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FOR REAL CHANGE



Sinn Féin Election Manifesto 1987

FOR REAL CHANGE

OUR PEOPLE condemned to the dole queues or forced into emigration; diminishing state services granted grudgingly to those in need; a depleted workforce demoralised by unfair taxation; our country divided, dependent and on the verge of bankruptcy – this is Ireland today.

Those of us who live in the 26 Counties are told that we are free. But are we? Are we free to determine the political future of this state while part of our country remains under British rule?

Are we free to plan for economic growth, for the development of our agriculture, fisheries, forestry and manufacturing industries, while policy decisions over such fundamental matters are increasingly controlled by the EEC?

Are we free to invest in the future, to build a social and economic infrastructure which would benefit young and old, healthy and sick, while that future is mortgaged to international money-lenders?

After 65 years of statehood, the legacy of successive Leinster House governments is a legacy of failure: failure to resolve the national question, failure to remedy social and economic stagnation, failure to defend even the limited sovereignty which this state was allowed to have.

As a party that is prepared to do more than simply talk about freedom, Sinn Féin believes that it is time for a change, time to tackle the political, social and economic mess which plagues this island, time to restore national self-esteem and to build confidence in the future.

Real change – and not simply the change of management which is all that the present parties in Leinster House can offer – this is what is needed and Sinn Féin can respond to that need.

We are an open, democratic and revolutionary political party, dedicated to the reunification of Ireland and the establishment of a 32-County

democratic socialist republic. Our members and elected representatives throughout Ireland promote a radical, community-based approach to politics. By reflecting the views and the needs of ordinary people rather than the opinions of so-called 'experts', such an approach is the only guarantee of democracy.

We are resolute in our determination to build political, social and economic justice in Ireland. Our entry into Leinster House will not, by itself, achieve such justice but, by confronting the self-servers who have betrayed the trust of the people of the 26 Counties, we are confident that the day of justice will come all the sooner.

An answer is needed to the corruption in Leinster House where politicians have voted themselves excessive salaries and numerous perks while the general public is told to 'tighten its belt'.

Besides opposing such injustice, Sinn Féin TDs will not draw their salaries for personal use. The money shall instead be distributed at the discretion of the Sinn Féin Ard Chomhairle to defray national and constituency expenses.

This manifesto, besides outlining the inept performance of the Coalition government on all the major issues of today, sets out the Sinn Féin alternative – an alternative which promises real change for the future.

Like the apartheid regime in South Africa, the political establishment in Leinster House fears the prospect of real change and has done all in its power to silence those who advocate such change. Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act is anti-democratic. It denies Sinn Féin the opportunity to present its policies on an equal footing with other parties and it denies the electorate the right to make an informed political choice on the basis of what is seen and heard on television and radio.

**A UNITED IRELAND –
AN URGENT DEMAND**

Sinn Fein offers the social and economic policies outlined in this manifesto as being sensible short-term steps needed to alleviate the grave situation facing the people of the 26 Counties.

At the same time, we firmly believe that neither the state nor the Six-County statelet can reach their full economic and social potential separately. This is quite obvious in the case of the Six Counties which has a totally dependent economy, incapable of constituting a viable economic unit. However, the impact of partition is not always so clearly seen in the 26 Counties where, on the surface at least, they appear to have a self-governing economic entity.

But partition has had a major effect, particularly in the border counties which, cut off from their rural hinterland, have suffered terminal economic decline and depopulation. Then there is the cost of the border in terms of direct spending through collaboration with Britain and lost revenue due to smuggling.

One of the major effects of this artificial border has been to make 26-County domestic economic activity that much harder to enforce.

The British have maintained a strong economic presence in the South. Banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions, and major retail outlets are largely owned by British firms or have strong British links. British manufacturing companies are also fairly well represented in an industrial sector which is dominated by multinationals from the USA and Europe.

This situation makes the Southern establishment, governed as it is by self-interest and a strong desire to maintain the status quo, unwilling to support any degree of independence in the face of Irish economic strength and their dependence on it. Increasingly, the 26-County political establishment has identified its economic and political interests with the wider interests of the USA, the UK and NATO.

Sinn Fein regards a united and sovereign Ireland not merely as an aspiration, the realisation of

which can be delayed indefinitely, but as a measure vital to the immediate and future social, political and economic development of the Irish people.

All of the main parties in the state declare that they too want to see a united Ireland, that the resolution of the Northern conflict is a national priority, yet Sinn Fein is the only party contesting this election which is organised substantially throughout the 32 Counties and the only party actively committed to, and working towards, the goal of total Irish independence.

Britain is opposed to Irish independence. The presence in part of Ireland of 10,000 British soldiers, in addition to 8,000 locally-recruited soldiers of the UDR and 12,000 members of the armed and paramilitary RUC, is clear proof of the British government's determination to keep Ireland and the Irish people divided.

British violence guarantees the maintenance of the Six-County statelet where a permanent pro-British majority tramples on the national right to self-determination and uses discrimination and repressive laws to defend its sectarian privileges. Faced with state violence and injustice, republicans in the Six Counties have been forced to take up armed struggle. Sinn Fein defends that struggle in the same way that we defend the achievement of an earlier generation which fought the British to a standstill during the Tan War. The armed struggle in the Six Counties today is the latest phase in the War of Independence, a war forced on the Irish people by the refusal of the British government to concede Irish freedom peacefully.

It should be remembered that the current phase of armed resistance to British rule began only after a campaign for Civil Rights had been literally beaten off the streets of the Six Counties, after a series of loyalist pogroms had destroyed nationalist homes and lives, and after it became clear that British troops had been sent to Ireland not to protect the beleaguered nationalists but to preserve the status quo.

For 50 years, nothing changed in the Six Counties. Over the past 16 years, however, the resistance of the nationalist and republican people has been the catalyst for steady political change. The fall of the Stormont parliament and the continuous experiments introduced by Britain in its attempt to stabilise the situation, testify to the success of that resistance in gradually narrowing British options until only one option remains – withdrawal.

Sinn Fein is convinced that further gains would



have been made had it not been for the actions of successive governments here. Far from confronting the British, they have tried to undermine the resistance campaign. Their willingness to extradite republicans to the discredited Northern judiciary and the fact that they spend £350 million-£400 million each year defending the border contradicts their stated opposition to partition. Indeed, it has now reached the point where the taxpayer in this state is forced to pay more to defend the British-imposed border than the taxpayer in Britain pays.

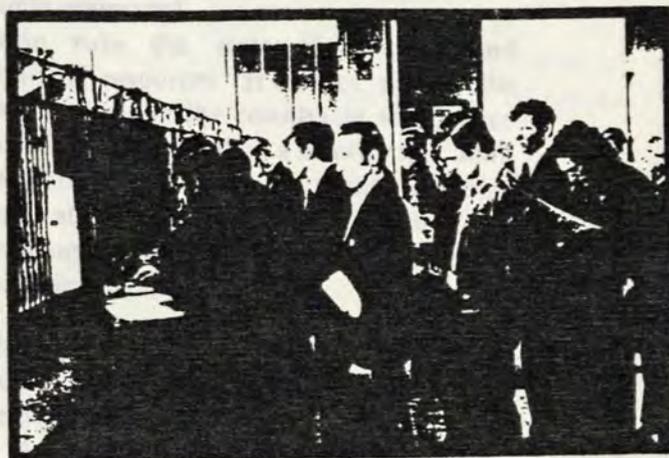
Britain is clearly not neutral in the Six Counties, yet the main political parties here act as if that were the case. Their support for the latest British experiment, the Hillsborough Agreement, ignores the root cause of the conflict and dooms the people of the Six Counties to more suffering, more repression, more inequality and more division. For the people of this island as a whole it means the continuation of partition and puts off the day of *real* peace when *all* of the people of Ireland will be able to determine their own future as a sovereign nation.

The major parties in Leinster House have had over 60 years to sort out the problem of British interference in Ireland. They have had over 60 years to implement the social and democratic principles of the 1916 Proclamation. They have had over 60 years to provide political, social and economic sovereignty for this island. They have had long enough.

Sinn Fein makes no empty election promises and offers no easy solutions. We stand on our record as the only party which has consistently asserted and worked for the right of the Irish people to national reunification and freedom.

Sinn Fein calls for:

- A declaration of British intent to withdraw from Ireland.
- Self-determination for the Irish people.
- An amnesty for all political prisoners in Ireland and abroad.
- An immediate end to cross-border collaboration.



UNEMPLOYMENT- The economic crisis

THE DEPTH of the economic crisis is clearly shown by the high rate of unemployment, the rise in emigration and the size of the government debt.

Government policies have led to an official unemployment rate of over 19% – a quarter of a million people. This official figure grossly underestimates the actual level of unemployment. It does not take into account the people on government 'training' schemes, school-leavers who are too young to register and those who just don't bother but who would in better times be active members of the labour force, and the 75,000 who have emigrated over the past five years.

Besides the hardship imposed on at least a third of the population, unemployment robs the state of the resources it needs for economic growth. Excluding the cost involved in lost economic activity, unemployment now costs the 26 Counties approximately £1 billion directly in welfare payments, lost tax revenue and employment schemes each year.

Nobody now attempts to deny that, for the foreseeable future, unemployment will continue to increase. The Coalition boast is that it has slowed down the rate of increase. This claim is of small comfort as the workforce is being pared to the bone and the dole queues lengthen. Fewer people now work in industry than was the case 25 years ago.

Failure to come to terms with and successfully tackle this lack of economic development will