

Equality: Saoirse na mBán and the New Ireland

EARRACH 2022 SPRING | EAGRÁN 3 ISSUE



ÉIRE NUA

Tá sé in am
don athrú dílis



TIME FOR
REAL CHANGE

The most important
election in a generation

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#Time4Unity
Am d'Aontacht



The Assembly election is on 5 May. It is the most important election in a generation. Its outcome will shape the future direction of politics in the North and on this island.

The imperative of using the vote to bring about real and substantive change has never been more obvious.

Speaking at the launch of the party's Assembly campaign Leas Uachtarán Shinn Féin Michelle O'Neill said: "Sinn Féin's priority is to make politics work, to demonstrate that real change is possible. Together we can build a modern progressive society based on fairness and equality."

The peace process and the Good Friday Agreement have created new opportunities. Brexit too has encouraged citizens to look beyond old certainties. The British state imposed partition on our island. But more and more people want to see an end to division.

The Assembly election provides an opportunity to make further advances. As Uachtarán Mary Lou McDonald said at the election launch in Belfast: "The political landscape is being transformed by a generation hungry for change."

It's up to this generation of republicans to unlock



TIME FOR REAL CHANGE

The most important election in a generation

this potential. We can't do it on our own but we can achieve it through working with others.

There is now a peaceful way to end the union with Britain. That is the referendum provided for in the Good Friday Agreement.

There is no contradiction in working and planning for Irish Unity while also tackling the cost of living crisis, rising energy costs, fuel costs, and food costs. The national and the social are opposite sides of the one coin.

All of us should have a say in planning the future. This should be done through discussion in a Citizens' Assembly.

The onus is on the Irish government to organise this and to give people their say about the type of new Ireland that is possible.

On the day after the election Sinn Féin is ready and willing to go back into the Executive if we have the mandate to deal with these issues. Change is coming.

**On May 5 – the anniversary of the death of Bobby Sands – Votáil Sinn Féin.
VOTE FOR REAL CHANGE.
Tá sé in am don athrú dílis.**

#Time4Unity
Am d'Aontacht



DISABILITY RIGHTS IN A NEW IRELAND

BY **DECLAN KEARNEY**

Whilst the prospect of constitutional change and Irish unity is firmly fixed on the political horizon, there is still much to be done to prepare the circumstances for a unity referendum to be triggered. The establishment of an all-island Citizens' Assembly would greatly inform the approaches to be taken, and the relevant considerations which wider society would want to see taken into account regarding how future transition is managed.

For example, an appropriate referendum question will need to be put to the people; the popular debate leading up to the referendum will need to be properly resourced. And when and if, the Irish people living North and South exercise the right

to self determination in favour of a new, national constitutional democracy, the subsequent process of transition will have to be planned in detail.

At this stage it would be both premature and illogical to try and pre-determine the nature of any new national and democratic arrangements which may emerge, or the policy basis of a future constitutional democracy. There will be many contested ideological and political preferences, and these will all have to be heard; and that debate will inevitably influence eventual public policy priorities in a new Ireland.

Of course as a left of centre, republican Party Sinn Féin has its own ideas. Our Party has already stated that we will advance the case for a world class, Irish National Health Service, free at the



Declan Kearney and
his son Fiachra

#Time4Unity
Am d'Aontacht



What is clear from the conversation is that our society remains largely passive to the huge challenges facing disabled people

point of delivery. We have also argued that a new national constitution should be fundamentally rights based; providing real guarantees in terms of civil and religious liberties; human and democratic rights; and robust economic, social and cultural protections for all citizens regardless of creed, colour, cultural tradition, sexual orientation, or ethnic background.

A right's based constitutional model which is built upon international law and universal principles and values as enshrined in United Nations Conventions would offer unprecedented opportunities to design a new progressive future, and also maximise popular democratic participation and inclusion in both society and politics.

One crucial sphere within which very important work could be developed is with regard to disability rights.

The Disabled People's Parliament

Last December the Stormont Assembly chamber hosted the inaugural Disabled People's Parliament which was timed to coincide with

the 'International Day of People with Disabilities'. The video recording of the Parliament is available here: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/dpp>

This first ever sitting debated a motion on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD); 'That this Parliament calls on the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to commit to fully incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into legislation in the north of Ireland'

Fourteen speakers presented their perspectives and experiences as both activists and people with disabilities, on why a change to the law based on the UNCPRD is essential to secure proper legal supports, rights, and equality for themselves, and all disabled people in the north. All of those who addressed the Parliament did so with immense conviction, courage and humanity. It was a very challenging and inspirational occasion.

I described it as probably one of the most important debates to ever take place in the Assembly chamber. Everyone who spoke highlighted the multiple institutional and invisible barriers faced by people with disabilities in respect of access to public services, the lived environment, as well as inclusion and participation in public life in the North. What is clear from the conversation is that our society remains largely passive to the huge challenges facing disabled people.

Fiachra's lived experience

All of the contributions made resonated strongly with me. My son Fiachra is now 22-years-old and

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF DISABILITY:

Amanda Paul told how she had suddenly become physically disabled as a married adult and was confronted with a world of previously unknown challenges. Christina Mc Clements joined the chamber virtually with

her daughter Lilia, who has a rare genetic disorder which causes severe physical and learning difficulties. She passionately asserted that Lilia is equal to any other child, but faces exclusion every day of her life.

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF DISABILITY:

Dermot Devlin and Michaela Holyrood explained that employment rights for people with disabilities and legislation rooted in the UNCPRD were needed

just to create a level playing field. Both Michael Johnston and Joe Kenny described managing their respective lives and vocations with hearing and sight loss.

Disabled People's Parliament
Friday 3 December 2021

WATCH ONLINE:
NIASSEMBLY.TV/



public policy must be future-proofed to reflect the needs of people with disabilities.

During the debate both Tony O'Reilly and Joanne Samsome were emphatic about the rights-based nature of the transformation required to guarantee, and protect the rights, dignity and humanity of disabled persons as equal citizens. It is obvious that incorporation of

is autistic. He has additional learning disabilities to manage, along with memory loss and regular episodes of severe anxiety.

He is also a very bright, clever young man and has a valuable contribution to offer in making our society a better place. But Fiachra's life is challenging and complicated. Very few see or understand his lived realities.

For years Fiachra, his mammy, and I have been navigating the challenge of securing his right to appropriate, long term support and care, and a safe, secure, independent future. Our experience has not been good. We have been pushed from pillar to post within the social care system. It seems that even the very system is oblivious to the needs of vulnerable young adults.

One in five people here live with a disability. So it's essential that we give voice to, and support the rights of our family, friends and neighbours with disabilities. Legislation and

the UNCPRD into legislation would be key to achieving that objective.

The theme of the 2021 International Day celebration was 'Fighting for Rights in the Post-Covid Era'. Over the last two years, the global Covid-19 pandemic has widened levels of inequality in our society. This is especially true for people living with disabilities, who have already been living with institutionalised inequalities and discrimination.

Through our shared family and personal experiences we have watched the level of inequality deepen with respect to accessing public services, including education, healthcare, and many other aspects of daily life.

A rights based society

Disability inclusion must be integral to a truly rights based society. The barriers which block full participation for disabled people in public life need to be dismantled.

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF DISABILITY:

The impact of Multiple Sclerosis, stress, and panic attacks were outlined by Greta Gurklyte in her life. She stated

that the right of access to health care should not be about luck or coincidence.



PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF DISABILITY:

The need for reliable, disability accessible public transport, investment in community care, and respect for people

with learning disabilities was articulated by Alison Lockhart, Ronnie Patterson and Jackie Robins.

The Disabled People's Parliament has the potential to be a powerful platform promoting an unambiguous message, that this society is committed to being a 'no-go area' for disability discrimination, exclusion or marginalisation.

Our power-sharing Executive has a responsibility to uphold the rights of all citizens in the north of Ireland. It needs to become fully engaged with the conversation about incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into law in this region. Already the Department for Communities, headed up by Sinn Féin Minister Deirdre Hargey, is leading on work to develop a new Executive Disability Strategy.

The Disability Strategy Expert Advisory Panel has recommended that consideration is given to how the UNCRPD could best be given legal effect. But this work also needs to be progressed both North and South. So the Oireachtas should match the initiative of the northern Assembly and inaugurate a Disabled Peoples Parliament under the auspices of Dáil Éireann.

It's essential that the broad disability rights framework throughout Ireland reflect the best international standards. It has to match the needs and expectations of our citizens with disabilities. That cannot be achieved without their full, democratic participation.

Disability rights are human rights. There should be no legal or financial impediment to securing these standards. Better still that disability rights would be incorporated within the framework of a new



constitutional settlement to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities were in fact protected under constitutional law in a new Ireland.

The moral litmus test for all modern societies should be the extent to which they look after, and act to guarantee the rights and welfare of the most vulnerable and most marginalised.

The durability of a truly rights based society should be built on the foundations of rights focused institutions which continuously hold to account, advocate for, and lobby to achieve new progressive standards. This should be the ongoing role of the Disabled People's Parliament in the North, and also hopefully in the South.

We should all share a political and civic responsibility to ensure that this first landmark sitting of the Disabled Peoples Parliament heralds a new era in how we ensure disabled people are included and celebrated as equals in Irish society, both now, and in the future.

As the momentum of the conversation around Irish unity continues to grow, let's all make sure that disability rights and the ambitions of disabled people are central to this process of change.

DECLAN KEARNEY MLA is National Party Chairperson of Sinn Féin

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF DISABILITY:

Both Diane Marks and Rosie Dempsey addressed the challenges faced by

adults, and children in school who live with complete or partial loss of sight.

A TRAFFIC LIGHT MOMENT

BY **DENZIL McDANIEL**

The Beatles song which begins “I read the news today, oh boy” was inspired by the death in the hedonistic 1960s of a rich young socialite in a car crash. It includes the line “He didn’t notice that the lights had changed” and the lyrics are on the theme of peering into new worlds.

There are parallels in Ireland just now, as a number of factors have conspired to bring us to a pivotal time -- a “traffic light” moment -- when people of all identities should be engaging in a wider conversation about how a better future would benefit all of us; people instead remain in their safe silos.

Most people accept the inevitability of a Border poll at some point; but whether it’s sooner or kicked down the road until later, what is missing from the discourse at the moment is a conversation about what we’re voting for. What would a new Ireland look like?

Having this honest conversation is a challenge alike for Republicans, Nationalists, Unionists and “none of the above”. But it is political Unionism that has

the most difficulty with the concept of change; put simply they will not engage in a process which they see as having the inevitable pre-determined outcome of a united Ireland.

So it’s a no.

This ignores the different times we all find ourselves in as the result of a perfect storm, a different era in east-west relationships, as well as those north-south and changed circumstances in societies within the North and the South. Brexit has brought these changes sharply into focus.

With a Scottish surge towards independence growing stronger, journalist Gavin Esler’s book “How Britain Ends” is a clear illustration of how the United Kingdom as an entity cannot survive English Nationalism, and Unionists here are constantly reminded that the British duplicity at the time of partition is perhaps even more damaging today. There also appears to be scant acceptance in political Unionism of the massive social change in the South, even though they may tacitly acknowledge that the catch cry of a century ago that “Home Rule is Rome Rule” is long obsolete in a



But in my experience, privately many Unionists will admit that they are thinking the unthinkable as regards constitutional change, and especially among younger people the binary issue of national identity is viewed with greater flexibility

modern secular Republic. Within the northern state, the demographics have evolved to the point that Protestants are no longer a majority.

Despite all the changes around them, within and without, when it comes to putting forward their case for the status quo Unionism tends to simply circle the wagons and the manifestation of this is that the 2022 Assembly election sees the perceived danger to the Union of the Protocol pushed front and centre of the campaign.

But in my experience, privately many Unionists will admit that they are thinking the unthinkable as regards constitutional change, and especially among younger people the binary issue of national identity is viewed with greater flexibility.

The term PUL community would suggest that Protestants, Unionists and Loyalists are a homogenous group who all think alike, and the narrative of a single story means that not only do other communities have an inaccurate perception of Protestants, but they themselves are reluctant to open up about who they are or what they are.

The question is, though, aside from political

Unionism's leadership, are there those in the wider constituency at civic level who have noticed that the lights have changed? Who speaks for Protestants who want to move forward with confidence, a question which should prompt some introspection from that community about what their identity means to them.

In a discussion group I'm involved in, a Protestant woman admitted that she felt intimidated and under pressure from some within her own community when talking about her identity because it didn't fit the accepted narrative.

In 2008, a report on the views and experiences of Border Protestants prepared for the Clogher Diocese of the Church of Ireland was entitled: "Whatever you say, say nothing," an indication of how the community tended to keep its head down especially in a time of conflict.

There isn't enough recognition of the existence of the Protestant Irish, an honorable tradition from the United Irishmen to the Presbyterians who saved the Irish language, from Sam Maguire to Sean O'Casey, and the role of WB Yeats and others in founding the Abbey Theatre.

There are strands of Protestantism which may be in a minority, but are examples which serve to show the disparate nature of a cohort, including British, which forms a sizeable proportion on the island of Ireland and must be valued and engaged with as we move forward. People like me resent the notion that my

People like me resent the notion that my Irishness isn't really properly Irish

Irishness isn't really properly Irish.

In the more recent conflict, particularly in Border areas many Protestants communities retreated into their silos and there needs to be more recognition of the hurt they feel with a fear for their culture and, indeed, their very existence.

In a survey of Protestants in the north in 1968 about their identity, just 39 per cent said they were British. 32 per cent said Ulster and 20 per cent said Irish.

After two decades of Troubles, the percentage of Protestants in 1989 who identified as Irish went down from 20 per cent to just three per cent. And those who identified as British went up from 39 per cent to 68 per cent.

There is no doubt that the conversation about Irish unity is gaining momentum, but it isn't yet engaging Unionism.

I also feel that a partitionist mindset in parts of the southern establishment and, indeed, southern media isn't fully engaged in the conversation about what a new Ireland would look like either.

The Taoiseach, Micheál Martin's shared island unit is welcome, though something that should be done anyway and not an answer to the southern leadership setting out the possibilities of new arrangements for major change. Which poses the question, is Dublin ready for change, or prepared to embrace what is needed?

The idea of the six counties being bolted on to the 26, or simply subsumed into the existing Ireland, makes many northerners uncomfortable. Vision is needed to create a new Ireland.

We all know the sensitivities of dealing with Unionists who fear losing their identity and



• **There isn't enough recognition of the honorable tradition of Protestant Irish like the United Irishmen**

Dublin has shown in the past that they can deal constructively with them.

How we all define ourselves and perceive others in this divided space can be barriers which need to be broken down with sensitivity and any outreach needs to be genuine and open. That goes both ways; although it is not the focus of this article, it has to be said that equally the misconception that many Protestants have of Nationalism and Republicanism is not a true representation.

The danger is we may miss the changing of the lights, and the juggernaut of historic division will roll on. Simply winning a referendum without the preparation will result in resentment among the losers who will not simply disappear from history.

DENZIL McDANIEL Commentator and former editor of Impartial Reporter, Enniskillen



It's time for an all island Citizens' Assembly on Irish Unity – Gerry Adams

Two contributors to this edition of Éire Nua have each identified the imperative of planning for future constitutional change. Denzil McDaniel writes: ***“The idea of the six counties being bolted on to the 26, or simply subsumed into the existing Ireland, makes many northerners uncomfortable. Vision is needed to create a new Ireland.”***

Pete Shirlow states: ***“The offer of a united Ireland is akin to a second hand car salesperson ringing up with the offer of ‘a great wee runner’ but not telling you the price, the cars age or when you can have a look. Where is the plan?”***

Most people who have watched the debacle that is Brexit take shape have long accepted that the failure by the British government to properly plan for the conversation around the Brexit referendum in 2016 was a disaster. It led to a narrow victory for Little Englanders and the emboldening of the right wing of the Tory party. The economic, political and societal consequences of this for the British system and also for the island of Ireland have been enormous.

As the debate around Irish Unity has increased so too has the demand for the Irish government to plan for it. Within the political establishments North and South, academia, the work of



• **Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness at the 1998 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis in Dublin that voted to endorse the Good Friday Agreement**

Ireland's Future, and within elements of the media the conversation about a unity referendum, has grown substantially. This has also been reflected in opinion polls.

One consequence of this has been a growing chorus of calls for a national conversation and the establishment of a Citizens' Assembly to facilitate the unity referendum provided for in the Good Friday Agreement. This month marks 24 years since the Agreement was achieved. It was a defining moment in our recent history, but it was, and is not, a settlement. It never pretended to be.

It is an agreement to a journey. Not the destination. For republicans and nationalists our goal is a united Ireland, arrived at democratically and peacefully through a referendum on unity. For unionists it is about the maintenance of the union. Ultimately it is for the people to decide.

For the first time the Agreement created a peaceful and democratic path to Irish Unity. It states;

"(ii) recognise that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between



the two parts respectively and without external impediment, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish, accepting that this right must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland;"

A managed and peaceful transition to a national democracy provides the best basis on which to build a new nation. Everyone must have the opportunity to have their say in shaping this new, shared Ireland.

In addition, those from a unionist background have a real role to play in a united Ireland. They should be part of the planning and preparation.

The motion passed by our Ard Fheis last year acknowledges that these are necessary elements of any dialogue and called on the Irish government;

To establish a representative, national Citizens' Assembly to begin discussing and planning for our future, including the unity referendums contained within the Good Friday Agreement

To engage with and assure Unionists that their culture and identity will be respected in a united Ireland, which will be tolerant, inclusive, multicultural and multiracial.

To use all relevant national and international resources to ensure that the British Secretary of State set a date for a referendum on Irish unity.

Thus far An Taoiseach Micheál Martin has rejected establishing a Citizens' Assembly to discuss the future constitutional arrangements for the island of Ireland.

In February however he agreed to establish two new Citizens' Assemblies on Biodiversity Loss and a Directly Elected Mayor for Dublin. The government then moved speedily to put them in place. The first meeting of these two new Assemblies took place on 9 April.

In March the government appointed UCD Academic, Dr Aoibhinn Ní Shúilleabháin, and former Dublin Football Manager, Jim Gavin, as the respective Chairs. Their appointment follows on from a successful response to randomly selected households to take part in the process. Almost 4,000 citizens responded to the invitation to participate and letters of

• Martin McGuinness, Gerry Adams and Mary Lou McDonald attending the Irish Governments Constitutional Convention conference in Dublin Castle, December 2012



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Am d'Aontacht



An Tionól Saoránach



The Citizens' Assembly

confirmation have been issued. The Citizens' Assemblies are due to report by the end of the year.

Previously the Irish Government established similar bodies three times in the last decade. A Constitutional Convention was held between 2012-14, which included representation from the North; a Citizens' Assembly ran between 2016-18; and a Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality was established in July 2019. Its report was given to the Oireachtas in June 2021.

The Irish government isn't alone in endorsing the use of Citizens' Assemblies. They are an important means of seeking resolutions to difficult issues. A recent article in the 'Constitution Unit Blog' from University College London described how 23 such Assemblies have been held across Britain in recent years, including seven last year. They are part of 'deliberative processes' to 'help resolve politically tricky issues'. They are 'widely celebrated for how they allow representative samples of the population to consider issues deeply before making recommendations.'

So enamoured is Micheál Martin of this mechanism for discussing legislative and constitutional change that he suggested in March that a Citizens' Assembly be held to discuss the future of Irish neutrality. He said: "I think we could look at a Citizens' Assembly to discuss these issues in the fullness of time – where detailed prepared submissions from a wide range of opinion could be considered."

However, when it comes to constitutional change and the need to plan for Irish Unity Micheál

Martin shifts speedily into reverse gear.

The reality is that there needs to be a dialogue on the future constitutional shape of the island of Ireland. Sticking your head ostrich-like into the sand will not make this issue go away.

In addition the complexity of the issue and the range of matters – constitutional, health service, legal, economic, identity rights, symbols and emblems – which all need to be discussed, cries out for a considered conversation in which those questions can be asked and expert testimony taken on what answers and solutions are available.

A Citizens' Assembly makes sense. Planning for the future makes sense. We can do much better if we govern ourselves. The unity referendums will happen. Everyone knows this. The question is when. But, change must be planned.

So let's have an intelligent, calm conversation on issues as diverse as governmental structures; an all-island health service; future governance arrangements; taxation; pensions and public services can be aired.

Only the messers and begrudgers are suggesting that there should be a vote on unity today or tomorrow. Sensible people want space and time to talk these issues through. Had we all stuck to our respective positions – politicians and people alike – there would have been no Good Friday Agreement. Dialogue and negotiations dramatically changed that. It can do so again. And that's why we need a Citizens' Assembly.

It's time to plan for change; it's time for an all island Citizens' Assembly on Irish Unity.

GERRY ADAMS is the former Uachtarán Shinn Féin, MP and MLA for West Belfast and TD for Louth





Rights are for Everyone

BY **MIKE
TOMLINSON**

One of the great promises of the Good Friday Agreement was that the British government would enact a Bill of Rights based on recommendations from the new Human Rights Commission. Almost a quarter of a century later, the Westminster government has still not delivered on a Bill of Rights for the North. Over the years it has argued that further public consultation was needed. It has accused the Commission of ‘overreach’ and going beyond the terms of the GFA. But the root of the failure lies in a change in the British government’s attitude to rights and to the Agreement itself.

When convenient, the British government adopts the DUP notion of consent which falsely asserts that the Good Friday Agreement requires cross-community support for anything contentious. In fact the GFA specifically limits ‘consent’ to a border poll on Irish unification and to certain decisions that are within the competence of the Assembly. The Agreement contains no consent requirement for the Bill of Rights.

In effect the British government is supporting a DUP veto on the issue of rights.

But that shouldn’t surprise us given that the Conservative Party’s 2015 manifesto promised to “scrap the Human Rights Act, and introduce a British Bill of Rights”. It is clear from its recent consultation document that the British government is seeking to constrain the use of fundamental human rights provisions. If it gets its way, state bodies will be less accountable as the positive duty to protect life (Article 2) will be watered down. It also intends to introduce a ‘permission to proceed’ stage under which you would first have to seek permission from a court before taking a human rights case, demonstrating that you have suffered a ‘significant disadvantage’.

All of this cuts across the GFA’s commitment to ‘no diminution’ of rights under the European Convention on Human Rights, and ‘direct access’ to the courts and remedies. The plan for a new, restrictive ‘British Bill of Rights’ is in stark contrast to the GFA commitment to a Bill of Rights for the North which is supposed to expand rights’ provisions.

The commitment to the North’s Bill of Rights was re-stated in New Decade, New Approach (Jan 2020) with the agreement to





• **The Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on the Bill of Rights was chaired by Emma Sheerin (Sinn Féin MLA, Mid Ulster)**

establish an Ad Hoc Committee of the Assembly to examine the issues once again. The Committee, chaired by Emma Sheerin (Sinn Féin MLA, Mid Ulster), was supposed to be advised by a panel of experts appointed by the First Minister and deputy First Minister. The Ad Hoc Committee, however, ended up publishing its report in February 2022 without the input from the expert panel as no such panel had been appointed. Why? Because, it was widely reported, the DUP blocked the appointment of former Human Rights Commissioner and constitutional law expert, Professor Colin Harvey.

The Committee's report is impressive for its range of consultations and the special effort made to include those on the receiving end of Britain's hostile immigration, asylum and refugee policies, and to in-

volve young people through focus groups. It presents evidence of widespread support for a Bill of Rights. Supporters wanted rights to be more than a fine-sounding moral pledge; they wanted the law to be specific enough for rights to be actionable in the courts.

However, the report is peppered with references to DUP objections. The DUP is against the justifiability and enforcement of rights; it is against the GFA commitment that Westminster will enact the Bill of Rights; and it is against including the range of rights considered by the Committee, such as rights for children, environmental rights and social and economic rights.

Whenever I come across opposition to economic and social rights, I find myself asking, what is so objectionable about 'the right to work, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment'? Why not proudly believe that 'everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work'. Why is it so hard to commit to 'the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance that is available, adequate and accessible'?

Lately, I have been researching the history of social protection policies, North and South, with a view to understanding the challenges of unifying social security provision in anticipation of a border poll. I believe this area of social policy is important to the unity discussion for a number of reasons.

FIRST, social security affects everyone as contributors and beneficiaries. Almost half the population (North and South) is in receipt of a social security benefit at any one time, including 1.5 million children and one million receiving state pensions. Many more receive the benefit of tax breaks on pension and health contributions.

SECONDLY, social protection is central to the public finances, from the perspective of both expenditure and revenue raising. North and South, more is spent on social security benefits than on health, and state pensions are the biggest item (around 40 per cent of social security spending in both jurisdictions). The impact of unity on public finances is already a political issue in the South with opinion polls asking loaded questions based on the assumption that there will be a high cost to pay for unification. This is not the case as a number of experts have confirmed. Having looked closely at this issue with regard to social security, my conclusion is that the Social Insurance Fund would gain substantially from northern contributors without corresponding liabilities in the decade following unification.

See United Ireland pensions policy:
<https://belfastmedia.com/economics-of-unity-irish-times-gets-it-wrong>

ECONOMICS OF UNITY: Irish Times gets it wrong on United Ireland pensions policy

Prof Mike Tomlinson February 15, 2022 10:36

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The most commented on opinion column in the Irish Times last week was a piece headlined, 'No, the UK will not pay a united Ireland's pensions' (10 February). Underneath this was a strapline which read, 'Pinning the Bill and the blame on the Brits stirs grievance in the North'. While we should never blame the columnist for the editor's choice of eye-catching captions, these headlines did in fact represent the general drift of



• Prof Colin Harvey's appointment to the Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on the Bill of Rights was blocked by the DUP

THIRDLY, whatever the heart may say, the head will want to make a judgement about the prospects for social and economic rights under the existing constitutional position versus a united Ireland. Households in the North will want to know if they are likely to be better or worse off under the British or Irish tax and benefits system. Likewise, employers will be calculating the gains and losses from different social insurance contributions and from a lower rate of corporation tax.

Some will base their judgement on the historical record: the suppression of those campaigning for the rights of the unem-



ployed and destitute in the 1920s and 1930s; the discriminatory employment, housing and economic development policies of the post-war period; or the degradation of social security over the last fifteen years (See Recommendations for an anti-poverty strategy:

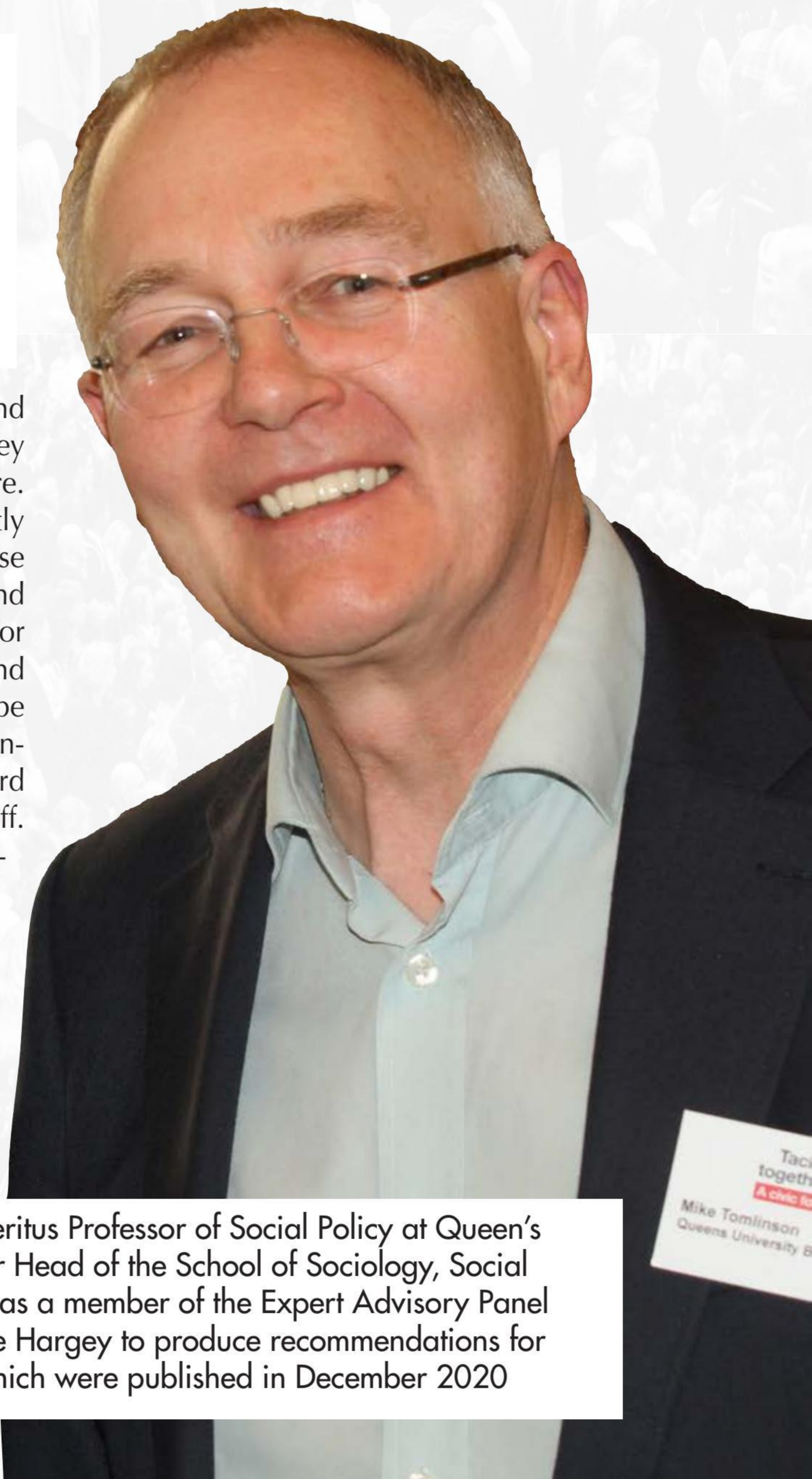
<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/report-anti-poverty-strategy-expert-advisory-panel>), and of course the continuing veto of a Bill of Rights.



Others will consider their economic and social rights as they are now, and what they are likely to be in the foreseeable future. For example, poverty rates are consistently lower in the South than the North because disposable income inequality is lower and benefits are more adequate, especially for children. My preliminary calculations find that most workers in the North would be slightly better off (up to €20 per week) under the South's PAYE system. The top third of earners would be marginally worse off. Employers in the North would face slightly higher social insurance contributions for low-paid workers in the bottom third of the earnings distribution but would gain from the lower rate of corporation tax in the south.

Above all, the discussion of the future of economic and social rights needs to

be informed by North/South comparisons of earnings, employment, low pay, social insurance, and taxation. We need to know how taxes and benefits impact on children, people of working age and those unable to work and who have retired. Without the comprehensive modelling of different households, informed judgements will be crowded out by misinformation and wild rhetoric.



MIKE TOMLINSON is Emeritus Professor of Social Policy at Queen's University Belfast and former Head of the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work. He was a member of the Expert Advisory Panel appointed by Minister Deirdre Hargey to produce recommendations for an anti-poverty strategy which were published in December 2020





Saoirse na mBán and the New Ireland

BY EMMA McARDLE

‘Ní Saoirse gan Saoirse na mBan’ is a familiar phrase in our collective consciousness. Equality, the corner stone of republicanism, demands that all genders are equal and therefore that people of all genders should be treated the same.

It's easy to say the words though, and who would argue that men and women should be treated any differently – no one, if you asked them, would consider themselves to be misogynistic.

And yet we live in a society which pays men more than women, which burdens women with the majority of unpaid caring responsibilities, which places the obligation for running a home on women, which forces women into part-time, low paid and precarious work and which permits an environment in which violence against women is worsening while funding to domestic abuse

agencies remains totally inadequate.

I am not claiming that men don't work in difficult and discriminatory circumstances or that no men undertake caring roles and responsibilities. The difference is that society does not expect it of them in the same way that it does of women.

We are indoctrinated from birth – the subliminal message is that women can do whatever they want career wise (for less wages than men), as long as they are first and foremost successful in their primary functions of looking good, being good partners to men, mothers to children and cleaners of homes.

From birth children are exposed to gender stereotypes, the toys they receive, the colours they wear, the tone in which they are addressed, the touch they receive, is all gendered.

This serves neither women nor men, each gender should be able to fully realise their sense of self, their unique personality, their traits, interests and skills should be allowed to develop outside of the constant prism of stereotypical norms.

WHY ARE WOMEN TREATED DIFFERENTLY?

The everyday experiences of women in our societies and communities is a consequence of the treatment of women by the State, they are two sides of the same coin.

The way the State interacts with women creates the parameters within which individuals behave towards women.

The State has a responsibility to treat all citizens equally, yet time and again both the northern and southern states have failed women. The pejorative culture which exists towards women has its roots in the very contract between the State and its citizens – Bunreacht na hÉireann.

In the southern state religious orthodoxy heavily influenced the 1937 constitution, which was sent to the Vatican for approval ahead of the Referendum.

Over recent years society has changed radically and as a result some of the more catholic elements of that constitution —the

ban on divorce, the abortion prohibition, a heterosexual conception of marriage, the blasphemy offence—have been removed.

People in the north, from all sections of our community, recognise that the 26 counties has undergone a revolution in social terms. This has had an impact on the psyche of unionism in particular which had harboured a particular view of the formerly conservative southern state. It is now the north, hampered by the influence of political unionism, which is an outlier in terms of people's rights.

THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY

The 26 counties is now a much more secular society, so it is appropriate and necessary that elements of the constitution which are no longer fit for purpose are unpicked and to take account of the new challenges faced by society.

The Constitutional Convention of 2012 was asked, among many other things, to consider amending Article 41.2 of Bunreacht, the article which reads *'the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to*

Aishling O'Reilly addressing IWD event in West Belfast



Sinn Féin organised IWD conference in Dublin



engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home’.

The recommendation of the Constitutional Convention, submitted to the Oireachtas in May 2013, was that the article should be amended. In 2016 the Government established a task force to examine potential replacements for this Article and the May 2016 programme for government contained a commitment from the Fine Gael led coalition to hold a referendum on a ‘women’s life within in the home’.

The referendum never happened and in 2019 the government, now led by Leo Varadkar, announced that a Citizens’ Assembly on Gender Equality would be convened.

The Citizens’ Assembly on gender equality gave its report to the Oireachtas in June 2021. It made 45 recommendations, the nucleus of which is a referendum to delete and replace article 41.2

This could have been actioned in 2016, six years ago, although the citizens’ assembly process did consider more widely the issue of inequality and the recommendations, if implemented in full, would have far reaching impacts on society in Ireland.

CHALLENGING OURSELVES

Our society is patriarchal, in the family

scenario this means that the male is the head of the household, the provider, the main earner and as such the main decision maker, inheritance follows the male line, as does surname and so on. At a state level power rests with men, they make and enforce the rules and occupy the leading roles in the institutions of the state and its economy.

This bias is seen as the natural order and although it disadvantages women, most women see it as the natural way of being and it goes unrecognised and unchallenged.

Take a look at the election literature which will shortly be coming through doors in the north. In the majority of female candidate biographies, the listed attributes will begin with family and marital status, in stark contrast to male candidates.

Look at the manifestation of International Women’s Day – in itself a worthwhile concept, with positive outcomes– reduced in many instances to an excuse for the well-heeled to dress up, eat an expensive meal and congratulate themselves on how much they’ve achieved.

We can’t be tokenistic about equality that just deepens inequality because the real issues are never addressed. International Women’s Day initiatives, while recognising achievement, primarily need to be about empowering the least advantaged among us, the most discriminated women – women who



Michelle O'Neill, Joanne O'Riordan
and Mary Lou McDonald



IWD conference in
Parliament Buildings

#Time4Unity
Am d'Aontacht



are poor, women who are travellers, women who are living with addiction, women who are parenting on their own, women who are not educated, women who are immigrants, women who have no social status – they are the women whose voices should be amplified by IWD – Ní saoirse gan Saoirse gach bean!

THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE NEW IRELAND

A successful referendum on Irish Unity will not mean that the north of the country is simply absorbed into the southern arrangement as it currently exists.

If this was the sum of our aspiration the years of struggle for emancipation and the sacrifice of countless people would be an utter waste.

The new Ireland which Sinn Féin wants to deliver is an opportunity to do better for citizens and while we try our very best within the current political arrangements to improve people's lives, it will only be when the entire

nation is free and all of our citizens have the right to self-determination that we can begin to deliver a radically different society.

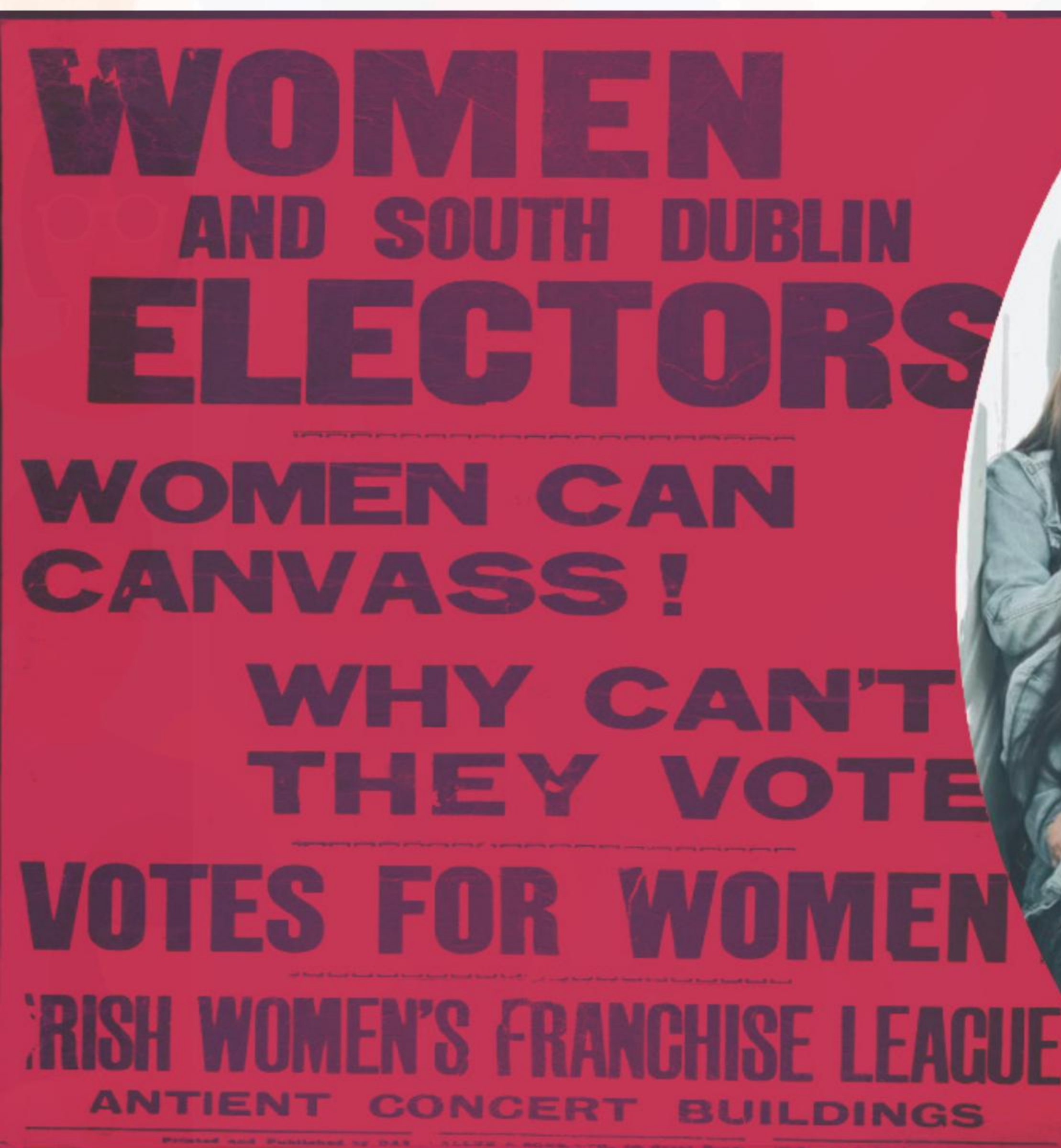
In the new united Ireland, we have the opportunity to replace the patriarchal system which was reinforced by the 1937 constitution.

This will mean a strengthening of people's rights, either through a revised or new constitution. Imagine a nation with a right to healthcare, a right to a home, a right to live free from gender discrimination.

Even when we achieve a united Ireland, and if we work hard we will achieve that, we can never claim an Ireland of Equals while the lived reality over 50% of the population is that they are worth less than the dominant gender.

The apparatus of the new republic must be constructed with rigorous adherence to an equality agenda. This will herald not just the emancipation of women, but the true emancipation of the Irish nation.

EMMA McARDLE is Campaign and Policy Development Officer Uniting Ireland Project



FACTS DO MATTER

PROFESSOR PETER SHIRLOW (FaCSS) is the Director at the University of Liverpool's Institute of Irish Studies. He was formerly the Deputy Director of the Institute for Conflict Transformation and Social Justice, QUB. He is a Visiting Research Professor at the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice

BY PETER SHIRLOW

A pro-unity panellist told me, during Féile, (west Belfast Féile an Phobail), 'that may be the case but facts don't matter'. A moment rendering the objective invisible. If facts do not matter, why were we debating? No one is naïve to believe that minds made will sway but surely, debate is about hearing each other's points of view, and not simply arriving at 'facts don't matter'. Debate is critical, especially for those for whom facts matter more than emotion.

At Féile Ulster Unionist Philip Smith analyzed the socio-economic issues that beset the 26 counties through reading from a Sinn Féin manifesto. An inter-community agreement that unity at present means swapping one form of imperfection for another. Things may of course change. The South may become a more equitable society but so too may Northern Ireland. One fact is this – no one knows. Like the argument that the British state would leave a cheque as they depart.

There are two fundamental problems with the economic debate. First, a binary reproduced via robust evidence. A united Irelander rightly points to higher wages in the South while a Unionist rightly replies about the cost of living, home ownership and high rate of working poor in the South. Second, the idea that the North is like East Germany with a family sitting watching West German TV and dreaming of swapping the Trabant for a BMW is nonsensical. The difference in standards of living is not extreme enough to follow such logic. Take Newry once synonymous with inter-generational unemployment in which businesses now experience a shortage of workers. Things change and therefore ideas need to be fluid.

The offer of a united Ireland is akin to a second hand car salesperson ringing up with the offer of 'a great wee runner' but not telling you the price, the cars age or when you can have a look. Where is the plan? We hear much about planning for unity without a coherent plan to start the planning.



Pro-union people and others cannot buy into a non-existent plan. Unity, if such a good idea would becosted, explained and beyond doubt. Saying all will be well when the 'Brits' go and that sunny uplands awaits is promissory and demanding a leap of faith into complete constitutional re-thinking. In simple terms, no plan means no consideration of the leap.

Nationalism and republicanism lie fractured across Sinn Féin, SDLP, PBP, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and others. How does a demand for unity of purpose work when some of these parties favour unity now, others later and some probably not at all? The Red C poll showed unity was favoured but few prepared to pay and even fewer willing to remove national symbols and engage in reconciliatory steps. If southerners think tight-fistedly and are against inclusivity then preparation is without start. Pro-union people highlight such problematics, which amplify when allied to the refutation, 'facts don't matter'. At such points, the whole edifice of unity jumps out as nationalist emotion and not republican thoughtfulness. As republicans know, a debate on unification led by nationalists is not even persuasive to them.

Eurostat data recently showed experience of racism in Ireland was twice as high as in the UK. If such racism exists against newcomers then how will deep historical antagonism among some towards the pro-union people play out? One only has to look at social media to sense the visceral nature of hostility to that community. It runs both ways but condemnation from within the pro-unity camp is rare.

If such public criticism does not emerge and hostility remains then protection advanced as achievable after constitutional change sounds fictional. With no plan, sectarian hostility and the potential loss of the benefits of remaining in the UK, the rejection of a united Ireland has a basis. It is not simply narrow-mindedness and two-fingered rejection but durable and as robust as arguments for Irish unity.

Surveys show no majority for unity with growths minimal. Demographic change slowed and as sections of the electorate head towards Alliance and the Greens, the combined vote for constitutional parties fell. Since 1968, the benefits of fair employment, the NIHE building programme and massive falls in sectarian crime ushered

forth. The economy grows around engineering, Fintech, Cybercrime and cultural production. More people mix and marry across the identity divide. There are hard edges and legacy issues. However, if Northern Ireland/North is a better place, due in part to pro-unity leadership, is it correct that constitutional change is unrequired. If Northern Ireland is evolving then do we have the political maturity to develop and deepen reconciliation? Maybe republicans understand such positive changes as guiding constitutional change. Whatever the case the situation is fluid and demarcated in ways yet imagined.

Simply stating Northern Ireland is dysfunctional is partly accurate but not as true as it was.

The offer of a united Ireland is akin to a second hand car salesperson ringing up with the offer of 'a great wee runner' but not telling you the price, the cars age or when you can have a look. Where is the plan?

PROF PETER SHIRLOW

Given growths in professional jobs and lifestyles, some question what this dysfunction is. Moreover, telling unionists that they can parade and Highland fling in the New Ireland is patronising and a shallow understanding of a diverse community. In a New Ireland, will the curriculum reflect Blake, Owen, Orwell and Zadie Smith? Will it teach British anti-slave history, suffragettes, and the global significance of British multiculturalism, punk, Ska and humour? A debate in which there is a parity of esteem of listening and mutual respect of hearing is critical. Republicans accept challenge but like unionists need to own up to contradicted thinking and move beyond the reach to history. Facts around healthcare, income and social inclusion matter, as they are the basis upon which to build social justice and decide constitutional futures. If facts 'don't matter' the future is thoroughly problematic.



Tá ciall leis an aontacht

LE PEARSE DOHERTY TD

Cothaíonn an chríochdheighilt go leor de na fadhbanna atá ag cur isteach ar mhuintir na hÉireann. Is siomptóim de na fadhbanna seo í freisin. Tá riail na Breataine in Éirinn agus an ceart chun féinrialtais a dhiúltú do mhuintir na hÉireann fós i gcroílár na deighilte agus na ndeacrachtaí atá againn. Bhí costais dhaonna, eacnamaíocha agus shóisialta an chinnidh thubaistigh sin chun críochdheighilt a chur i bhfeidhm in Éirinn agus chun riail na Breataine a thabhairt isteach ollmhór.

Is léiriú í an chríochdheighilt ar rannpháirtíocht na Breataine i ngnóthaí na hÉireann. Cuireadh i bhfeidhm i 1921 í de réir Acht Rialtas na hÉireann 1920. Cuid den chuspóir a bhí leis ná rialú na Breataine ar chuid den oileán a éascú agus cosc a chur ar theacht chun cinn Poblacht a bhí náisúnta

mar ba cheart. Ar na buntáistí is mó a thiocfaidh as athaontú ná smacht a bheith againn ar ár ngiaráil eacnamaíoch féin.

I 1998, ar na héachtaí a tháinig amach as an bplé a raibh Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta mar thoradh air ná reifreann ar aontacht a chinntiú.

Sa chuid ar Shaincheisteanna Reachtúla sa Chomhaontú, dearbhaítear "...gur faoi mhuintir oileán na hÉireann agus fúthu sin amháin atá sé, trí chomhaontú idir an dá chuid faoi seach agus gan bac ón taobh amuigh, a gceart féinchinnidh a fheidhmiú ar bhonn an toilithe, arna thabhairt dá ndeoin féin agus i gcomhthráth, Thuaidh agus Theas, chun Éire aontaithe a thabhairt..."

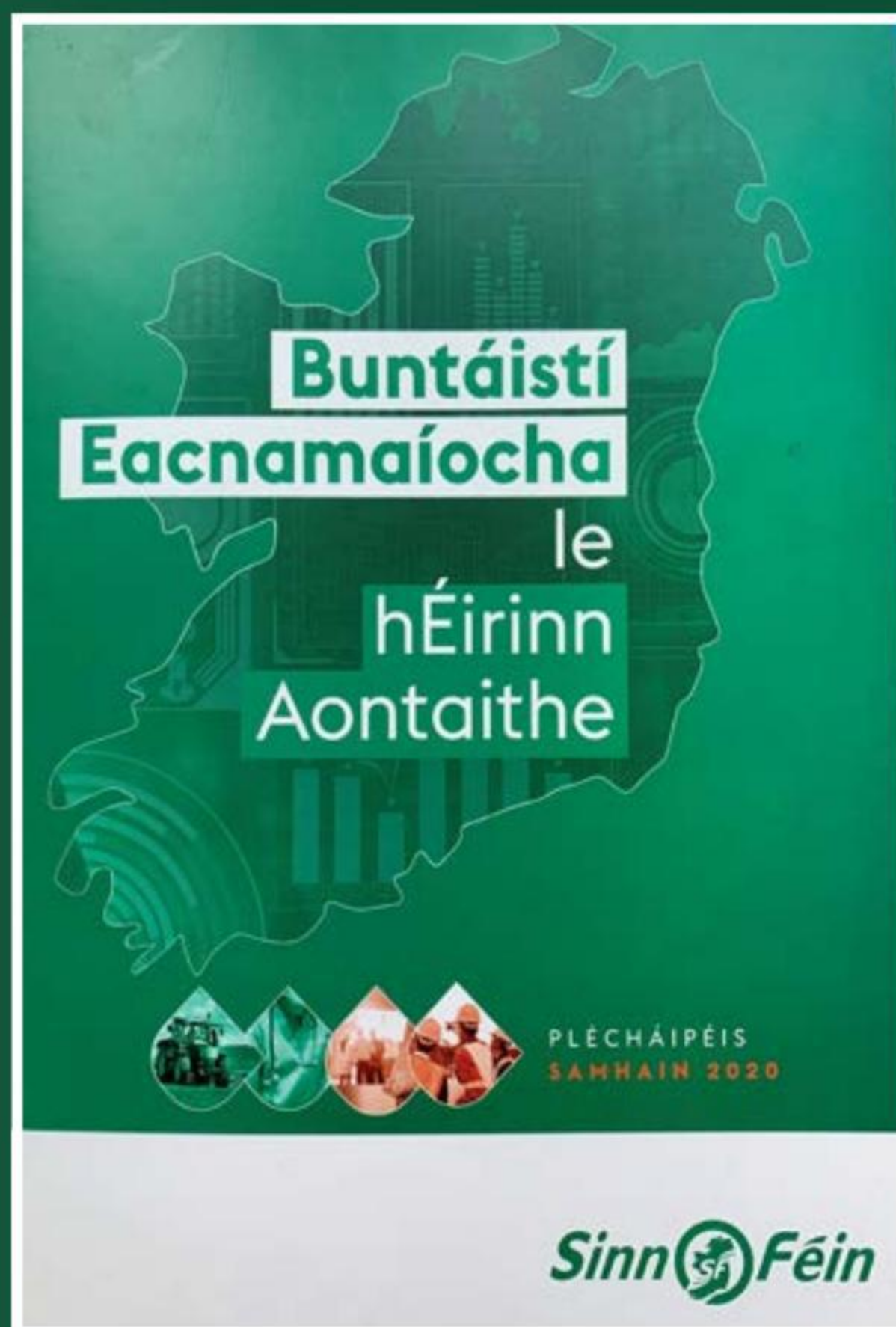
Aithníonn Rialtais na hÉireann agus na Breataine freisin go mbeidh torthaí an



reifrinn mar “oibleagáid cheangailteach” orthu “reachtaíocht a thabhairt isteach ina bParlaimintí faoi seach, agus tacú léi, chun éifeacht a thabhairt don mhian sin.

Tugann Éire Aontaithe an deis is fearr chun dul i ngleic leis na saincheistanna seo ar bhealach a bhféadfaidh muintir na hÉireann leas eacnamaíoch a bhaint as. Tá ciall leis an aontacht agus cruthóidh sí deiseanna nua agus rathúnas nua do mhuintir na hÉireann uile. Dá mbeadh Éire Aontaithe ann is amhlaidh go mbeadh forbairt eacnamaíoch níba chomhordaithe agus níba straitéisí ann ar fud an oileáin agus go háirithe laistigh de réigiún na teorann, agus mheallfaí níba mhó infheistíochta, táirgiúlacht fheabhsaithe, agus bheadh bonneagar riachtanach feabhsaithe ann dá bharr. Ina dhiaidh sin, thabharfadh sé seo buntáistí suntasacha eacnamaíocha ar fud na hÉireann, trí bhrabús in ioncaim phoiblí, méaduithe foriomlána ar aschur, agus mhéadófaí fostaíocht ardsbile.

Ní bhaineann an todhchaí, áfach, le hathrú láithreach ina rachaimid a luí oíche amháin



in Éirinn críochdheighilte agus an mhaidin dár gcionn ag múscailt in Éirinn aontaithe. Baineann sé ar fad le próiseas: plé, athmhuintearas, aistriú agus claochlú.

Baineann sé le comhaontú ar an dóigh a ndéanfaimid ár dtodhchaí a eagrú agus a chomhroinnt. Baineann sé le haitheantas a thabhairt do na traidisiúin agus na cultúir agus na cúlraí eitneacha ar fud atá in Éirinn. Baile atá ach go háirithe d’aontachtóirí an Tuaiscirt.

Tá Éire nua-aimseartha tuillte ag ár ndaoine uile atá bunaithe ar chomhionannas

agus meas; ina gcosnaítear saoirsí sibhialta agus creidimh gach duine; agus ina ndéantar gach traidisiún agus féiniúlacht, lena n-áirítear iad siúd de bhunadh na Breataine nó na hÉireann, nó de bhunadh eile a chosaint de réir an dlí.

Tá dualgas agus oibleagáid bhunreachtúil ar Rialtas na hÉireann ullmhúcháin a dhéanamh i leith na hAontachta; na hargóintí eacnamaíocha; na gnéithe cultúrtha agus sóisialta agus an dinimic pholaitiúil a scrúdú. Is léiriú é an praiseach atá ann mar gheall ar anord Brexit gur gá pleanáil don todhchaí.

Pearse Doherty - Leascheannaire (Dáil), Urlabhraí ar Airgeadas agus Caiteachas Poiblí agus Athchóiriú

IS É AN TUAIRIM ATÁ AGAINN NÁ GO BHFUIL NA NITHE SEO A LEANAS AG TEASTÁIL:

- ▶ Cur i bhfeidhm iomlán Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta lena n-áirítear na hinstiúidí uile-oileáin.
- ▶ Comhchoiste Oireachtais ar Aontacht na hÉireann a chur ar bun.
- ▶ Tionól Saoránach ionadaíoch uile-oileáin nó fóram iomchuí a bhunú chun Aontacht na hÉireann a phlé agus a phleanáil.
- ▶ Ní mór an t-aonad oileáin comhroinnte a mhol rialtas na hÉireann ina Chlár Rialtais 2020 a mhaoiniú mar is i gceart, foireann a bheith aige agus cuspóirí agus treoirlínte soiléire poiblí a bheith aige.
- ▶ Ní mór don rialtas Páipéar Bán ar Aontacht na hÉireann a fhoilsiú.
- ▶ Ní mór dó reifreann a fháil, thuaidh agus theas, ar Aontacht na hÉireann de réir fhorálacha Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta.

WOMEN AND A UNITED IRELAND



A HISTORY LESSON IN FEMALE PRINCIPLE

BY HILARY DULLY

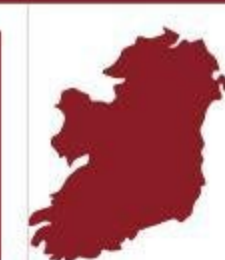
As we move ever closer to the 100-year anniversary of the commencement of Irish Civil War (June 1922), the powers that be – politicians, public commentators and assorted gatekeepers of historical commemoration- continue to grapple with how national discourse about this tragic period of our history should be shaped and navigated. Fears have been expressed about how commemoration of the Civil War might give rise to old grievances, or become ‘high jacked’ by present day political interests on the island of Ireland.

This fear is in many ways understandable, with the ongoing debate about the future of the failed Northern Ireland state, and one hundred years of tragedy and strife for many of the people who live there. It is also reflective of public engagement with, and interest in, this defining period of Irish history, which is not always in unison with present day governmental or mainstream media perspectives.

A century ago, the Treaty of 1921 was portrayed by its champions as ‘a stepping stone’ to full

independence, or as ‘the freedom to secure freedom’. In 2022 ‘the stepping stone’ to a United Ireland remains elusive, and challenging. The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 created a Dominion Free State, and cemented the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. We live with the consequences of the Treaty to this day.

In light of the national commemorations held or to be held covering the revolutionary period, it is regrettable, but not really surprising, that one important event from early 1922 passed by, largely unmarked by the official Decade of Centenaries Programme. The convention of Cumann na mBan, the female auxiliary organisation to the Irish Volunteers (formed in 1914), was called for 5 February 1922. They gathered in the Mansion House in Dublin to decide on their organisational response to the Anglo-Irish Treaty, signed in London in December 1921. Cumann na mBan was the first important military organisation to vote on the Treaty, and the first to split on the issue. The women of Cumann na mBan were female militants, who transgressed cultural



and social conventions of the time, fighting for independence from Britain with astonishing discipline, ingenuity and gusto.

My own interest in this historic Cumann na mBan convention stems from my engagement with the legacy of Irish Republican Máire Comerford (1893-1982), while editing her evocative revolutionary period memoir, entitled 'On Dangerous Ground'. Máire was very active during the Tan War and the Civil War, and was present at the Cumann na mBan Convention in February 1922, when delegates voted overwhelmingly, 419 to 63, to reject the terms of the Treaty. Prior to the February convention, all six female TDs in Dáil Éireann had already publically voted against the Treaty, although the Dáil had narrowly voted in favour of ratification (64 to 57).

One of those TD's, Mary MacSwiney, who had spoken at length against the Treaty in the Dáil debate, also proposed the first resolution debated at the Cumann na mBan Convention— 'That the Executive of Cumann na mBan reaffirms its allegiance to the Republic of Ireland and therefore cannot support the Articles of Agreement signed in London, December 6th 1921'.

In her speech Miss MacSwiney argued that the question was 'one of principle'; 'It is for us, Cumann na mBan, to maintain the Republic', adding that even 'if there was not a man in Ireland to stand for the Republic' the women would 'still hold allegiance to it'. She regarded the pre-existent Oath to the Republic— to 'defend the Republic against any enemies, domestic or foreign'— as sacrosanct. Speaking in support of Miss MacSwiney's resolution, Mrs Barry, representing Kerry, made a plea for the North, declaring that – 'By accepting the Treaty we hand the people of the North over to the enemies'.

An amendment to Miss MacSwiney's resolution,

put forward by Jennie Wyse Power, proposed that Cumann na mBan should not work obstructively against those who supported the Treaty. Additionally, she argued, the organisation should not take 'a party side'. In short, Mrs Wyse Power's amendment proposed that the women of Cumann na mBan should remain neutral, sit on the ditch if you like, and wait for the men of the IRA to decide the future of Ireland. While Jennie Wyse Power's intentions were undoubtedly honourable, the majority of the delegates were having none of this kowtowing to the views of men. The anti-treaty women would pay a high price for their independent stance against the Free State, which became a cold and unwelcoming place for the women of Ireland in the decades that followed.

The majority of the active members of Cumann na mBan took the anti-Treaty side in the ensuing Civil War; those members who supported the Treaty set up a new organisation, Cumann na Saoirse, to support the Free State, and as a rival to Cumann na mBan. In the bitter post-civil war years, many anti-Treaty women endured years of hardship and poverty.

To add insult to injury, their substantial contribution to the fight for freedom from Britain was subsequently erased, traduced or vilified, beginning with Patrick Sarsfield

O'Hegarty's 'The Victory of Sinn Féin', first published in 1924.

In this virulently pro-Treaty polemic, O'Hegarty rails against the anti-Treaty side, but holds particular contempt for the anti-Treaty women. In one chapter entitled 'Furies', he goes in hell for leather, describing the women as 'practically unsexed, their mother's milk blackened to make gunpowder, their minds working on nothing, save hate and blood'. 'Women', O'Hegarty declared, 'were largely responsible for the



Máire Comerford

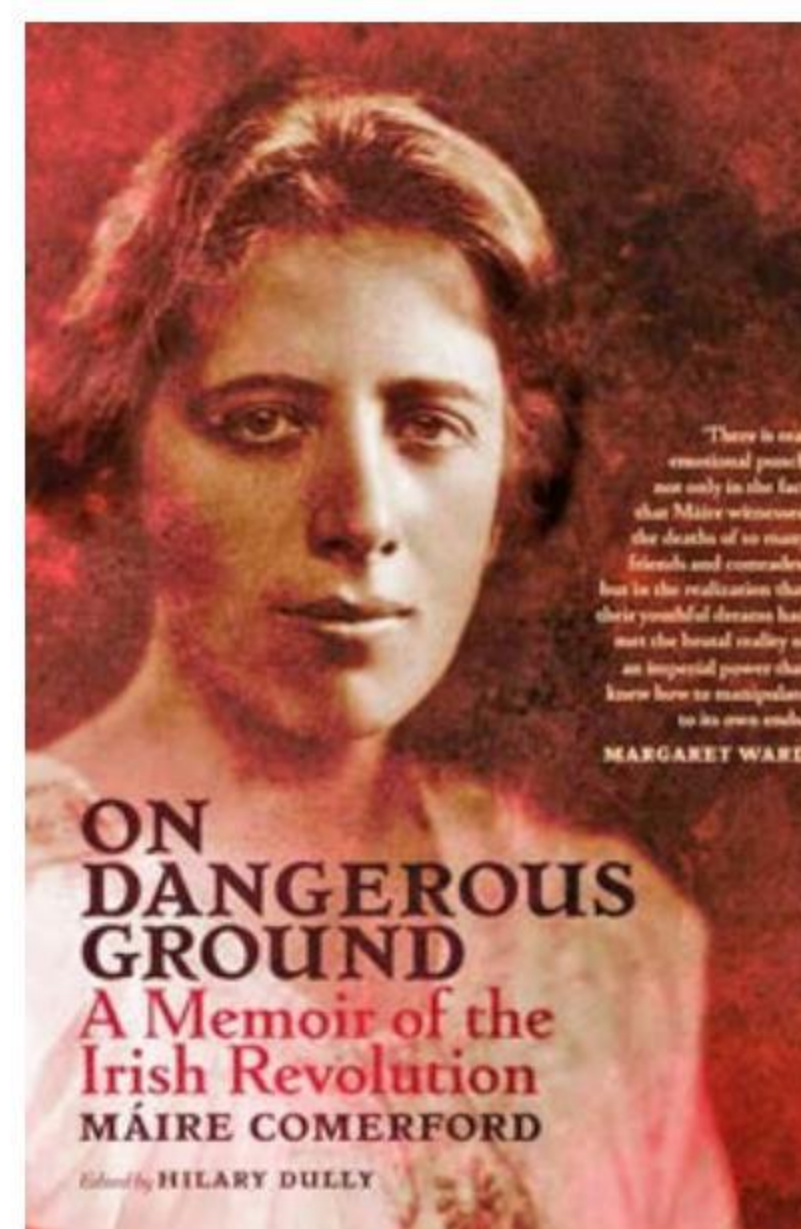


• **BOOK LAUNCH:** Dublin Rathdown Sinn Féin representative Shaun Tracey, Historian Liz Gillis, Editor of 'On Dangerous Ground' Hilary Dully, Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald and Chairperson of the Máire Comerford Sinn Féin Cumann in Sandyford, Diarmuid Coogan

bitterness and ferocity of the Civil War'.

At least O'Hegarty acknowledged, albeit inadvertently, that women were active 'gun women', who 'lived on war', even if they were, in his view, 'destructive-minded arid begetters of violence'. In subsequent decades, the anti-treaty women were substantially disappeared from the male dominated historical canon of the period. More recently, their legacy has been rescued by feminist historians and researchers, who have led the way in bringing these female ghosts of the past back into the narrative of the revolutionary period.

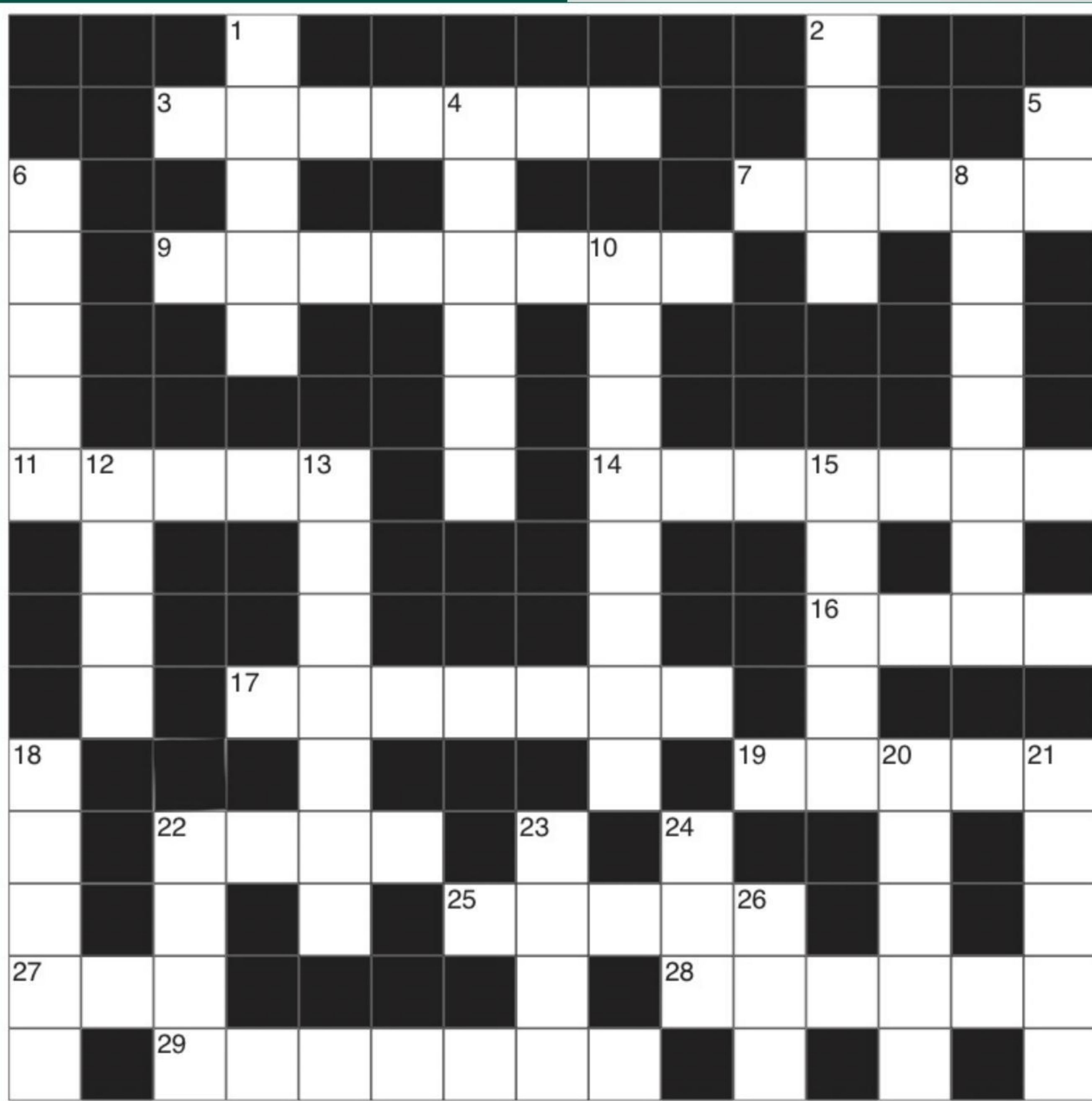
As we move forward towards a debate about a United Ireland, we should make time to listen to our female fore bearers from a century ago, our spectral sisters of the past. As Pádraig Pearse wrote– 'The ghosts of a nation sometimes ask very big things; and they must be appeased, whatever the cost'.



*'On Dangerous Ground -
a Memoir of the Irish Revolution'*
By Máire Comerford.
Edited by Hilary Dully.
Published by Lilliput Press

Available from:
📺 www.sinnfeinbookshop.com





Clues

ACROSS

3. The successor to Terence Mac Swiney: Tomás Mac _____ (7)
7. With Fódhla, and (12 Down) she is the second Goddess of Ireland (5)
9. Prison camp where POWs were held after the 1916 Rising (8)
11. British ship which shelled Dublin during the 1916 Rising (5)
14. The three great pillars of the French Revolution: _____, Equality, Fraternity (7)
16. The number of Hostages Niall had? (4)
17. Galway Town which took part in the 1916 Rising (7)
19. Old name for a prisoner, might have worn a noble hat? (5)
22. British General who accepted the surrender from Pádraig Mac Piarais (4)
25. Difficult belief to display when dealing with the British (5)
27. Sounds like this Basque revolutionary group might arrive on time (3)
28. (and 23 Down) Current Garda Commissioner (4, 6)
29. (and 22 Down) Commandant of Galway 1916 Rising (4, 7)

DOWN

1. SDLP and Fine Gael politician, erstwhile Civil Rights leader (5)
2. (and 5, and 6 Down). Site of ambush where Michael Collins died (4, 2, 5)
4. Yacht used to transport guns into Howth in 1914 (6)
8. Prison in which Terence Mac Swiney died on hunger strike in 1920 (7)
10. Owner of yacht used to transport guns in to Howth in 1914 (Erskine _____ (8)
12. With Fódhla, and (7 Across) she is the first Goddess of Ireland (4)
13. Vol. Martin Savage died here in 1919, during an IRA attack on the British Viceroy (7)
15. IRA leader who wrote On Another Man's Wound: _____ O'Malley (5)
18. Celtic country where the prison camp in (9 Across) was located (5)
20. Transport from H7 to the prison gates in 1983? (5)
21. This form of torture was 'white' and used to torture prisoners in August 1971 (5)
22. (and 29 Across) Commandant of Galway 1916 Rising (4, 7)
23. (and 28 Across) Current Garda Commissioner (4, 6)
24. The DUP wanted to exchange this, for cash... (3)
26. The uniform of British terrorists in Ireland in 1920 Black and ____ (3)



scribble pad

See page 36 for Issue 3 Crossword answers

Building A National Health Service

BY **DAVID CULLINANE TD**

Collectively and individually, health is a top priority for most people right across the island. Access to and affordability of healthcare are major concerns for many, and a major consideration in Irish Unity. A United Ireland is an opportunity for a properly funded and functioning public National Health Service.

In planning and preparing for Irish Unity, we must build an all-island Irish National Health Service which will deliver care closer to home on the basis of need, not ability to pay.

The Government parties in the south have proven time and again that they have no real plan to address the many crises facing the health service. There has been a complete lack of leadership at ministerial level for decades. The issues affecting our health service and the health economy are severe as it has suffered from decades of underinvestment and neglect.

We must end healthcare based on postcode or bank balance and make the reforms needed to ensure the interests of patients come first. We

need a Government that will invest in our health service to ensure it has the capacity necessary to deliver for patients when they are in need while also reducing the cost of healthcare.

In the North the crisis in the Health Service is exacerbated by the fact that the purse strings are held in London and the Tories have long been focussed on privatisation.

Sinn Féin has a plan for building the all-Ireland Health Service we need which can maximise the potential of the island to reduce costs for patients and tackle waiting lists.

Building an All-Island NHS

To begin, and in preparation for Irish Unity, we need to align the health service on an all-island basis.

A Sinn Féin government in Dublin would work to build a national health service which ends the failed two-tier system, expands free GP and primary care, and cuts waiting times to agreed levels.





The method of doing this has already been agreed under Sláintecare, though Sinn Féin would go further in many areas to reach universal healthcare in the quickest realistic timeframe. Six Regional Health Areas are to be established across the south, under the HSE.

They are essential to integrating healthcare across primary, community, and acute care sectors. This will make the system more efficient, but they also need to be able to plan ahead.

To do this, we would give them significant powers in budgets, recruitment, and capital planning. We would reduce tiers of management, integrate care sectors, and empower good healthcare leaders to deliver better and quicker for our communities.

We will reduce the cost of health care by delivering free GP care for all over two terms in government and will in the short term reduce the cost of medicines, abolish car parking charges at hospitals and abolish in-patient hospital charges in our first term in Government.

Tackling Health Waiting Lists

Waiting times are far too long North and South,

and it has become incredibly difficult to get an appointment for any health or social care service.

The current system does not work for the 900,000 people on the waiting lists in the South or the almost 350,000 on waiting lists in the North. It is a scandal that does not take account of the patients left on trolleys, or children with disabilities who cannot get access to therapies and supports.

We need to increase investment in community hospitals and primary care centres to increase the capacity for minor surgeries and treatments which can be delivered closer to home, outside of a major hospital.

We also need to invest in surgical theatre capacity for elective surgeries, which make up most of the inpatient waiting lists in the south, to ensure timely access to basic care.

We need to equip healthcare professionals to do the job, and that means investing in equipment, further training, safe staffing levels, and ICT and eHealth systems to deliver healthcare better.

Most importantly, we need to ensure that education and training places match need and demand, and listen to healthcare workers when they move abroad. We need to retain our graduates and show them that we want them to work in the Irish Health Service.

All-Island Potential

We need to maximise the potential of the island's population to achieve critical mass for delivering high quality healthcare.

This will allow us to develop further specialised care centres, as is being done currently between children's hospitals in Dublin and Belfast and at Altnagelvin. We can deepen and expand this cooperation across the border and the island.

Sinn Féin would make all-island health care a priority by leveraging resources North and South and using the critical mass of the population to deliver high quality integrated and specialist care in cancer care, in cardiac care, in children's health and in research and innovation.

We need to ensure we have enough surgical theatres, critical care beds, and recovery beds as well as the health and social care professionals to staff them.

Accountability Like Never Before

We need more transparency across health and social care. We must create a culture of transparency and accountability in health not seen before.

The HSE struggles with accountability because it does not have accessible data on many of its own day-to-day activities, let alone the community and private sectors who provide more services than ever before.

We must call time on bad management, and bad Governments which have led the Health Service down this road of privatisation and outsourcing. Strong, robust, and autonomous Regional Health Areas are essential to creating an atmosphere of openness and transparency, for the health service to be fairly judged, and create efficiencies to get things done.

We will end the opaque nature of the health system and shine a new light of transparency for the betterment of staff and patients' experiences.

We will ensure public money is spent on public health care and build confidence in the ability of the public health service to deliver the care people need and have earned.

Last December and at the start of this year I visited hospitals in Dublin, Derry and Newry. I heard first hand the experience of healthcare staff and took the opportunity to thank them for their courage and diligence during the current very difficult times. We discussed the need for better all-island cooperation to ensure that patients get the best possible care.

It is clear that an all-island national health service is the best option for delivering high quality healthcare for patients and fair treatment for staff. Through better sharing of knowledge and resources services can be improved for all. Sinn Féin is committed to delivering an all-island National Health Service which works for all.

DAVID CULLINANE is TD for Waterford and Sinn Féin spokesperson on Health



A GREEN NEW

BY **MATTHEW O'REILLY DEEHAN**

The afflictions of partition have been to the detriment of all the people of Ireland, but perhaps none more than those who reside in the country's north-west.

The current climate emergency and the growing failures of partition have provided people here with myriad problems, but also an opportunity to make a permanent, positive and sustainable change to the way our country operates, and it is the ever neglected North-West that can drive forward that change.

Irish re-unification would reunite the North West, breaking the chains of socio-economic bondage. Given the widely predicted, and academically credited, €26-€36B economic boost Unity would bring, as outlined in the Hubner report, reunification would allow a much greater space for us to work to tackle the World's most prominent existential crisis on a domestic front.

As Martina Anderson correctly pointed out in 2020, "Our unique & ideal location in the NW of Ireland means we are perfectly positioned to become a global leader in renewable and sustainable energy production, capitalising from wind energy and complimenting oxygen and hydrogen industries."

The spacious environs of the NW would allow those committed to people based solutions to the climate emergency, to innovate and develop the newest technologies with regards to greener methods of public transportation, wastewater treatment and sewerage capacity.

Take hydrogen buses as an example. Over the course of the last year, we have seen hydrogen buses added to public transportation fleets across the World. However, they are very much still in the minority and are massively outranked by

diesel and petrol vehicles. The opening up of a sustainable public transport manufacturing plant in the North-west, which would likely place emphasis on vehicles such as Hydrogen buses, would not only create badly needed jobs in the region, but would establish the North-west as a geographic centre for environmental, worker friendly, innovative excellence.

Naturally, once this is established, we would see the petering out of diesel vehicles that make up the current domestic, and local public bus fleets. Certainly in Derry, where the diesel guzzling buses operating the Foyle Metro routes have plagued Foyle Street and its surrounds for some time. This would also offer an opportunity to improve local bus services in Derry, Donegal and Tyrone, which are far too irregular to be considered a reliable form of transport, in turn making the working day much easier and affordable to commuters without cars, and would encourage those with cars to abandon them for a more environmentally friendly commute. Such a realisation would result in substantial employment opportunities.

Of course the bus is not the limit of public transport. Partition has decimated the Irish Railways. We've all seen the 'before and after partition' map, and there is no place that has been hit hardest by the absence of rail than Tyrone and Donegal – two very large



NORTH WEST

counties with no rail connectivity. Sustainable transport production in the region, affords us the chance to finally correct this.

Much like buses, hydrogen trains are becoming increasingly popular, albeit with a smaller uptake. Currently, the vast majority of the Translink and Iarnród Éireann fleets are diesel locomotives. The very same, welcoming NW environment would prove appropriate in helping decarbonise the Irish railways, and ameliorate infrastructural problems plaguing transport in Ireland.

The best place to introduce these eco-conscious locomotives would be in the North-west. Rebuilding track in Donegal and Tyrone, connecting the North-West to Dublin, quicker services from Derry to Belfast, would bring a sustainable economic boost to the NW. If rail times are improved from Derry to Belfast, and a line akin to the European Standard line is opened between Derry and Dublin, as advocated for in the Dáil by Eoin Ó Broin, then the geographic location of Derry is ideally placed to become Ireland's Northern transportation hub. This could potentially create hundreds of jobs. Improving transportation in the NW is a must if we are to tackle this global emergency at home, and we have a sustainable way to do so, that creates employment opportunities for people in Tyrone, Donegal & Derry. The boost for the region would be huge.

But so long as partition remains, there is no means of enacting this change. The potential of our people and our country is stymied by Whitehall's disinterest in Ireland. The unemployment, poor

Rail network coverage and population density:



public transport facilities and lack of investment in the North-West will continue. Ireland's potential inhibited.

Partition has burdened these counties, and this country, with many problems, and looks as intent to refrain from solving those problems a century on, as it ever has.

So when people say that a United Ireland is a distraction from the important issues, such as climate change, unemployment, lack of infrastructure, health and more - they're wrong. Irish Unity is our best means of solving them.

MATTHEW O'REILLY DEEHAN is the Vice Chair of Ógra Derry and Ógra Representative to the Derry United Ireland Committee

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ISSUE 3

Crossword
Croshocall
ANSWERS

