



## **MITCHEL McLAUGHLIN, MLA**

### **Sinn Fein's National Chairperson**

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Mitchel McLaughlin is 57 years old. He is married and lives in the Bogside area of Derry City with his wife Mary-Lou and their three sons, Conor, Ronan and Niall. He is also a grandfather to two boys.

Mitchel, a member of the Party's National Executive (Ard Chomhairle), has been Sinn Fein's National Chairperson since 1996. In this role he plays a major part in overseeing the political development of the Party.

He was elected to Derry City Council in 1985 and served on that body for almost 15 years. During this time Mitchel was leader of the Sinn Féin group of Councilors, chairing vital policy and resources committees involved in developing an economic and strategic development plan for the city. He has campaigned against and led delegations of Councilors to raise the issue of intrusive British military installations in local neighbourhoods. Due to his heavy workload in the Assembly and Party Leadership responsibilities he resigned from Derry City Council in December 1999 following his election to the Assembly in 1998. Party colleague Gearóid MacLochlainn was co-opted to replace him on Derry City Council.

Mitchel was first politically active in the Civil Rights Association in 1968. In this capacity Mitchel took part in the Bloody Sunday march in January 1972 at which British paratroopers shot and killed 14 unarmed demonstrators. He was also a leading member of the National H-Blocks/Armagh Committee -a committee organised to campaign around the prison protests of the late 70's and early 80's arising out of the criminalization policy, which culminated in the hunger strikes of 1981.

He has played a central role in formulating Sinn Fein's current peace strategy and was instrumental in the drawing up of our two peace documents, Scenario for Peace (1989) and Towards a Lasting Peace in Ireland (1992). Mitchel was a key representative of the party in opening up talks with British politicians and members of the unionist community in the days before the peace process took on a public dimension. He is one of Sinn Fein's main spokespersons on the peace process and travels widely to speak on behalf of the party.

Mitchel was elected as a party peace negotiator to the all-party talks in the election of May 1997. He participated in detailed negotiations about human rights matters including the future of policing and the abuse of human rights during the course of the conflict.

He was one of the main negotiators in the talks resulting in the Good Friday Agreement and remains a key player in the ongoing attempts to have that Agreement implemented in full. Mitchel was elected to the Assembly as a member for Foyle in the 1998 elections.

In June 1999, Mitchel McLaughlin was the party candidate in the elections to the European parliament polling 119,384 votes.

As an Assembly member for Foyle, Mitchel played a key role in the assembly. He was a member of the Assembly's Environment and Education Committees. He has been the Party Spokesperson on the Environment as well as 'Justice Spokesperson'. In this capacity Mitchel was involved in detailed work on the issue of British Crown force involvement in the killings of nationalists including the human rights lawyers, Pat Finucane and Rosemary Nelson and the ongoing negotiations to achieve a new beginning to policing. He has recently been appointed as the "Education Spokesperson". As Foyle MLA, Mitchel was instrumental in highlighting the problem of City centre violence and was the first public representative to bring together representatives of the business, community, Vintners and Fire and Ambulance Services to explore ways of eliminating this madness from our community.