



# Manifesto

May 1999

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## SINN FÉIN ON THE ROAD TO EUROPE



**A Chara,**

This election comes at an important time both in the search for a lasting peace in Ireland and the far reaching political and economic changes that are currently taking place within the European Union. In these elections the people of Ireland will have to decide what our priorities are for the future both in terms of a changing Ireland and a changing Europe.

As the only party standing candidates in all five constituencies in Ireland Sinn Féin are working to build an inclusive, just and equal society.

We want to see a European Union which is representative of its people. The European Union of today is dominated by the larger states and acts in the interests of international finance. We want a European Union where the aim of policy and the goals of its institutions is to improve the quality of life for people.

It is only by electing strong and hard working representatives who will stand up for Ireland's rights that real and positive change will be achieved in reforming and restructuring the European Union.

*Is mise,  
Gerry Adams MP*

### **Sinn Féin and the European Union**

**Sinn Féin recognises the European Union as a key terrain for political struggle and one which we can use to advance our republican aims of national independence and economic and social justice.**

We are keenly aware of the dangers for Ireland as more and more decisions regarding political, economic and military matters are ceded to the unaccountable structures of the European Union.

Sinn Féin's position is one of engaging with the European Union and its institutions in a critical manner. One of the core issues facing voters is what kind of Europe we want and how best this can be achieved, particularly in relation to

key policy areas - EMU, CAP, Agenda 2000, regional policy, Peace and Reconciliation Funding, the environment, and social inclusion. Sinn Féin are committed to:

- working for the reform and restructuring of the European Union
- decentralising of power back to national parliaments
- advancing national democracy and economic and social justice
- promoting a 32 county political and economic identity in the European Union
- forging political alliances with other like minded parties and struggles in the best interests of Ireland

## EU and Peace Process

Since the last European elections in 1994 we have seen many developments and setbacks on the road to a lasting peace settlement, in all of which Sinn Féin have been central. We saw the evolving of the Irish peace process, two IRA cessations, negotiations in 1998 leading to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. An Agreement which was endorsed by the overwhelming majority of the people of Ireland.

Sinn Féin committed ourselves to the full implementation of the Agreement and have participated in the process in good faith. We have honoured all of our commitments. However, the last year has been one of missed opportunities and broken promises. We have seen an absence of political progress, the ongoing siege of the residents of the Garvaghy Road by the Orange Order and hundreds of attacks on the nationalist community by loyalist death squads.

The failure to establish the Executive and the all Ireland Ministerial Council is as a result of the refusal of the British government and the unionists to implement all aspects of the Good Friday Agreement.

While much has been achieved in the last five years a lot more hard work is required. The Good Friday Agreement needs to be implemented. Equality and Justice must become a reality. Sinn Féin has shown our willingness to take difficult and hard decisions and to lead from the front. We are committed to the transformation of Irish society and are working to develop agreement among the people of Ireland. We are confident that we can make this happen

Sinn Féin is working for:

- the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement
- a lasting peace settlement
- Irish unity and independence

## Neutrality

Sinn Féin is committed to the maintenance of positive neutrality and an independent foreign policy both in the context of a 26 county state and in a future united Ireland. We are for positive neutrality in action. We have a world view, as well as a distinctly Irish view. We make common cause with oppressed people throughout the world against economically and militarily powerful states.

Sinn Féin believes that the NATO bombing of Serbia should end. Slobodan Milosevic is a gross violator of human rights but the bombing of Serbia is not the solution to the complex political crisis in the Balkans. Instead of passive support for NATO Ireland should be part of the effort in the European Union and in the United Nations to secure a diplomatic solution.

Sinn Féin believes we should:

- oppose the militarisation of the EU and the participation by Ireland in military alliances eg: NATO and NATO led organisations - the Western European Union and Partnership for Peace (PfP)
- hold a constitutional referendum on the issue of Irish neutrality
- promote European and International security through a policy of disarmament and demilitarisation.
- strengthen our unique position on the international stage as a neutral state in Europe

## Accountability in Europe

The resignation in recent months of all of the members of the European Union Commission has highlighted the democratic deficit within the European Union. This is just one of a complex series of institutions and power structures which have superseded national parliaments and the rights of citizens, a situation referred to as the 'democratic deficit'.

Sinn Féin is opposed to these undemocratic structures. We are against the

present structure of the European Union Commission which is a hugely powerful and unelected executive, beyond the control of elected members. Sinn Féin oppose institutions such as the European Central Bank which is unelected, unaccountable and unrepresentative.

The ongoing transfer of economic and political power and sovereignty from individual states to the European Union is a matter of grave concern and is something we are working to reverse. Sinn Féin believes:

- we need a decentralisation of power within the European Union
- we need political institutions that are open, transparent and accountable
- there must be serious reform within all EU institutions to counter the current democratic deficit

## Economy

Sinn Féin has been highly critical of European Union economic policies and in recent years have voiced our opposition to Economic Monetary Union and the EURO. We believe EMU will limit the right of Irish people to control their own economy. If implemented EMU will represent a backwards step with potential costs for Ireland, north and south. EMU is contrary to our socialist, republican objectives of national sovereignty in political, economic and social terms.

Our vision of EU economic policy involves:

- decentralisation of power and decision making
- strengthening social provisions
- the introduction of an equitable taxation system
- a campaign to combat poverty through the introduction of a minimum wage and the expansion of public sector employment

**Our opposition to the EMU is for the following reasons:**

- It will involve even further centralisation of political and economic power in a European superstate with loss of power to member states
- The people of Ireland will surrender control of domestic monetary policy to the European Central Bank
- There is a complete absence of social priorities such as the need to eradicate unemployment and poverty
- It will result in increased economic divergence within Ireland, north and

south. This will create further obstacles to our objective of developing a single, fully integrated all-Ireland economy

## EU Structural Funds

The 26 Counties will receive total structural and cohesion funds of £ 2.97 billion between the years 2000 and 2006. The Six Counties will receive £1.5 billion for the same period. The EU Peace and Reconciliation Fund will receive an additional £400 million.

Sinn Fein believes that the Dublin and London governments have missed a great opportunity in the latest round of structural fund negotiations to maximise the benefits to the people of Ireland. Sinn Féin is calling for:

- An all Ireland dimension There is a strong argument to be made for a joint structural funds plan to develop infrastructure on a cross border basis.
- An increase in spending on community initiatives Community initiatives such as the LEADER programme actually make a difference at the basic level of society, yet they are a tiny amount of the total funding. Sinn Fein believes that these programmes should make up the bulk of the funding.
- Prioritising the areas and communities most disadvantaged In 1988 Ireland was deemed one of the poorest regions of the European Union, now in 1999 Ireland is an economic success story and our GDP is at 90% of the European Union average level. However across Ireland many urban and rural communities are actually worse off than they were in 1988. Structural and cohesion funds should be prioritising disadvantaged areas and communities rather than concentrating on high visibility and flagship projects.
- Maximise participation Allocation of European Union funds is decided totally by central government in Dublin and London. Control of the EU funds as with significant elements of public spending should be in the hands of empowered democratically elected regional and local government structures. The European Union funds should be administered, co-ordinated and planned from the ground up.
- Efficient , equitable and transparent funding mechanisms At present many of the processes of how European Union funding is spent in Ireland is hidden from the general public. We are calling for funding allocations in Ireland to be co-ordinated and administered to avoid criminal abuses.
- Safeguards for the environment The EU Commission plays a huge role today in setting the criteria for funding allocations. In many cases the

environmental consequences of the funding criteria are not properly taken into account. Sinn Fein believes that all EU funding initiatives should environmentally assessed before any funding is allocated.

## CAP reform

The recent negotiations on Agenda 2000 took no action to end the inequities of the CAP. There was no recognition of the problems facing small farmers and there was little to assist the almost 5,000 people who are leaving farming annually or indeed those farmers throughout Ireland who are facing collapsing incomes

Sinn Fein proposes:

- Real reform of the CAP. The original objectives to maintain the maximum amount of farmers on the land while ensuring a proper standard of living for farmers and fair prices to consumers have not been delivered. The CAP funding mechanisms must be changed to help small farmers and rural communities;
- A guarantee of a basic income for farmers who stay on their holdings to guarantee their long-term future. This would stop ongoing depopulation and create a positive spin off effect in local rural economies.
- A funding initiative to promote organic farming in Ireland, co-operative agricultural projects and broadleaf forestry projects should be vigorously promoted and supported;
- Funds for rural enterprise projects - Sinn Fein believes there should be equity in the allocation of funding for local enterprise projects. Funding for indigenous enterprise projects have been cut in recent years.
- An Increase in LEADER funds The success of rural development projects under the European Union LEADER programme is well recognised and should play a vital part of any rural regeneration programme. It should be a substantial part of European Union funding to rural areas.
- A National Conference - The Dublin Government should be prevailed upon to hold an all Ireland conference that could formulate a strategy to promote rural development in Ireland. Such a conference would have to be organised on a community participatory basis and not be solely representative of the vested interests that dominate agri-business and rural policies today.

## Environment

Sinn Féin is committed to the principles of sustainable development. The aim of environmental policy both within Ireland and the European Union must be to create less pollution, use energy wisely and to reduce, reuse and recycle waste.

Sinn Féin are calling for:

- all-Ireland approach to environmental issues
- the closure of Sellafield
- a ban on the production and sale of genetically modified foods
- enactment of European Union waste legislation
- a ban on the use of incinerators

## Equality

Parallel to the moves towards economic and political union by European Union member states is the programme to create a Social Europe. While some progress has been made efforts to tackle social exclusion have yet to be given sufficient priority.

Sinn Féin believe that equality and bringing an end to exclusion and discrimination must be at the heart of European Union social policy. Sinn Féin is calling for:

- an EU wide campaign to oppose racism
- legislation to ensure the provision of state childcare facilities
- the implementation of an European Union wide minimum hourly wage
- the extension of social charter to ensure that workers rights are fully protected
- investment in education, housing, health and social services
- an European Union wide equality agenda

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[Sinn Féin Election Headquarters](#) · [Sinn Féin Documents](#)