



CELEBRATE THE FATHER OF IRISH REPUBLICANISM
THEOBALD WOLFE TONE

Bodenstown

2022 Sunday 19th June
Assemble
2.30pm,
Sallins

First Commemoration
in three years
- get organised!



Main Speaker:
MICHELLE
O'NEILL
MLA

PUBLIC MEETING



MARY LOU
McDONALD

MICHELLE
O'NEILL



PEARSE
DOHERTY



EOIN
Ó BROIN

Time for Change!

June 14th @ 7.30pm
Liberty Hall, Dublin

Tá sé in am don athrú

NUAIGHT NA HAONTACHTA

JUNE AIBREÁN 2022

UNITY



NEWS



A truly

historic election

The Assembly election result on 5 May is truly historic. Like the election of Bobby Sands in 1981 – whose anniversary the election fell on – it is a deeply symbolic moment. The emergence of Sinn Féin as the largest party, Michelle O'Neill becoming First Minister designate, the party's increase in first preference votes, and the narrowing of the ground between the pro-Unity and pro-Union votes means that this election result will have far reaching consequences. It was never supposed to happen. The North was a gerrymandered apartheid unionist state. Its boundaries were set to ensure that it would be ruled in perpetuity by a permanent unionist majority. The election of a republican and nationalist was never to happen.

However, the civil rights campaign, the decades of conflict, demographic changes and eventually the peace process and Good Friday Agreement in 1998 changed this dynamic by gradually transforming the

political landscape. The increase in support for the Alliance Party and the drop in support for unionist parties is also evidence of a fundamental shift in our electoral politics.

Regrettably not everyone has embraced the new dispensation. There remain those within unionism who still see nationalists and republicans as second class. Sectarianism remains a major concern. While Sinn Féin is prepared to work the institutions in the interest of all of our people this does not diminish our commitment to or our ongoing efforts to persuade others of the merits of a united Ireland. On the contrary through greater all-island cooperation and harmonisation the imperative of unity will become even clearer. In addition, tackling the cost of living crisis in the longer term, and confronting poverty and inequality is only possible in the context of a united Ireland in which the people of our island have control over our own affairs.

Speaking after the election result Leas Uachtarán Michelle O'Neill described it as "a defining moment for our politics and for our people." It was she said time for Ireland North and South to discuss a new, shared island: "Let's have a healthy debate about what our future looks like."

Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald said: "I believe the referendum will be possible within the decade. More importantly I believe the preparation needs to start now."

The Sinn Féin leader also said: "The past was for those who seek to divide. The future is for those who seek to unite. Those who seek to hold back the tide of change can have yesterday. But tomorrow is ours."

#Time4Unity Am d'Aontacht



Irish Unity roadshow in Canada

The Cross Canada Irish Unity Roadshow organised by Friends of Sinn Féin Canada, got off to a great start as Sinn Féin MP for West Tyrone Órfhlaith Begley met with the Irish communities in Québec City and Montréal and many elected officials to promote a vote on Irish unity.

The tour began with a trip to the Québec National Assembly. Before Órfhlaith had even arrived, Andrés Fontecilla of the Québec Solidaire party announced her visit in the Assembly and called for full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement including a vote on Irish unity.

Meetings were held with Sol Zanetti and Ruba Ghazi MNAs for Québec Solidaire, Joël Arseneau from Parti Québécois, civil servants and leaders of the Québec City Irish community. Órfhlaith highlighted Sinn Féin's vision for a Citizens' Assembly and the growing movement in support of a vote for Irish Unity.

Órfhlaith's next stop on the roadshow was Montréal. Órfhlaith signed the city's guest book and presented City Councillors Sterling Downey and Craig Sauvé with a copy of the recent Dublin City Council unanimous motion calling for a vote on Irish unity.

La Presse newspaper, the largest French language paper in North America carried an in-depth interview with Órfhlaith on the current political situation in Ireland. She also visited the School of Irish Studies at Concordia University to meet with its principal Dr. Gearóid Ó'hAllmháin and historian Gavin Foster.

Alexandre Boulerice MP and deputy leader of the federal New Democratic Party who recently reaffirmed his call for a vote on Irish unity, was delighted to meet with Órfhlaith and promised support for further roadshow activities later in the year.

Órfhlaith also took part in a panel discussion on imperialism and self-

determination organised by Québec Soldiare. All of those present signed the FOSFC petition calling for a vote on Irish unity.

A series of meetings with MPs, the Executive of the Montréal Central Council, Montréal Irish Park Foundation and leaders of Montréal Irish community organisations also took place.

Órfhlaith completed the roadshow by addressing hundreds at the Black Walk Gorta Mór Memorial.

The West Tyrone MP delivered an uplifting, positive message of change in Ireland and reaffirmed the message that Irish unity is no longer an aspiration; it is a project and idea whose time has come. This is the prologue to a cross-country tour of Sinn Féin representatives set for the Autumn which will end with an Irish unity event in Ottawa.

The West Tyrone MP delivered an uplifting, positive message of change in Ireland and reaffirmed the message that Irish unity is no longer an aspiration

Time 4 Unity Am d'Aontacht

Plan for Unity - demand is growing

On Wednesday 18 May, at an Ireland's Future event in London, Neale Richmond of Fine Gael proposed that the Irish government should establish an "all-party special Oireachtas committee" to look at "the challenges and opportunities that Irish unity presents." Not long ago his proposition what would have been regarded as heresy by Fine Gael. But times are changing. The growing public conversation around Irish Unity and the demand for a national Citizens' Assembly is forcing some in the establishment parties to rethink their attitudes.

Richmond told the Westminster event that it is "very conceivable" that a British Secretary of State could "call a border poll on Irish Unity within the next decade. It is therefore the Irish government's duty to ensure that we are best prepared as possible to meet the challenge of such a referendum. That is why I am calling for the establishment of an all-party Oireachtas committee to be established to look at the challenges and opportunities that Irish unity presents."

The Fine Gael European Affairs spokesperson went on to say that it was time "to bring together stakeholders, experts and advocates of all positions to work through these many questions in a parliamentary setting."

Interestingly the day before Richmond's address in London his boss Leo Varadkar addressed a Co-operation Ireland Business dinner. Varadkar spoke of the need for greater North-South co-operation; for InterTrade Ireland becoming a North/South Body and of "joint trade missions with my Executive counterparts in years to come. I think there is much more scope to 'think all-island' ...". On the issue of the unity referendum the Tánaiste said, "the aspiration to unification is a legitimate aspiration" and in keeping with the thrust of Richmond's remarks the next day Varadkar said: "We would also need to know what the question [for the referendum] was and have clear proposals as to what unification would look like."

Just over a week later Neale Richmond repeated some of what he said in London in an opinion piece in the Irish News. He said: "We must be prepared to tell the people of Ireland exactly what is on the table when we discuss a united Ireland. What will our health service look like? Our



...it is time "to bring together stakeholders, experts and advocates of all positions to work through these many questions in a parliamentary setting."

Neale Richmond TD,
Fine Gael

education system? How much will it cost?"

Surprisingly Fintan O'Toole wrote a column for the Irish Times under the title: 'Don't avoid the united Ireland issue. Make it real.'

O'Toole told his readers that there is "every reason to think that a Border poll is highly likely within the next 10 years. Slow demographic change, the real possibility of Sinn Fein holding simultaneously the offices of first Minister and Taoiseach" and Brexit and another Scottish referendum "make it an active possibility."

But O'Toole also raised the spectre of it all being "a bit of a mess and at worst dangerously divisive" because "almost no one seems remotely ready for it." With this in mind he makes a number of proposals including the obvious one that "Irish Unity needs to be defined. If the Brexit referendum tells us anything, it is that people should not be asked to vote for a slogan ... There are some really fundamental questions that would have to be decided before they can be put to the people."

O'Toole, like Richmond and even some now within Fianna Fáil are catching on to what Sinn Fein leaders have been saying for years. We need to plan for Unity. We need a conversation with public opinion across this island. With all sectors and all shades of political, cultural and economic opinion. No one wants a unity referendum tomorrow but a date should be set with sufficient time to produce a plan. We think a national Citizens' Assembly similar to those that have been successfully used in the South to effect constitutional change would be a sensible way forward. Whatever method or methods are used to inform and discuss what is, for the people of the island of Ireland, the most important issue of the 21st century, it needs to

begin soon. The Irish government has a leadership role in this but as Mary Lou McDonald said; if they won't do it now a Sinn Fein led government in Dublin will make it our priority.

#Time4Unity Am d'Aontacht



Seanadóirí Niall Ó Donnghaile, Lynn Boylan, Paul Gavan and Fintan Warfield



The Assembly Election AN ANALYSIS

SEANAD REJECTS BRITISH 'BORDERS' BILL

A Sinn Féin motion condemning the British government's 'Nationality and Borders Bill' was passed by the Seanad. The 'Borders' Bill is currently making its way through the British Parliamentary process.

The Bill is a consequence of Brexit. It fundamentally undermines the Good Friday Agreement; threatens the developing all-Ireland economy and imposes restrictions on the rights of foreign nationals and tourists to move freely on the island of Ireland.

The British legislation will directly affect the lives of countless workers, especially along the border, families, students, healthcare professionals and people availing of healthcare, who at the moment move freely South to North and North to South on a daily basis to work and live their lives.

The government's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney, who attended the Seanad meeting, expressed his support for the motion.

In the Seanad gallery representatives from human rights organisation were in attendance: Luna Liboni and Grace Tierney from the Irish Council of Civil Liberties and Daniel Holder, Deputy Director of the Committee on the Administration of Justice.

Sinn Féin Seanadóirí, Niall Ó Donnghaile, Lynn Boylan, Paul Gavan and Fintan Warfield spoke about different damaging aspects of the Bill with Seanadóir Ó Donnghaile presenting a comprehensive indictment of the Bill not only in terms of the details but in terms of the motivation and thinking behind the Bill.

He described the intentions behind the Bill as repugnant, anti-refugee and contrary to any kind of progressive, inclusive and positive politics.

Seanadóir Ó Donnghaile thanked his colleagues from across the Seanad for their support for the party's motion. He said the unity of opposition in the Seanad was sending a very important public message to the British government that its 'Nationalities Bill' was being rejected. Seanadóir Ó Donnghaile said, "This Bill will impose an electronic border in Ireland. It will undermine the Good Friday Agreement and act as a bar to our tourism industry." He urged the Irish government to use its international connections and membership for international bodies, including the UN Security Council, to oppose this British legislation and to win international allies in opposing it.

The full impact of the Assembly election has yet to be realised. The emergence of Sinn Féin as the largest party, with Michelle O'Neill becoming First Minister-designate set historic firsts.

The Assembly returned in 2022 will be like no other. The response of the Democratic Unionist Party was to block the Assembly meeting and a government from forming despite the wishes of all other parties and the electorate.

The election returned 36 Members from Pro-Irish Unity parties, 37 from Unionist parties, and 17 members from the Alliance party. The total breakdown of the vote was a combined pro-unionist party vote of 42.1%, a pro-unity party vote of 41.5%, and a vote for "Others" of 16.2%

Just over half a percent separates the unionist and nationalist vote. There is no clear majority in favour of continued partition. Unionist commentators and the Taoiseach have been quick to point out that there has been little growth in the Nationalist vote share over the past 24 years. The sin of omission leaves only half the story.

While the nationalist vote share has held steady the unionist vote share has dropped from over 51% to 42%. The trend of diminishing support for unionism is clear.

The rise of the Alliance party vote has been heralded as both the rise in the middle ground and a break from a binary Nationalist/Unionist position. It is assumed that this is a vote for the status quo and so a unionist vote. The popular assumption is that this is not held out anecdotally or in the data.

In the week before the election, both the Lucid Talk Poll and the University of Liverpool Poll found the Alliance party's second preference vote breaking 2:1 in favour of the Nationalist parties.

These poll results were consistent with the witnessed in Alliance party transfers which moved to parties supporting Irish Unity. While the Alliance Party is agnostic, non-committal, or neutral on constitutional change it appears their voters have a clear preference for parties that support Irish Unity. This does not mean that unity is their primary concern.

They are open to persuasion. The election result confirms again that the electoral majority of unionist parties is over. The Alliance party vote cannot be assumed to be a soft unionist vote but is more open to discussion about and the possibility of Irish Unity than previously believed.



Dublin Sinn Féin activists getting the Irish Unity message out in Raheny at the landmark sculpture. Great support from passing motorists. Is gá dúinn Éire a aontú



Good Friday Agreement must be defended

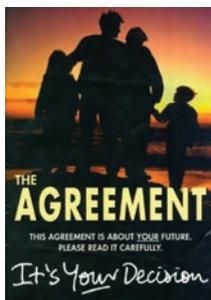
The British government confirmed last month that it plans to replace the Human Rights Act with a British Bill of Rights. In a letter to Boris Johnson over 50 human rights groups warned of the “dire consequences” this move will have particularly in respect of the Good Friday Agreement. The British government has also introduced legislation to protect its soldiers from prosecution and to deny victims truth.

A key component of the Good Friday Agreement was its recognition of the importance of protecting and safeguarding human rights. The Agreement affirmed a series of core rights;

- the right of free political thought;
- the right to freedom and expression of religion;
- the right to pursue democratically national and political aspirations;
- the right to seek constitutional change by peaceful and legitimate means;
- the right to freely choose one’s place of residence;
- the right to equal opportunity in all social and economic activity, regardless of class, creed, disability, gender or ethnicity;
- the right to freedom from sectarian harassment; and
- the right of women to full and equal political participation.

Underpinning these rights the British government introduced the Human Rights Act in 1998 and completed the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into law. In addition, there was to be a separate Bill of Rights for the North. Almost immediately the Conservatives and Unionists opposed the introduction of a Bill of Rights. They successfully fought its introduction at every opportunity. To further their attack

on the concept of citizens’ rights the Tories announced in their 2015 election manifesto that they would “scrap” the Human Rights Act 1998 (“HRA”). In its place they would “introduce a British Bill of Rights which will restore common sense to the application of human rights in the UK.”



The Bill of Rights the Tories now propose falls far short of what is needed to protect rights.

The decision to scrap the Human Rights Act and to deny victims and their relatives’ truth is a direct attack on the Good Friday Agreement. It is a breach of the British government’s international obligations.

Last month Sinn Féin MPs Michelle Gildernew, John Finucane, Francie Molloy, and Mickey Brady

accompanied a delegation from ‘Relatives For Justice’ to London to protest against the British state’s legacy proposals. A protest was held on Parliament Square and a letter of opposition was handed into 10 Downing Street. A subsequent drop-in session with ‘Relatives For Justice’ was held inside the British Parliament and was attended by MPs from across the House of Commons.

The British government is intent on diluting human rights and abandoning any notion of accountability. Amnesty International has said that the Human Rights Act “carefully and precisely” protects individuals’ rights.

A former Chief Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Emily Logan warned some years ago that a repeal of the Human Rights Act “would have negative consequences for the uniformity of human rights standards across these islands.”

No effort should be spared in opposing any effort to subvert the human rights components of the Good Friday Agreement.

Ireland’s Future event in Waterford

Several weeks ago Ireland’s Future held a public meeting in Waterford. It was one of a series that included debates in London and Kilkenny.

Ireland’s Future events provide an opportunity for all people from different and diverse backgrounds to discuss the future of our Island, constitutional change and the impact such change will have on every facet of society. From the Arts, to sport, community and business the topic of Irish Unity provides an opportunity to plan for a new Republic and a new Ireland.

One of those who contributed to the Waterford evening was David Cullinane TD. In his contribution the Waterford TD said: “I am a United Irlander. I believe that a United Ireland makes sense. I work to bring it about every day. I also understand and respect that many do not. However in recent years more and more people are engaging on the topic of unity and on building cross border and all-island engagement.”

The President of the Waterford Chamber of Commerce Mr John McSweeney spoke about the potential of cross border trade and the all-island economy for businesses North and South. The Irish protocol agreed as part of the British Withdrawal Agreement provides limited but vital protections to Ireland. It prevents a hard border on the island and protects the GFA. It is imperfect but only necessary because Brexit was forced on the people of Ireland.

This reality has engaged some from the Unionist Community on the issue of Unity. Andrew Clarke, who addressed the meeting, comes from a Unionist background but is open to a United Ireland. He does not see the traditional Unionist parties as representing his interests. He is looking to the future and was eager to engage.

David Cullinane explained: “This is why Sinn Féin is eager to establish a national Citizens Assembly on Unity. It would give all voices on the island an opportunity to engage and debate. To engage with those of a like mind but also with those with whom they disagree. Dissent and disagreement on constitutional change is inevitable. But dialogue is important and planning is crucial.

“Unity will provide exciting opportunities to build a stronger economy across the island and better public services. I want to be a Minister for Health that helps build a truly Irish National Health Service. I want to leverage all our resources across the island to improve patient care and deliver better health outcomes. I want to take the best from two very different systems and build a National Health Service that works for all.”

In addressing the meeting Dr Jennifer Kavanagh talked about the legal architecture of the GFA and the pathway to constitutional change. “There can be no better democratic exercise than putting a referendum to the people. But we must start the planning now.”

David Cullinane concluded: “We should look to the future with optimism. Ireland’s future is bright. But change is not inevitable. United Irelanders need to continue to work, plan, organise and persuade. The partition of our island has failed. The unification of Ireland is all the more closer but that United Ireland must be a place where those who see themselves as British or Unionist feel comfortable and have all of their rights vindicated.”

Time 4 Unity Am d’Aontacht



Barry Andrews, Nathalie Loiseau & Stéphane Séjourné - Renew Europe with Mary Lou McDonald, Michelle O'Neill and Chris MacManus



Geert Bourgeois of the ECR (NVA MEP) with Mary Lou McDonald, Michelle O'Neill and Chris MacManus

Positive EU visit in Brussels

Midlands Northwest MEP Chris MacManus has described a Sinn Féin meeting with Vice President of the European Commission Maroš Šefčovič as a "positive engagement". The Sinn Féin delegation to Brussels included Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald TD, First Minister Designate Michelle O'Neill MLA and Chris MacManus MEP. They held discussions with senior politicians from across Europe.

Chris MacManus explained, "The purpose of the visit was to brief EU leaders and MEPs from across the political spectrum on the latest developments following Sinn Féin's historic election victory in the North. The implementation of the protocol and the protection of the Good Friday Agreement in all of its parts were to the forefront of the discussions." As part of the day's business the delegation visited the European Commission for a meeting with Vice President Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič. Commissioner Šefčovič was briefed on the Assembly elections and how a majority of MLAs returned want the protocol to work and are opposed to the unilateral action threatened by Boris Johnson. During the discussion the Sinn Féin delegation spoke of the importance of the resumption of talks between EU and the British Government on the basis of good faith and joint solutions.

The Sinn Féin team held similar briefings with leadership figures and members of various political



Chris MacManus MEP with Mary Lou McDonald TD and Michelle O'Neill MLA

groupings including Renew Europe, Socialists & Democrats and The Greens/EFA. MacManus said, "We enjoyed constructive conversations with all. It was refreshing to hear that across political parties, party groupings and various member states there was a strong sense of camaraderie and eagerness to understand and assist in all areas of developments in Ireland especially towards the implementation of the protocol and the protection of the Good Friday Agreement."

Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald and Leas Uachtarán Michelle O'Neill were also guest speakers at our own group meeting of the Left where the party leaders gave a briefing on the situation in Ireland, the Irish protocol & the threats posed by the British government to international law. First Minister designate O'Neill received a warm ovation from those present following her recent election success. The Sinn Féin visit to the EU parliament concluded with a briefing of the Co-Chairs of UK Contact Group, where again the central topic was post-election developments in the north, the implementation of the protocol and the need for constructive dialogue between the European Commission and the Westminster government. "Today was an important occasion in maintaining and developing the relationship between Belfast and Brussels." said MacManus "It is our responsibility to keep our colleagues in the European institutions keenly aware of every development in the North of Ireland. The recent election victory was a seismic moment and there is a sense that our friends in Europe understand fully the historic nature of Michelle O'Neill's election to the position of First Minister designate. The significance of the change happening on the island of Ireland is certainly causing a stir at an EU level. I believe today was another important step on the road to an exciting new Ireland."



Pedro Marques & Iratxe García Pérez of S&Dsi with Mary Lou McDonald, Michelle O'Neill and Chris MacManus



Philippe Lamberts of Greens-EFA with Mary Lou McDonald, Michelle O'Neill and Chris MacManus

Confronting sectarianism

BY GERRY ADAMS

The posting online of a vile video showing members of the Orange Order mocking the murder of Michaela McAreevey has been widely condemned. Last week in another video Pastor Barrie Halliday appeared on social media describing Catholics as 'rats that need to be murdered with rifles and grenades.'

Both of these actions are evidence of an existing underlying sectarianism within northern society that has its roots in English colonialism and in the deliberate fostering by the British state in Ireland of division between Catholics and Protestants. The Loyal Orders have long played a prominent role in promulgating this.

That sectarianism still exists is not surprising. Unionist political leaders and their British allies often play the Orange Card as they seek to maximise their electoral vote or secure an advantage in a negotiation.

Since partition there are few Catholic families in the North that have not had direct experience of sectarianism, of discrimination in employment or housing, of collusion involving unionist death squads, the B Specials, the UDR, RUC and British Army or of pogroms. Orange marches with their 'kick the Pope bands' and sectarian songs – like The Famine Song; their posters of nationalist politicians or of religious statues on bonfires and their desire to parade triumphantly through or past nationalist areas have long been part of the nationalist experience.

The dignity and grace of Michaela's family is an example to us all.

Words like 'abhorrent' or 'shameful' or 'despicable' readily spring to mind when sectarianism rears its head. But if society is serious about challenging sectarianism there is a need to go beyond the rhetoric of condemnation. The fact is that sectarianism is written into the DNA of the northern state. The celebration/commemoration of the centenary of 'Northern Ireland' and the Orange Hall event which was a part of this, are a case in point. It is important to note that those involved are a bigoted minority. But they have to be stood up to.

So, what to do? The reality is that sectarianism will not be wished away. It cannot be ignored. The starting point must be positive leadership from political, cultural, religious and civic society. The law and the enforcement of the law also has a crucial role to play in this. That means a new legal definition of sectarianism entrenched in law with legal sanctions and robust incitement to hatred provisions.

Last year Sinn Féin published a policy paper 'Inclusion and Reconciliation in a New Ireland.' Its focus is on promoting inclusion and reconciliation, ending sectarianism and building an agreed New Ireland. It contains a wide-range of proposals and accepts that reconciliation and healing are essential if our society is to move beyond the historical antagonisms of the past. This means dealing with sectarianism in all its manifestations and embedding an anti-sectarian ethos, culture and commitment at the heart of all political and public discourse.



Among our proposals are the provision of an all-island Charter of Rights to protect the status,

rights and aspirations of all citizens. This Charter will reflect the commitments in the Good Friday Agreement to the right to equal opportunity, the right of women to full and equal political participation and the right to freedom from sectarian harassment, and much more.

Sinn Féin also proposes an anti-sectarian charter to be included in the pledge of Office for Ministers, MLAs TDs and local Councillors and an all island reconciliation strategy under the auspices of the North South Ministerial Council.

Achieving inclusion and reconciliation will require maximum co-operation and good will across all sectors of society. But these are straight forward, common sense proposals that can help bring an end to the sectarian songs, supremacist chants and racist language that are too often a feature of discourse. A key component to making progress is using the manner in which public funds are disbursed. Bigotry and sectarianism should not be publicly funded. It should be illegal.



The Inclusion and Reconciliation document can be found at:
https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2021/Inclusion_Reconciliation_in_a_New_Ireland_-_Ma%CC%81rta_21.pdf

WHAT CAN ACTIVISTS DO TO PROMOTE INCLUSION AND RECONCILIATION AS WE MOVE TOWARDS A NEW IRELAND?

- ▶ Inform yourself of the content and proposals for inclusion and reconciliation in our document.
- ▶ Have conversations with your friends and family on how Sinn Féin intends to build a nation in a new Ireland through Inclusion and Reconciliation.
- ▶ Discuss these proposals in your Cumann and Comhairle Ceantair and plan how to take them forward.
- ▶ Engagement is key. Be proactive!
- ▶ Build and maintain new relationships.
- ▶ 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 & 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 Féin's proposals.
- ▶ Take out adverts and write letters to your local media on this topic to inform the public.

#Time4Unity **Am d'Aontacht**

United Ireland is a legitimate constitutional goal

Professor Colin Harvey is well known for his advocacy for a united Ireland. In a recent edition of the Derry Journal Professor Harvey argued that people need to be able to make an “informed choice on the issue when the time comes.” Professor Harvey criticised those who seek to prevent the debate and to erect barriers to a democratic vote by raising a “persistent wall of noise. All aimed at making practical work and civic advocacy difficult.” As someone who has been targeted and threatened for his pro-unity views Professor Harvey warned against those who seek to “delegitimise people so that their professional expertise, and the substance of what they say, become secondary to ad hominem insults.” In his Derry Journal piece Professor Harvey states that: “Advance planning [on unity] is happening as a matter of basic fact. It is still not at the level or intensity required, but it is hard to miss the ongoing initiatives. This is particularly striking in universities - the ARINS project being only one valuable example - but evident also in the books being published or forthcoming and other forms of outputs. Frank Connolly’s impressive United Nation: The Case for Integrating Ireland is the latest example.”

The core of Professor Harvey’s article is an argument in favour of the widest conversation to plan for unity. He says that “It would be easy for a group of academics and/or others to produce the framework for a united Ireland. A draft constitution is easier to write than you might imagine. But is that what you want? Do you really believe a small group of people should go away privately and determine your fate? I suspect not.” What is required, he says, is an inclusive process of “civic dialogue and democratic deliberation.”



Professor Harvey warns that “not all will agree about the content and shape of a new and united Ireland. As these internal debates develop, it is worth recalling that, even when a united Ireland happens, it will remain imperfect. There will always be challenges, particularly for those seeking to advance equality, human rights and social justice. But, if this is going to be a ‘new’ and transformed Ireland, then the content of the novel components must be considered.” The Queens University Human Rights expert argues for the debate around constitutional change to be broadened and deepened. He writes that the role of the Irish government is crucial. While hiding “behind universities, academics and civic initiatives has its advantages ... it is not a substitute for determined, open and well-resourced governmental action.”

Concluding Professor Harvey calls for the Irish Government to “take responsibility directly for enabling the collective effort of preparing for the future of this shared island. The objective of a new and united Ireland within the EU, enjoying healthy relations with its neighbour, is a legitimate constitutional goal sought by many. Not something to be stumbled into or to fear. But to be ready for and embrace with imagination and courage.”

Colin Harvey is Professor of Human Rights Law in the School of Law, Queen’s University Belfast, a Fellow of the Senator George J Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice, an Associate Fellow of the Institute of Irish Studies and a member of the Management Board of Ireland’s Future.

UNITY WILL LEAD TO FINANCIAL BENEFITS

BY EMMA McARDLE
POLICY & CAMPAIGN MANAGER, UI COMMITTEE

‘The South could never afford the North’ is a tired cliché that many will be familiar with. The notion that the north would be some kind of economic albatross around the neck of the South’s finances is a trope that has been heavily peddled by the establishment on both sides of the border for many years. This pervasiveness of this myth, coupled with relentless establishment partitionism, means that for many the economics of unity has been relegated to the realms of republican propaganda, fake news or a prospect so unlikely that it doesn’t even merit discussion.

The subvention, or block grant –the amount of money given to the North’s Executive by the British Treasury to deliver public services - has been held up for years as a reason to deny an intelligent conversation around the economic implications of unity.

Since the British voted to leave the European Union academic focus both in Ireland and internationally has increasingly interrogated what Irish unity would mean for the economies of the North and the South and the island as a whole.

The latest contribution from Queen’s University Professor Emeritus Mike Tomlinson has brought the conversation from the abstract down to the nuts and bolts of what unity could mean for people’s pockets.

His paper ‘Social Security in a Unified Ireland’ has attracted the positive appraisal of other academics and the media. Professor Tomlinson has researched the provision of social protection North and South and compares and contrasts the rates of payment for different entitlements such as payments for children, to unemployment and welfare payments to pensions. He also examines the potential all-island tax yield should the Southern tax code be applied in the North. Professor Tomlinson concludes that there would be an overall increase of around 11%, with this being principally funded from the higher tax receipts from the top third of earners and greater social security contributions from the employers of those on low incomes, which is currently in place in the 26 counties.

Many people in the north are understandably concerned about the payment of their state pension in a united Ireland. Professor Tomlinson points to the post Brexit social security protocol which was signed by the Irish and British governments as part of the Withdrawal Agreement, which can be found here: gov.ie - Social Security arrangements post Brexit (www.gov.ie) Under the terms of this protocol there will be no changes to pension entitlements. Those who have paid national insurance contributions will remain eligible to apply for a British pension. At the point of unity, citizens in the North who are not currently of pension age will begin to make contributions, through PRSI deductions, to the Irish scheme. The national insurance payments already made to the British system will be ‘banked’. When an individual reaches retirement age their pension will be paid from two sources, depending on the number of contributions made in each country. This system is currently in place for people who have made national insurance contributions and now live in Dublin or Spain or elsewhere internationally.

Professor Tomlinson’s paper has been well received by academics such as Seamus McGuinness and John Doyle, both of whom have also published research which demonstrates the economic dividend which unity would unlock.

Some additional reading can be accessed here:

Who is Better off? Measuring Cross-border Differences in Living Standards, Opportunities and Quality of Life on the Island of Ireland (jhu.edu)

Why the ‘Subvention’ does not Matter: Northern Ireland and the All-Ireland Economy (jhu.edu)

Overall there is a major upswing in the economic debate around a united Ireland, as the campaign for unity intensifies, we can expect a lot more of it.

'Ireland's Future' event at Westminster

On 18th May Ireland's Future held one of its events in the heart of the British Houses of Parliament to discuss the possibility of a new and agreed Ireland.

The Grand Committee Room, just off Westminster Hall, was packed to the rafters and there was standing room only by the time the discussion got underway.

The organisers had put together an impressive rostrum of speakers, which featured Sinn Féin's John Finucane MP, Fine Gael's Neil Richmond TD, the SDLP's Claire Hanna MP, Alliance's Stephen Farry MP, and Ian Blackford MP of the SNP. The panel was chaired by the broadcaster Andrea Catherwood and opening remarks were provided by Lord Alf Dubs.

Each speaker provided an opening 'pitch' covering their perspective on the topic of Ireland's constitutional future. The discussion then broadened out to include contributions from the floor and follow-up questions to individual speakers.

In his contribution John Finucane MP noted the result of the northern Assembly election. While not wishing to be triumphalist, he advised that it would be short-sighted for an audience in Britain to choose to ignore the seismic change that had taken place. Indeed, the northern statelet was deliberately designed to avoid such a result. The North Belfast MP also cited recent demographic changes, general opinion poll trends, the reported uptake in Irish passport applications, and the imminent release of the latest census returns expected this summer.

He summarised, "We must prepare for Irish Unity. There will be a referendum and we need to be ready to win that referendum..."



is what we're going to do." The following day he reissued this call with a public statement that received widespread media coverage and commentary. A challenge was put to Stephen Farry MP, from the floor that the Alliance Party could no longer afford to sit on the fence when it comes to the future of the island. Farry said: "To be clear we're not passive on this issue. What we are saying is that it is not the defining issue for the party. It's not what we canvassed on in the Assembly election. We bring together people with different constitutional aspirations." But he added, "People who vote Alliance, our members, and representatives - they don't have no view on the matter. But our stated purpose is other outcomes."

The SDLP's Claire Hanna observed that, "Of course for an island of our size, it just makes sense that public services don't stop between Newry and Dundalk. The logic of trade and the management of the environment are just entirely sensible things." Ian Blackford, of the SNP provided some incisive perspective and observations from the Scottish experience. He remarked, "Frankly, I'm bored that for much of the last ten years the debate has been about process. In a way, Johnson and the Conservatives want us to talk about process. Because

to some extent, they hold the cards ... what's actually going to make a difference: its winning hearts and minds."

The meeting was a positive engagement of ideas and proposals.

Commenting after the event John Finucane said: "While the ultimate decision, when it comes to Ireland's constitutional future, will be a matter for the people of Ireland. There is a role for people living in Britain to play. Whether as active persuaders for unity or as neutral promoters of dialogue and discussion. There is nothing to be gained by turning a deaf ear to the discussion that is taking place in Ireland. To do so would be a disservice not only to the Irish people but also to the British people."

When you have a triggering mechanism that, with the greatest of respect, is in the hands of a government that can't be trusted on anything there's even more of an onus on all of us to prepare and have that preparation - dare I say - 'oven ready!' So that when a border poll is announced we aren't taken by surprise."

Neale Richmond TD surprised many in the audience by calling on his own government to establish a special Oireachtas committee on Irish unity before the end of this year. The Fine Gael TD stated, "The Irish Government has to be the 'adult in the room', much like the European Union has been for the last six years, and genuinely come out and say, 'you know what, this

Sinn Féin leadership in London

On the 23rd and 24th May, Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald and Leas-Uachtarán Michelle O'Neill led a party delegation to London for two days of back-to-back engagements and meetings. Beginning on Monday 23rd, McDonald and O'Neill were joined by Chris Hazzard, South Down MP, and Conor Murphy, the outgoing Finance Minister in the last northern Executive, to brief London-based Embassy representatives inside Westminster. Over 50 countries were represented, and the discussion covered everything from the protocol, to legacy, to legislative protection for the Irish language. The potential for a referendum on Irish reunification was a matter of considerable interest, with much speculation and curiosity about the North's potential re-entry into the European Union post-unification.

The following morning, saw a tour of the news studios. Mary Lou McDonald appeared on ITV's breakfast television programme, 'Good Morning Britain', where she was interviewed by Richard Madeley and Susanna Reid. Kicking off the conversation, Madeley asked the Sinn Féin leader, "How much longer do you think it'll be before we see a united Ireland and 'Northern Ireland' becomes history?"

Mary Lou McDonald set out the result of the most recent election in the North. She added: "I believe that we are going to have referendums on unity in this decade. I believe the constitutional arrangement will change and I believe that we all need to prepare for that."

She continued: "I also believe that we shouldn't come at this with a sense of dread, or fear, or loss. We need to look at this as an incredible democratic opportunity. Partition has been disastrous for Ireland. It's been disastrous for Britain as well. We've had division. We've had conflict. But we've also had now almost a quarter of a century of a very robust peace process. And the time is now looming where we bring this journey to its conclusion. An end of partition. A reunified Ireland in peace and security. And with a good-neighbourly strong relationship with Britain our next-door neighbour."

Michelle O'Neill struck a similar tone on BBC Radio 4's 'Today' programme that same morning. Informing the host, Justin Webb, that, "Brexit is a very good case in point as to how not to have a referendum. Whenever people were asked to make a decision in terms of Brexit, all the facts, all the implications weren't actually laid bare. So, I don't want that to happen to our people. I want us to have a very informed conversation. So constitutional planning for the future is really important. I think the recent election result is very telling in terms of where people are at."

These engagements were followed by a bustling press conference hosted by the Foreign Press Association. Over 80 journalists from across the globe turned out to question the Sinn Féin leadership and hear about the altered political terrain in the North of Ireland. Subsequent coverage across media platforms in Europe and



President McDonald interviewed on Good Morning Britain, London



London International Press Conference



Sinn Féin leadership meeting with Labour Party leader Keir Starmer MP

the Global South confirmed the interest that there is in what's taking place in Ireland. The rest of the visit consisted of political meetings with key stakeholders in Britain. These included the Director-General of the Confederation of British Industry, the General Secretary of the British Trade Union Congress, the leadership of the British Labour Party, and the Westminster Group Leaders for both the SNP and Plaid Cymru.

In the evening, the Sinn Féin leadership and Sinn Féin MP team provided a private briefing for invited guests inside Westminster. The

meeting was widely attended and consisted of MPs and Peers from all political parties in the British Parliament, trade unionists, business leaders, and representatives of Irish community organisations.

Sinn Féin remains committed to engaging constructively and positively with decision-makers and audiences throughout Britain. The leadership delegation marked the first such visit to London since the outbreak of the pandemic. It was a successful couple of days and hopefully provides a strong foundation for future engagements in the time ahead.

All-island trade on the rise

Brexit has brought with it many consequences. While the DUP is politically a right-wing party that embraces a belief in Empire it primarily backed Brexit because it believed Brexit would result in a hard border on the island of Ireland. Jeffrey Donaldson was so determined to win Brexit that he dismissed the possibility of 40,000 jobs being lost and of significant damage to the agricultural industry because a hard border was for him more important.

The DUP ignored the democratic majority in the North who voted against Brexit and supported the Tories. They kept Theresa May in power for two years believing that she would deliver Brexit. When she faltered the DUP jumped ship and backed Boris. They nailed their colours to the mast of the European Research Group, Jacob Rees-Mogg, Nigel Farage and others of that ilk. They voted against the single market and customs union. They back measures that directly attack the Good Friday Agreement and prevent a trade deal with the USA. The British economy is in trouble and the pro-Brexit faction appears set on a course that will result in a trade war with the EU.

In the midst of this chaos the international agreement negotiated by Boris Johnson with the EU – which he now rejects and is preparing to unilaterally break – has produced one bright spark. The North remains in the single market, as well as being part of the British customs territory and as a result is benefiting economically from this unique position.

According to the recent statistics from the Central Statistics Office in Dublin the strong trend in growing all-island trade is increasing.

Sinn Féin's economy spokesperson in the Assembly Caoimhe Archibald MLA pointed out that: "Over the course of 2021 North



"NORTHERN IRISH OUTPUT, AS MEASURED BY GROSS VALUE ADDED (GVA) HAS SLIGHTLY OUTPERFORMED THE UK AVERAGE."

to South trade in goods increased by £1.3 billion (65%) and South to North trade over the same period was up by £1.1 billion (54%).

"In the first three months of 2022 that trend has continued strongly, with North to South trade up by a further 34% or £250m compared to January-March 2021 and South to North trade by 49% or £312 million over the same period.

"This highlights the benefits and importance of the protections of the Protocol and the opportunities that exist which must be built upon. Three successive DUP economy ministers have ignored this potential."

A report from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) noted in May that the northern economy has outperformed the British average and is now at pre-pandemic levels. It said: "Northern Irish output, as measured by Gross Value Added (GVA) has slightly outperformed the UK average. This is partly an outcome of the Northern Irish Protocol and its special status in the Brexit arrangements, including better trade and investment conditions as part of the EU's single market and customs union."

Caoimhe Archibald said: "It is past time for playing politics and threats of unwarranted unilateral action from the British government which benefits no one and will in fact damage businesses and our economy. People want to see negotiated solutions on the implementation of the protocol.

"The DUP should end its boycott of the Assembly, the Executive and the north south bodies so we can put money into the pockets of workers and families struggling with the cost of living, put an additional £1 billion into the health service and maximise the potential of the protocol to create jobs and prosperity."

TALKING TO EUROPE

When people talk about Europe, all too often they think about the EU institutions, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of Ministers and of course the European Court of Human Rights. All these institutions are important players and influencers on the European stage, but continental Europe is wider than the EU and there are also important voices within the EU that are not necessarily part of its institutions.

Recognising this Sinn Féin appointed former MEP Martina Anderson to head up a project of engagement with these structures. Through May and into June she has been especially busy. Her role involves interacting on the issue of Irish Unity and the unity referendum provision of the Good Friday Agreement with national governments, political parties, Trade Unions, Human Rights Groups, Academics, Journalists, Think Tanks and a host of other important participants.

Commenting on recent developments and her engagements Martina Anderson said: "The Assembly election was seismic in Europe and it has triggered a continental conversation about Irish reunification. As well as engaging with political representatives and others I have spoken to many Trade Union organisations in recent weeks who are very conscious that EU workers living in one part of Ireland and working in the other are now 'Frontier Workers.' They are also deeply concerned at the implication for workers of Britain's threat to unilaterally break the Protocol and of the danger this poses to the Good Friday Agreement.

In addition the May 5th Assembly result, coupled with consistent opinion polls in the South indicating the possibility of Mary Lou McDonald emerging as Taoiseach, is informing and influencing conversations and attitudes across continental Europe."

In conclusion Martina Anderson said:

"Republicans understand that Europe presents an unparalleled opportunity to advance the Irish Unity agenda. The European community, especially civic society organisations are aware that Irish reunification will not only impact on Ireland but also on European, and the EU institutions. In this context Sinn Féin has to make its voice heard, present the logic of our strategy, and show people what a new Ireland has to offer to the people who live on the island of Ireland but also on the continent of Europe."



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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