

CLIMATE EMERGENCY: RESETTling OUR VISION OF IRISH  
UNITY - A DIFFERENT SHADE OF GREEN

**new  
IRELAND**

FÓMHAR  
2021  
AUTUMN  
EAGRÁN ISSUE 2



**ÉIRE  
NUA**

**HAVE  
YOUR  
SAY**



**THE NEW  
IRELAND  
IS FOR  
EVERYONE**

Sinn Féin will formally launch an extensive island-wide and global initiative to begin in January 2022. This will involve an ambitious, 18 month long public and private consultation, open to everyone through 'Peoples Assemblies.' We want everybody to have their say on the political and constitutional future of the island of Ireland.

**SEE PAGE 4**



**ABAIR  
DO  
CHUID**



**ÉIRE  
NUA  
DON UILE  
DHUINE**

**TAOBH  
ISTIGH**

IRISH UNITY ON THE HORIZON  
IRISH UNITY A VERY REAL PROSPECT  
WORKING TOGETHER MAKES SENSE

**#Time4Unity  
Am d'Aontacht**





# Clár

FÓMHAR 2001 AUTUMN **EAGRÁN ISSUE 2**

- 3** WELCOME TO NEW IRELAND
- 4** THE NEW IRELAND IS FOR EVERYONE  
- HAVE YOUR SAY
- 6** IRISH UNITY ON THE HORIZON  
- BY DECLAN KEARNEY
- 8** CROSSWORD
- 9** INTERVIEW WITH MARK GUILFOYLE
- 11** WESTMINSTER'S AWAKE
- 14** THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND A  
UNITED IRELAND  
RESETTING OUR VISION OF IRISH UNITY
- 17** A DIFFERENT SHADE OF GREEN
- 20** ÉIRE IARCHÓILÍNEACH
- 22** SELF-DETERMINATION AND  
SOVEREIGNTY
- 25** IRISH UNITY IS NOW A VERY REAL  
PROSPECT
- 28** WORKING TOGETHER MAKES SENSE
- 31** CRANN NA SAOIRSE
- 34** A CALL FOR THE DIASPORA TO  
MESSAGE FOR UNITY

## LATEST NEWS - LATEST NEWS

In a welcome development the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) at its biennial delegate conference in Belfast passed a motion in support of the Good Friday Agreement and the referendum on Irish Unity.

## *Tá fáilte romhat chuig – Éire Nua*

**T**á seo ar an dara eagrán den iris ráithiúil ar líne le Sinn Féin a bheas ag díriú isteach ar gach gné den díospóireacht ar Athaontú na hÉireann.

This is the second edition of our online magazine which is dedicated to examining all aspects of the Irish Unity debate.

It is being published just before the 2021 Ard Fheis of Sinn Féin which will devote a significant section to the issue of Irish Unity.

Since our first edition was published in the summer hardly a week has passed without some commentary on unity emerging. When will the unity referendum be held? What is the role of the Irish government? What will the referendum questions be? How will the referendums be structured and what new laws might be needed to facilitate them? What of the issue of rights and equality? Of a national health service? Of reconciliation and inclusion? All valid questions that require answers.

The reality is that there will be a unity referendum. Exactly when and how quickly can be influenced by the work of United Irelanders.

As we prepare for it, it is worthwhile reflecting on the recent role of referendums in encouraging greater public awareness of and an engagement in democratic decisions that achieved significant positive change.

The referendums on marriage equality and the repeal of the 8th amendment are the most obvious. The Irish Government helped prepare for these by establishing citizen centred mechanisms – the Constitutional Convention and then the Citizen's Assembly – to examine constitutional and societal change. This process of maximising democratic engagement in the process of change and in the referendum process was a success.



# Welcome to the second edition of Éire Nua/New Ireland

23 years ago the May 1998 referendums that were held north and south came at the end of an intense period of negotiation and a wide-ranging debate on the merits or otherwise of the Good Friday Agreement. Those referendums achieved a massive majority in favour of the Agreement.

In stark contrast the failure of the Tory government to properly prepare for the Brexit referendum in 2016 resulted in an outcome that has sharply divided British society, encouraged the break-up of the British union and created economic turmoil.

The consequences for the North have been especially difficult. The unionist parties – the Democratic Unionist Party, the Ulster Unionist Party, the Traditional Unionist Voice and the Progressive Unionist Party – have all united behind the claim that the EU and the Irish government are responsible for the border on the Irish Sea and for the flaws they claim exist within the Irish Protocol.

The reality of course is very different. The Unionist parties back Brexit. It is they who supported Johnson. They resisted every effort of Theresa May's government to negotiate an agreement with the EU. It is they who are refusing to recognise the democratic vote of the majority of citizens in the North to remain in the EU. It is unionists who ignore the fact that it was Boris Johnson who negotiated the Withdrawal Agreement – which he described two years ago in October 2019 as a *“fantastic deal for all of the UK”*. It is Johnson and Frost who at the same time negotiated the Protocol. And it is unionist cheerleaders who are egging David Frost on to unilaterally scrap the Protocol and write a British version of it.

To add to this chaos, the day before the EU published its constructive proposals on resolving the Protocol crisis, Frost and Johnson announced that there can be no role for the European Court of Justice in judging disputes. From October 2019 until July this year it was never raised by the British in discussions with the Irish government. Now it is a new red line.

Bad faith, duplicity, disinformation, playing the fear card, and creating new problems are the hallmark of this Conservative government's approach to Brexit and the Protocol, slavishly followed by the unionist leaders.

So, the challenge for United Irelanders in the time ahead is substantial. In an editorial in May the Irish Times concluded ...*“If it is plausible to think referendums on Irish unity could happen this decade, it would be prudent to plan for that possibility.”* The Irish government has a crucial role in this and in establishing a Citizens Assembly to begin the process of planning for the unity referendum. The Citizen's Assembly is also an important tool in the effort to engage and dialogue with anyone willing to discuss the future shape of a new, shared Ireland. This is especially important in efforts to engage with those who come from the unionist section of our people.

Éire Nua/New Ireland is one contribution to this discussion. This edition details the Party's plan to launch an extensive island-wide and global initiative to begin in January next year on the future shape of the New Ireland. It will involve an ambitious, 18 month long public and private unique consultation, open to everyone through 'Peoples Assemblies.' There are articles on different aspects of a United Ireland, including Pearse Doherty looking back on the year since Sinn Féin published *“The Economic Benefits of Irish Unity”*; on the climate emergency in the context of unity; an interview with Mark Guilfoyle, the President of Friends of Sinn Féin and an article by Kevin Meagher, a former Special Adviser to Shaun Woodward who was Secretary of State for the North, and who writes regularly on Irish politics.

ENJOY.

Email your letter to  
[irish.unity@sinnfein.ie](mailto:irish.unity@sinnfein.ie)



# HAVE YOUR SAY



# THE NEW IRELAND IS FOR EVERYONE

**I**n November Sinn Féin will formally launch an extensive island-wide and global initiative to begin in January next year. This will involve an ambitious, 18 month long public and private unique consultation, open to everyone through 'Peoples Assemblies.'

We want everybody to have their say on the political and constitutional future of the island of Ireland.

Under the title - The New Ireland is for Everyone – Have Your Say – Sinn Féin will organise a series of national, regional and local 'Peoples Assemblies' in key locations across the island and invite citizens to make oral or written submissions. Wherever there is a demand Sinn Féin will seek to facilitate it, including within the Irish diaspora.

Uachtarán Mary Lou McDonald TD explained: "Today the issue of Irish Unity is a central part of the mainstream political discourse. It is an everyday topic of conversation in the media, among political parties, civic society and citizens and within the diaspora. Achieving Irish Unity is the single biggest challenge and opportunity facing the people of the island of Ireland since partition was imposed 100 years ago.

In the summer the Ard Chomhairle of Sinn Féin, unanimously endorsed a recommendation from

its United Ireland sub-committee, and agreed to establish - "The Commission on the New Ireland." Its remit is to organise a series of major public conferences, or 'Peoples Assemblies.' These will be open and inclusive conversations on the future shape and constitutional arrangements for the island of Ireland.

This significant political initiative will invite citizens to have their say on all issues pertaining to the future of Ireland; its constitutional arrangements; on political and democratic structures and governance; on the role of the Irish government in the setting up a Citizens Assembly and of the Irish and British governments in holding the unity referendum provided for in the Good Friday Agreement. It will also seek views on the rights and equality agenda; the protection of minorities; and future economic and public policy models. It will seek to engage with the protestant/loyalist/unionist section of our people and genuinely take on board their apprehensions and opinions.

The Commission will invite submissions and contributions, and hold both public and private sectoral meetings with individuals, trade unions, business, community, women's groups, young people, sporting organisations etc. Sinn Féin will also roll this initiative out to the Irish diaspora.







The 'Peoples Assemblies' will also provide an opportunity for alternative proposals to be presented by those with a different vision of Ireland and of the relationships between the people who live on this island and in Britain. At the end of the process a report will be published.

### **"THE COMMISSION ON THE NEW IRELAND"**

The Commission has its roots in the Peace Commission established by Sinn Féin in January 1994 that helped contribute to the groundbreaking IRA cessation announced in August of that year.

The objectives governing its work included a requirement that it consult with "the widest possible spectrum of public and private opinion on how to establish a lasting peace in Ireland ... To create a dialogue around the issues of a lasting and durable peace."

In all five major conferences were held – one in each province – Derry, Galway, Cork and Dublin and a fifth meeting was held in Belfast. All took place between 21 January and 4 March. In the report that was subsequently published it was explained that:

"We publicised the fact that we were seeking submissions through the media, letters to the

papers, letters to individual, organisations and through local advertisements. We gave people the option of presenting their submissions to us publicly or through meeting with us privately ..."

Subsequently 228 submissions from a broad range of community activists, religious groups, Trade Unions, women's rights activists, Irish language and cultural rights activists, campaign groups, politicians and individuals all took part. The report of the Peace Commission was published and then discussed at the Letterkenny conference held in July 1994. It was one element in the process of dialogue and negotiation that eventually created the conditions for the IRA cessation announced on 31 August.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Party will formally launch 'The New Ireland is for Everyone - Have your Say' campaign in November and subsequently provide additional detail on the number of 'Peoples Assemblies' to be held, a calendar of dates, the names of those from Sinn Féin who will take part in the panels of the 'Peoples Assemblies,' the first of which will take place in the New year.

**ABAIR  
DO  
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**ÉIRE  
NUA**  
DON UILE  
DHUINE

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# Irish Unity on the horizon

“

Last month I attended the annual British - Irish Association (BIA) conference which took place in Oxford, England. Indicative of the pressures on relations between Britain and

Ireland, there was a large number of senior Irish and British cabinet ministers and civil servants present. Ministers from the administrations in Holyrood, Cardiff and Belfast, including myself, also participated.

Platforms were given to An Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD; Irish Foreign Minister, Simon Coveney TD; Finance Minister, Paschal Donohoe TD; and lead British Brexit negotiator David Frost, who was joined by British government cabinet Ministers, Michael Gove, and Brandon Lewis; to explain their perspectives on British-Irish relations post Brexit, the Protocol negotiations, the pandemic, legacy, and other challenges.

It was notable but hardly surprising, that no reference was made to the influence these issues have had in moving the political debate on Irish unity centre stage.

That was up until the Saturday afternoon session addressed by myself, Scottish Minister Angus Robertson, the Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford, Paschal Donohoe, Michael Gove, and, the north's First Minister Paul Givan MLA. Angus Robertson's opening remarks immediately addressed the renewed mandate and political momentum for a Scottish

independence referendum.

Angus, Mark, and I then strongly challenged the Tory government policy of centralising power in London since Brexit, which has undermined the autonomy and competences of our political institutions, and resulting in a democratic crisis for intergovernmental relations with Whitehall.

In my remarks I advocated a reset in political relations across these islands, and called for a joint focus from all the administrations present on how to collectively navigate the permanently changed political and economic relations both within, and between Britain and Ireland.

I told the BIA that the Irish unity is now firmly on the horizon, (and that dealing with Scottish independence is also unavoidable).

Everything has changed. Brexit detonated an earthquake at the heart of the British state. It's after effects, the pandemic, and now the debate around the Protocol, have been driving unstoppable change.

Relations between Britain and Ireland have been fundamentally altered. At the same time, the Tory power grab, under the guise of the Internal Market Act has seriously damaged inter governmental relations. Tory Brexit Britain is increasingly behaving like an outlier with regard to international convention and multilateral norms. At the same time the realignment of the political landscape in Ireland is happening in plain sight.

I said this reality needs to be dramatised, by bringing reason, flexibility and generosity to





**DECLAN KEARNEY**

Sinn Féin National Chairperson. An MLA & Junior Minister. And the Party lead on the Irish Unity project. He is also an Antrim Gael.

*“Relations between Britain and Ireland have been fundamentally altered.”*

our discussions about how future change is managed.

Such a process must involve the British and Irish governments, all the political parties on the island, and crucially, widespread civic participation.

I took the opportunity in Oxford to assert the importance of power sharing for the north of Ireland, notwithstanding the challenges and limitations created by this model of government. I reiterated my privilege to serve as a Sinn Féin Minister, absolutely committed to our existing institutions, while having no contradiction in strongly promoting the democratic case for ending partition and securing Irish unity.

However, the history of the peace process is that power sharing, and the rights and equality agendas only succeed when both the British and Irish governments fulfil their obligations under all of the binding international agreements upon which our peace settlement has been built. That's why the role of all the Good Friday Agreement institutions, including the British Irish Council, North South Ministerial Council, and British and Irish Inter-Governmental Council must be continuously strengthened and renewed.

Earlier in the day Brandon Lewis spoke about opportunities he associated with the centenary of the northern state.

I noted the significance of the ongoing decade of centenaries, and how the historic relationship between Britain and Ireland has been defined by colonialism, conflict and division.

I emphasised that the experience of partition has been disastrous and continues to cast a long shadow, in the form of sectarianism, political and communal polarisation and the unresolved issue of how to deal with the past.

One of the biggest strategic challenges now in the north is to liberate ourselves from the legacy of old battles and move forward to open a new phase of the peace process based on reconciliation and healing. Discussion about constitutional change in Ireland and Scotland, and increasingly so in Wales, are happening in a wider and dynamic geo-political context. Progressive constitutional change should be viewed as a modernising societal and political influence. We should be excited about the future prospect of two new sovereign states emerging between these islands, in Scotland and Ireland, alongside a Welsh state with maximum democratic autonomy arrangements; and the potential for new forms of positive cooperation and coexistence.

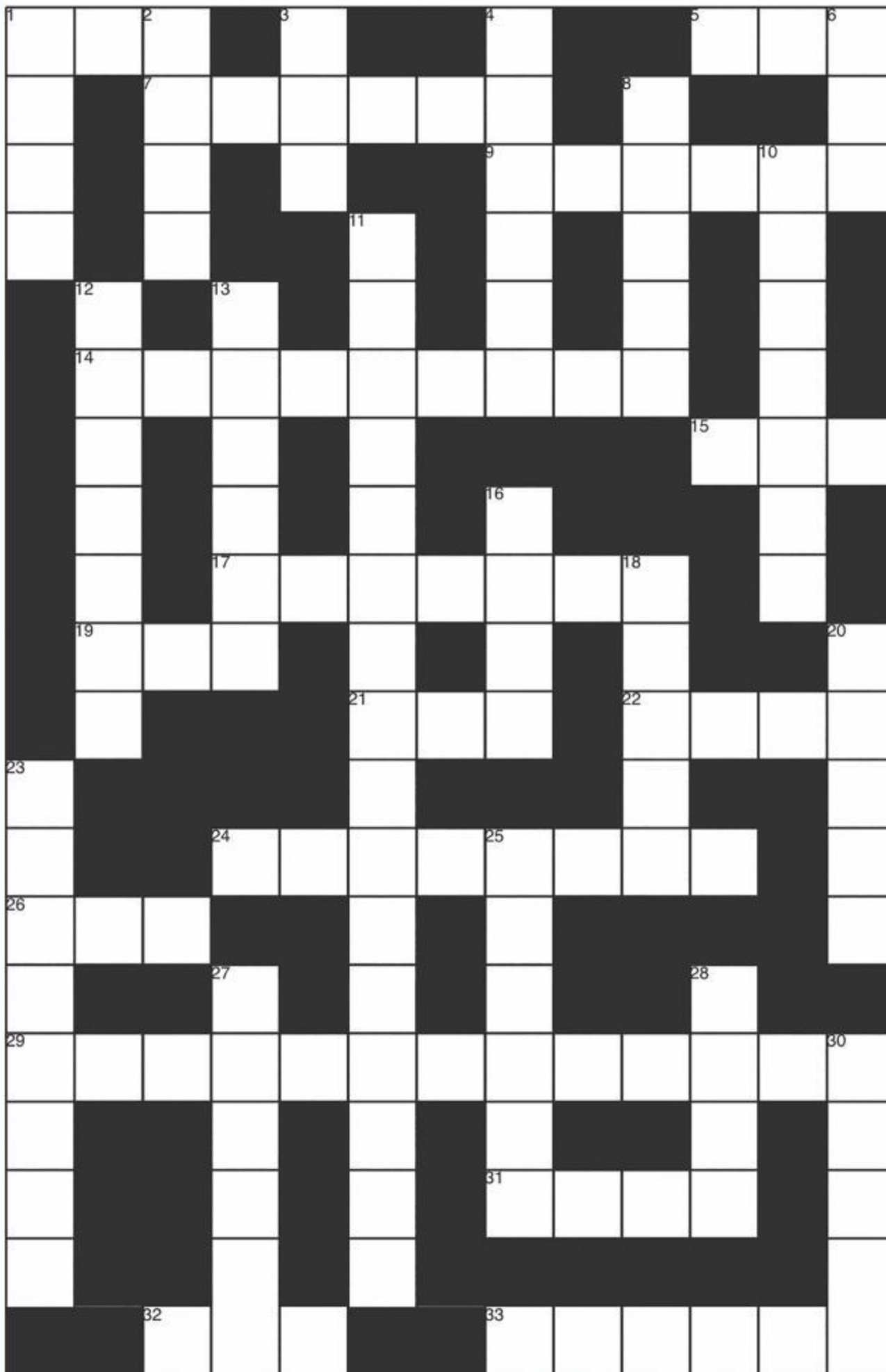
The Irish peace process was in part a product of positive geo-political influences, especially from the USA and the EU.

The international community continues to have a pivotal role to play in Ireland, by supporting the transition towards Irish unity, and a new constitutional and political framework of national government, in which citizens rights, pluralism, prosperity, and progress will flourish.

”







## Clues

### ACROSS

- 1 Republican greeting abbreviated (3)
- 5 Group established in 1981 to ensure human rights are protected in the 6 counties (3)
- 7 Calendar festival when Republican remember our fallen comrades (6)
- 9 Political thought process as to how to achieve results (6)
- 14 Highest office in Sinn Féin (9)
- 15 Comrades in South Africa (3)
- 17 **(and 23 down)** First female leader of Sinn Féin (8,7)
- 19 The CR variety of this was dropped on prisoners in Long Kesh during the burning in 1974 (3)
- 21 **(and 28 down)** Sinn Féin policy document during the 1970s and early 1980s (4,3)
- 22 Nickname for Belfast prison (4)
- 24 **(and 4 down)** Founder of Sinn Féin (6,8)
- 26 Proposal to be debated at Ard Fheis (3)
- 29 Policy of not taking a seat in the British parliament (13)
- 31 The number of counties in Cúige Uladh (4)
- 32 Saint which Louise Gavan Duffy name her school after, when Pádraig Mac Piarais had St Enda's (3)
- 33 Belfast IRA leader in the 1920's and 30s who escaped from Belfast Prison in 1943. First editor of Republican News in 1970. Jimmy ----- (6)

### DOWN

- 1 British army chief at time of Internment in 1971 (4)
- 2 The side of the political spectrum on which Sinn Féin stands (4)
- 3 Disgraced paramilitary police force established in 1920 and disbanded in 1970 (3)
- 4 **(and 24 across)** Founder of Sinn Féin (6,8)
- 6 Nickname for Dublin prison and middle name of Belfast United Irish leader (3)
- 8 **(and 27 down)** Where Sinn Féin offices were established in 1970 in Dublin (5,6)
- 10 Sinn Féin was founded in this building in Dublin in November 1905 (7)
- 11 Hotel in Dublin where the 1970 split in Sinn Féin was followed by a walk-out led by Ruairí Ó Brádaigh (16)
- 12 Bleak prison where many republicans were interned in Kildare (7)
- 13 It sound like a well cleaned prison in England. Helped by a Limerick man, the spy George Blake escaped from it. Wormwood ----- (6)
- 16 Unit of the Fianna, Irish word for group (4)
- 18 The Asguard was this type of boat. (5)
- 20 Boer leader held in high esteem among founders of Sinn Féin. General ----- (5)
- 23 **(and 17 across)** First female leader of Sinn Féin (8,7)
- 25 Member of the IRB (6)
- 27 **(and 8 down)** Where Sinn Féin offices were established in 1970 in Dublin (5,6)
- 28 **(and 21 across)** Sinn Féin policy document from 1970s and early 1980s (4,3)
- 30 Belfast Sinn Féin leader murdered in Mater Hospital in 1976 ----- Drumm (5)



scribble pad

*See page 36 for Issue 1 Crossword answers*





AN INTERVIEW WITH...



# Mark Guilfoyle

## President of Friends of Sinn Féin USA

The USA has been and remains central to the cause of Irish unity, independence, and freedom. In every phase of struggle from Wolfe Tone, the Fenian movement, the 1916 Rising, the 1981 Hunger Strikes, the peace process, and Good Friday Agreement, Irish America has stood with Irish Republicanism.

The story of Friends of Sinn Féin is the story of the peace process. Established in 1994 following the first visit to the USA by Gerry Adams, the group is the only authorized body to support the work of Sinn Féin in the USA.

Brexit has demonstrated that the USA remains a player in safeguarding our agreements and interests. The USA will be crucial to secure and win the unity referendum and to build a new and united Ireland.

In this edition, we Interview Mark Guilfoyle, President of Friends of Sinn Féin USA, about Irish America, Friends of Sinn Féin, and what the future holds.

**Eire Nua:** *In every phase of our history Irish America has played a central role. What continues to drive the interest in Ireland?*

**Mark Guilfoyle:** First of all we have to look at how America was born. We were a colony of Britain. We threw off British occupation. We fought a war over it. We despise tyranny and colonialism. That is embedded in the American psyche. On top of that, the Irish immigrant experience stretches over two hundred years. Their stories have been handed down through generations - leaving Ireland to escape poverty, injustice, or persecution. The Irish took the jobs that no one else wanted to do. They built the railroads and went down the mines. They always wanted better for their children. I'm the first in my family to go to college. My dad was a union pipefitter. Through it all, Irish America retained a sense of community, of pride in both Ireland and America.

The American values of democracy and rights and a sense of unfinished business back in Ireland drove the involvement of Irish America. It still does.

It has often been quoted but is still very important for all of that but if you want a sense of the connection between Irish America and the desire for freedom and independence in Ireland you only have to look at the Proclamation which speaks of the support provided "by her exiled children in America." That support has never diminished.

**Eire Nua:** *Is the US still engaged in Ireland?*

**Mark Guilfoyle:** The descendants of Irish immigrants have





now risen to high political office and are leaders in industry, law, the unions, and politics. Many of these leaders have put the cause of Ireland front and centre. It is part of who we are and our heritage.

US engagement is much stronger now. The world is a lot smaller, and people can gain instant access to what is happening in Belfast, Dublin, or Washington. The information is unfiltered, and people are better informed. We see the President calling out Boris Johnson or Rep. Richard Neal saying no to a trade deal if the Good Friday Agreement is undermined. And, we see it immediately.

The Friends of Ireland Caucus is fully engaged and operates at a high level on Brexit and legacy. Thirty-six members of Congress recently signing on to a letter opposing the British government's legacy proposals is very significant.

Of course, many Americans see Irish unity as the solution to these issues.

***Eíre Nua: How did a Kentucky Lawyer end up a President of Friends of Sinn Féin?***

**Mark Guilfoyle:** I drew the short straw!!! I became interested in Friends of Sinn Féin shortly after it was set up following the ceasefire.

In response to a request, I got a letter and pamphlets from Mairead Keane on behalf of the Friends of Sinn Féin in June 1995.

I took my kids to an event in New York in May 1998 where Gerry Adams was speaking, and it was a seminal event leading to my involvement. I got to know and work closely with Larry Downes, then President of Friends of Sinn Féin. And, I met with and became a great admirer of Rita O'Hare.

From 2000 on, activists hosted visits by Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness, and Gerry Kelly to Kentucky and Cincinnati Ohio. Those visits were very inspirational. I was always struck by their utter lack of bitterness, always positive and forward-looking.

More recently, I worked with Jim Cullen, another great leader, when he was President of Friends of Sinn Féin. I was honoured to be proposed as President when Jim passed on.

***Eíre Nua: Friends of Sinn Féin was established over 25 years ago, how has its role changed?***

**Mark Guilfoyle:** When FoSF started it was built from scratch. We had great support and leadership. Over the years, Friends of Sinn Féin has grown in influence to mirror the rise of Sinn Féin.

When we started it was about getting Gerry Adams into the states. We now have strong and enduring relations with democrats and republicans across the states and in the Capitol. We are a vibrant platform for Sinn Féin in the USA.

The biggest change has been increasing our social media. Engagement is off the charts, small donations are increasing, information and posts are shared and widely read. The community is expanding and the unity campaign is really driving this development.

No other Irish party has invested in and maintained an ongoing relationship with political and community leaders in the US.

***Eíre Nua: What are the priorities for Friends of Sinn Féin USA?***

**Mark Guilfoyle:** The continued rise of support for Sinn Féin across Ireland and the committed, honest and positive leadership of the party is inspiring activists in the USA. We want to continue to build the organization.

We have to defend the agreements from Brexit and uphold the rights of victims.

Front and centre for all our work is securing and winning a unity referendum. Five years ago that was an aspiration, it is now doable. It is achievable. Gerry Adams challenged people to be the first Irish Americans to visit a new and united Ireland. That comment made a real impact.

***Eíre Nua: Are you optimistic for the future?***

**Mark Guilfoyle:** I have to be, if you spend any time with Mary Lou McDonald, Michelle O'Neil, or Pearse Doherty you can only be positive and inspired. We are not looking backward -- we are looking forward to building a new Ireland. That is an amazing prospect. A new country based on rights. An Irish Republic that fulfils the sacrifice of the volunteers of 1916 and the hope of our exiled children.



# Westminster's Awake

BY KEVIN MEAGHER



*Kevin Meagher is 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.' He is a former special adviser to the last Labour Secretary of State, Shaun Woodward.*



I've always found the phrase a bit unusual. The one in the Good Friday Agreement that empowers the Secretary of State to call a border poll; 'if at any time it appears likely to him that a majority of those voting would express a wish that Northern Ireland should cease to be part of the United Kingdom and form part of a united Ireland.'

Overlooking the dated language, (especially as we have seen three female Secretaries of State in that time), the idea that a constitutional referendum affecting the integrity of the United Kingdom, not to mention that of the Republic of Ireland, could be called at the whim of a middle-ranking British cabinet minister is well, fanciful.

My assumption is that the phrase was meant to distance the prime minister of the day – preventing the triggering of a poll from becoming a bargaining chip in negotiations in a scenario where a government needed the support of smaller parties – like the unionists – to prop-up its position in the House of Commons.

Of course, this is not an academic point and has happened on three occasions over the past 40 years, with James Callaghan, John Major and Theresa May all ending-up reliant on unionist votes for their administrations' survival.

Despite the wording in the agreement, the reality is that calling a poll will be the culmination of an unwritten, but intuitive process, requiring three elements to harmonise.





First, that there is demonstrable demand in the North for holding a referendum, evidenced mainly through election results, and perhaps by a vote to support one in the assembly.

Second, in the parlance of eBay, the buyer must be willing to collect; with Dublin preparing the ground through a process of careful and sustained engagement with Belfast and Westminster to agree and facilitate the reunification of the country.

Third, that the seller is willing to trade. Westminster will need to reciprocate Dublin's eagerness, sure in the knowledge that the demographic and political composition of the North has tilted irrevocably and that the number

government in the South.

This is crucial as British politicians are tentatively prepared to sell, but they want Belfast and Dublin to initiate proceedings. Like a character in a Jane Austen novel, they do not want to be seen to be overly forward in making the first move, inviting allegations of treachery from Unionists.

This underlines the significance of Sinn Féin's surge in the last Dáil elections (and in every opinion poll since). British ministers may very shortly find themselves dealing with Michelle O'Neill as First Minister and Mary-Lou McDonald as Taoiseach. How would they react to that?

**"Ultimately, the realpolitik of 'losing' Northern Ireland has no domestic downside for either a Labour or even a Conservative government. There is no electoral price to be paid, no real reckoning with public opinion, no loss of international prestige, and certainly no adverse economic impact."**

of voices shouting 'Unity!' drowns out those crying 'Betrayal!'

The poor old Secretary of State – and there have been 22 of them since Direct Rule was imposed in 1972 (and for half of them it was their last government job) – barely gets a look in. This is big 'P' politics.

Now for the past twenty-odd years since the Good Friday Agreement was signed, this elliptical commitment to a poll has been largely academic. Attention has instead focused on the here and now and handling of periodic crises. The longer term, existential question: 'How long has Northern Ireland got?' has been dumped at the bottom of the ministerial in-tray. Over the next few years, it will rise to the top of it.

If Sinn Féin secures top spot in next May's assembly elections (assuming, reasonably, that Jeffrey Donaldson's threats to crash the institutions over the Protocol in the meantime are merely vapour), then that will be hugely symbolic. As will forming part of the next

At one time there would have been a lot of harumphing, but I think they will see it as an opportunity. They will position themselves supporting a demand for change agreed by Belfast and Dublin, describing it as Ireland 'coming of age' (or some other equally patronising phrase), as a smokescreen to cover their concession.

Ultimately, the realpolitik of 'losing' Northern Ireland has no domestic downside for either a Labour or even a Conservative government. There is no electoral price to be paid, no real reckoning with public opinion, no loss of international prestige, and certainly no adverse economic impact.

Yet British leaders are coy and require choreography to move from their comfort zones.

Wary of being perceived as unpatriotic after the mauling his predecessor Jeremy Corbyn took at the hands of the British media, Labour leader Keir Starmer appeared to rule out any prospect of a border poll in an interview with the BBC's



Enda McLafferty back in July, describing it as 'a very hypothetical discussion.'

Asked whether he would campaign with unionists in the event of a vote, Starmer replied: 'I personally, as leader of the Labour party, believe in the United Kingdom, strongly, and want to make the case for the United Kingdom, strongly, and will be doing that.'

Superficially, that sounds like 'yes,' but Starmer is a careful lawyer. He doesn't even mention Ireland in that formulation. He simply feels that he cannot look equivocal about the Union to British voters (it's a huge negative for Labour in internal polling) especially as he has his eye on half a dozen Scottish Tory seats at the next election - possibly as little as 18 months away - where championing Scotland's place in the Union is a key factor.

In a recent interview with The House magazine, Michael Gove – the cabinet's leading romantic, Tory nationalist - said he would like to see 'small "u" unionism,' - a belief that Northern Ireland is economically better off in the UK - 'becoming the new normal,' regardless of people's background.

I remember Peter Robinson saying something similar at the DUP's conference a decade ago. As we have seen over the past 100 years, a successful Unionist charm offensive to win round Nationalists is a slim prospect, to put it mildly.

So here was Gove offering something a long way short of a full-blooded defence of the Union. Especially from a man who infamously wrote a gung-ho pamphlet twenty years ago, opposing the Good Friday Agreement, ruing the decision not to continue the 'dirty war' against republicans.

The long and the short of it, to coin a phrase, is that Westminster's awake, and beginning to price-in that change is coming. If the dial tilts towards unity in Belfast and Dublin, then British politicians will deal.

And when you are listening to them, concentrate on what they don't say, as much as what they do.

The long and the short of it, to coin a phrase, is that Westminster's awake, and beginning to price-in that change is coming. If the dial tilts towards unity in Belfast and Dublin, then British politicians will deal.





# The Climate Emergency and a United Ireland

In this era of planetary emergency, we need a credible vision for a united Ireland economy that places climate and the environment ahead

of growth. And that begins to examine what policies/objectives/strategies are needed in a United Ireland if we are to should The 26th United Nations Climate Change Convention (COP26) will begin in Glasgow at the end of this month. The world faces many stark choices in the years ahead. At a time of increasing climate disasters and with the threat of rising sea levels; droughts; floods and starvation significant decisions are needed to prevent an even greater climate emergency in the decades ahead.

In this edition of Éire Nua/New Ireland we have two articles on this issue which begin to ask the questions that need answered for the future.



## Resetting our vision of Irish unity

BY **SEAN FEARON**

For a few days in August 2021, an unusual urgency appeared to sweep across governments and the public in the wake of the publication of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) 6th Assessment Report.

Governments were told the report's contents were a 'wake-up call'. This was a novel choice of words, given that the same governments of every ideological stripe have slept through or simply ignored the previous three decades of bleating alarms sounded by the prevailing body of global climate scientists.

When the IPCC released its first Assessment between 1990 and 1992, scientists projected that global heating, caused by the presence of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere would exceed 1 degree by 2025.

As of 2021, the IPCC have now made clear the planetary consequences of inaction – the world has already warmed by at least 1.1 degrees. Far from limiting global heating to 1.5 degrees by 2100, as earnestly pledged in 2015 by world leaders in the Paris Agreement, even moderate emissions scenarios now project our planetary home to be devastated by 2 degrees of warming by 2040, and by almost 3 degrees by 2100.



It's best to avoid ambiguity here. These projections, unfolding in the present and more intensively as we approach irreversible tipping points in the next few decades, mean an uninhabitable earth.

But the climate crisis is one of many overlapping and interlocking planetary crises. In 2009, Prof. Johan Rockstrom identified nine planetary boundaries which, if breached by human activity, mean ecological catastrophe. As of 2015, four of these boundaries have been breached, potentially irreversibly.

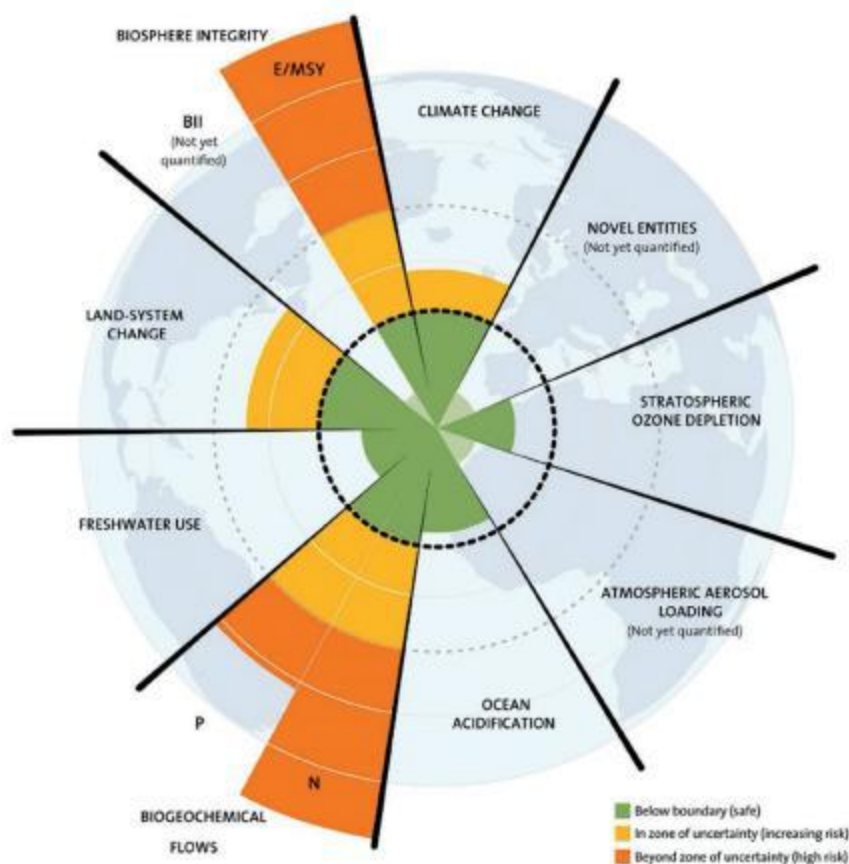


Figure 1 – The Stockholm Resilience Centre's 'Planetary Boundaries'

## FRAMEWORK

In this stark context, it is incumbent upon proponents of Irish reunification to place our project for a new and agreed Irish republic firmly in the context of a living world engulfed in ecological crises. But can we confidently say that this has received the attention it demands in our maturing public debate on reunification?

Let's use a context familiar to us. The Good Friday Agreement was just over 20 years ago. According to the IPCC, the next 20 years on earth is set to be a period of mass extinction in the non-human living world, extreme weather events, and devastating climactic shifts. Regardless of whether a border poll is secured

in the coming years, one thing is for sure - there will be no republic on a dead planet.

## A CREDIBLE ECONOMIC CASE FOR IRISH UNITY

This unfortunate reality is particularly troublesome where the economic case for reunification is concerned, particularly as these arguments have increasingly taken centre stage in recent times.

The challenge for republicans, however, and for researchers and commentators on this issue, is to address the fact that this case has typically rested on projections of ecocidal economic growth on the island of Ireland.

We are now familiar with these points: a denial of economic autonomy has undermined economic growth potential in the North; the exaggerated fiscal subvention to the North can be consumed by all-Ireland economic growth; partition has isolated and stifled the economic potential of regions across the island; and so on.

There are reasonable and convincing grounds for these projections in the theatre of conventional economics. These mainstream perspectives, however, are blind to the ecological realities of an economic system permanently geared towards endless economic expansion.

These realities are immutable. It is biophysically impossible to grow a global or national economy forever on a finite planet, with finite resources, and a constant supply of energy from our sun. It is a fanciful notion at odds with the laws of thermodynamics, condemning perpetual economic growth as an ambition to 'collapse in deepest humiliation', in the words of astrophysicist Arthur Eddington.

This is chiefly because ideas of 'forever growth' ignore the indisputable relationship between economic expansion, material extraction and consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and, therefore, ecological destruction (Figure 3 ).



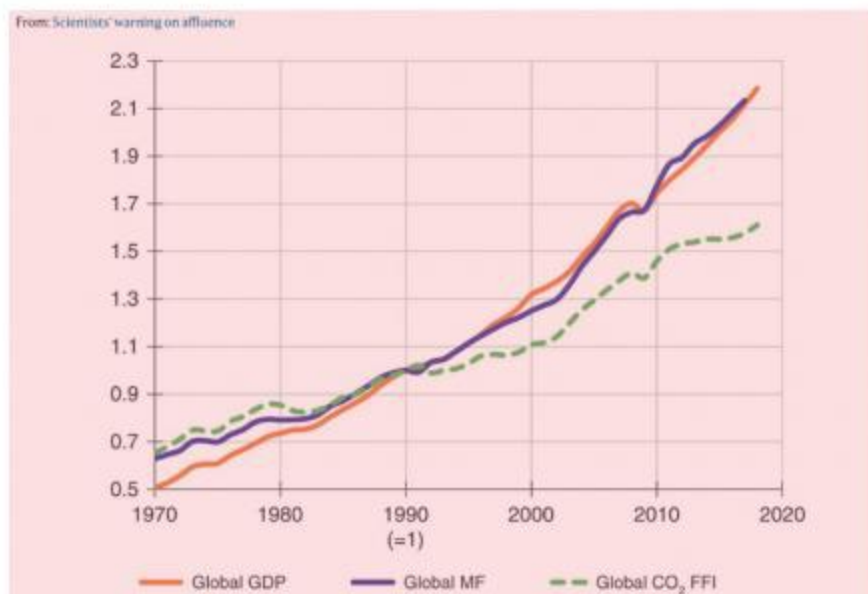


Figure 2 –Material footprint and CO2intensity of economic growth 1970-2020

Global economic output is now 10 times bigger today than it was in 1950. In 2021 we live in a world of plenty, but defined by vast inequalities, where growth as an end in and of itself is no longer required to guarantee a dignified standard of living for all.

Post-growth economist and playwright, Prof. Tim Jackson, gives brevity to the predicament: “The idea of a non-growing economy may be anathema to an economist. But the idea of a continually growing economy is anathema to an ecologist.”

## POST-GROWTH FUTURES IN A REUNIFIED IRELAND

The rub here is simple. If we continue to make an evidence-based case for economic growth as a benefit of reunification, then we must also have an evidence-based account for the ecological costs of this growth.

How much more of our precious ecology, on which we depend for life itself, will be sacrificed at the altar of economic growth? More specifically, if growth is the central pillar of the economic case for unity, then we must have answers to questions of ‘what will grow’?

Will our new national economy be furnished with more data centres consuming vast quantities of electricity and hundreds of millions of litres of fresh water a year; more luxury hotels built from depleting stocks of the

earth’s resources; and more glossy offices on Dublin’s ‘Silicon Docks’ and the IFSC to house the agents of footloose international capital? Will the vast ecological footprint of Ireland’s agricultural sector continue to expand, despite evidenced-based warnings to the contrary?

At 24.7 tonnes of natural materials consumed in economic activity per capita, the South’s destructive ecological footprint already exceeds that of the United States, the OECD average, the European Union, and Britain .

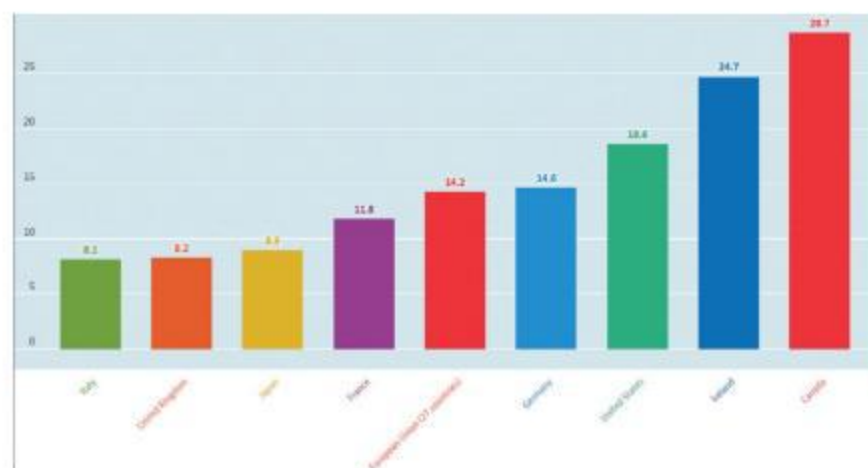


Figure 3 – Material consumption, tonnes per capita (2019)

This is growth for growth’s sake, in the service of the most privileged sections of our society. What is the social value of this model in an island rife with social crises in public service provision, stark wealth and income inequality, and communities in a state of decay isolated from the centres of growth?

In January 2020, more 11,500 scientists from 153 countries co-signed a ‘Warning of a Climate Emergency’ explicitly calling for “shift from GDP growth and the pursuit of affluence toward sustaining ecosystems and improving human well-being by prioritizing basic needs and reducing inequality” .

We must heed this warning and seize upon the benefits it suggests. The profound social, economic, and political transitions triggered by Irish reunification are an unmistakable and unmissable opportunity to reset our vision for the all-island economy.

In our economic planning for reunification, we must ask and answer an entirely different set of questions. How will reunification improve our



communal and individual wellbeing? How can it allow us to mobilise our national resources to confront the ongoing breakdown of our fragile climate? Can Irish unity provide for a new eco-social contract, unapologetically resourced by redistribution, to end homelessness, eradicate poverty, support the vulnerable as we rapidly decarbonise, and meaningfully improve the quality of our lives?

These must be the foundational aims of any modern, humane, and ecologically conscious

economy in our era of planetary crises. In policy and political terms, it will involve diving into the tricky quandaries of post-growth economies - but ignoring this task is not an option.

In making the case for reunification, we must provide detailed and credible visions of a post-growth island economy, consistent with the carrying capacity of our earth, and tailored to the needs of every citizen and community in need.

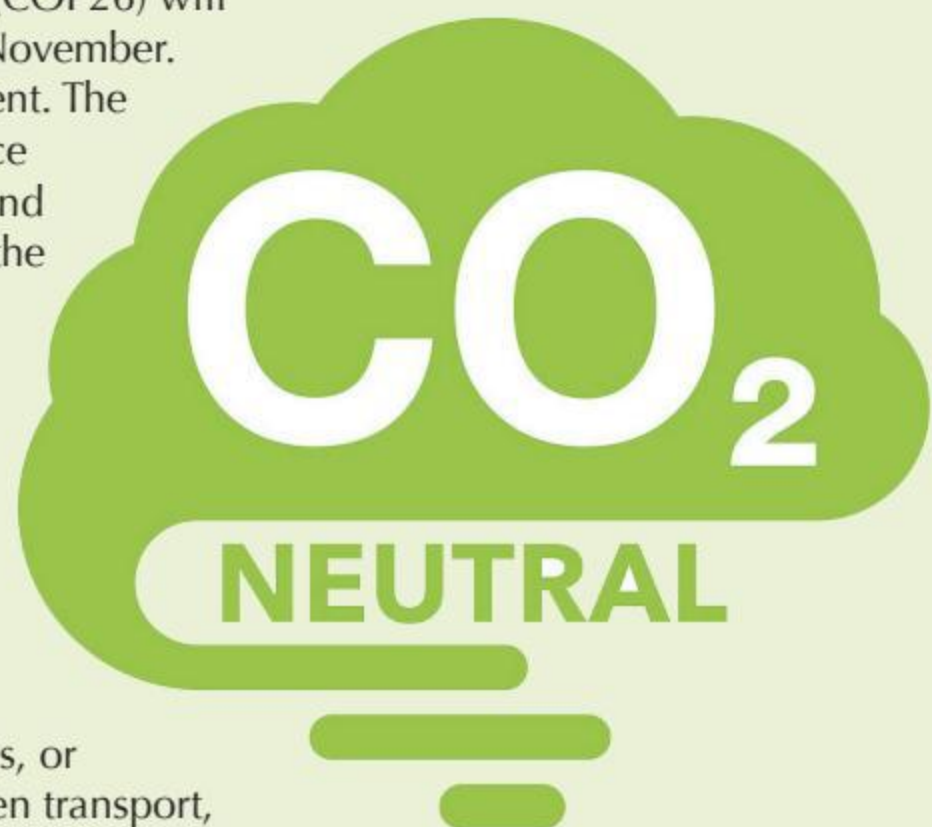
# A DIFFERENT SHADE OF Green

BY **CAOIMHÍN McCANN** CATHAOIRLEACH NÁISIÚNTA; ÓGRA SHINN FÉIN

The 26th United Nations Climate Change Convention (COP26) will begin in Glasgow on 31 October and run until 12 November. The conference will be hosted by the British Government. The enormous challenges it and the people of the world face have been on show this year in the ongoing droughts and famines; floods and devastation; the disappearance of the ice sheets and the thawing of the Siberian permafrost and the release of more green house gasses.

Boris Johnson, the 'it's easy being green' Prime Minister, who hasn't found it very easy himself, will likely be inundated with similar protests to those which recently brought Britain to a halt as major roads were blocked.

The British government's plan for the decarbonisation of its economy, a just transition for workers and families, or even a sensible plan for a significant investment in green transport,





is lacking in ambition or vision. Carbon neutral by 2050 simply doesn't cut it.

To add insult to this very grievous injury, Political Unionism still dances to the beat of a Tory drum. In the North there is an outright refusal from unionists to plan on an all-island basis. Minister Poots says that we are part of the UK, and come hell or high water, we will follow the Tory plan. That makes no sense.

In the South the Irish government, despite having a Green partner in Cabinet, has chosen the path of least resistance; carbon taxes, closing Bórd na Mona plants (while still importing peat), and lurching from one crisis to the other. Without a clear commitment by both governments on this island and the adoption of an all-island strategy for tackling climate change the chances of achieving a better, cleaner and greener Ireland are remote.

A lack of all-Ireland planning and divergent policies on both sides of the border have meant that we are either unnecessarily doubling up on work, or completely failing in tackling the issues around the climate crisis that will have a real tangible impact on our present, as well as our future.

One of the clearest examples of how partition has damaged our national ecosystem is the Mauboy dump in Co. Derry, just along the border.

## A LACK OF ALL-IRELAND PLANNING AND DIVERGENT POLICIES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER HAVE MEANT THAT WE ARE EITHER UNNECESSARILY DOUBLING UP ON WORK, OR COMPLETELY FAILING IN TACKLING THE ISSUES AROUND THE CLIMATE CRISIS THAT WILL HAVE A REAL TANGIBLE IMPACT ON OUR PRESENT, AS WELL AS OUR FUTURE.

This illegal dump contains over 1.2 million tonnes of waste and is considered the largest illegal dumping ground in Western Europe. Is it only a coincidence that this is situated beside a border town? No, it is a direct result of the partition of this island, it is a direct result of divergent policies, and it is a direct result of not thinking 32 when it comes to policy.

Professor John Barry of Queen's University in Belfast posits that "where there are borders, there is crime, there is smuggling." He is not wrong.

In the 26 counties, the government deployed a policy of a landfill tax which means that for every cost attributed to waste disposal, the government would add an extra levy on top. This can be described as a behavioural tax, with a view

of reducing the amount of non-recyclable waste. What this demonstrated though, was a complete inability to think about how such a policy could be undermined by a different jurisdiction, just a few miles up the road.

To skirt around the regulation in the South, unscrupulous operators, are dumping in the north. Ingrained partitionism means that the Irish government has been content to export the problem to the North, without any thought given to the environmental damage such a dumping ground would cause across the border. Out of sight, out of mind. What this has meant is a massive bill for ratepayers, and an even bigger price for our ecosystems to pay.

So the million-euro question is; what is the solution? Some might say all-Ireland planning alone will suffice; that if we



simply just cooperate across borders we can play our part in tackling the climate crisis. This is short-sighted. We need a more long-term, sustainable solution.

The fact is that partition holds back the ability of the island of Ireland to develop a green economy. Even if the north's Finance Minister wanted to release all the money in the world to develop green infrastructure, they can't. We are trapped inside a system run by a Tory government in London.

Even the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) - no economic radicals - are pleading with governments to borrow now and build green infrastructure, such as high-speed rail, electric vehicle infrastructure, and a just transition to renewables. The Finance Minister is unable to do that. The power to borrow and raise finances is reserved solely for Westminster.

We can't spend our time with the begging bowl asking for whatever crumbs the Tories may throw our way. The reality is that we need control of our own environmental and climate policies and investment. This can best be achieved in an all-island, all-Ireland context.

Irish Unity will enhance our ability to challenge climate change significantly.

Unity would strengthen our ability to develop stronger biodiversity, sustainable and effective strategies for the 21st century.

All those who are genuine in their ambition to advance climate politics on this island need to understand the negative impact partition is having on our ability to achieve this. The time is long past when the constitutional future of the island of Ireland can stand separate from climate politics. Those who want to implement policies that can seriously confront the climate emergency have to grasp the reality of ending partition. It is another example of the benefits that can arise from Irish Unity.

**IRISH UNITY WILL  
ENHANCE OUR ABILITY  
TO CHALLENGE  
CLIMATE CHANGE  
SIGNIFICANTLY.**





IS GAEL POBLACHTACH ÓG É **OISÍN Ó SÍOCHÁN** AS CORCAIGH, BHÍ BAINTE AIGE LE RANGANNA GAEILGE SHINN FÉIN A THEAGASC AGUS TOGHADH LE GAIRID É AR AN CNÓ

Pléann an t-údar le trí mhóorthéama a bhaineann leis an tsochaí, i ndiaidh dúinn Éire a athaontú: ardcheannas, athghaelú agus cinniúint eacnamaíoch.

# ÉIRE

## IARCHÓILÍNEACH

Gan amhras ar bith, is é ár bpríomhchúram i láthair na huaire ná reifreann a bhaint amach chun ár sprioc ársa, uasal a chur i gcrích; is í sin Éire Aontaithe. Ach agus sinn sa tréimhse chorraitheach seo, tréimhse ina mbraithimid go léir go bhfuil an nasc lofa sin idir ár dtír agus Sasana ar an dé deiridh, ní mór dúinn, mar Phoblachtánaigh, bheith ag pleanáil agus ag comhrá linn féin. Tá a fhios againn go mBeidh ár lá linn - ach cad a dhéanfaimid an lá dar gcionn?

Ar an gcéad dul síos, ní thiocfaidh deireadh le ról Shinn Féin i sochaí na hÉireann nuair a aontófar an tír. Ní bheidh ansin ach tús ár n-aistir chun na Poblachta. I ngach aon sochaí iarchóilíneach, tá sé de dhualgas ar na náisiúnaithe an móiminteam, an fuinneamh a choimeád beo. Inár gcás féin, tá trí mhórdhualgas orainn - ardcheannas a chinntiú; athghaelú; agus cinniúint eacnamaíoch an uile dhuine a chur ina lámha féin.



## “Dearbhaímid gur ceart ceannasach dochlóite ceart mhuintir na hÉireann chun seilbh na hÉireann...”

Le cúpla mí anuas, tá sé tugtha fé deara ag Poblachtánaigh go bhfuil dúil nua curtha ag Fine Gael, Leo Varadkar agus Neale Richmond ina measc, i gceist an athaontaithe. Cé gur céim dhearfach í seo, caithfimid bheith soiléir faoin gcúis a bhfuil boic mhóra na bunaíochta polaitiúla ag glacadh seilbhe ar an tionscnamh seo. Aithníonn siad go bhfuil sruth na staire ag dul in aon bhealach amháin, agus déanfaidh siadsan cinnte de go mbeidh an tír nua seo (nó an ‘tOileán’ nua seo, dar leo) chomh cóngarach lena bhfís agus is féidir. Ina óráid d’Ardfheis Fhine Gael, dúirt Varadkar go mbeadh “caidreamh níos cóngaraí” uainn leis an mBreatain - ag lua ábhar inní na nAontachtaithe mar leithscéal. Bainfidh na seoiníní úsáid as an tír athbhunaithe seo chun mórspriocanna a bpáirtí a chur chun cinn.

Mar Shinn Féinigh, leanfaidh an streachailt ar aghaidh sna blianta tar éis an aontaithe chun an smacht atá ag Westminster orainn, agus na naisc dhíobhálacha atá eadrainn le beagnach míle bliain a bhriseadh. Dar ndóigh, is iad ár gcomharsana iad na trí thír a roinneann oileán na Breataine, agus beidh dlúthcheangal go deo eadrainn. Ach ní hionann comhoibriú agus sárú ar cheannas mhuintir na hÉireann. Tá sé luaite ag roinnt mórphearsana le blianta beaga anuas go mbeidh orainn dul isteach sa Chomhlathas Briotanach ar mhaithe le ‘féiniúlacht na nAontachtaithe’ a chosaint. Cé gur fíor nár cheart dúinn ligean d’aon fhocheisteanna bheith mar bhac is sinn ag druidim chun an reifrinn, caithfimid bheith ullamh mar pháirtí do na dúshlán nua a thiocfaidh chun solais i ndiaidh an aontaithe.

Ar ndóigh, ní hí Sasana amháin, agus a gníomhairí in Éirinn, atá mar bhagairt dár gceannas. Le cumhacht an Domhandaithe ag dul i neart lá i ndiaidh lae, ní foláir dúinn bheith airdeallach faoi fhórsaí móra airgeadais an Domhain. Tá an Deisceart ar tí ‘CETA’ a rith tríd an Dáil, comhaontú a thabharfaidh an ceart do chorparáidí ilnáisiúnta an dlí a chur ar rialtas na hÉireann má chuireann polasaithe an rialtais isteach ar bhrabúis an chomhlachta. Srian ollmhór a bheidh i gceist anseo ar ár gcumas mar shóisialaithe dul i ngleic le mórfhadhbanna na linne, an t-athrú aeráide mar shampla.

I ndeireadh na dála, is Poblacht atá uainn - ní tiarnas, ní stát atá ar teaghrán éinne eile. Poblacht atá oscailte don Domhan, a chomhoibríonn lena chomhpháirtithe, ach a bhraitheann uirthi féin. Éire, “thar gach ní, le muinín as a neart dílis féin”.

## “Comhchearta agus comhdheiseanna dá saoránaigh uile...”

Labhair mé thuas faoi chumasú náisiúin agus a phobail trí neamhspleáchas iomlán polaitiúil a bhaint amach. Is tríd an gcumasú úd is féidir cumasú an duine aonair a bhaint amach. In Éirinn



athaontaithe, socrú bunreachtúil a chabhróidh le rialtas Shinn Féin a bheith againn, ní hamháin go mbeidh ár stát saor ó laincisí na críochdheighilte, ach is féidir le gnáthmhuintir agus gnáthoibrithe na hÉireann smacht a thógaint ar a saol féin. De réir Iarluachtarán an pháirtí, Gerry Adams, is é an “réiteach nó fealsúnacht is fearr ná sóisialachas agus struchtúir rialtais díláraithe”. Go praicticiúil, is í is brí leis seo ná go spreagfaí comhfhiontair oibrithe, seirbhísí a n-íocfaí astu trí cháin ghinearálta, agus daonlathas níos áitiúla.

## “Ní hamháin saor, ach Gaelach ...”

Dúirt Máirtín Ó Cadhain tráth “nach fiú bheith i do stát neamhspleách ... níl aon chiall ann”. Dúirt sé go mbeadh náisiúin bheaga níos fearr as ag brath ar gheilleagair na stát mór, ar nós Shasana agus na Stát Aontaithe. Aon t-aon chúis amháin, dar leis, gur cheart d’Éirinn bheith neamhspleách ná gur náisiún agus pobal ar leith sinn, lenár n-oidhreacht shainiúil féin. ‘Sí an Ghaelainn bunchloch na saineúlachta sin. Murach an teanga, ní bheadh idir Éirinn agus Sasana ach muir na hÉireann.

Dá bharr sin, níl i dtionscnamh an athaontaithe ach cur amú ama mura n-eascróidh an Ghaelainn arís mar mháthairtheanga an ghnáthdhuine ina dhiaidh. Tabharfaidh an t-aontú, agus an lasair náisiúnach a chruthóidh sé i bpobal na tíre an deis dúinn tabhairt faoi chéimeanna móra, suntasacha agus praicticiúla chun éagóir stairiúil an teangadhíothaithe a chur ina ceart. Ní tharlóidh sé seo gan rialtas Shinn Féin, cúis eile nach mór dúinn ár neart polaitiúil a thógáil. Tarlóidh an iarracht náisiúnta seo i bhfoirm Ghaelú an chórais oideachais, Gaelú riarachán an rialtais, poist a chruthú a bhfuil an Ghaelainn mar riachtanas iontu, agus gluaiseacht mhór pobail a stiúir ionas nach ón mbarr anuas amháin a thiocfaidh na hathruithe.

Ach arís, tá naimhde ag an nGaelainn. Agus an comhrá faoi Éirinn Aontaithe faoi lán seoil, iontas na n-iontas, tá coimeádaigh na polaitíochta is na meán ag labhairt faoi stádas oifigiúil na Gaelainne a ghéilleadh. Chun an fhírinne a rá, bíonn an seandream frith-Ghaelach céanna, Fine Gael ina measc, á mholadh seo le sceitimíní. Mar a dúradh thuas, bainfear úsáid as an athrú mór atá ag teacht chun aonchineálacht chultúir agus pholaitiúil a fhorbairt idir Sacsthiortha an domhain. Tá ábhair bhuartha na nAontachtaithe san oirthuaisceart á lua. Bímis macánta - ní chuirfear iallach ar Aontachtaithe bheith ina nGaeil mura mbraithfidh siad Gaelach; ach, ar an gcéad dul síos, tá laethanta an ‘veto’ imithe, agus ní féidir le héinne cearta daoine eile a shéanadh. Anuas air sin, ámh, tá níos mó agus níos mó daoine ó chúlra Protastúnach ag cur spéise in oidhreacht a n-áite dúchais. Tuigeann siadsan chomh maith linne gur riachtanach an rud í tuiscint ar an nGaelainn - ar mhaithe le hathmhuintearas, ar mhaithe le léirthuiscint a fháil ar an gcomhshaol agus ar a bhféiniúlacht féin mar dhaoine agus mar Éireannaigh. Mar sin, ná tugaimis aird ar bhréagbhuaire na nIar-Bhriotanach. Tapaímis an deis ár dteanga a shábháil - mar is í an deis dheireanach a bheidh ann.

Ag deireadh an lae, is í lársprioc aon ghluaiseacht réabhlóideach ná feabhas a chur ar shaol an ghnáthdhuine. Nuair a bhainfear amach saoirse na hÉireann, is ansin a thosóidh iarracht ollmhór an díchóilínithe. Ceadóidh saoirse pholaitiúil na hathruithe ollmhóra cultúrtha agus eacnamaíocha sa saol laethúil a spreagann brí agus fuinneamh ionainn. Beidh Éire Athaontaithe, Éire larchóilínithe ina lóchrann dóchais do náisiúin dhearmadta, do phobail imeallaithe, don dream uasal sin ar ghlaigh Fanon ‘the Wretched of the Earth’ orthu, agus ar ghlaigh An Píarsach ‘the risen people’ orthu. Coinnímis le chéile - agus i dteannta a chéile, i dteannta ár leathbhádóirí ar an aistear corraitheach seo chun na saoirse, bainfimid amach ceann scríbe.







# SELF-DETERMINATION & SOVEREIGNTY

## DALTÚN Ó CEALLAIGH EXAMINES THE CONCEPT OF SELF-DETERMINATION

It is generally accepted in the world today that people have the right of self-determination. That is to say that no group of people have the right to dominate another or others. This then raises the issue of what constitutes a people. A people may be defined in both objective and subjective terms. Objectively, one has to take account of history, language, culture, economics, and territory. Subjectively, there are the considerations of consciousness and solidarity.

A people may be characterised by all of these features being present in common or a particular combination of some of them. For example, in Europe, Hungary is an example of the first situation in its virtual homogeneity, while Switzerland might be taken as an illustration of the second in its diversity. When a people exercises its right to self-determination, this usually results in the establishment of sovereign independence, in other words a nation-state.

In the Atlantic Isles (dubbed by some as the

'British Isles'), there are two States recognised in international law - one, officially titled the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland' and another consisting of 26 Irish counties, the official description of which varies, but legalistically amounting, in effect, to an Irish republic as so far established. The extent of the United Kingdom on the island of Britain comprises three elements: the nations of Scotland, England, and Wales; the remaining UK element is found on this island and consists of six north-eastern counties, often referred to by the establishments in London and Belfast as a 'Province' (as distinct from the historic province of Ulster).

The principle of national self-determination has been acknowledged in Britain in regard to Scotland as evidenced in the referendum of 2014. However, this showed that self-determination does not always result in support for independence. Nonetheless, there will probably be a second Scottish referendum on the matter in the next few years which, given





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present indications, may well then result in secession from the UK. The position in Wales is that there has not yet been a majority in the Welsh parliament calling for a referendum on independence. But attitude surveys in recent years have shown the demand among the populace for independence growing from 10% to 30%. If Scotland in fact leaves the UK, the signs are already there that this figure will continue to increase and, should it exceed 50% and be reflected in the Welsh parliament, there would probably have to be a referendum on independence for that country as well.

The provision in respect of the north of Ireland is outlined in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. In that document, it is stated; "that it is for the people of Ireland alone ... to exercise their right of self-determination". The method for doing this is laid down as involving plebiscites in the two jurisdictional areas on the island on the option of a united Ireland. Republicans have assented to this, taking account of demographic and political developments in recent times which indicate the likelihood of that approach actually enabling the fulfilment of the Irish national objective.

It is clearly understood that such self-determination would involve the emergence of a sovereign independent Ireland. Of course, following a positive outcome of the stipulated plebiscites, there would have to be negotiations about the content of such a polity. All sorts of detail have been raised about structures, devolution, language, flags and emblems,

anthems, recognition of identity, bills of rights, and so on. These would all have to be addressed meaningfully and republicans have stated that they would not be found wanting under these headings.

The key point about self-determination that needs to be stressed is the sovereignty made possible by it, which signifies that British power in Ireland will at last come to a complete end.

Returning to our initial observations, it is an interesting question as to how exactly one defines the people of Ireland, bearing in mind the objective and subjective factors referred to at the beginning of this article. However, the full realisation of that task is something that will take time and need not detain us unduly in the context of working out the immediate political implications of the Good Friday Agreement. Nonetheless, one can currently envisage the construction of a concept of at least civic Irishness ranging from the Gaelic along a spectrum of identity to the Ulster-Scots. It is notable that most unionists reflect the attitude towards them emanating from the neighbouring island in that they generally acknowledge some sort of Irishness as part of their self-description. After all, their name for the entity to which they are attached is 'Northern Ireland'.



PEARSE DOHERTY

# *Irish Unity is now a very real prospect*



It is twelve months since the publication of Sinn Féin's discussion document, Economic Benefits of a United Ireland. This paper was not intended as a blueprint for reunification. Its objective was much more modest – to encourage evidence-based discussion on national reunification and widen its scope.

**I**rish unity is no longer notional, an abstract concept that enjoys only aspiration. It is a very real prospect that will bring fundamental changes to social and economic relations on and between these islands. For politicians and policymakers, that demands responsibilities that cannot be shirked.

We have seen how an insular Tory project to leave the European Union built on mistruths without a sketch of a plan has led to a destabilising process, the impact of which will be lower living standards for the people of the North. It is the duty of those with power and influence on this island to ensure that we follow a different course.

That is why we in Sinn Féin have called for the establishment of a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Irish unity, the setting up of an all-island Citizens' Assembly on unity to consider important policy issues surrounding reunification and drawing on all the diversity of society North and South, and the publication of a White Paper on Irish unity by the Government, utilising the resources and expertise of the State.

Over the past twelve months, momentum has continued to build with discussions around our island's future becoming more nuanced and richer. This has begun with greatest earnest in the civil and academic sphere.

Meanwhile North-South trade flows continue to rise, with trade from the North to the South having increased by 61 percent in the first eight months of this year and increasing by 47 percent in the other direction.



**#Time4Unity  
Am d'Aontacht**







While economic activity continues to reflect a strengthening of the all-island economy, research over the past year has called into question the old and worn arguments of those opposed to change.

As we know, political unionism has long brandished the subvention to the North as a barrier to unity and a cost that could not be met. Far from being a strong argument, its premise undermined the unionist position – that the Northern economy had languished within the Union and required subvention as a result.

In recent times, policy experts and academics have subjected the subvention to greater scrutiny, finding that many of the claims made with respect to it are inflated and misleading. It has led Professor John Doyle of Dublin City University to conclude that “those elements of the current subvention that are likely to transfer to a united Ireland would represent a deficit of €2.8 billion... significantly lower than the figure of £9b to £10b, frequently quoted in the media”.

What is clear, as has been said by Professor Alan Barrett of the Economic and Social Research Institute, is that it would be “overly simplistic” to interpret the crude subvention figure as being the annual cost of reunification.

As Professor Doyle notes, such static analyses of reunification fail to take account of the significant growth that economies of scale and wider synergies would bring about. He concludes that “the debate now needs to focus on the public policy decisions necessary to support sustainable economic growth and to maximise the benefits of a larger and

integrated all-island economy”.

With the interests of workers and families, North and South, centred around outcomes in employment, education and health, his recommendation should be heeded.

That work has begun, with economists at the ESRI having undertaken research to compare cross-border living standards, opportunities and quality of life. Accounting for differences in prices, Professor Seamus McGuinness and Dr Adele Bergin find that household disposable income in the South was \$4,600, or 15 percent, higher than in the North.

Of course, this fails to account for regional disparities in the South, with disposable income in counties in the Border region and midlands significantly lower than in urban centres such as Dublin.

Their research extends to areas of educational attainment and measures of risk to poverty. They conclude that “given the increased likelihood of a future border poll and the focus on north-south issues there is a need for greater co-ordination between the statistical authorities in both regions to produce meaningful, timely and timely statistics.”

As the authors of the research note, “this is crucial for building an evidence base for issues such as a border poll but also to inform policymakers, the business community and public debate on north-south issues”.

All analysis underlines the damaging impact exacted upon living standards and opportunities in the North by British Government policy, exacerbated under more than a decade of Conservative governance. This impact is not peculiar to the North, but



has been felt in Scotland, Wales and areas in the north of England. Of course, the impact in the North is felt without any democratic legitimacy. Conservative governments are never elected in the North but their rule and mismanagement prevail regardless.

The real-life implications of British Government policy are borne out by the divergence in economic fortunes North and South.

The North was once the economic powerhouse of the island. It has languished since partition. The South has benefited from economic policies that could only be implemented with independence. As we move forward, discussions must move from the theoretical to the practical, and be led from the centre of Government rather than through the initiative of academics and others in civil society.

The stakes are too high and the responsibilities too great.

The past twelve months, both in the public sphere and through the evolution of North South trade, has seen further development in the greatest national project in a century. But more can be done, through North South coordination but also a dedicated programme of work by public institutions and, critically, the State itself.

We can look forward with hope. The future is ours to win.

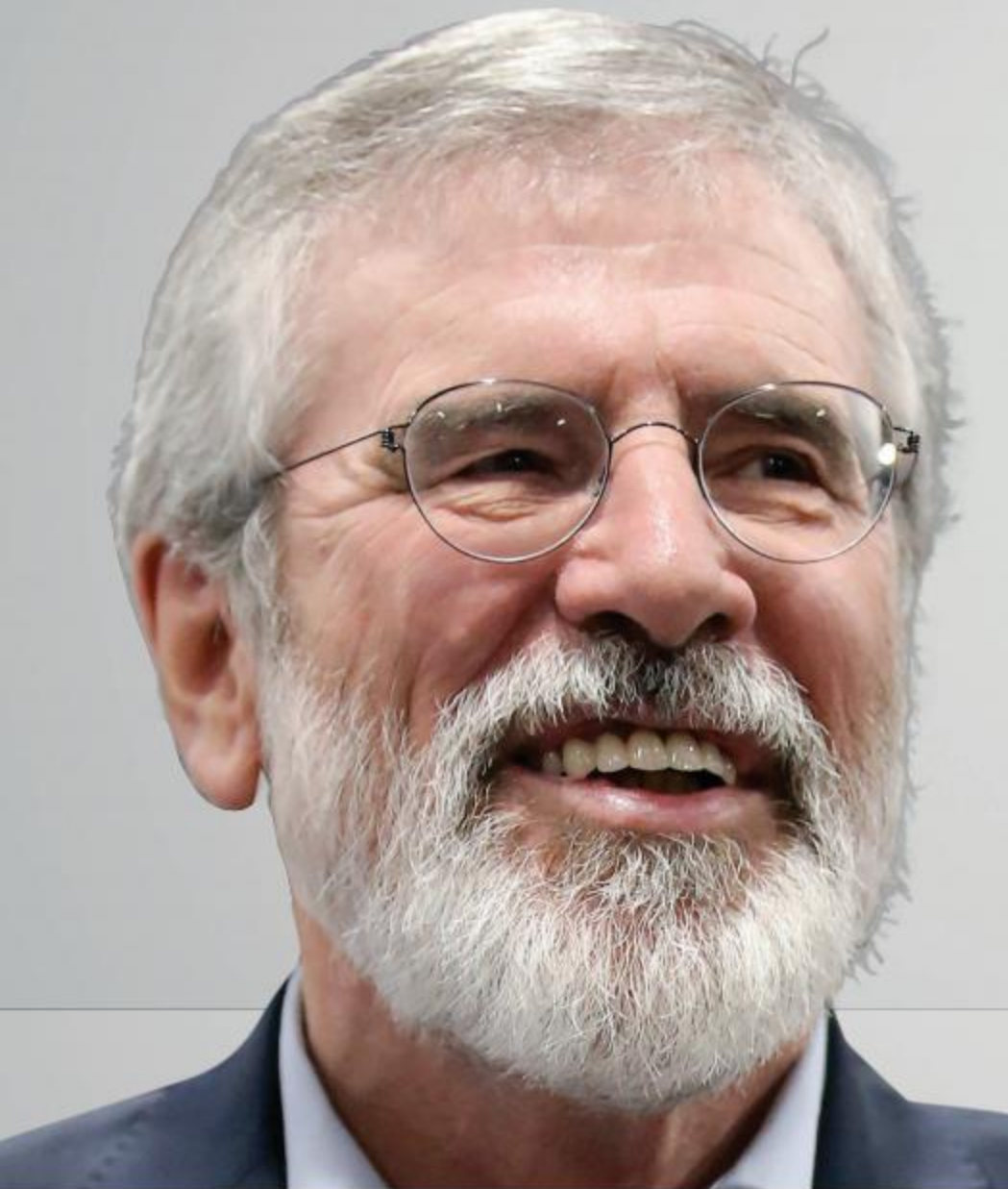
The real-life implications of British Government policy are borne out by the divergence in economic fortunes North and South.





# Working together makes sense

BY GERRY ADAMS



Earlier this year, in April, protests against the Protocol and the so-called Irish Sea Border, agreed by the British government with the European Union, took place in several parts of the North, mainly Belfast. The DUP and the Loyalist Communities Council (LCC) claimed that the Irish Protocol is destabilising the North.

Much of their criticism was directed at the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. The LCC Chairperson David Campbell described Mrs Von Der Leyen as an "ostrich with her head in the sand" and he warned that the North is set to "descend into chaos this summer." Campbell, who represents no one, said: "the protocol has to go and will go - the people of Northern Ireland will not accept this

diktat from yet another unelected German."

Campbell and others like to ignore the fact that the "people of Northern Ireland" democratically voted to remain in the EU in the referendum of 2016.

The summer of chaos didn't happen. There have been protests but most have been poorly attended. Within loyalism there exist different voices and different opinions on the way forward. There isn't unanimity of approach around the possibility of "chaos" or violence. There are many within loyalism and the community sector working within loyalist working class areas who oppose unionist politicians using their community as a stick to







*Overall within the city Catholics continue to experience greater levels of poverty however it is also true that many loyalist working class areas endure similar levels of deprivation in relation to health and disability, crime and their living environment.*

threaten others with. They see “chaos” being to the detriment of their community.

They are also trying to deal with housing need; unemployment; drug gangs; health inequalities; poverty, deprivation and disadvantage. They are especially concerned at the emergence of an underclass of young people – no hopers – who refuse to listen to anyone.

Tackling these problems in a heightened atmosphere of fear and with unionist parties normally disinterested in addressing these issues, is hugely difficult.

In the 2011 census figures for the six counties and then in the statistics drawn from the 2017 Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM) areas of Belfast are identified as either Protestant or





Catholic depending on the relative size of the respective population in each.

As much as I and others dislike identifying people by religious labels the sectarian history of the northern state means that the census and MDM statistics are usually broken down in this way.

There are 174 so-called Super Output Areas (SOAs) in Belfast each with an average population of just under 2,000 people.

According to these figures in 2011 Belfast was 47% Protestant. In 2017 the SOA with the highest income poverty rate was in Woodvale 1 (24.7%) which in the 2011 census was 91% Protestant. The locality with the second highest area of income poverty in Belfast was Ardoyne 2 (24.6%) which in 2011 was 95% Catholic.

In the poorest 30% of Belfast 17 out of 52 SOAs are 'Protestant areas'. And Protestants form 44% of this population. Overall within the city Catholics continue to experience greater levels of poverty however it is also true that many loyalist working class areas endure similar levels of deprivation in relation to health and disability, crime and their living environment.

None of the larger unionist parties have shown the remotest interest in seriously challenging these problems. Everything is subordinated to maintaining a status quo that will condemn the next generation of young people to the same levels of poverty their parents have known.

Several weeks ago, before the EU produced its recent proposals on the Protocol, the DUP, UUP and TUV participated in a discussion at the Tory Party conference. It was intended to expose the damage being caused to the north's economy by the Protocol. Instead it succeeded in confirming that the Protocol is proving advantageous to business in the North and across the island of Ireland.

In September new figures from the Irish government's Central Statistics Office revealed that cross-border trade on the island of Ireland continues to sharply increase. In the first eight months of this year exports from the South to the North grew by 47% compared to the same period in 2020 – from €1.516 billion to €2.223

***But as united Irishmen engage in that important piece of work we must also work to improve the living conditions of every citizen.***

billion. Trade going North to South grew even greater by 61% - from €1.553 billion to €2.5 billion.

For the British Brexit Minister David Frost this was his biggest concern. He told the Tory meeting: "we are definitely seeing supply chains being reordered quite quickly. Trade between Northern Ireland and Ireland has gone up a lot in both directions." His worry is that this "will weaken the links with GB. I think that's inevitable."

Once again the conservative and unionist parties in the North are choosing to put their political self-interest above the needs of the working class loyalist families who will carry much of the burden of a Brexit decision that will impose increasing hardship. At the same time the British Tory government is consciously heightening concerns around peace as a way of putting pressure on the EU.

Republicans believe that the best future for the people of Belfast – unionist and nationalist, republican and loyalist - and of the island of Ireland is through reunification. Persuading them of this is hugely challenging but not impossible.

But as united Irishmen engage in that important piece of work we must also work to improve the living conditions of every citizen.

Unionist or Loyalist representatives working constructively with Republican representatives inside or outside of the Assembly and local Councils will not make them any less committed to the Union with Britain. Whatever our position on the constitutional issue there are many other matters where we share a common concern and common cause. Working together can mean better outcomes for those communities that constantly top the lists of those with severe poverty and deprivation.



# Crann na Saoirse

Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald TD has launched a nationwide campaign to plant a tree for unity. The party is asking activists inside and outside of Sinn Féin to plant a Crann na Saoirse in solidarity with the campaign for Irish Unity. Dublin, Belfast and South Armagh have already planted their first trees.

*This native tree will grow tall in a free United Ireland*



The trees will be accompanied by a small plaque:

## **Crann na Saoirse**

**This Native Tree will grow tall in a free United Ireland.** *(include the date)*

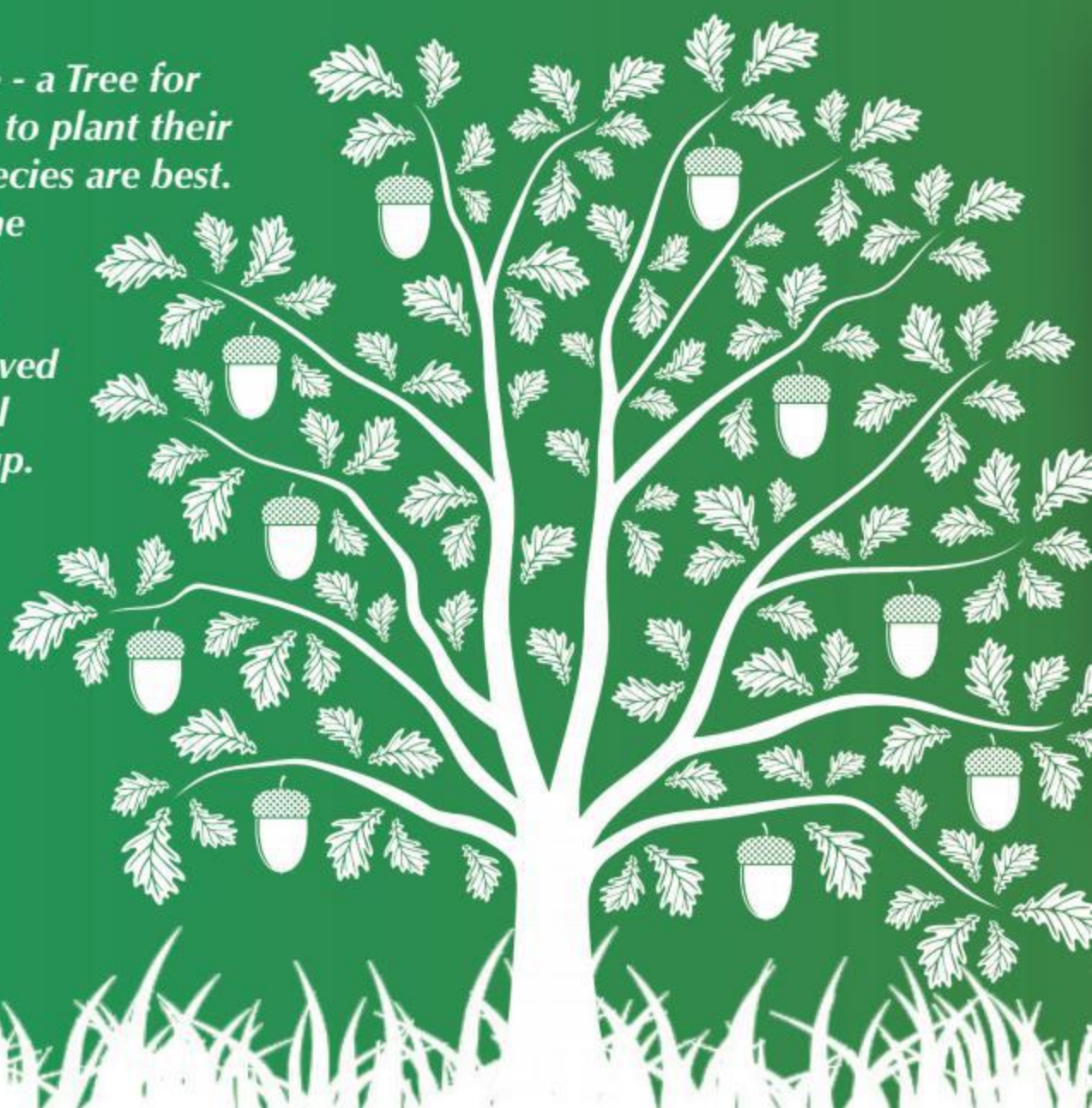
**#Trees4Unity #Time4Unity #Am d'Aontacht**





Mary Lou McDonald said:  
*"I have planted my Crann na Saoirse - a Tree for Unity. I appeal to everyone who can to plant their own Unity tree. Native broadleaf species are best. This initiative will not only benefit the environment but it provides families and communities the opportunity to plant a Unity Tree in memory of a loved one, for a new born baby, your local club, association or community group. My Unity tree symbolizes my commitment to achieving a united Ireland and I look forward to watching it grow tall in a free United Ireland."*

#Time4Unity  
Am d'Aontacht





Crann na Saoirse

BELFAST



Crann na Saoirse

DUBLIN



# A CALL FOR THE DIASPORA TO MESSAGE FOR UNITY



#Time4Unity  
Am d'Aontacht





Leas Uachtarán Michelle O'Neill is reaching out to those living in the diaspora to send a message home for this Christmas supporting the campaign for Irish Unity. Michelle O'Neill said:

"The Irish diaspora has an important role to play in campaigning for a referendum on Irish Unity and in spreading the conversation on the future of Ireland.

"As the debate around Irish Unity increases, our collective endeavour should be to shape that debate in a constructive and positive direction. I am sure the Irish diaspora will mobilise in support of Irish unity and build an international momentum towards that goal.

"The ask is simple – don your Santa hat, grab a flag, banner or homemade sign with the hashtag #Time4Unity, get out to a local landmark and take a short video sending your Christmas wishes home and urge people to get active in the campaign for Unity in the coming new year.

"Every single one of us has a part to play in that. Post your message on social media and/or send it to [outreach@sinnfein.ie](mailto:outreach@sinnfein.ie)."

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#Time4Unity  
Am d'Aontacht







# YOUR VOTE. YOUR VOICE.



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ONLINE **TODAY.**

VISIT: [gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://gov.uk/register-to-vote)

**New  
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**ÉIRE  
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**ISSUE 1**

Crossword  
Croshfocal  
**ANSWERS**

