It has taken a number of unilateral initiatives which have advanced the Peace Process.

Sinn Féin has demonstrated leadership and determination. We have been dynamic and have met all of the challenges placed in front of us. We will continue to do this. We will not be diverted from demanding equality and justice.

We will continue to be a source of confidence and strength, replacing conflict and division with peace and opportunity.

Our peace strategy and the Peace Process which it delivered can create change.

With increased political strength this process and the changes it will deliver will become irreversible.

All-Ireland Politics

Sinn Féin is the only all-Ireland party. The only party with a strategy and policies for achieving Irish unity and independence.

The Good Friday Agreement is an all-Ireland agreement.

Over the last 12 months — through the new political institutions created under the Good Friday Agreement — the beginning of all-Ireland co-operation in the crucial fields of education, health, environment, agriculture, transport and tourism is occurring. In each of these areas, progress and programmes of work are being advanced through the implementation bodies.

Even at this embryonic stage, the potential is obvious and it is clear that all-Ireland developments would bring about considerable benefits to all of us living on the island.

Notwithstanding the current difficulties, it is essential that such co-operation continues.

Representation

- For the right for those elected at parliamentary elections in the Six Counties to attend and participate in the proceedings of Leinster House;
- For citizens in the Six Counties to be given the right to vote in referendums and presidential elections, currently held on a 26-County basis.

All-Ireland co-operation

- To bring an end to the unlawful actions of David Trimble;
- To actively develop and advance the potential of the Implementation Bodies;
- To make available the appropriate financial and other resources to ensure that substantial progress can take place.

Politics

- To bring a republican and socialist analysis into the heart of politics throughout Ireland in local government, Leinster House, Assembly and Six-County Executive;
- Harmonisation of financial incentives and Corporation Tax across the island;
- Establishment of an all-Ireland health service;
- Environmental standards and policies to be co-ordinated on an all-island basis;
- Development of an all-Ireland approach to education;
- Establishment of an all-Ireland constitutional court;
- Strategic planning of infrastructure.

Representing your interests

Prior to the 1997 Westminster elections, Sinn Féin made it clear that successful candidates intended to make use of the facilities and resources available in the British Parliament.

At that time, all MPs were entitled to use facilities at Westminster whether or not they took the Oath of Allegiance to the British queen and their seats in the chamber. This was a British parliamentary tradition (known as 'Erskine May') which has been in existence for more than 150 years.

Within days of the successful election of Gerry Adams in West Belfast and Martin McGuinness in Mid-Ulster, the then Speaker of the House of Commons, Betty Boothroyd, announced that she was setting aside parliamentary practice and tradition and banning the two Sinn Féin MPs from using resources and facilities.

Sinn Féin protested against the decision. It is a discriminatory act aimed solely against Sinn Féin and our electorate. Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness met Betty Boothroyd and eventually took the issue to court. But the case was lost because, under the British Constitution, the British parliament is sovereign and the courts are unable to intervene.

In all of the negotiations which we have had with the British Government since this time, we have repeatedly raised this important issue.

We recognise that effective representation requires sustained campaigning and lobbying outside Ireland. This is why Sinn Féin opened offices in Washington and London. This is why we have been engaged in a vigorous campaign in England, Scotland and Wales with political parties on the implementation of the Patten recommendations on policing and other issues.

As an Irish republican party committed to a united Ireland we do not believe that there is any value in Irish MPs sitting in a British parliament.

This is proven by the attendance record of those who make a virtue of being in Westminster but actually seldom show up there.

Sinn Féin is not prepared to pledge allegiance to British royalty and we have shown that you do not have to take an oath of allegiance to the British queen to be an effective advocate of Irish voters' rights and entitlements.

Our MPs will continue to lobby for facilities at Westminster and when the British Government restores these rights it is our intention to use these facilities in the interests of our constituents.

Policing — A new beginning

The Good Friday Agreement promised a new police service that would be: "impartial; representative; free from partisan political control; efficient and effective; infused with a human rights culture; decentralised; democratically accountable at all levels".

Although Sinn Féin believes that the Patten recommendations did not go far enough, we made clear that, if implemented, they might provide a threshold from which a new police service could develop.

Sinn Féin has worked hard on this issue because we want to see a new beginning to policing. We put detailed, reasonable and practical proposals to the British Government on numerous occasions. And while we made some progress, the British Government's position falls short of the promises of

the Good Friday Agreement and the recommendations of Patten.

- It does not give us common ownership of policing for all;
- It does not remove the unionist ethos and emblems;
- It does not provide for real democratic accountability;
- It does not provide for the mechanisms to identify and expel the torturers and abusers of human rights.

More can be achieved

Sinn Féin believes that much more can be achieved. We are calling for the British Government to amend the legislation and do what they promised in the Good Friday Agreement when the Patten Commission was established and at Hillsborough on May 6th 2000.

Democratic accountability

Democratic accountability is a right. The British Secretary of State and the RUC Chief Constable have too much power.

Power needs to be given to the:-

- New Policing Board;
- District Partnership Boards;
- Oversight Commissioner;
- Ombudsman.

Common ownership

A police service must be in the ownership of all the people. This means:-

- It must be representative of the community it serves;
- Name, symbols and emblems must be politically and culturally neutral;
- It must be community-based;

- User-friendly police buildings, vehicles and uniforms.

Human rights

- Disbanding the Special Branch political police as a 'force within a force';
- A human rights ethos and culture for everyone in the new police service;
- Banning lethal-force plastic bullets;
- Powers of independent inquiry which must be effective, efficient and capable of being promptly put to use in issues such as collusion;
- Repressive legislation which remains in place must be removed.

Nationalists and republicans have suffered 80 years of RUC oppression. A new police service is the prize we must win for the future. It is one that Sinn Féin is committed to achieving.

Equality

Nationalists have endured decades of social and economic discrimination. Inequalities in employment, education, household incomes, housing conditions and access to healthcare all provide evidence of the enduring link between poverty and inequality.

Sinn Féin's goal is to replace poverty through inequality with prosperity through equality for all. We are working to ensure that government policies target poverty and inequality and that TSN be placed on a statutory basis to ensure real accountability.

Equality department

Sinn Féin is campaigning for a fully-resourced Department of Equality in line with the rest of Ireland. During negotiations, other parties resisted this, relegating equality to a unit within the Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers. The equality agenda has been retarded and undermined.

Parity of esteem

- Legislation to guarantee parity of esteem and equality of treatment for the Irish language, heritage and culture;
- Provisions for the expression of nationalist and republican sentiments in the display of monuments and symbols that command civic space in public areas, buildings, towns and city centres in equal measure to those of unionism;
- Workspace and working environments to be governed by the principle of equality or neutrality;
- Public bodies such as the BBC, Translink, local universities, colleges of further and higher education, and housing associations to be compelled to comply with the equality legislation.

Unemployment

Despite 30 years of fair employment legislation, recent statistics show Catholic males two times more likely than Protestant males to be unemployed. Catholics also constitute more than 70 per cent of the long-term unemployed;

- Targets and timetables for eliminating unemployment — the Good Friday Agreement promised "the progressive elimination of the differential in unemployment rates between the two communities". Sinn Féin will fight to have that commitment placed on a statutory basis.

Anti-nationalist discrimination

- An end to discrimination in employment on sectarian and racist grounds such as those practices deemed to be in the 'interests of [British] national security';
- An overhaul of the Civil Service to eradicate institutionalised discrimination. The exclusion of Irish nationals from positions in public bodies in the North of Ireland, especially senior grades, must be ended.

Prisoners

The British Government has failed in its commitment under the Good Friday Agreement to "facilitate the reintegration of prisoners into the community by providing support". It continues to

enforce legislation and policy that discriminates against political ex-prisoners participating as equals in all aspects of social and economic life. Sinn Féin is campaigning for:

- The release of all political prisoners;
- The removal of all legal, procedural and policy obstacles to full equality for political ex-prisoners.

The Economy

A new social and economic order in Ireland will cherish all our people equally and prize equality and social justice.

Sinn Féin's economic policy objectives are to:-

- Provide sustainable and dignified livelihoods for all;
- The development of economic, social, natural and cultural resources;
- Fulfil the needs and aspirations of the people of Ireland through the creation of economic structures which reflect their social and cultural values.

Everyone, irrespective of their background, should be able to gain secure, well-paid, long-term employment in a fair working environment.

Sinn Féin's strategic approach to the economy includes:-

- The creation of an all-Ireland economy;
- The transformation of the war economy in the North of Ireland into a productive peace-time economy;
- The elimination of the economic distortions created by partition and peripheralism;
- Campaigning against poverty which is being exacerbated by the increasing globalisation of the marketplace.

If economic and social regeneration in Ireland is to be successful, there will need to be:-

- Investment in and the development of indigenous Irish manufacturing;

- Harmonisation of financial incentives for industrial development and investment;

- Penalties imposed on grant-aided foreign industry which exploits cheap-labour economies by relocating away from Ireland after being given financial support here;

- Investment in social infrastructure;

- Education and training for all, at all stages of personal development;

- A proactive approach to economic development in the wider context of social, political, cultural and environmental priorities.

Delivering change

Through Sinn Féin's involvement in the Assembly and the North-South bodies, we have successfully pushed for economic development in an all-Ireland context:-

- Opposed the use of the Barnett formula to calculate the block grant;

- Called for tax-gathering powers for the North of Ireland as a precursor to reunification;

- Worked for the development of the North-South body for trade and business development, InterTrade Ireland;

- Promoted equality and social justice within all economic policy initiatives, and we are addressing the deficiencies of the new Targeting Social Need policy.

Through Sinn Féin's chairing of the Finance and Personnel Committee, we have initiated a public inquiry into the use of private finance to fund investment in the public sector (PFI/PPP).

We have also been the catalyst for the development of alternatives to ensure that our public services can overcome the legacy of under-funding.

Through Sinn Féin's chairing of the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee, we have completed a public inquiry into the fundamentally-flawed Strategy 2010 economic policy initiative. We have highlighted the need for an all-Ireland

economic policy, a strategy to tackle peripheralism, and the promotion of social justice and inclusion.

Education

Education is a fundamental human right. It enables young people to become aware of themselves as human and social beings who are enabled and encouraged to take up positions of leadership and responsibility in society. Sinn Féin advocates an education system based on the key principles of:

- Equality

- Choice

- Accessibility

- Excellence

Education is about partnership. Schools should reflect a creative and a mutually-affirming partnership of parents, students, teachers, ancillary staff, governors, trustees, other partners in education and the local community. The student must be at the centre of education.

Delivering on commitments

In 2000-2001, as Minister for Education, Martin McGuinness has delivered:-

All-Ireland

- Regular interaction between Education Departments, North and South, including several all-Ireland education working groups established under the North-South Ministerial Council.

Equality

- An approved equality scheme for the Department of Education;

- An Equality Division in the Department of Education.

Investment

- Support for small rural schools;

- A massive and unprecedented £200 million capital investment in schools in the Six Counties;

- Increase to 75 per cent pre-school provision.

Eleven Plus & League Tables

- A fundamental review of the post-primary provision, including the 11-Plus;
- An end to the publication of the School Performance Tables.

Irish language and integrated schools

- The creation of an Irish-medium promotional body, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta;
- The setting up of Irish-medium Trust Fund, Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta;
- New viability criteria for Irish-medium and integrated schools.

Information Technology

- Significant increase in allocation of computers to teachers;
- Arrangements being made for a substantial increase in ICT provision in schools.

Sinn Féin will campaign for:

- Increased all-Ireland harmonisation;
- Taking forward the equality agenda;
- The 11-Plus to be abolished;
- A fair and inclusive post-primary school system;
- A continued increase in pre-school provision;
- A significant increase in funding to Target Social Need;
- Proper education funding for marginalised and disadvantaged groups;
- Support for schools, teachers and pupils in disadvantaged areas;
- Continued development of Irish-medium education;
- Creativity to be encouraged in all areas of the

curriculum;

- Core flexibility in the delivery and content of the curriculum to allow for innovative, local solutions;
- Fair pay and conditions for teachers;
- A reduction of the bureaucratic workload on teachers;
- More focussed support for Special Educational Needs and more mainstreaming of children with Special Educational Needs.

Health

Years of under-funding have left the health service on a life-support system. Lack of resources has led to ever-growing waiting lists, fewer beds and a lack of basic services to maintain people in their homes.

Sinn Féin is committed to:

- An all-Ireland health service which would harmonise and maximise use of resources;
- Equality of access to modern and quality health and social services which command public confidence;
- Democratisation of the health service to include patients, staff organisations and political representatives in policy, planning and decision-making;
- Eradication of the social, cultural and economic inequalities (including poverty and disadvantage) which have a direct and detrimental bearing on public health.

Delivering on commitments

As part of Sinn Féin's drive to provide a more effective and patient-centred health service throughout the island of Ireland, Minister for Health Bairbre de Brún has initiated a range of actions, reviews and public consultations designed to:

- Improve the standard and efficiency of health care service delivery;
- Develop a strategic direction for health, social services and public safety which will deliver

modern, effective, accessible services and command public confidence.

Improving hospital care

- Acute hospital services review;
- Action frameworks to reduce waiting lists and ease winter pressures on intensive care provision and community care;
- A cardiac services review to improve access and treatment times;
- A two-week out-patient appointment target in cases of suspected breast cancer;
- An end to compulsory market-testing.

All-Ireland health care

- Establishing working groups and the implementation of programmes of work on:
 - A & E planning
 - Cancer research
 - Health promotion
 - Major emergencies planning

Primary and community care

- Legislation to end GP fund-holding;
- Consultation to develop a new system of community-based local health and social care groups;
- A Social Care Council to improve protection of vulnerable patients and raise standards of practice.

Children and young people's services

- Expanding residential childcare places;
- Extra child and adolescent in-patient psychiatric beds.

Equality

- Introducing a departmental equality scheme;
- Approving a new Targeting Social Need action plan;

- A public appointments awareness campaign to attract candidates from all sections of the community;

- Making department publications available in Irish.

Health and well-being programmes

- Initiating a public health strategy which addresses the social and economic determinants of ill-health and health inequalities;

- Funding 15 Sure Start schemes for disadvantaged children;

- Funding 16 community-based projects reducing the level of drug-related harm;

- A strategy to reduce alcohol-related harm;

- A strategy to reduce the high level of teenage pregnancies.

Farming in Crisis

Our agricultural industry is in crisis — and not just over foot and mouth, although that is the most pressing issue today. We need to tackle this crisis but we also need to look at the underlying reasons which created it in the first place. One of the issues which this crisis highlights is the need for an island-wide approach to agriculture.

In the Six Counties, the average net farm income declined by 65 per cent between 1996/97 and 1997/98. Sinn Féin wants to keep farming families on the land, supports agricultural diversification and mixed and organic farming. Sinn Féin will work for:

- An all-Ireland agricultural strategy, recognising the different needs of farm families in different regions;

- Early retirement schemes for farmers;

- Training for those who wish to work off the farm and adequate rural employment;

- Recognition of farm-family income as providing the most appropriate means of measuring income distribution;

- Training in marketing skills;
- An environmentally sensitive programme for the development of forestry and fisheries;
- Development of a food safety strategy.

Rural development

On rural development Sinn Féin will work for:

- Long-term funding;
- The lessons of the the Leader Programmes to be integrated into a long-term national strategy;
- Regional assemblies to act as a focus for rural regeneration;
- Proper remuneration for people involved in rural community initiatives;
- A coherent strategy for rural economic development;
- The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to assume the central policy focus for rural development;
- Rural health, education, employment and transportation all require concerted action across appropriate departments;
- Close links between these departments and co-ordinated programmes with the relevant Implementation Bodies.

Equality

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is legally obliged to redress inequalities in practices and policies. Sinn Féin will work for:

- Employment and recruitment practices to be monitored;
- Policies to reverse under-representation of minority groups within agricultural bodies;
- Urgent examination of the reasons for under-representation of women in rural development initiatives and recommendations on positive ways of involving women;

- The Department of Agriculture must develop a strategy to take account of women in agricultural statistics and introduce quota systems to ensure their adequate representation in farming organisations.

Environment

Sinn Féin is committed to creating environmental standards on a co-ordinated island-wide basis.

We are committed to the principle of sustainable development. We believe that all economic activity and policy decisions should be environmentally proofed to ensure no needless damage is inflicted to an island environment already under severe pressure from unnecessary pollution and inefficient waste management strategies. Sinn Féin will work for:-

- Devolution of powers over the quality of life to local authorities, including the financial means to fulfil responsibilities;
- Involvement of all interested groups in the planning and implementation of policy;
- Local authorities to co-operate with others on an all-Ireland basis to develop environmental policies.

Planning

In relation to planning, Sinn Féin is working for:

- A complete review of planning procedures;
- Planning legislation to focus on the needs of local communities;
- The automatic right of access to information relating to the health and environmental impacts of new technologies such as telecommunications advances;
- Planning regulations to be harmonised through all-Ireland structures;
- An audit of all existing mobile telephone base stations and antennae, adequate control over radio frequency fields generated, and the establishment of physical exclusion zones around base stations.

Waste management

On waste management, Sinn Féin is working for:-

- The establishment of an all-Ireland Zero-Waste Agency to develop a strategic approach to the planning, financing and implementation of this strategy;
- Application of the 'producer pays' principle;
- Release of central funds and green taxes to local authorities to support recycling, reduction and reuse initiatives;
- An end to attempts to deploy incineration as a means of waste disposal.

Sellafield

On Sellafield, Sinn Féin will work for:-

- The closure of Sellafield and an end to the dumping of nuclear waste in the Irish Sea.

Water and air

On water and air quality, Sinn Féin will work for:-

- An all-Ireland strategy to protect water and air quality;
- A regulatory body capable of setting targets for the reduction of particular pollutants over a period and meeting these targets;
- Resources to encourage change by means of the 'polluter pays' principle and the ring-fencing of revenues generated by green taxes for anti-pollution programmes.

Climate change

On climate change, Sinn Féin is working for:-

- The climate change levy to discourage the production of greenhouse gases;
- A reduction levy to encourage the use of new technologies designed to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and encourage renewable and environmentally sustainable energy sources.

Children's Issues

Sinn Féin has a vision where all the children of Ireland can live free from poverty and abuse, have the best possible start in life, and grow into healthy, confident adults who can play a full role in their communities.

Young people under 18 make up one third of our population. One in three children live in poverty. We have one of the highest rates of child abuse in Europe. Many children have no safe space in which to play, and others suffer from discrimination and injustice. Sinn Féin has worked to draw attention to and address the needs of children.

We are concerned about the lack of co-operation on the registration and vetting of those who have committed offences against children.

Sinn Féin will work for:-

- A Commissioner and Junior Minister for Children. We welcome the decision to appoint a Commissioner but will continue to fight for the appointment of a Minister so that children throughout Ireland have independent and political representation;
- An all-Ireland register of paedophiles to ensure that there is no hiding place for such people;
- Funding for children's services. Sinn Féin has been instrumental in highlighting the lack of funding for children's services. Our call for an investigation into the funding of services led to a Health Committee investigation and report into residential care for children. We will continue to monitor and lobby to ensure services for children receive the funding they need;
- We will continue to work to make sure that children's needs are not overlooked. Our challenge is to improve the lives of all children in Ireland and to ensure that children's needs and rights are at the top of the political agenda.

Childcare

What value is economic development if the children of the nation are not properly cared for?

We must ensure that children receive the best care at all times. That includes care by parents in the

home, care by other family members, paid care by childcare workers in the home, early childhood education, crèches and other facilities provided by the community or voluntary sector or by private concerns.

Therefore Sinn Féin proposes:-

- Support mechanisms to assist parents working in the home;
- Quality, affordable and accessible childcare facilities;
- A childcare strategy which equally values all children and parents, ensures the provision of quality regulated childcare services, and prioritises the needs of children and families experiencing disadvantage and social exclusion. We need to establish a centrally-assisted Childcare Service in urban and rural areas and in tandem with existing service-providers;
- Job sharing, flexi-time and flexi-place working arrangements to be promoted as means of facilitating parents who wish to participate in the workplace and maintain a home life.

Higher and Further Education

As economic activity is increasingly skills-based, individual and community success depends on access to adult educational opportunities. Opportunities have to be widened to include sections of society traditionally excluded and under-represented.

Sinn Féin is working for:-

Access

- An increase in participation rates within further and higher education from those groups traditionally excluded and marginalised;
- Universities and the colleges of further education to provide an integrated route into higher education;
- Wider and inclusive representation on public bodies (e.g. the governing bodies of the institutes of further education) to make them more representative.

All-Ireland initiatives

- The development and expansion of a system of further and higher education that is all-Ireland in character and ethos;
- All-Ireland integration of further education institutes and technical colleges to meet the skills and labour shortages;
- A heightening of the profile of the Irish language.

Funding

- Abolition of tuition fees;
- Restoration of means-tested student grants;
- Increased, targeted funding to pay fees for those engaged in part-time study;
- Continued access to the social security system for those who are studying and unemployed;
- A common system of student financial support throughout Ireland.

Planning for the future

- A new strategic plan for youth services on a similar basis to the Strategic Plan for Education Services. Resources to focus on a comprehensive programme of retraining of those made redundant from traditional industries;
- The designation of the Magee Campus of the University of Ulster as a fully-fledged University of Derry City in its own right as a major alternative centre for the provision of full-time higher education with up to 10,000 additional places.

Human Rights

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 entrenched in legislation.

Bill of 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.

Citizens, especially those most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society, require a Bill of Rights that holds out real possibilities to secure their rights in a user-friendly way.

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

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

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 an accountable fashion.

Delivering justice

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 be the outcome.

The delivery of justice and 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 in disputed circumstances

is well-documented. The willingness 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.

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

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

As a party we will strive to harmonise rights throughout the island as outlined in the Good Friday Agreement.

Regional Development

Ensuring an efficient and equitable regional development strategy is an imperative for not only the Six Counties but for the entire island economy. It is crucial that when planning infrastructural developments (particularly in the areas of roads, rail, power, gas, and telecommunications) that the negative effects of partition and the current east-west bias in Six-County and 26-County regional planning be tackled.

A just regional development policy will help ensure that the economic benefits of state investment is accessible by all and that decades of institutionally-created disadvantage and under-development are eradicated. This means that, in coming years, the need to redress past imbalances in regional development will involve concentration of resources in those areas negatively affected by partition, the conflict and deliberate policies of neglect.

Sinn Féin will work for:-

- Strategic planning of roads, railways, water resources, energy supplies and distribution, ports, airports and telecommunications to take place on an all-Ireland basis;
- Major investment in Irish transport infrastructure

both to improve the efficiency of our cities and towns and to maximise economic and social links between north and south, and east and west;

- A reversal of the decline of the West and the concentration of development in the Belfast and Dublin metropolitan areas;

- Regional development policies which combat unemployment, poverty and inequality;

- Transparent and measurable equality targets, and challenging the Regional Strategic Framework's failure to address past patterns of discrimination and disadvantage;

- Responsibility for transport services and waterways and resources to stay within the public sector — an end to attempts by the British Treasury to force the sale of Belfast Harbour lands and the semi-privatisation of ports;

- Investment in roads, rail and ports, particularly in the north-west region;

- More investment in public transport to alleviate road congestion;

- An island-wide strategy to ensure that the best use is made of the new gas resources that have been discovered off the west coast;

- The rebuilding of the Derry to Monaghan railway line and the development on an all-island basis of the N2/R5.

Bridging the digital divide

There is widespread recognition throughout Irish society of the need to invest in the new communications and computer technologies that have become the cornerstone of modern economies. What is required is public sector involvement to ensure equity in how these communication resources are developed and that it is done through the principle of social inclusion:

- Rolling out new cable infrastructure throughout the island, not just larger towns and cities;

- Funding the deployment of new technologies to schools;

- Training to end the literacy problems that

effectively stop many people from having the skills in new technologies necessary in the modern workplace;

- Community access to telecommunications technologies.

Social Development

Disadvantage in our society can no longer be tolerated. While we all want prosperity it cannot be at the expense of those who are in need in our changing society. The elimination of poverty and social exclusion must be a major goal and an objective of our political representatives.

Sinn Féin calls for:-

- The creation of Priority Action Zones for urban development;

- A recognition of the importance of the social economy;

- Promotion of equality of opportunity between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinions, racial groups, ages, marital status and sexual orientation;

- A fully-resourced benefit take-up campaign should be initiated now which will lift people out of poverty. High-quality independent advice centres should be provided in all TSN (Targeting Social Need) areas, with full and unrestricted resources being made available to all benefit claimants to allow for full participation in reviews, appeals and tribunals;

- Policies, practices, expenditure and other resources need to be targeted towards people, groups and areas most in need. (TSN);

- Support for Restorative Justice schemes. The question of justice is one which needs to be located within the communities most concerned with the need for accountability and transparency. As such, Restorative Justice is an indispensable ingredient in the empowerment of marginalised and disadvantaged communities.

Housing

- Increase 'new build' by 1,000 per annum;
- The provision of accommodation to be made the principal responsibility of an accountable Housing Executive;
- Establish a specialist Homeless Forum to advise on homelessness;
- Retain mandatory grants for owner-occupiers and disabled people;
- Increase repair grants.

Anti-Racism

As Ireland becomes a more multicultural country, the challenge is to embrace our growing diversity as a source of strength and opportunity. To do this we must begin by opposing racism, discrimination and intolerance of any kind, wherever it occurs.

All of this requires a multi-faceted response: politically, educationally and working with communities and on an all-Ireland basis. Sinn Féin welcomes the Directive by the European Council in June 2000 requiring enhancement of the anti-racist provisions of EU member states by 2003.

Sinn Féin calls on all political parties in Ireland to sign an anti-racist pledge and make a commitment that they will not play party politics with the race issue and that they will not tolerate racism in any form in their party.

Asylum seekers and refugees

- All asylum seekers who arrived in Ireland before January 1st 2001 should be granted an amnesty;
- Measures to combat racism in Ireland through policies such as incitement to hatred legislation, racial discrimination; mainstreaming anti-racist awareness and resourcing minority ethnic groups and projects;
- A National Task Force on Immigration and Emigration to develop a national policy and a new Immigration Act;
- An end to detention of asylum seekers — 15 per

cent of asylum seekers in the Six Counties are detained each year;

- An end to the use of voucher systems for asylum-seekers;
- Amendments to the Dublin Convention to make special provision for the experience of asylum seekers and expedite their release from custody if they have claimed refugee status in the 26 Counties and are then arrested as illegal entrants in the Six Counties;
- The Equality Commission to demonstrate the robustness of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act to correct existing inequalities between people, irrespective of race or ethnic origin.

Travellers

- Legislation transferring powers of responsibility for Traveller accommodation from district councils to the Housing Executive must be passed without further delay;
- There is a need for legislation and adequate funding to ensure the implementation of PSI (Promoting Social Inclusion);
- Increased powers for the Equality Commission to enable the Commission to legally challenge discrimination.

Arts and Culture

Historically, arts, leisure and sports organisations that promote Irish culture have been under-funded, politically vetted and their work has been censored. Mainstream funding has, in the past, been allocated on a clear sectarian and class bias away from games and activities that reflect Irish culture.

The potential for the development of the arts, cultural and leisure sectors in Ireland is immense. Recent political developments, particularly of an all-island nature, could be underpinned by the inclusive and unique scope of Irish arts and culture. Furthermore, a more integrated, imaginative and innovative arts and culture policy could open up markets which generate indigenous business and craft sectors and also serve as a dynamic to reinvigorate Irish culture in general.

Economic development

- Developing cultural and tourist industries in the context of economic regeneration;
- Centralising and promoting Gaelic games and the Irish language in tourism;
- Archaeological heritage to be prioritised as a matter of urgency.

Expanding all-Ireland co-operation

- Encouraging an all-Ireland approach to the arts;
- Promoting tourism internationally as an all-Ireland destination with a single agency to market tourism;
- Encouraging the media throughout Ireland to dedicate more time to Irish arts and culture;
- Designating St Patrick's Day an all-Ireland public holiday.

Driving the equality agenda

- Developing an action plan and timetable which fully implements the new Targeting Social Need programme;
- Proposing strategic programmes for Irish arts, culture and leisure activities;
- Prioritising public art projects for artists working in Ireland.

Arts policy

- Arts Councils, North and South, should work for better co-operation in project co-ordination and strategic development;
- Community arts provide individual development and community empowerment and should be given a special designation within arts and culture policy and budgeted accordingly;
- Ensuring democratic accountability of the Arts Council;
- Working to ensure ethnic minority participation;
- Developing comprehensive disability arts programmes.

Irish language and the arts

- Strategy and timetables to plot the expansion and accessibility of the Irish language;
- Irish-language newspapers should be expanded with support of government funding;
- All public authorities and public buildings should operate a bilingual policy;
- Greater access to TG4 and Radio na Gaeltachta;
- Provision of two-way translation and translation staff to support the right to use the Irish-language in elected chambers
- Increasing support and resources for Foras na Gaeilge;
- Supporting innovative projects to enhance the level of Irish-language inclusion within society.

Women's Rights

The role of women in Irish society continues to be undervalued and underpaid. Throughout public life the voice of women is often absent, and in the negotiations which are taking place to shape the future of the island, the presence of women such as Minister Bairbre de Brún is the exception rather than the rule.

Sinn Féin is committed to bringing forward measures to ensure that women are represented equitably throughout society.

Access and participation

- Measures to achieve equality of representation both in political life and in all public appointments;
- The setting of time-scales to achieve equality of outcome in employment structures, education and training;
- The elimination of discriminatory and prejudicial practices in the public service and private sector;
- The provision of childcare facilities and subsidies for childcare;
- Training, education and community employment

opportunities for women in the home who wish to return to the workforce.

Violence against women

A multi-faceted approach to eradicate violence against women, including proper resources for crisis centres.