TIME **4**UNIT AM LE HAONTACHT

NUACHT NA hAONTACHTA

SEPTEMBER **MEÁN FÓMHAIR 2021**

UNFOLDING OF SEE PAGE 2

BANNER FOR MORE

PREPARING FOR IRISH UNI

However hard some within the Irish and British governments, political unionism, and sections of the media, try to blunt or distract the ongoing debate about Irish Unity, they fail.

The conversation around a united Ireland continues to grow apace. Many commentators have reflected on unity in their recent contributions, some negatively but most constructively. The big focus for many is on what are the next steps as we seek to positively resolve the constitutional question.

In an opinion piece in the Irish Times Economist David McWilliams examined the recent statistics on trade north and south - which is commented on in a later article. He said: "The increased integration of the island economy serves to refocus our minds on constitutional change which is coming."

McWilliams examined the demographic shifts that have taken place in the North over recent decades. He notes that: "Based on the 2011 census. (the most recent we have) under the age of 40, self-identified Catholics are in the majority in Northern Ireland. This becomes more evident as the population gets younger. In the youngest age group of 0-5, Catholics comprise 44.3 per cent, Protestants 31.7 per cent, and no religion 23 per cent."

McWilliams is right in acknowledging that the use of religious labels may not accurately reflect voting intentions but they do "give a good approximation" he says.

While Protestants now only comprise a majority in two of the North's six counties they would still constitute around 15 per cent of the population of the island of Ireland. In the 2011 census approximately 48 per cent identified themselves as British only or British/Northern Irish only. They are as McWilliams defines them, "a distinct community whose identity, culture and interests must be served in a united Ireland. They are not Irish, and you cannot force them to be Irish." McWilliams offers up his thoughts on one possible future model for the island of Ireland. He says: "The Swiss have figured out a way to ensure that no ethnic group feels short-changed, dependent or unrepresented. The key to Swiss success is localism, devolved decision-making, and direct democracy, where each locality runs its own affairs, sets its own taxes and basically doesn't annoy the people over the next valley..."

SO, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT FINDING **ACCOMMODATIONS THAT ARE** COMFORTABLE TO ALL AND THREATEN NO ONE... IS GOING TO BE A S IGNIFICANT CHALLENGE. BUT CLEARLY THE DEBATE HAS ALREADY BEGUN.

In short McWilliams is suggesting that the Swiss commune system, in which the greatest amount of power and decision making is devolved to local communities, is one structure that should be looked at for a future shared island of Ireland. Patricia MacBride in a column in the Irish News also touched on the issue of future constitutional and governmental structures. Her interest, sparked by a tweet from a graduate of International Politics at Queens University, was whether United Irelanders were up for examining a consociational Dáil in a United Ireland. Consociational means "a political system formed by the cooperation of different social groups on the basis of shared power." Some responders were for it. Others were against it. Others raised alternative governmental structures.

So, it is obvious that finding accommodations that are comfortable to all and threaten no one - in which the rights of all citizens are respected and democracy is the only basis for change - is going to be a significant challenge. But clearly the debate has already begun.

Sinn Féin are clear about our objective of a citizen centred rights based Republic as set out in the 1916 Proclamation but whatever constitutional arrangements we eventually

arrive at it is vital that they emerge from open, public, democratic conversations - including in a Citizens Assembly and/or Constitutional Convention – which seek to address the concerns of all, but in particular the unionist section of our

Let's talk about

of dialogue, open, and democratic, which is inclusive of all voices and excludes no one. In such discussions, as in the negotiations around the peace process, the key to success means that everything must be on the table for negotiation and no issue should be excluded.

If someone wants to discuss what the flag of the new Ireland should be or what anthem we should stand to or any other matter that is of concern, they have the right to do so. We will all have issues we want on the agenda.

All of these developments and commentary are naturally part of the ongoing work of advocating for Irish Unity. It is taking place every day on social media, in the newspaper columns, on the broadcast media, in interviews and publications and through public events. While the Irish and the British governments, and others might want wish it away the future of this island and the potential for a United Ireland is now top of the agenda. Join the Conversation.

people in the North. This can best be achieved through a process

UNITY IS FOR EVERYONE - DÉANAÍMIS LE CHÉILE

Over the summer the Unity is For Everyone Banner has been touring the country. It started off on Divis Tower. In early August it was in West Tyrone and Donegal. The front page photo is of the banner draped over the bridge at Strabane. It was also displayed in Lifford and Castlederg.

Later in the month it was brought to Munster as part of Sinn Féin's Irish Unity summer campaign. Following on from the very successful #Time4Unity projection in June on the wall of the R&H Hall building in Cork's dockland the 'Unity is for Everyone' banner was displayed at key locations around Cork.

Among the locations it was erected were Bells Field; The Lough; Ballincollig and The Fairfield.

Local TD Thomas Gould explained the purpose of the banner: "We're trying to stimulate a debate. We want Irish Unity but what we're trying to do is encourage different people from different political parties and groups to begin discussing unity. What it means for them, for Cork, for Munster and for the island of Ireland. It's about encouraging the establishment of a peoples Assembly and Constitutional Convention where the views of all who live on this island can be voiced and the future debated."

The banner was then brought from Cork to Kerry where it was displayed





at Killarney Lakes; Banna Strand; Inch Beach and the Clashmealcon caves. From there it travelled to Cork North West and Millstreet and Kanturk Park. Millstreet has particular connections to the plans for the Easter Rising. After he became a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood's Military Council Padraig Pearse



visited Millstreet on 22
August 1915. Publicly he was there to take part in the local Feis but the real purpose of his visit was to meet with the local Irish Volunteers.

His visit took place just three weeks after his speech at the graveside of O'Donovan Rossa where he famously said: "They think that they have pacified Ireland.



They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools!—they have left us our Fenian dead; and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace."



WANT A UNITED IRELAND? — GET ON THE **REGISTER TO VOTE!**

However effective an election campaign might be either in terms of posters, social media, leaflets, canvassing and all the rest it will fail if voters are not on the electoral register.

This is the single most important aspect of any election campaign and it begins long before a date is set for the election. In July the Electoral Office in the North wiped the entire electoral register. Each and every citizen of voting age was taken off the

register in one fell swoop. Sinn Féin robustly challenged the Electoral Office once they

announced their decision to do this, but the deafening silence of the North's other political parties meant that the deletion of every single name on the register went ahead. A couple of months on and the uptake of citizens actively working to

get themselves back on the electoral register has been patchy. At this moment in time, most areas lie somewhere between a third and a half of those on the old register, successfully getting on the new one. The Six-County Cúige has initiated an ambitious and comprehensive registration campaign to try and get as many people on to the new register as quickly possible. Whilst there are obvious immediate benefits for both people and the party in doing so, the big prize has to be seen in preparing for a future unity referendum.

The Electoral Register was last wiped in the early 2000s - almost two decades ago. Fuelled by Brexit, Sinn Féin's growth, and a myriad of other factors, the debate on a new and united Ireland is growing. We're seeing an almost daily intervention on the subject from a widening range of people. The political establishment on this island are now actively considering our constitutional future in a way never seen before. Does anybody seriously believe that we won't be facing a unity referendum by the end of this decade and probably sooner? Next year there will also be an Assembly election and we can already see how unionist parties are wiping up fear to maximise their turnout. So, we need the biggest vote possible for Sinn Féin and the biggest vote possible for a United Ireland. We all need to redouble our efforts. Get in touch with your local Cumann or Comhairle Ceantair to find out how to play your part!



REGISTER NOW TO VOTE gov.uk/register-to-vote



Irish govt must take the lead on Unity

In the course of an interview in the Irish News, publicising his new book of short stories 'Black Mountain', the former Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams spoke about his hopes and expectations for the future and for the referendum on Irish

He said: "The process we have in mind involves the Irish government taking the lead, which is constitutionally obliged to do anyway, making sure that all aspects of the Good Friday Agreement are implemented, and then we want to see the creation of a Citizen Assembly and a Constitutional Convention looking what preparatory work is needed for a successful vote on a United Ireland.'

Obviously there are those who have an ideological and emotional connection to the Union with Britain and that is fair enough but there are others who are already asking - can we afford unity and what about our health service.

"We have the National Health Service in the North which is under huge pressure and we have a semi-privatised service in the South. Can we have an all-island health service? Sinn Féin says Yes. Can we afford it? Yes. But that's where the experts would be brought it to ensure that there are proper social protections and a service that is GERRY ADAMS free at the point of delivery. It makes sense.'



"ULTIMATELY IT IS FOR THE PEOPLE. THE REFERENDUM IS THE PEOPLE TAKING THE **DECISION. NOT THE POLITICIANS.**"

If you are a unionist what sort of Ireland can we have that guarantees your rights and protections. "Arlene Foster lives in a county that has a majority of nationalists and she's happy there. It's her homeland. It's her home place. I don't want her to leave, she has a contribution to make. Unionists who are of that mindset need to be persuaded that they will have greater representation; they will be better involved in a new future. How can we create a situation in which unionists feel at home and are content? How can we in this city which is one of the most segregated, guarantee that the kids on the Shankill can have a future? All of this needs to be planned for debated and thrashed out. Then when you have that preparatory work done you have your referendum.

Gerry Adams pointed out that: "Some unionists have started to engage on the issue of unity. Some within civic unionism are very much part of this. But tactically most unionists don't want to talk about it because they see that as a trap. So, we must respect the political ideological position that unionist leaders have but continue to engage. You change people by changing the political conditions in which they live."

On the role of the Irish government Gerry Adams said: "If the Irish government decided now, as a matter of policy, that it was going to go for a referendum then the timing of the referendum would also be part of the process of consultation and the timing would be set by the processes we put in place for consultation and information planning.

The Irish government should also be using its diplomatic and international connections to bring that about. We have a diaspora, especially in the USA, that has enormous influence. The EU was skilfully used to ensure that the economy of this island was protected as a result of the chaos of Brexit.

If the Irish government used the same energy in America, across Europe and other parts of the world to get international support in behind the principle of letting people have their say, we can secure the referendum and win it. Ultimately it is for the people. The referendum is the people taking the decision, not the politicians.

On the timing of the referendum the former party leader said: "It isn't just a matter of having the referendum. I want to win it. It's about moving from a divided Ireland where we don't have control over our own destinies into a united people who then have that control. How long will it take? That will depend on the process of planning and the transitions that the process goes through. I am confident that we will succeed."

OPPOSING

SECTARIANISM

Unity News has been serialising sections of our policy paper 'Inclusion and Reconciliation in a New Ireland' since it was first published in March.

The policy paper is an important contribution to the ongoing debate around legacy issues but it also addresses matters that must be part of any dialogue that leads to the Unity Referendum and to a United Ireland.

This edition outlines Sinn Féin's commitment to maximise opposition to sectarianism and sets out clear propositions to encourage the widest possible support for anti-sectarian policies, including the introduction of an all-island reconciliation strategy under the auspices of the North South Ministerial Council.

The policy also identifies measures to be taken by the Executive,

Assembly and local government to tackle sectarianism and places an obligation on elected representatives to honour an anti-sectarian pledge.

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

The GFA principles of mutual respect, parity of esteem, equality, the right to both live free from sectarian harassment, and the right to pursue constitutional change through purely peaceful and democratic methods have never been fully embraced within the political institutions of the north. The culture of sectarianism continues to retard the primacy of democratic politics within the northern state.

We believe the robustness of the political process depends upon anti-sectarianism being embraced at the heart of the political institutions.

In furtherance of this, Sinn Féin will:

- Seek the incorporation of a citizen's anti-sectarian charter into the pledges of Ministers, MLAS, TDS and local councillors across the island.
- Seek the full implementation of the Together: Building a United Community strategy in the north.
- Introduce a clear legal definition of sectarianism as a hate crime within anti-sectarianism legislation with appropriate legally enforceable sanctions.
- Encourage all-party unity and leadership for a popular campaign against sectarianism and segregation, North and South.
- Support the establishment of a civic forum in the north as a platform to encourage crosscommunity and anti-sectarian solidarity within civic society.
- Support the introduction of an all island reconciliation strategy under the auspices of the North South Ministerial Council.

ENHANCING POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY

True democratic politics, bereft of sectarian culture or attitudes, need to work and be seen to do so successfully within our institutions, under the agreed and binding GFA principles.

Public representatives and political leaders must set the example and desist from language or actions which cause insult or demean the identity of anyone in our society. In furtherance of this, Sinn Féin proposes that:

- The Executive & Assembly in the north, local authorities and all public sector bodies adopt a dedicated antisectarianism policy and make it publicly available on their websites.
- All elected representatives will be bound to pro-actively uphold and implement the commitment of his / her anti sectarianism pledge of office.
- Every member of the civil service and public sector workers, including staff within the Assembly, will be provided with sectarianism awareness training so they may be equipped with the skills and awareness to challenge bigotry.
- Full compliance with equality and anti-discrimination legislation of Fair Employment & Treatment Order will be actively promoted for successful bidders for Government contracts or public funding in the private and voluntary sectors; and that previous compliance record be taken into account when awarding contracts.

THE INCLUSION AND RECONCILIATION PAPER IS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT



https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/60497

RÓL NA NINSTITIÚIDÍ POLAITIÚLA

Níor glacadh riamh go hiomlán le hinstitiúidí polaitiúla an tuaiscirt prionsabail Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta maidir le meas frithpháirteach, comhionannas meas, comhionannas, an ceart chun maireachtáil saor ó chiapadh seicteach, agus an ceart chun athrú bunreachtúil a shaothrú trí mhodhanna síochánta agus daonlathacha amháin. Leanann cultúr an tseicteachais siar ar phríomhacht na polaitíochta daonlathaí sa stat

thuaidh.

Sinn (3) Féin 🚟

ATHMHUINTEARAS

CUIMSIÚ

IN ÉIRINN NUA

Creidimid go mbraitheann stóinseacht an phróisis pholaitiúil ar ghlacadh le frith-seicteachas I gcroílár na n-institiúidí polaitiúla.

Chun é sin a chur chun cinn:

- Déanfaidh Sinn Féin iarracht cairt frith-seicteach saoránach a ionchorprú I ngealltanais Airí, MLAnna, TDanna agus comhairleoirí áitiúla ar fud an oileáin.
- Cuirfidh sé I bhfeidhm go hiomlán an straitéis Le Chéile: Straitéis Pobail Aontaithe a Thógáil sa tuaisceart.
- Tabharfaidh sé sainmhíniú soiléir dlíthiúil ar sheicteachas mar choir fuatha laistigh den reachtaíocht neamhsheicteachais le smachtbhannaí iomchuí atá infheidhmithe go dlíthiúil.
- Spreagfaidh sé aontacht agus ceannaireacht uile-pháirtí d'fheachtas móréilimh I gcoinne seicteachais agus deighilte, Thuaidh agus Theas.
- Tacóidh sé le fóram cathartha a bhunú sa tuaisceart mar ardán chun dlúthpháirtíocht thrasphobail agus frith-seicteach a spreagadh sa tsochaí chathartha.
- Tacú le straitéis athmhuintearais uile-oileáin a thabhairt isteach faoi choimirce na Comhairle AireachtaThuaidh Theas.

CEANNAIREACHT AGUS BEARTAS POLAITIÚIL A FHEABHSÚ

Caithfidh fíorpholaitíocht dhaonlathach, saor ó chultúr nó dearcadh seicteach, oibriú agus caithfidh daoine a fheiceáil do n-oibríonn sé laistigh dár n-institiúidí, faoi phrionsabail aontaithe agus cheangailteach Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta.

Ní mór d'ionadaithe poiblí agus do cheannairí polaitiúla an sampla a leagan síos agus éirí as teanga nó gníomhartha a mhaslaíonn féiniúlacht aon duine inár sochaí. Chun é sin a chur chun cinn, molann Sinn Féin an méid seo a leanas:

- Glacann an Feidhmeannas & an Tionól sa tuaisceart, údaráis áitiúla agus gach comhlacht san earnáil phoiblí beartas tiomnaithe in aghaidh seicteachais agus cuireann siad ar fáil go poiblí é ar a láithreáin ghréasáin.
- Beidh sé de cheangal ar gach ionadaí tofa tiomantas a ghealltanais oifige frithseicteachais a sheasamh agus a chur ibhfeidhm go forghníomhach.
- Tabharfar oiliúint feasachta seicteachais do gach ball den státseirbhís agus d' oibrithe na hearnála poiblí, len a n-áirítear baill foirne sa Tionól, ionas go mbeidh na scileanna agus an fheasacht acu chun dúshlán a thabhairt don mhórthír.
- Cuirfear comhlíonadh iomlán le reachtaíocht chomhionannais agus frithidirdhealaithe an Ordaithe um Fhostaíocht Chóir agus Cóireála chun cinn go gníomhach do thairgeoirí rathúla ar chonarthaí Rialtais nó ar mhaoiniú poiblí sna hearnálacha príobháideacha agus deonacha; agus go gcuirfí taifead comhlíonta roimhe seo san áireamh i.

What can Activists do to promote Inclusion and Reconciliation as we move towards a New Ireland?



Sinn (3) Féin 🚟

RECONCILIATION

INCLUSION

- Inform yourself of the content and proposals for inclusion and reconciliation in this document.
- Discuss these proposals with comrades.
- Engagement is key. Be proactive!
- Be proactive in challenging sectarianism whatever its source. Republicans should have a zero tolerance for all discriminatory language.
- Develop your own local public anti sectarianism campaign.
- Create platforms for calm and reasoned exchange of views.
- Could your area arrange an online panel discussion on anti-sectarianism?
- Continue to reach out and engage with those from a unionist/loyalist background.

- Hold meetings with trade unionists; and defined religious organisations, Protestant and Catholic; members of business organisations like the CBI and traders' bodies and those sporting organisations who are interested to discuss the issue with us.
- Reach out to your local faith groups, local Chambers of Commerce δ business organisations, sports organisations, youth and community groups. Actively seek their opinion on this policy, current circumstances and the prospects of change.
- Consider Council motions in relation to this policy.
- Circulate the policy to other elected representatives, invite discussion on the document.
- Use Social Media to promote inclusion and reconciliation and inform others of Sinn Fein's proposals.
- Take out adverts and write letters to your local media on this topic to inform the public.

ECONOMIC MERITS OF UNITY

As unionist political leaders continue to try – with limited success - to drum up opposition to Brexit their claim and that of the British government that the Protocol is having a negative impact on the lives of people in the North is not standing up to scrutiny.

On the contrary the most recent trade figures reveal that the business sector is taking advantage of the unique position of the North which is in both the EU single market and the customs territory with Britain.

Last month the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Dublin released trade figures showing what the London Guardian has described as evidence "deeper economic unity on the island of Ireland."

The value of goods moving North to South in the first six months of 2021 dramatically increased by 77 per cent to €1.77 billion (£1.5 billion) – an increase on the same period last year when it was just under €1 billion.

The value of good travelling South to North also jumped by 40 per cent to €1.57 billion. This is an increase of almost half a billion over the same period last year.

The Guardian newspaper concluded: "If it is sustained, Northern Ireland's deepening economic ties with the republic – and weaker ones with mainland Britain – will raise questions over the region's relationship with the rest of the UK."

Responding to these new statistics Sinn Féin MLA Caoimhe Archibald called for a strategy to be agreed to take advantage of the north's special status under the protocol . She said: "We need to see a greater focus on helping businesses identify opportunities and we need a strategy to take advantage of our special status under the protocol of continued access to the EU single market to attract investment and create jobs here.

"The DUP and the British government need to face the new realities created by the Brexit they negotiated and agreed. They need to listen to businesses, to the manufacturers, the farmers and retailers who are telling us all that they want the protocol to work."

Concluding she said:

"Sinn Féin has been arguing the economic merits of Irish Unity for a long time. In the last year we have produced several key documents detailing how this can happen. These recent trade figures underline the economic merits of an allisland economy creating wealth, jobs and contributing to an increased standard of living for everyone."

FEILE DEBATES UNITY

In August this year's Féile an Phobail in West Belfast and the Gasyard Féile in Derry attracted nearly twenty different debates with a direct and indirect connection to a United Ireland.

Both Féile drew on a range of topics dealing with the economic benefits of a united Ireland; 'busting the myths'; examined the cost of Irish unity and a debate focused what the Irish government should be doing about unity.

A number of debates examined the impact of partition and the formation of the northern state – one hundred years ago.

Brexit and the Protocol featured as did the future of the unionist and Protestant people at a time when the leading unionist party, the DUP is in a political crisis due to its advocacy of Brexit and its failure to come to terms with the reality that unionist parties are a minority.

The breadth of interest in the constitutional future of Ireland was reflected in the attendance of all the main political parties, with the exception of the unionists.

These included Sinn Féin, Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, SDLP and Alliance. Independents representing 'Think 32' and 'Ireland's Future' also took part.

The implications of the British government's amnesty plan was discussed in the context of dealing with the past and the legacy of the conflict and the need for truth for relatives who lost loved ones or were injured.

The minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney and the former leader of the British Labour Party Jeremy Corbyn added their voices to the constitutional debate with Susan McKay attending Féile an Phobal and the Féile Gasyard to discuss her new book, 'Northern Protestants on Shifting Ground'.

It is quite clear from the number of debates and their popularity that the issue of Irish unity and new constitutional arrangements remain the number one topic for almost all of the main parties in Ireland.



THE FUTURE OF IRELAND

The Fine Gael leader Leo Varadkar TD and Tánaiste recently posted a series of tweets asking the public "Do you have an idea for a #BetterIreland? If so, @FineGael wants to hear from you. Submit your idea and be in with a chance to discuss your idea with me over a video call. Submit: http://FineGael.ie/BetterIreland".

This immediately prompted a significant reaction on twitter with many responders wanting to discuss how we can build a new, shared and united Ireland. Will the Tánaiste take up that particular challenge? If you want to discuss your vision of a new future – a new Ireland - why not contact him and see if he replies.

In the same vein a few weeks ago the Irish government announced a "national brainstorm" on ideas that Irish researchers might usefully pursue to help shape "future research . . . we want to engage everyone in conversations in communities across the country, to inspire curiosity and generate ideas for research that will shape our future."

Perhaps instead of obstructing debate on Irish Unity An Taoiseach Micheál Martin could initiate "a national brainstorming" on the issue of Irish Unity.

Ireland's Future describes itself as a group "established to advocate for, and promote, debate and discussion about Ireland's future, including the possibility and viability of new constitutional arrangements on the island."

The group's philosophy is rooted in the principles and ethos of the Good Friday Agreement and is committed to the "promotion and protection of human rights, equality and fostering mutual respect."

In recent months it has held discussions on issues as diverse as the role of the International Labour Movement; planning for a strong economy in a new Ireland; engaging with voices from the unionist community; and building peace using the experience of the international community.

The group has announced that between now and the end of the year it plans to hold public debates on the future of the island of Ireland in Cork, Galway, Dublin, and Armagh.

The group has also published details for at least nine further public meetings next year's across the 32 counties.







RESOURCE FOR ACTIVISTS

All of the recent articles and significant contributions on the United Ireland theme are available on the Sinn Féin website. Log in to www.sinnfein.ie/irish-unity for all of the news on uniting Ireland.





