

UNITY NEWS

#TIME4UNITY
#AM LE HAONTACHT

Bodenstown

'AN ALL-IRELAND CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY IS NECESSARY'

On Sunday 19 June the sun shone brightly down on the many republicans who had travelled to Sallins, in County Kildare, to participate in the first Bodenstown commemoration in recent years. The island of Ireland is replete with monuments, statues, gravesides and speaks special places where those who fought for Irish freedom and independence are remembered. Bodenstown holds a special place in all of this. Bodenstown graveyard holds the family plot of Theobald Wolfe Tone. It is where his body was brought after his death in British custody in Arbour Hill, Dublin, on 19 November 1798. His graveside has been a special place of pilgrimage and on the nearest Sunday to 20 June, Tone's birthday, republicans gather. This year the main speaker was Sinn Féin Leas Uachtarán and First Minister designate Michelle O'Neill.

In her speech Michelle O'Neill set out our primary political objectives; "an end to partition, an end to the union with Britain, the construction of a new national democracy - a New Ireland - and the reconciliation of our people."

She said: "We have never been closer than we are now, to achieving our objectives. Ireland is changing. And the demand for change is growing in every town, village and city on our island. Ireland needs republican politics now more than ever. The politics

of fairness and hope. And the politics for prosperity and equality for all... Sinn Féin's vision for a new society is better than anything that has come before." Commenting on the impact of the Assembly election in May the First Minister designate said; "The people of the North gave Sinn Féin an overwhelming endorsement for our vision for change, and the future. Our performance reflects changing public attitudes and the progressive shift in politics on our island. Irrespective of religious, political or social backgrounds our commitment is to make politics work through partnership, co-operation and delivery working with others who want progress. Sinn Féin wants to work together with others to deliver for people."

Commenting on the impact of Brexit and the actions of the British government and of the DUP Michelle O'Neill said: "The outworking of Brexit and the decision of the DUP to support it; the shift in the balance of power at Stormont, the irreversible loss of the unionist political majority and their perpetual veto has created a political landscape which many within the leadership of the DUP and the Tory party seem incapable of reconciling themselves to.

We know that the Protocol is being used by political unionism to undermine the Good Friday Agreement. The reality is that the Protocol is working, and

that Boris Johnson is incapable of accepting in a straightforward, honest and truthful way that this is the case... It is not taken lightly that this British Government discards international law at a whim in such a reckless way, and only ever in their own selfish interests... a majority of those MLAs recently elected support the Protocol because it is working, giving us continued access to the European single market, creating jobs and providing economic benefits."

The Leas Uachtarán of Sinn Féin warned that the "Good Friday Agreement is under a full-frontal attack and that the human rights framework on which citizens and society at large rely is being grossly undermined. The Tory government has abandoned any pretence of "rigorous impartiality" in the discharge of their responsibilities. Its approach represents a head-on collision with the Good Friday Agreement, and importantly everyone who cherishes, values and depends on it across this island, and beyond."

She also said: "This is a defining moment for our politics and for all of our people. It presents us all with an exciting opportunity to re-imagine relationships in this society on the basis of fairness, equality and social justice. As a First Minister for All

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"We must plan for Ireland's future beyond this Brexit chaos. Brexit has, and continues to be, a huge catalyst for constitutional change, and will undoubtedly lead to the ending of the Union with Britain."

#Time4Unity **Am d'Aontacht**



Bodenstown: An all-Ireland Citizens' Assembly is necessary - Cont'd

I intend to work with those from all political perspectives, through partnership - not division.

I want to create as much opportunity for our young people in Ballymurphy, as I do for those on children and young people on the Shankill Road.

I want to get to work now, and deliver on the cost of living crisis bearing down on people.

I am very proud of our place on this island, and these islands, which is a rich tapestry of languages, a vast heritage and cultures, including the orange, green and rainbow of cultures, and multiculturalism.

The scale of what has been accomplished since the advent of the Good Friday Agreement twenty-four years ago has resulted in the transformation our society ... This includes advancing peace and reconciliation, and eradicating the cancer of sectarianism in our society.

Michelle O'Neill expressed her firm belief that within this decade there will be an opportunity to achieve constitutional change. She said; "We must plan for Ireland's future beyond this Brexit chaos. Brexit has, and continues to be, a huge catalyst for constitutional change, and will undoubtedly lead to the ending of the Union with Britain.

A stark choice has opened up between the narrow, inward-looking vision of Brexit Britain and the open, inclusive vision of a New Ireland. Many of those of a British or unionist identity are now considering the merits of reunification- not to become republicans, but to remain European. I firmly believe that within this decade the people will have the freedom to freely choose new constitutional and political arrangements on this island, as underpinned by the provisions of self-determination in the Good Friday Agreement.

Far from diluting the unionist tradition or British identity and culture in any future arrangements these rights like others must be guaranteed. Everyone who has a stake in this transformation from across this island must be involved in designing what shape that takes. There must be space created for mature dialogue where nobody feels they are being asked to compromise or surrender their identity or allegiance."

Concluding the First Minister designate said that the conversation about future constitutional change is not about victories. She said; "We want reunification not just for republicans, but for everyone. This is not about victories. This is about something better for us all.

- ▶▶ It's about re-entry back into the EU for all of Ireland.
- ▶▶ An Irish national health service, free at the point of entry.
- ▶▶ Meeting the challenge of the climate crisis on our island.
- ▶▶ An end to the duplication of public services.
- ▶▶ Maximising the full economic potential and opportunities for everyone who shares this island.

Consequently, there is a direct challenge and responsibility on the Irish Government to plan for constitutional change, to avoid the dangers, jeopardy and pitfalls of the Brexit referendum in Britain.

This requires a structured dialogue led by the Government through an All-Ireland Citizen's Assembly. It should be established without further dithering and delay. The decisions we make now will shape the direction of our country for the next generation.

To conclude, let me quote the great Wolfe Tone himself;

"From my earliest youth I have regarded the connection between Great Britain and Ireland as the curse of the Irish nation, and felt convinced that, whilst it lasted, this country could never be free nor happy.

Let's make this the moment we turn the tide for workers, for families and for Ireland. Let's make history.



"We must plan for Ireland's future beyond this Brexit chaos. Brexit has, and continues to be, a huge catalyst for constitutional change, and will undoubtedly lead to the ending of the Union with Britain."

Unity Activist Training Day:

On Saturday the 2nd July Dublin Unity Reps took part in a half day Unity seminar. Each member received a pack with the Activist Guide to the Economic Benefits of a United Ireland, a fact sheet, some sample articles that have been published and a sample unity leaflet produced by Dublin West.

Mark Ward TD led a discussion on The Economic Benefits of a United Ireland and Conor Keenan led a discussion on Inclusion and Reconciliation. There was really good participation from activists with many questions raised and answered. It was a very positive progressive session.

There was a workshop conducted after the break. This was broken into four main titles: the role of the Unity rep and the structures to use; twinning - connecting Ireland's two largest cities Dublin and Belfast; the call for an all-island Citizens' Assembly, and canvass training on Irish Unity.

The canvass training included some role play activities which anticipated questions that might come up on the doors during a canvass on the reunification of Ireland.

Areas were encouraged to go into their core areas and carry out a leaflet drop using the unity leaflet. This would be followed by a canvass of the area as part of the campaign to encourage the conversation on Irish Unity. The workshop also discussed what has been achieved so far within the unity campaign, including identifying those parts of the campaign that were working visually and informatively.

There were some great ideas from a very enthusiastic room full of Unity Activists who are ready to push on and intensify the Unity campaign.



DUBLIN: MONTHLY VIGIL FOR IRISH UNITY AND IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE AND OF CUBA

Every month Dublin activists gather to support the campaign for Irish Unity; express our solidarity with the people of Palestine and oppose the blockage of Cuba.

The youngest of us knows it's Time for Unity!!!



Irish Unity public event in Tuam

The sun shone for the Michael Moran Cumann in Tuam, County Galway while they hosted an Irish Unity afternoon in June.

Speaking at the event Louis O'Hara said: "We spent the afternoon engaging with members of the public on the important issue of Irish Unity. Leaflets, car stickers and Proclamations were also given to the many who were interested. There was a very positive response from local people and a real appetite for change. The message was loud and clear – we need an all-island Citizens' Assembly to plan and prepare for Irish Unity."

#Time4Unity Am d'Aontacht

THE FOUR HIGHEST PEAKS IN EACH OF IRELAND'S 4 PROVINCES ...in just 4 days



CLIMBING FOUR PEAKS FOR UNITY AND LOCAL FOODBANK

Later this month Béal Feirste activist, Marty O'Toole, will be climbing each of the highest peaks, in every one of Ireland's four provinces, in just four days to raise funds for the North Belfast Community Food bank and to raise awareness around Irish Unity.

£1000 has already been raised to support the fantastic and life changing work that the Community Food bank is involved in. Every cent, penny, pound and Euro can go a long way in supporting families who are struggling within our communities as a result of the cost of living crisis.

Marty is asking you for your support and donation to support the unbelievable work that the foodbank does on a daily basis. If you want to donate the link is: <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/northbelfast-communityfoodbank>



THE JOURNEY TO IRISH UNITY

"We want to unite everyone in this very diverse island - a diversity that we would all embrace and be very proud of. The closer we get to that unity referendum, the more we want to take as many people as possible with us on that journey."

These were the words of Leas Uachtarán Shinn Féin and First Minister Designate Michelle O'Neill as she answered questions from an engaged audience at Dublin's Liberty Hall. The meeting was one of a series of such events taking place across the island by the Sinn Féin leadership. Another was held in Dundalk.

It was the first time such large engagements with voters of this nature have been able to take place in the 26 Counties since the aftermath of the 2020 General Election and prior to the onset of pandemic restrictions. The Sinn Féin leadership team included Uachtarán Mary Lou McDonald, Leas Uachtarán Michelle O'Neill, Pearse Doherty TD and Eoin O Broin TD.

The theme of these meetings was the ongoing cost of living crisis, and what was clear from all of these meetings is that the appetite for change is as resolute as ever

after the most challenging of times over the past two-and-a-half years.

Audience participation indicated that the momentum for Irish Unity is very much a live conversation despite the additional and at times all-consuming challenges presented by current crises.

In a response to a question from the floor, Michelle O'Neill added: "Now is the time to have a conversation about the change that is unfolding all around us. If you look at the recent elections in the North, the North was built with an in-built Unionist majority so that balance of power would always shift the one way. The Assembly election result said 'no, not happening - those days are gone and are never to return'.

That is one of the biggest examples we have of the change that is happening on this island - that and the fact that so many across the 26 counties are in support of this change. The fact that we have the first Sinn Féin leader occupying the position of 'Leader of the Opposition' - and soon to be Taoiseach - is evidence of this also.

"We have amazing activists - activists who

want for your children what we want for our own children. The conversation about constitutional change has to start now. If you look at Brexit, that is an example about how not to do something. People were asked to make a decision on something they didn't have all the information for. They didn't know their economy was going to be decimated - they weren't told that. They were told there was going to be endless money to invest in the health service. Money that didn't materialise.

So let's have an honest conversation about Irish Unity. What will a better all-Ireland health service look like? An Irish National Health service free at the point of delivery for every citizen. What will education look like in a new and agreed Ireland?

In Dundalk almost 400 people packed into the Fairways Hotel to hear the Sinn Féin leadership team cover a wide range of issues and answer questions on the cost of living, Irish Unity, Brexit, transforming Irish society, the future of the northern institutions and much more. John O'Dowd replaced Michelle O'Neill who wasn't able to make it.

#Time4Unity Am d'Aontacht



Are we about to witness the reunification of Ireland? – Ken Livingstone

In October 1982 Sinn Féin won five seats in the Assembly election and took 10 per cent of the poll. The five elected were Gerry Adams, Francie Molloy, Martin McGuinness, Danny Morrison and Jim McAlister. It was the party's first major outing into elections in the North and the result shocked the political establishments in Ireland and in Britain. In December 82 the Labour-controlled Greater London Council, led by Ken Livingstone invited Gerry Adams to visit London. The Thatcher government and the British media was outraged and William Whitelaw, the British Home Secretary banned the newly elected Sinn Féin Assembly members from travelling to Britain.

Two months later in February 1983 Ken Livingstone and fellow Labour Councillors Cathy Bundred and Steve Bundred visited Belfast. The media hysteria reached new levels of outrage. The Daily Star ran the headline 'Red Ken in the Den of Hate'. Livingstone was a long standing advocate of ending Britain's involvement in Ireland. In the years that followed when he was Mayor of London and as an MP he continued to support Irish Unity.

Several weeks ago and following the Assembly election Livingstone wrote an article for the Morning Star in London in which he urged the left in Britain to stand up for Ireland's right to self-determination.

He wrote; "At the height of the Thatcher government's vicious and jingoistic offensive, myself and a group of other figures on the Labour left who used our positions in public office to call for peace and justice in Ireland were decried as 'terrorist sympathisers.' The MPs and newspapers denounced us for arguing in favour of dialogue to end the conflict.

At the same time, those who made these attacks on us were rather less concerned about revelations of collusion between the British state and loyalist paramilitaries in cases such as the assassination of human rights lawyer Pat Finucane at his family home and the Loughinisland Massacre, where six people were murdered in a bar whilst watching the Republic of Ireland play at the 1994 World Cup."

Livingstone recalled how even cultural celebrations involving the Irish were subject to criticism. He wrote: "As recently as 2012, whilst running for re-election as Mayor, Boris Johnson defended his decision to scrap the annual dinner we held for London's Irish community by dismissing it as "lefty Sinn Fein crap" — although clearly his aversion to putting on big social events didn't last over the subsequent decade!"

Commenting on recent electoral developments, including Michelle O'Neill emerging as First Minister designate Ken Livingstone reminded his audience that there is now "a pro-reunification party topping the Assembly poll in the



North for the first time in a state that was designed to prevent this ever occurring."

Commenting on the impact of Brexit he wrote; "With the various constitutional ramifications of Britain's departure from the European Union continuing to shape much of the political landscape, more and more people are questioning how having two different states, currencies and sets of public services on an island with a population of around 7 million people can be said to make any kind of sense — including no small number in Britain itself.

And as more and more members of a generation who have grown up with most or even all of their lives spent under the Good Friday Agreement reach voting age, reactionary divide-and-rule scaremongering simply no longer holds the same sway, with

many young people from a Unionist family background choosing options such as the liberal Alliance Party instead of the established right-wing parties." The current policy toward Ireland of the Labour leadership also came in for some sharp criticism for Livingstone however he urged; "Progressives in Britain should embrace the opportunities for change that the current period in Irish politics offers — first and foremost by demanding our government respects the Good Friday Agreement and supporting the basic principle of self-determination in recognising the right to hold a border poll."



You can follow Ken at:
www.facebook.com/KenLivingstoneOfficial
 and www.twitter.com/Ken4London



#Time4Unity **Am d'Aontacht**



A living Republic, a home to all

- Mary Lou McDonald

Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald delivered a spell-binding, deeply personal, and hugely evocative speech at an event in Dublin's Pearse Centre last Wednesday 29 June to mark the 100th anniversary of the attack on the Four Courts by Free State forces in 1922. They were the opening shots in the counter-revolution and of a civil war that “presaged a human, political and economic tragedy for our island and our people.”

Mary Lou McDonald said; “Ireland was to endure a short but bloody and brutal period marked by assassinations, firing squads, widespread destruction, draconian repression and suffering. Republicans saw the hope of a free, united and socially just Ireland dashed. Thousands suffered imprisonment. Seventy-seven were executed officially in Free State prisons. Many more were murdered on the outside.”

Among those executed was her maternal great-uncle James O'Connor (24), from Bansha, Co Tipperary. He was executed along with six other men on December 19th, 1922 at the notorious Glasshouse in the Curragh Camp. The Sinn Féin leader quoted from a letter sent by her great-grandmother Bridget seeking a pension for James's service and her “powerful refutation of her son being branded a criminal”.

Mary Lou McDonald said; “Reading my great-grandmother's letter, I



think also about how much of her life was sculpted by the razor-sharp chisel of colonialism and domination. For her, the loss of her beloved son to a bitter Civil War, executed by his own, was the ultimate and heartbreaking manifestation of the oppression she experienced.”

Mary Lou McDonald went on to say; “As a result of the Civil War, the defeated republican side saw the hope of a free, united and socially just Ireland dashed” consequently since then “power has been on the side of financiers, big landlords, the golden circles... Inter-generational poverty and deprivation became embedded. Even at times of economic progress, too many people were left behind and ordinary people forced to pay for the reckless gambling of those at the top.

All these dysfunctions are symptoms of a colonial hangover, of the damaging interplay between power, war, and dominance.”

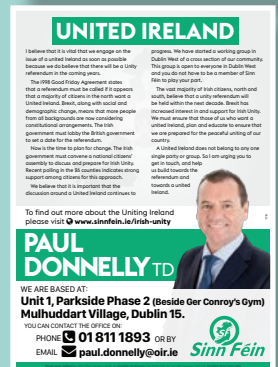
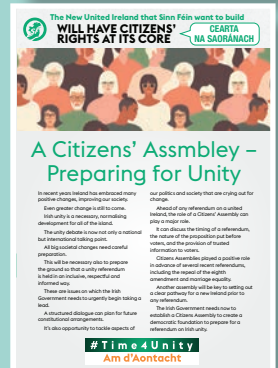
Concluding Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald looked to the future. She said; “The debate about the Civil War will always be a part

of who we are. The lesson it teaches us is that the destiny of the Irish nation can never be fulfilled by settling for less than full freedom, equality, and opportunity for everyone. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael used the misnomer of Civil War politics as a comfort blanket, as a space to occupy when their failures in the Ireland of today are called-out and challenged.

Today, we reach for the Republic anew, with positivity, courage, and confidence. These are interesting times and exciting times. Ireland has changed and Ireland is changing. We are living in the dying days of partition. North and South, we have a generation brimming with talent, potential and ambition. A generation that, with compassion, decency, and togetherness, is determined to realise the Ireland denied to our parents and our grandparents before us. A generation that will not settle for less.

Liam Mellows believed that the Republic was a living, tangible thing. We are closer than ever before. We are now challenged to reach out beyond the shadow of the Civil War, to see the light of a new dawn breaking. Because Mellows was right. A nation is a living, breathing thing. It pulses through the hopes of its people to endure, to continue, to achieve its destiny. The destiny of the Irish nation is on the horizon. A living Republic, a home to all. That remains our goal.”

Dublin West recently published a leaflet promoting Irish Unity. The leaflet is now being extensively used with that constituency. It is an initiative which other areas should consider taking.





A letter from Martina Anderson

ENGAGING WITH EUROPE!

For a number of weeks, I have been engaging with Trade Union confederations across continental Europe, discussing the impact that Brexit has had on labour rights in the north of Ireland. Trade Union organisations across Europe are aware of the context of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) and understand that it was a watershed agreement, setting out a new political dispensation for political relations on the island of Ireland and between Ireland and Britain. Trade Union representatives want to know if the Protocol in the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement, which says that the British Government 'shall ensure no diminution of rights, safeguards, or equality of opportunity, as set out in the GFA', will be upheld. Whilst the British Government is committed to no regression in labour standards there is a real concern among many trade unionists that this is in fact a key part of the Tory agenda.

Recently the British Government opened a consultation with business leaders on EU/Employment Rights including the Working Time Directive which sets a maximum 48-hour working week 'to examine what they want to keep'. Like the European Union, Trade Union movements are being urged by Sinn Féin to take a stand in defence of Irish workers and in support of Irish unity in the same way that they supported the reunification of Germany, and in the same way that they have a positive position on the reunification of Cyprus.

This moment in our history, is an important time in the shaping of Ireland's future. The reunification of Ireland would be a positive and progressive development across Europe. As we know, nothing truly great has ever been achieved alone, so the involvement of the European Trade Union movement in the conversation on constitutional change is crucial.

Whilst there are implications from Brexit for people living and working in a partitioned island – those implications are felt acutely more by EU nationals, specifically, with regards to labour rights in the context of the ending of the freedom of movement. This is creating significant problems for 'frontier workers.' EU nationals living in the South of Ireland but who work in the North are in a precarious position.

The prospects of a re-united Ireland with full EU membership are enormous. European Trade Union representatives are keen to hear of the extent of the discussion that is taking place. There is also a concern that the Irish government is failing to plan for this outcome. The European community, especially civic society organisations across Europe are aware that Irish reunification will have implications for Europe too, specifically within the EU institutions and for EU citizens living on the island.

This decade of opportunity where people will have the freedom to choose Ireland's future beyond Brexit through a referendum is as challenging as it is exciting and real. Europe needs to prepare and Sinn Féin is very focussed on engaging with governments and EU institutions to ensure that it is.

Council of Europe hears case for Irish Unity

The second part of the ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) took place recently. There was a great deal of interest from comrades across the United European Left about Sinn Féin's progress in Ireland in recent times. During a busy week of debates Seanadóir Paul Gavan spoke on Ukraine and the need for the European Union accession to the European Court of Human Rights.

The fact that the Irish Government has taken over the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers from May until November has added to the focus on Irish Politics. At the beginning of June the President of the Parliamentary Assembly Tiny Cox travelled to Dublin and held an important meeting with Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald. The Sinn Féin leader gave an update on political developments including the recent success of Sinn Féin in the North's Assembly elections, and the challenges of getting a new Assembly established, and overcoming British Government intransigence on the protocol.

Later the same day the Leader of the United European Left in PACE George Katrougalos also held a meeting with Mary Lou McDonald TD. As well as exchanging political updates there was real interest in George



Senator Paul Gavan

Katrougalos's role as rapporteur in an upcoming report and debate on "The impact of Brexit on Human Rights on the island of Ireland". Katrougalos hopes to complete the report by the end of the summer and see it scheduled for debate and adoption during the October PACE Session, which will still be under the Irish Presidency. Reflecting on a very busy few weeks in PACE Paul Gavan said "There is a renewed interest across member state delegates about what is happening in Ireland and especially the significance of Michelle O'Neill being designated as First Minister of any new Assembly in the North. There is also a much greater understanding of why Irish Unity is such an integral part of our political project to build a new 32 County Irish Republic."

Varadkar 'divisive remarks' challenged

Regrettably Irish government Ministers too often engage in the rhetoric of Irish unity and rarely say or do anything positive to advance it. It's as if they have no responsibility for this issue.

The latest offering from An Tánaiste Leo Varadkar is a good example of this. He says that 'a border poll - at this stage - would be both divisive and defeated'. But what is he doing about this? Is he planning for the new Ireland? Creating opportunities to engage with others, especially our unionist neighbours, on the momentum toward constitutional change?

Failing to effectively challenge the British government's consistent attacks on the Good Friday Agreement is a mistake. If the Irish Government does not stand up for this international treaty why on earth would a serial breaker of agreements like Boris Johnson do so?

Leo Varadkar and the Irish government need to lead the debate for the new Ireland.

As Declan Kearney, Sinn Féin's National Party Chairperson said in response to the Tánaiste: "This is a time for the Irish government to have ambition, and start developing a road map for an agreed, prosperous united Ireland. Partition has failed all our people. Political leaders should be engaged in visionary thinking and developing positive opportunities, rather than seeking to limit and reduce citizen's aspirations.

Brexit, the failures and reckless approach of the Tory government in London has be-



Declan Kearney MLA

come a huge catalyst for change in recent years. It is undeniable that a widespread popular discourse on a new constitutional future for Ireland has begun.

The Irish government should be focused on catching up with that popular momentum. It needs to embrace a new approach. It should start the process of planning the transition to Irish unity, and use its formidable resources nationally, and internationally to place the constitutional future of our country at the centre of its diplomatic mission."

That means they should move speedily to establishing an all-island Citizens Assembly to plan the future. This is the time for ambitious thinking and positive strategic actions. It is the time to raise peoples' expectations, not to lessen them. It is the time for a new approach by the Irish government. We need to utilise and intensify our diplomatic services and place the constitutional future of this island at the centre of Ireland's International mission. The government also needs to work properly with the people of the North."



IRISH UNITY

RAISING HOPE

IN EUROPE

- MAIREAD FARRELL



Ireland's Future events in Kilkenny & Sligo

Over the past month Ireland's Future held their latest events in Kilkenny and Sligo. Ireland's Future events provide an opportunity for people from all walks of life to discuss the future of our island, constitutional change and the impact such change will have on every facet of society. Representing Sinn Féin at the Kilkenny event Kathleen Funchion TD said: "I was 17 when the Good Friday Agreement was signed. The political landscape has changed irreversibly since then. We have arrived at a new historic moment. It is time to begin planning and preparing for a new, agreed Ireland. We do not want a situation like Brexit- we want a New Ireland built on genuine equality, where people can access the services they need, where people have access to affordable homes and where women are treated fairly across Irish society. We're on the cusp of real change North and South."

John McGuinness of Fianna Fáil remarked: "Martin McGuinness & Ian Paisley came together and built bridges to achieve something positive. If we start the conversation early enough, we can identify the issues and find solutions"

The 35th President of the GAA, Nickey Brennan, addressing the Kilkenny audience said: "The GAA being is an important component in how a United Ireland might come about. The GAA must be involved and at the table. It has influence".

Also speaking in Kilkenny the GAA Diversity and Inclusion Ambassador Abood Al Jumaili said: "I was born in Baghdad and moved to Ireland at 9 years of age. I can relate to the conflict in Ireland from my experience in Iraq. The past is the past but we must try to move on for a brighter future together."

At the Sligo event Chris MacManus MEP

represented Sinn Féin and focused on the importance of the establishment of an all-island Citizen's Assembly. "I believe that it is now time we had a structured mechanism to plan for constitutional change on our island. The Government has a duty and an obligation to establish an all-island Citizens Assembly that would include our diaspora. In addition, the Irish Government should take the lead in working with the British government to secure a date for the referendum and a managed transition in the event of a yes vote. MacManus concluded by calling on the EU institutions to also proactively engage with civil society from across Ireland to make it clear what supports will be available in the event of Irish reunification. "As an MEP, I believe it is also incumbent upon the EU Institutions to engage with civil society across the island of Ireland so we know exactly what supports would be available to ensure a smooth transition from partition to Unity."

Frank Feighan of Fine Gael repeated to the Sligo conference the proposal made recently by his colleague Neale Richmond in London: "I believe a border poll is inevitable and we should set up an Oireachtas commission to examine one". Sligo has the largest proportion of asylum seekers per head of population. Diversity Sligo is in the frontline of welcoming asylum seekers and respond to their needs. Nike Ogun is Chairperson of of Diversity Sligo. She told the Ireland's Future conference: "We can't continue to dwell on the past if we want to move forward. We will grow old, we will fizzle out, and we need to give young people the tools to be able to go in the right way."

Travelling to the Basque Country for the first time I wasn't sure what to expect. While I have made many Basque friends over the years I was unsure exactly how to address a local festival about the current political situation in Ireland. I needn't have worried, I was greeted with a detailed exhibition of Irish History from pre-great hunger times to the present day and by the time I'd sat on the stage in the auditorium I had already been approached by members of the audience with questions about the May 5th Assembly elections.

The understanding of the changing political landscape both North and South led, with the help of interpreters, to an interesting discussion and it was evident that recent election successes for Sinn Féin had reverberated across the world. There was a clear sense of hope, excitement and indeed anticipation for an Irish Unity referendum and that many in the Basque country are spurred on by our successes.

Bíonn suimar leith ag na mBascaigh i gcúrsaí teanga ar ndóigh agus an rólatá ag an teanga san gluaiseacht d'Éire Aontaithe. Dóibh sin tá an dhárud na scaithe le chéile agus caithfidh mé a adhmháil go bhfuil siad i bhfad chun tosaigh orainn ar an gceist seo.

The importance placed on the language was most apparent when attending a reception with the Mayor of Pasaia where simultaneous translation into Irish took place for me and others from the Irish delegation – I have never experienced that in Ireland! There we spoke of the common history of the Basque and Irish people and the bright future we hope to share.

The vibrancy in the Basque movement, being led from the front by young people full of enthusiasm and understanding of the greater political situation inspired me also.

A family day of Irish music, food and dancing was organised, and while I am thankful that there are no photos of me having to dance with the Basque flag, it was great to see Basques of all ages dancing to shoo the donkey.

It was clear that not only is the momentum surrounding Irish Unity giving us hope but that it is giving movements for independence across Europe hope also.



Partition and Irish sovereignty at the UN

The issues of sovereignty and independence and ending partition were raised at the United Nations last month by Belfast MLA Pat Sheehan.

He was at the UN Headquarters in New York to contribute to a symposium - "Living Political Transformation - Voices of Witness". The event was sponsored by the UN Department of Peace Operations and the Berghof Foundation. The panel by Pe drina Rivera Hernández of the FLMN in El Salvador and Camilo Miguel "Bong" Montesa a senior adviser to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines. Its focus was to examine the causes of conflict and the process of transformation in the move from conflict to peace.

Speaking in advance of the conference Pat Sheehan said: "The Good Friday Agreement is a symbol of hope throughout the world and I look forward to meeting with the panellists and sharing experiences. Peace-making is not a one-off event, it's a process and we have much to do to fully realise the transformative potential of our agreements."



"The conference is extremely timely as our agreements, international law, progress, and the political process is held hostage by a Tory party leadership battle."

Pat Sheehan is a former IRA prisoner who spent 18 years in jail. In 1981 he took part in the hunger strike that saw ten men die. Pat had gone 55 days without food when the protest ended. He was released under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement and replaced Gerry Adams as a member of the Assembly in Stormont in 2010. A position that he has defended in every election since.

Speaking at the UN Pat Sheehan said; "While struggles differ there are commonalities. Discrimination, repression, and inequality are often the drivers of conflict. The resolution found in agreements that assert the primacy of politics and tackle social, economic, and democratic injustices. Addressing the causes of conflict, respecting democracy and demilitarization is key to building peace.

Conflict is the past. We have now enjoyed a generation at peace. Ours is a successful peace process, but it can never be taken for granted. It has to be constantly nurtured."

The West Belfast MLA criticised the current approach of the British government. He said: "They are ignoring the lessons of the past and walking away from agreements, undermining international law, and with no mandate in Ireland, the Tory party is seeking to impose their will on the people. Consequently, many people are turning to a future free from Boris Johnson and the Westminster government. More and more are opening up to the idea of a new and united Ireland."

SINN FÉIN LEADERS LAY SOMME WREATH

On the anniversary of the start of the battle First Minister Designate Michelle O'Neill joined with Belfast Mayor Tina Black to lay a wreath at Belfast City Hall to remember all of those who lost their lives at the Somme.

The need for a reconciliation process in Ireland is beyond dispute. Its achievement cannot be taken for granted. It requires a commitment from all those prepared to take new initiatives and agree new strategies to tackle sectarianism and bigotry and to advance reconciliation and healing.

Sectarianism and sectarian segregation remain major barriers to building a better future. For as long as we fail to successfully address sectarianism and division, then intolerance, bigotry and fear will continue. Sinn Féin is absolutely committed to challenging sectarianism and ensuring a culture of respect for all identities, cultures and traditions. This responsibility cannot be left solely to our national leaders. It is a responsibility of all our activists to be unrepentantly anti-sectarian and to reach out to those who do not share our view of the future. Local



leaders in keeping with the Inclusion and Reconciliation policy of the party need to break down barriers and take local initiatives. This can be done quietly and away from the public gaze if necessary but it is an essential part of nation building. Healing the divisions in Irish society is essential and is inseparable from the new and building momentum for a new, agreed constitutional democracy in Ireland. That means holding out the hand for friendship and good neighbourliness, and to represent not just who elect us directly but all citizens. First Minister Designate Michelle O'Neill is committed to being a First Minister for all. Her decision to join Belfast Mayor Tina Black to

lay a wreath at Belfast City Hall is in keeping with our republican principles, policies and our objectives. Michelle O'Neill explained that she joined Mayor Black "to pay respects to all those, Irish and British, from our island who were killed at the Battle of the Somme 106 years ago.

"I believe it's important that as First Minister Designate, that I demonstrate my commitment to work for everyone and work to

strengthen cooperation and friendship between those of us in political and public life and the people we represent, from all traditions.

"If we are to heal all the wounds of the past and build a better future, we must acknowledge the loss of those killed in war and conflict as experienced, honoured and commemorated by those they left behind.

"We must also seek to identify with the grief, the hurt and the suffering as something we all share; an approach based on common humanity. This is part of our shared history.

"I believe however that all political leaders must stretch themselves to seek common ground and that's what I am committed to doing every single day."



THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

Belinda Nugent Sinn Fein Representative in Dublin Central, travelled to the north of France in June to represent Ireland on the International Committee for October 17th campaign.

That day has been set aside for over 30 years by the United Nations to mark the eradication of poverty objective. The initiative began on 17 October 1987 when over a hundred thousand people gathered at the Trocadéro in Paris, where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed in 1948, to honour the victims of extreme poverty, violence and hunger. They proclaimed that poverty is a violation of human rights and affirmed the need to come together to ensure that these rights are respected.

In 1992 the General Assembly of the UN declared 17 October as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and invited all States to devote the Day to presenting and promoting, as appropriate in the national context, concrete activities with regard to the eradication of poverty and destitution.

The committee had an in-depth discussion on the Economic benefits of a United Ireland and the need for the government to implement a Citizen's Assembly on Irish Unity. All the International representatives supported Irish Unity and recognised the need for a citizen's assembly to be implemented immediately. #TimeforUnity.



SOUTH ARMAGH VOLUNTEERS DAY

Time for Unity

The theme for this year's annual Volunteers commemoration in South Armagh for those republicans who lost their lives during the decades of war was 'Time for Unity.'

A large crowd of relatives and activists took part in the parade and in the subsequent discussions that took place. Policy papers and unity packs were distributed to the participants.

The main speaker at the event was Gerry Kelly MLA who reminded everyone that those being commemorated "had family and friends who they loved and who loved them back. They were part of the community which makes up the villages and townlands of South Armagh and they were proud to be part of this community which has produced so many outstanding activists. What made these ordinary men and women extraordinary, was that they had a vision of the New Ireland based on freedom and equality..."

Irish politics is undergoing its biggest shake-up since partition. Sinn Féin is at the heart of that change. This is about all of us living on this island, our families, our hopes and our expectations. It's about taking our country's future into our own hands. It's

about the opportunity to decide on our future...

In this time the Irish Government has to lead the argument for the new Ireland. It should establish a Citizens Assembly to plan the future; be persuaders for the new Ireland based on the will of the people in a referendum, held on the same day North and South.

This is a time for fresh thinking, for a new approach by the Irish Government using its formidable resources nationally and internationally. A time to place the constitutional future of this country at the centre of its diplomatic mission.

Taking the best from the North and the South we have the means to achieve an economically strong and socially just United Ireland that belongs to all who live here."

Gerry Kelly concluded by paraphrasing the great James Connolly: "We standing here today are '...the glowing hopes of the living present....' The young republicans standing about us here today are '...the vast possibilities of the mighty future!'"



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.



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