

WE MAY NEVER AGREE ON THE PAST BUT WE CAN PLAN A BETTER FUTURE TOGETHER

Sinn Féin's Commission on the Future of Ireland held their 7th public event this month in the Verbal Arts Centre, Derry. The theme was 'Exploring Northern Protestant Identities and Culture in a Shared Future'.

Catherine Pollock, a local community and rights based activist chaired the discussion and was joined on the panel by community activists Catherine Cooke and Alison Wallace. Speaking after the event Foyle MLA Pádraig Delargy said,

"This was an opportunity to build upon the themes discussed at last year's event 'Celebrating Diversity- Ending Divisions' and on the very diligent reconciliation work that has been undertaken in Derry over many years.

"We were delighted with the attendance and the excellent contributions from the panel and the audience.

"The theme of the discussion helped to deepen our understanding of northern Protestant identities and culture.

"It's not monolithic- this discussion provided us with an opportunity to learn how diverse it really is."

Commission Chairperson Declan Kearney MLA gave the opening remarks at the event. He said,

"It is important going forward, that we as republicans, not only internalise what we heard, but that we use it as a pathway for opening up new opportunities to expand



this discussion.

"In turn, this will enable us to become much more sensitised, aware and informed about the kind of debate that is going to be

required, that will lay the foundations for a new inclusive and agreed Ireland.

"We may never agree on the past but we can plan a better future together".

Further information on the Commission can be found at: www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland

Footage from the Derry event can be found on Sinn Féin's YouTube channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xsp5WicaBqE>



UPCOMING EVENTS

COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF IRELAND

AN COIMISIÚN UM THODHCHAÍ NA HÉIREANN

▶▶ Waterford People's Assembly | October 12th 7pm | Tower Hotel, Waterford

▶▶ Tionól Ghaeltacht Chonamara | 27 Samhain 7.30pm | An Cheathrú Rua, Co. na Gaillimhe





IS FÉIDIR NACH N-AONTÓIDH MUID AR AN AM ATÁ THART ACH IS FÉIDIR LINN TODHCHAÍ NÍOS FEARR A PHLEANÁIL LE CHÉILE

Thionóil Coimisiún Shinn Féin um Thodhchaí na hÉireann a 7ú imeacht poiblí an tseachtain seo caite sa Verbal Arts Centre, Doire.

Ba é an téama ná ‘Féiniúlachtaí agus Cultúr Protastúnach an Tuaiscirt a fhiosrú i gcomhthéacs todhchaí comhroinnte’.

Bhí Catherine Pollock, gníomhaí pobail áitiúil agus bunaithe ar chearta ina cathaoirleach ar an phlé agus bhí na gníomhaithe pobail Catherine Cooke agus Alison Wallace ar an phainéal.

Agus é ag caint i ndiaidh na hócáide, dúirt CTR an Fheabhail Pádraig Delargy,

“Ba dheis a bhí anseo tógáil ar na téamaí a pléadh ag imeacht na bliana seo caite ‘Celebrating Diversity- Ending Divisions’ agus ar an obair athmhuintearais an-dúthrachtach atá ar bun i nDoire le blianta fada anuas.

“Bhí muid thar a bheith sásta leis an fhreastal agus leis an méid iontach a rinne an painéal agus an lucht féachana.

“Chuidigh téama an phlé lenár dtuiscint a dhéanamh níos fearr ar fhéiniúlachtaí agus ar chultúr Protastúnach thuaidh .

“Níl fál go haer é - thug an plé seo deis dúinn a fháil amach cé chomh éagsúil atá sé i ndáiríre.”

Ba é Cathaoirleach an Choimisiúin Declan Kearney CTR a labhair ag tús ag imeachta. Dúirt sé,

“Is tábhachtach amach anseo, go ndéanfimid mar phoblachtánaigh, ní amháin an méid a chuala muid a thuiscint, ach

go n-úsáidfimid é mar bhealach le deiseanna nua a chur ar fáil leis an phlé seo a leathnú.

“Dá thoradh sin beimid in ann a bheith i bhfad níos tuisceanaí, níos feasaí agus níos eolasaí faoin chineál plé a bheidh de dhíth, a leagfaidh an bonn d’Éirinn nua imeascha agus aontaithe.

“Is féidir nach n-aontóidh muid ar an am atá thart ach is féidir linn todhchaí níos fearr a phleanáil le chéile”.

KEYWORDS EOCHAIRFHOCAIL

- **Inclusion** - Cuimsiú
- **Reconciliation** - Athmhuintearas
- **Dialogue** - Idirphlé
- **Sectarianism** - Seicteachas
- **Peace** - Síocháin
- **Healing** - Téarnamh
- **Mutual respect** - Comh-mheas
- **Conflict** - Coimhlint
- **Victims** - Íospartaigh
- **Division** - Deighilt

Is féidir tuilleadh faisnéise faoin gCoimisiún a fháil ag:

www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland

Tá píosaí scannáin ón imeacht i nDoire le fáil ar chainéal YouTube Shinn Féin.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xsp5WicaBqE>



#Time4Unity **Am d'Aontacht**

'A new Ireland is now inevitable'



A founding member of the DUP has said he believes that a 'New Ireland' is now inevitable. Wallace Thompson, a former special adviser and evangelical Protestant, also says unionism was "always in many ways doomed because of Ireland's nature".

He says he is prepared to hold discussions with those planning Irish unity in a bid to try to make it a more appealing idea to unionists.

It is not the first time that Mr Thompson has spoken about his thoughts on a possible united Ireland. Earlier this year, he said it should be debated "openly and honestly" adding that given changing religious demographics he would be open to conversations about unity.

In an article with the Belfast telegraph earlier this month Mr Wallace said: "I think we are in an inevitable move towards that — when it comes, I don't know, but there's an inevitability in my mind that we are moving towards some form of new Ireland.

"Hopefully, new and not absorption... but we need to ask the questions and we need to ask for answers and we need to talk to people. That shouldn't mean then you're thinking that we're suddenly going down that road. We might not. We might decide based on all the evidence that we don't want to go down that road.

"But we're closing our eyes and pretending there's no problem. This is the problem with unionism, we're in denial; constant denial.

"To talk to these groups that are calling for a new Ireland to me is not an indication of weakness; it's an indication of strength."

WHAT MIGHT PROTESTANTS BRING TO THE IRISH REUNIFICATION DEBATE?

In an edition of the Irish news this month Claire Mitchell reflected on a question she had been asked at a panel discussion at this year's Féile an Phobail. The question, she felt, was 'a game changer'. The audience member said they felt republicans didn't know enough about Protestants and asked the panel to elaborate on what makes protestants 'tick' and how republicans can be changed by that.

See Claire's article below:

The question unlocked something. It showed a level of openness, curiosity and respect that I am convinced is the key to our future politics, whatever shape that may take.

So, what might Protestants bring to the reunification debate? Of course there is no archetypal 'Protestant', just a patchwork of left, right, free-wheeling and traditional. Many do not want to talk about unity at all. So I simply offer a few observations from my own experiences.

Firstly, dissent. Protestants often enjoy disagreement. While there is one Catholic Church, there are nearly 60 Protestant denominations in Northern Ireland.

There's a tradition of free-thinking that stems back to the story of Luther pinning his theses on the established church's door.

This spirit manifests itself in the 'No' of the DUP. But amongst other pockets of Protestantism, dissent takes different forms. Questioning. Independence. Strong strains of social activism. Protestants may be good allies to those who want to challenge consensus positions in a reunification debate.

Democracy. Many Protestant churches are run fairly democratically. Lay people often have a role in appointing ministers. In some denominations, church ministers and selected members vote on theological positions.

Recently, this has led Presbyterianism in a conservative direction — although, naturally, many dissent from the official policies. In my parents' Quaker congregation, there is no minister. The meeting sits in quiet contemplation, then people speak from the floor if they feel moved to do so. This democratic ethos heavily influenced dissenters in the 1790s and infused the 1798 rebellion. Hunger for democracy has resurfaced time and again amongst Protestants, in the Chartists, the Tenant Right League, the civil rights movement, in some forms of progressive loyalism. If talking about reunification is to be meaningful, it must focus on empowerment of people and grassroots democracy.

Being a northern Protestant also brings a textured sense of belonging. While many Protestants are British, I've had an Irish passport my entire life. But this is not a result of my DNA. My ancestors were largely Scottish and English, coming to Ireland post-Plantation to find work. Yet I live on this island. I'm Irish.

I am an Irish language learner and love Irish



folklore. But I've never felt the need for pure Gaelic blood to opt into these ways of knowing. This is perhaps one of the most important contributions that Protestants may make to the constitutional debate. Cracking open the category of Irishness, so that it becomes more diverse. In an era of global migration, any concept of nation-building must be outward looking and inclusive.

We live in a time of rapid political, cultural, technological and ecological change. If there was a border poll in 10 years, climate collapse will already be quite advanced. The burning questions of today — health, work, energy, food, housing — may look very different.

Twentieth century ideas of the nation state may not be as relevant. Some things, like biodiversity, will need island-based solutions. On other issues, we will need to be part of wider collaborations, on these islands, and with Europe and beyond.

Increasing numbers of Protestants are entering the reunification debate. It is of course important to ask what Protestants might want from political change. But I think it is interesting also to ask what Protestants might bring. Asking these questions might allow all of us to be changed a little. This work will serve us well, however the constitutional chips fall.



Rural communities in a new Ireland

Sinn Féin's Commission on the Future of Ireland hosted their 8th public event at this year's National Ploughing Championships in Co Laois.

The theme of the discussion was 'Rural Communities in a New Ireland'.

The event was chaired by Agriculture and Rural Affairs Spokesperson Claire Kerrane TD. Claire was joined on the panel by Nigel Renaghan, an organic farmer from County Monaghan, Damian McGenity, a farmer from County Armagh and member of Border Communities Against Brexit and Niamh Farrell, current chair of Macra na Feirme's Rural Youth Committee.

The large crowds in the Sinn Féin marquee demonstrated the growing momentum in the conversation about the future of Ireland. Hundreds of people who visited the marquee also took time to have their say on Irish Unity by filling out surveys



on the topic.

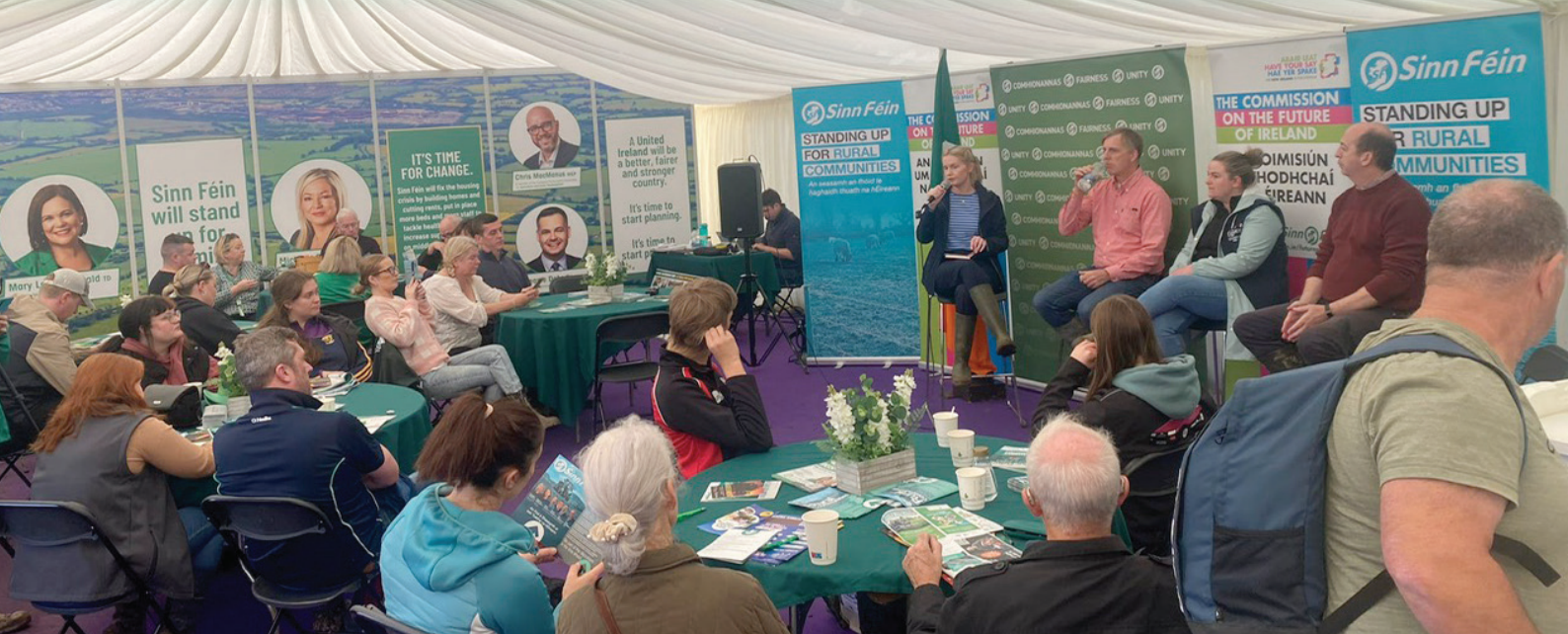
Claire Kerrane TD said,

"This is an exciting time for us all; filled with opportunity and hope for a better future.

"It's clear the challenges confronting the agrifood industry & rural communities arising from Brexit & the climate & biodiversity crises can best be met with all-island strategies & structures. This makes sense.

"Rural areas across Ireland need investment in the road network, better broadband, access to healthcare, childcare and support for small businesses, including agriculture. All of this would be best planned and implemented on an all island basis.

"It is absolutely crucial for farming families and rural communities to engage in the conversation around Irish unity to ensure they maximise the benefits that reunification could have for them."



#Time4Unity Am d'Aontacht

Bohs fans for unity call for an All Ireland soccer team



By John McCann

Bohs fans for Unity was set up several seasons back to further promote the ideas of an all-island league and football structure, one national football association and national unity. Inspiration was drawn from Wales and Scotland where "Under One Banner" groups, Welsh Football Fans for Independence and Scottish Football Fans for Independence, had been formed.

At present, our small group is made up of active fans of Bohemian FC and others. We have a Facebook page with almost 500 members and our logo on flags, pin badges and stickers. We hope that fans in other clubs will take our lead and organise similarly.

After a lengthy process of consultation with stakeholders in the two Irish soccer jurisdictions, Cork businessman Kieran Lucid, recognising the stagnant and under achieving status of the domestic game, had developed and proposed, along with Hypercube Dutch Sports Innovation Experts, several all-island soccer league models. A preferred option emerged and was in the process of being promoted when we were overtaken by flag protests, Brexit and then the COVID pandemic. The project was derailed.

In Dalymount Park, we are part of a club that has a community centred ethos with a strong social conscience. We are about inclusion, diversity, and togetherness. The Unity project sits easy with us.

There has been a huge void left in senior inter league competition since the Setanta Cup died. Last season, UNITE The Union spon-

sored an inaugural inter league competition that ran well, despite some match scheduling difficulties. This season, we have had the inaugural Women's All Island Cup sponsored by Avenir Sports. The final was played in Sligo and was won by Galway United. Cliftonville, who had previously vanquished Bohs in Dalymount, were the other finalists. Bohs also played away to Sion Swifts in Strabane, again suffering a narrow defeat.

The IFA and FAI as two governing bodies have had their dirty washing aired in public and their woes are well known. The sadness of the competitive international women's match between 'The Republic of Ireland' and 'Northern Ireland' which took place at the weekend, puts partition in sharp focus once again. We advocate for the establishment of the AIF, The Association of Irish Football, which would be the amalgamation of the IFA and FAI. We want our international teams to represent Ireland, one country, one people. We look on with envy at our GAA friends, our boxers, athletes, rugby players, cricketers, hockey players, rowers and all the rest who operate on an all-island basis and represent us all with pride.

We reject the narrow minded, selfish, and sectarian obstacles that are holding Irish soccer back and are creating a toxic, divisive atmosphere for players who "have to declare" for one or other of the "international" footballing jurisdictions here.

Soccer on this island has suffered disproportionately in sporting development terms from partition and the splitting of the original football association. It is time to change that.



#Time4Unity Am d'Aontacht

Irish Unity makes sense for students

IS É AONTACHT NA hÉIREANN

IS CIALLMHAIRE DO MHC LÉINN

Sinn Féin members have been at freshers fairs across the country, talking with students about how partition affects them and promoting the benefits of Irish Unity.

Bhí baill Shinn Féin ag Aonaigh na bhFreisear ar fud na tíre, ag caint le mic léinn faoin tionchar a bhíonn ag críochdheighilt orthu agus ag cur buntáistí Aontacht na Gaeilge chun cinn.

PARTITION IS BAD FOR STUDENTS

- ▶ Differences in assessment and grading systems mean that many students experience significant difficulties in selecting courses in third level institutes outside of their jurisdiction
- ▶ Recognition of qualifications differs across the island – this means that students leaving education can have problems accessing jobs across the island
- ▶ Currently workforce planning is undertaken separately in the north and the south, this stymies opportunities for growth and island wide planning
- ▶ Brexit removed access to the Erasmus+ study abroad scheme for students in the north. The Irish government has dedicated almost €2 million in funding to ensure access remains available
- ▶ Students in the north are more likely to leave school early and with a lower level of education than students in the south
- ▶ 26% of students in the north leave for third level education and most of these do not return
- ▶ Student fees are a massive block in accessing third level education. A Sinn Féin led government would abolish student fees in Ireland. That can only be achieved in a united Ireland in which locally elected politicians have access to the full complement of economic powers.

IS LE HAIMHLEAS NA MAC LÉINN Í AN CHRÍOCHDHEIGHILT

- ▶ Mar gheall ar dhifriochtaí i gcórais mheasúnaithe agus grádaithe bíonn fadhbanna suntasacha ag go leor mac léinn cúrsaí a roghnú in institiúidí tríú leibhéal lasmuigh dá ndlínse.
- ▶ Tá éagsúlacht ag baint le haitheantas cáilíochtaí ar fud an oileáin – ciallaíonn sé seo go mbíonn fadhbanna ag mic léinn atá ag fágáil an oideachais le teacht ar phoist ar fud an oileáin
- ▶ I láthair na huairé déantar pleanáil fórsa saothair ar leithligh sa tuaisceart agus sa deisceart, cuireann sé seo bac ar dheiseanna forbartha agus pleanála ar fud an oileáin
- ▶ Chuir Breatimeacht deireadh le rochtain ar scéim staidéar thar lear Erasmus+ do mhic léinn ó thuaidh. Tá beagnach €2 milliún tiomnaithe ag rialtas na hÉireann chun a chinntiú go mbíonn rochtain fós ar fáil
- ▶ Is dóichí go bhfágfaidh daltaí ó thuaidh an scoil go luath agus le leibhéal oideachais níos ísle ná daltaí sa deisceart
- ▶ Fágann 26% de dhaltaí an tuaisceart don oideachas tríú leibhéal agus ní fhilleann an chuid is mó acu seo

Is bloc ollmhór iad táillí mac léinn chun rochtain a fháil ar oideachas tríú leibhéal. Chuirfeadh rialtas faoi stiúir Shinn Féin deireadh le táillí mac léinn in Éirinn. Ní féidir é sin a bhaint amach ach amháin in Éirinn aontaithe ina bhfuil rochtain ag polaiteoirí a toghadh go háitiúil ar chumhacht iomlán eacnamaíoch.



Time 4 Unity Am d'Aontacht

The annual Brian Keenan Walk took place at the weekend. South Armagh activists themed this year's walk on Irish Unity & there was plenty of discussion along the route with those who took part in the challenge.



Promoting the **Unity** message across Ireland

Sinn Féin activists across Ireland took part in this year's Chieftains Walk, in memory of Martin McGuinness. Many areas had their unity banners and flags on show.



KERRY



KERRY



DUBLIN

Activists attended the Ould Lammas Fair this year in Ballycastle & engaged with attendees on the issue of Irish Unity. Unity themed literature was also given to hundreds of people who passed by the Sinn Féin stall.



Time 4 Unity **Am d'Aontacht**

UNITING IRELAND ROUND UP

BXL IRISH UNITY NETWORKING EVENT

BXL Irish Unity are hosting a networking event in Brussels on September 28th at 7pm to learn more about what the group are trying to achieve and how you can get involved. You will have the opportunity to network with other attendees who are also curious about a new and united Ireland and what role the EU has to play. Details in the graphic attached.



Meet The Team

BXL-Irish Unity

Join us for a networking evening
and learn more about BXL-Irish Unity

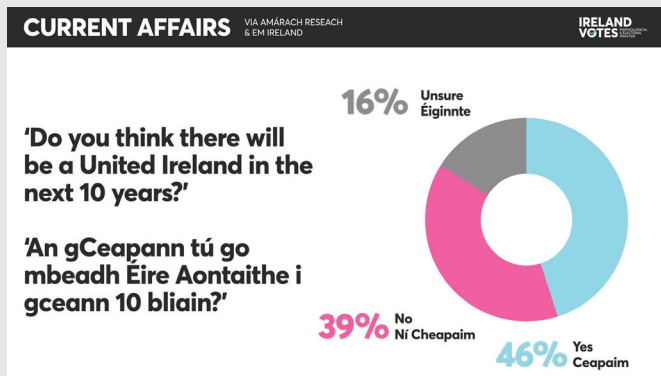
Thursday 28th September
19:00

L'Autobus bar
33 Place Jourdan

BXL-Irish Unity

POLLING

A recent poll by 'Ireland Votes' has shown that 46% of northern voters feel there will be a United Ireland within the next 10 years. Details of the poll are in the graphic attached.



SDLP NEW IRELAND COMMISSION

The SDLP have appointed Kyle Duncan as the new Chairperson of their New Ireland Commission. Colum Eastwood said this month that the SDLP are deadly serious about cherishing the British traditions in a New Ireland and there are conversations to be had on this.

CHRIS MACMANUS MEP RAISES IRISH UNITY IN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DEBATE

During a debate on the European Parliament which was exploring resolutions to legal and admin obstacles in a cross border context, Chris MacManus MEP highlighted the denial of justice to victims of the conflict and also the need for Dublin and Brussels to engage in the Irish Unity conversation.



BARRIERS TO STUDENT MOBILITY NORTH/ SOUTH

Only 0.6 percent of undergraduate students in the south are from the north according to a recent report on barriers to student mobility, jointly compiled by the ESRI and Shared Island Unit. The full report can be accessed here: Student mobility in Ireland and Northern Ireland | ESRI





Sinn Féin president Mary Lou McDonald says **United Ireland planning** should be at heart of government

An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar has said he believes we are now on 'the path to unification'. Speaking this month he said,

"I believe that there will be a united Ireland in my lifetime, and in that united Ireland there is going to be a minority, roughly a million people who are British. And you judge the success and the quality of a country by the way it treats its minorities and that's something we're going to have to think about."

Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald says planning for Irish unification should be "at the heart of government".

Mary Lou welcomed the comments by Leo Varadkar, saying she agrees with him - but challenged him to

take action on the issue.

"Leo Varadkar, the Taoiseach, has correctly said that we're on the path to Irish unity. The question and the challenge now for him and for the government is what are they going to do about that?"

"Because we need processes and preparation that are inclusive, respectful, we need a process that's democratic, entirely peaceful, and all of that requires active planning. You can't wish that into existence. You have to roll up your sleeves and get the work done."

"The preparation for Irish unity can't just be syphoned off or left in a silo of government. It needs to be planned at the heart of the government."



CALL FOR IRISH UNITY HEARD AT TUC CONFERENCE

By Joe Dwyer

“This is an exciting time to be a united Irishman”. That was the message that was brought to the 155th Annual Trade Union Congress conference in Liverpool last week.

Mickey Brady, Sinn Féin MP for Newry and Armagh, was in town for the yearly gathering of trade unionists from the length and breadth of Britain. Speaking from Liverpool, Mr Brady said, “It was great to attend this year’s congress. We received a very warm welcome from the trade unionists we met and found plenty of interest in the constitutional conversation that is taking shape happening back home in Ireland.”

The Tuesday evening of conference, 12 October, saw a fringe meeting discuss the campaign for Irish unity. The event was a product of the hard work and dedication of Austin Harney, a longstanding trade unionist and advocate for the Irish community in Britain.

The panel of guest speakers included Mickey Brady MP alongside: Frank Connolly, author of ‘United Nation: The case for integrating Ireland’; Máire Doolin, a full-time PCS Union Officer and former chair of the Liverpool Irish Centre; and Kevin Meagher, author of ‘A United Ireland: Why Unification Is Inevitable and How It Will Come About’ and ‘What a Bloody Awful Country: Northern Ireland’s century of division’.

A last-minute fire alarm meant that the venue for the evening’s meeting had to be fully evacuated. However, a hardy bunch reassembled in the backroom of a public house across the street. Fortunately, the proprietors were happy to accommodate the hastily reconvened fringe meeting and the discussion was able to continue uninterrupted.

In his address, Frank Connolly noted that, “The trade union movement in Ireland has already agreed at its conference two years ago in Belfast, and I was present at it and was involved in preparing the motion, decided that the unions north and south agree that we as a movement of 800,000 workers in Ireland, prepare for a referendum and for unity”. This being a reference to the motion passed at the ITCU’s BDC in October 2021.

Máire Doolin spoke eloquently about how a new Ireland would be able to better address the rights of women both north and south. As she said, “Despite the pivotal role that women played over the course of Irish history still, all too often, their voice has not been heard. In a new Ireland, women must have an equal place in society because until gender equality is achieved our democracy will remain unfinished.”

This address was followed by Kevin Meagher who made a forceful case that the debate on constitutional change is already well underway and that the political establishment needs to be cognisant of this reality. As he said, “We’re getting to that point, in the next five to ten years, when all the variables that you look at, in terms of what might constitute demand for a border poll, will be reached. There’s not actually that many of them. It’s either a series of opinion polls or a series of election results.”

Mickey Brady MP opened his address by saying how good it was to be back in Liverpool, a city he studied in as a student in 1970s. As he told the fringe meeting, “In terms of the prospect of a united Ireland, for the first time in my lifetime the issue of a united Ireland is no longer an aspiration: it is a project. I think it is a project that trade unionism has to be very much involved in, both here and back in Ireland. The trade union platform is a huge platform and any trade unionists here tonight need to go home to their branches and raise the campaign for Irish reunification.”

It was evident from the question-and-answer session afterwards that there are notable matters and concerns that require serious consideration and examination. It was also clear that the trade union movement provides a ready-made network of expertise and experience to host such vital conversations. The old mantra of ‘Labour Must Wait’ cannot be repeated. Workers must be central to the building of a new Ireland because ultimately, as history has too often proven, if worker’s voices are not in the room; their concerns won’t be heard.

The meeting concluded with an appeal to trade unionists and progressive voices in Britain to lend their support to the campaign for a unity referendum.



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.



sinnfein.ie

[@sinnfeinireland](https://twitter.com/sinnfeinireland)



[sinnfein](https://www.facebook.com/sinnfein)

irish.unity@sinnfein.ie