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Local & National

McCord rejected a second time for victims' post

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Thursday, December 13, 2007

By Chris Thornton

Campaigning dad Raymond McCord has been turned down for the Victims' Commissioner's job a second time - this time because he doesn't have experience running an office.

Mr McCord was rejected without an interview earlier this year, and again this month after First Ministers Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness decided to allow new applications.

The first Ministers decided in October to seek more applications for the £65,000-a-year post, which was first advertised back in January.

Mr McCord's first application for the job was turned down because officials said he did not demonstrate enough awareness of the Troubles - even though his son was murdered by the UVF, he was attacked and threatened repeatedly by loyalists, and his complaint to the Police Ombudsman led to a significant report on collusion.

They also said he did not have the necessary media skills - despite running a decade-long campaign to keep his son's case in the spotlight.

This time the steelworker was rejected solely on the basis of his office experience.

"Why all of a sudden am I aware of the Troubles and able to deal with the media?" Mr McCord asked.

He said he did not believe office management skills should be an important requirement for the job.

"Victims want someone who knows what it's like to sit and cry at night over a lost son or brother or mother," he said.

And he said office management did not appear to be a requirement when Interim Victims Commissioner Bertha McDougall was appointed as a political favour to the DUP. It was later declared illegal, although the Government is appealing.

"I don't know what experience Bertha McDougall had of office management, but I understand she had people to run her office. She was picked for the job because the DUP wanted her," McCord said.

"As far as I'm concerned the NIO and the Office of First and Deputy First Ministers have shown utter contempt for victims.

"This is not about glory or money. This is something I believe in. I was invited to the White House on the victims' issue but I'm not even fit to get an interview.

"The people who are shortlisted are going to be interviewed by Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley. I believe this is wrong."

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