

# Taobh istigh

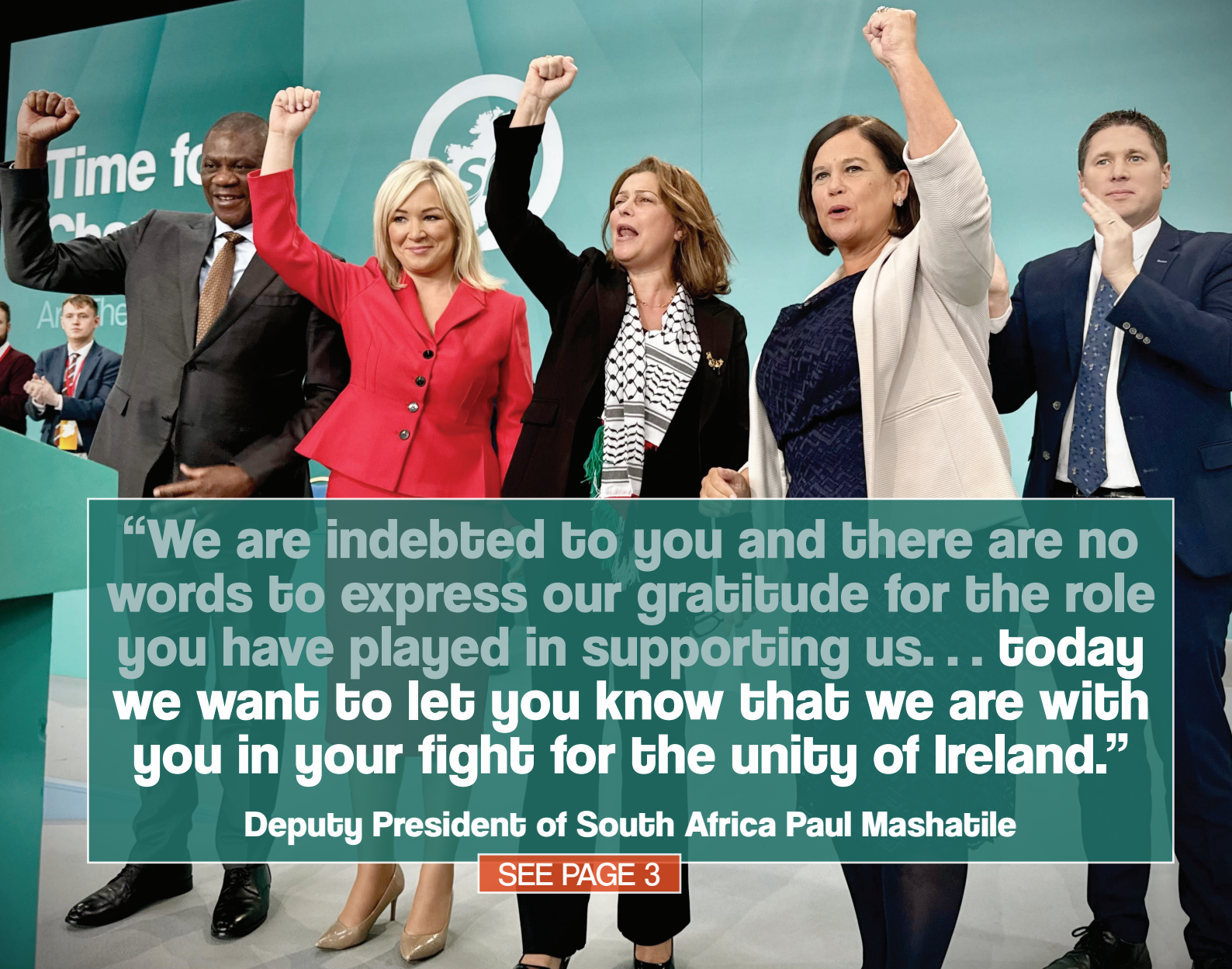
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# New Ireland éire Nua

AN FHÓMHAIR  
2024  
AUTUMN  
EAGRÁN ISSUE 8



**“We are indebted to you and there are no words to express our gratitude for the role you have played in supporting us... today we want to let you know that we are with you in your fight for the unity of Ireland.”**

**Deputy President of South Africa Paul Mashatile**

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**KEEP TALKING  
ABOUT  
PALESTINE**



**CEASEFIRE  
NOW**

***Enact the Occupied Territories Bill and Illegal Israeli Settlements Divestment Bill.***

# Clár an Abhair

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**EAGRÁN ISSUE 8**

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# ***Plan and prepare for Unity***

**T**his year's Sinn Féin Ard Fheis was full of enthusiasm and passion with great speeches covering every issue imaginable and the delegates voting through policy motions that will help shape Sinn Féin politics in the time ahead.

The speeches demonstrated the strength and relevance of the party across our island as we prepare for the general election.

In her Presidential Address Mary Lou skilfully critiqued the many failures of the Fianna Fáil/Fine Gael government while presenting Sinn Féin as the alternative government, with policies and a leadership that can deliver real solutions and a better life for all citizens.

An underlining theme that ran throughout the Ard Fheis was the issue of Irish Unity and on that Mary Lou confidently asserted our ability to "unify Ireland." She said that, "We need a mature, respectful conversation about constitutional change." But she added, "Be in no doubt – Unity referendums are coming. By end of this decade, people north and south must have their say. The Dublin and London governments can't continue to tread water. It's time to plan and prepare. That means a green paper on Irish Unity, a Citizens Assembly, a Minister for reunification at the Department of An Taoiseach, a new government with a clear-cut commitment to holding referendums." Vótáil Shinn Féin. We will work hard. We won't let people down."





# *South Africa supports 'fight for the Unity of Ireland'*

**I**rish Republicans have had a long and enduring relationship with the African National Congress. In 1995 Gerry Adams travelled to South Africa to meet its senior team of negotiators who succeeded in ending apartheid and electing Nelson Mandela as President.

In the midst of the negotiations around the Good Friday Agreement some of those senior figures travelled to Ireland to hold public meetings and go into the prisons to talk about their experience of negotiations. That relationship has

remained strong over the years thanks in part to the hard work of Declan Kearney, Sinn Féin Party Chairperson. In a very significant and concrete reflection of



friendship between Sinn Féin and the ANC the Deputy President of South Africa Paul Shikoko Mashatile addressed the Ard Fheis. He emphasised the strong bonds of friendship between

Ireland and South Africa. He said: "Ireland was a strong supporter of the liberation struggle, particularly the Irish anti-apartheid movement... We are indebted to you and

there are no words to express our gratitude for the role you have played in supporting us... today we want to let you know that we are with you in your fight for the unity of Ireland."

He concluded saying: "Our message as the African National

Congress and the people of South Africa to Sinn Féin is simple but unequivocal which says solidarity forever. I want to say that the people united will never be defeated."



# Speaking at the Ard Fheis on **Irish Unity**



## **Uachtarán Mary Lou McDonald**

From Dublin to Derry, Waterford to Tyrone, we want to end partition and unite our country. We believe in Ireland and our people. We are republican activists in the tradition of Connolly and Markievicz, Sands and O'Farrell, McGuinness and O'Hare.

We aspire, we dream, we reach for a new Ireland, for the republic. 'Our demands most moderate are, we only want the Earth'. That is why we step forward, never backing down, to lead from the front...

We can unify Ireland. We need a mature, respectful conversation about constitutional change. Be in no doubt – Unity referendums are coming. By end of this decade, people north and south must have their say. The Dublin and London governments can't continue to tread water. It's time to plan and prepare.

That means a green paper on Irish Unity, a Citizens Assembly, a Minister for reunification at the Department of An Taoiseach, a new government with a clear-cut commitment to holding referendums. Each generation walks their own length of this journey. Today, we hold the compass and the map. We decide the direction we take, for this generation and those to come. So, let's work for it, believe in it, make Unity happen...

I am more determined, Sinn Féin is more determined than ever to build a better, fairer, united Ireland for everyone. We are not giving up.



## **Michelle O'Neill**

Our goal is a united, inclusive Ireland where this country and all of our citizens can reach their



full potential. By our determination and the support of the people, we will turn that aspiration into reality. It is Time for Change. Tá sé in am don athrú. We must engage with communities about the change Sinn Féin will bring. Sinn Féin will deliver a government that will put people first. That is needed now, more than ever. Our commitment is to an Ireland that is stronger, fairer, and united!



### **Rose Conway Walsh**

We are an island of immense opportunity. We know that we can create a new and united Ireland that cherishes all of our children equally. No longer can we tolerate inequality, regional imbalance, growing homelessness and denial of access to healthcare.

The Good Friday Agreement has given us an opportunity for peace, prosperity and most importantly the ability to hold a referendum on Irish Unity. Just imagine a new, inclusive and united Ireland where we are in control of our own affairs, our own land, our own natural resources, our own decision making.

We can create an island where no one is left behind.

Where all voices are heard. A chairde, we must prepare for Irish Unity, and we must prepare well.

The Irish Government has a responsibility lead those preparations. This must begin by immediately establishing a Citizen's Assembly. I very much welcome the comments from Leo Varadkar calling for all parties to make Irish unity a political objective.

I would go further and say that unity should be a programme of work for all parties, especially the government, who can command the resources of the State, to begin the proper thorough work of planning for constitutional change.



### **Conor Murphy**

Partition has long disrupted the natural circuits of commerce in Ireland. Discouraging investment. Creating inefficiencies. And hindering trade. But the economic logic of the all-Ireland economy is prevailing. Over the last five years cross-border trade has more than doubled to over €10 billion. Cross-border tourism has also surged, with the north now attracting an unprecedented number of visitors from the south. Individual companies, sectoral clusters, and supply chains increasingly operate on an all-Ireland basis.

For the benefit of everyone on this island, we must build on this organic growth. As Economy Minister, I have

increased Intertrade Ireland's budget and its staff complement in order to step up its support for the all-Ireland economy. I have also increased funding for Tourism Ireland, which markets the island as a single destination. Discussions are underway to extend into the north, Fáilte's tourism brands: The Wild Atlantic Way. Ireland's Ancient East. And Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

Cross-border co-operation is flourishing between our economic development agencies. Indeed in November, I will be in Singapore with Enterprise Ireland and Invest NI to jointly lead the first all-Ireland Trade Mission...

As more people conclude that a United Ireland is in their economic interests, and that it offers their children a brighter future, the need for the Irish government to plan for unity becomes ever more urgent.



### **John Finucane**

Irish unity is within the gift of the people on this island, not the British government. Be it a Labour or a Tory government, the future of our country is in our hands. The conversation on the constitutional future of Ireland is thriving right now across all sections of society. Across the island, people are genuinely excited by and are engaging in this discussion. But we are clear - planning and preparation must start now.



The Irish government should lead those preparations by immediately establishing a Citizens' Assembly on Irish unity; one where everyone is welcome, everyone is included, and one where people can openly share their ideas, their hopes, and their ambitions. There is an onus on the Irish government to prepare for referendums and reunification without any more delays.



### Rev Karen Sethuraman

*Rev Karen Sethuraman is the first female Baptist Minister in Ireland. She is also a Board member of Ireland's Future. This is an edited extract from her remarks at the Ard Fheis:* We deserve better than to feel as though we are the unwanted stepchild of the United Kingdom. I truly believe that the opportunity to build a new Ireland is the greatest work of peace and reconciliation since the Good Friday Agreement.

The conversations concerning Irish unity are growing and unstoppable. People from all black backgrounds are asking, if there is to be a new Ireland, what will it look like?...

We propose that all political parties who are supportive of a new and united Ireland place Irish unity at the centre of your election manifestos... and there must be a concentrated effort in the setting up of a department with a minister appointed, tasked with the planning and preparing for Irish unity.

This conversation belongs to all of us ... We are not complete without our unionist brothers and sisters. There will always be those who do not want to engage and we cannot demand them to do so. But what we can do is we can continue to extend the hand of friendship and be committed to listening with a willingness to learn and unlearn... Recently, Hilary Benn, the British Secretary of State, stated that there are no grounds for a border poll. His colleague Fleur Anderson said this is not a priority for her. It is a priority for us. I want to extend an invitation to both Hilary Benn and Fleur Anderson to come and meet with us. We want to share our proposals with you as we move forward towards 2030 when we believe that a border poll should be called.

Friends, we are not responsible for the homes that we are born into, but we are responsible for the home that we will leave behind. So, friends, let's together build a nation of neighbours.



### Matt Carthy

The story of Ireland is a story of colonisation, oppression, partition, and occupation. It's also the story of rebellion, of resistance, of a people refusing to be held down, rising again and again in a courageous fight for freedom.

We have never given up on our central ambition of ending British rule in our country, of ending partition and creating a new country, a United country – a 32 county Irish republic... We are living in the end days of partition. We walk the pathway forged by those who came before us, those who met injustice with revolution, who laid down their lives for this great country. We are the generation who will finish the journey to freedom.



### Carál Ní Chuilín

The scale of discussion around constitutional change has never been higher. I would like to commend the work of the Commission on the Future of Ireland who have been engaging with civic society in areas across Ireland on the issue of Irish Unity and what it would mean for their local communities.

In Belfast we were lucky to host the very first commission event, the Belfast People's Assembly. We have also hosted Rights in a New Ireland, Irish Unity & the all island



economy & the Belfast Women's Assembly- which has now evolved into an independent structure who have been doing fantastic work. These events attracted people from all walks of life who spoke from the authority of their own lived experience.

For me, the Belfast Women's Assembly was hugely significant. The energy, enthusiasm and serious engagement at the event on the issue of Irish Unity was simply extraordinary. It was clear that the women in attendance saw the prospect of a unity referendum as an opportunity to plan for a new Ireland that would guarantee women's equality, gender rights and social justice.



### **Declan Kearney**

There's a growing view that the economic and social needs of workers and families will only be properly addressed within a new constitutional settlement. Support for a united Ireland is today stronger than ever before. The persistent refusal by British governments to set criteria, and a date, for a unity referendum is no longer sustainable.

The British government must change that position.

By contrast, an emerging consensus exists among the majority of political parties across Ireland on the need to plan for Irish unity – including the three coalition government parties. That consensus found expression in July with the landmark publication of the all-party Joint Committee on Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement report, 'Perspectives on Constitutional Change'. It explicitly asserts the need for the Irish government to begin planning and preparing for reunification. The report mirrors the breadth of popular discussion on Irish unity. The success of Sinn Féin's 'Commission on the Future of Ireland' is testament to that momentum.

So too is the work of Ireland's Future'. Its latest event last June in Belfast brought 11 political parties under one roof to discuss planning for unity. Self-determination has become the defining Irish political discussion of our times. Leo Varadkar's welcome contribution on Thursday reflects this by repeating the need for unity to be a political objective for the next Irish government.

Partition has run out of road. The next Irish government should make planning for Irish unity a political objective. The current British government should join with it in opening the road to reunification and reconciliation.



### **Emma Sheerin**

I know that I don't have any work to do to convince any of you to support a united Ireland, and that the motivation to build a new and better version of our country, was what drove all of us to join Sinn Féin. But a goal without a plan is just a wish. We cannot deliver this by ourselves, alone. We need to convince a majority of the population of the benefits of reunification, and ensure that all voices are heard in the conversation. We need buy in for planning from existing government parties.

In the north, we can see how decades of activism and work on the ground is bringing us closer to where we

need to be, with Sinn Féin now the largest party at all levels of Government.

Reunification is the problem solver for many of the issues we encounter now on both sides of the island. It will bring economic opportunities, break us free from the challenges we endure as a result of British decision-making, and give us the power to control our own destiny. It will end the duplication and wastage, and open us up to a more efficient way of governing.

In the 26, this upcoming election can be a key turning point. On the ground activism, and listening to those who we want to represent, will allow us to offer an alternative to the regressive and self-serving politics that have ruled the roost since the creation of this state. And it is from there, with others, that we can build our new Ireland.

Comrades there is a better way, and it is for all of us to be part of.





# Pat Cullen

“I believe Irish Unity is inevitable.”

Pat Cullen was elected as MP for Fermanagh South Tyrone in July 2024. She is the youngest of seven children and grew up in Co Tyrone. She is married with two children, and recently became a grandmother. Pat holds a degree in Nursing and a Master's in management and qualified as a registered nurse in 1985 working in a range of community and clinical healthcare settings, before becoming a director of nursing. She has held senior roles within nursing, including Director of Nursing at the Public Health Agency and advisor to the Department of Health, before joining the Royal College of Nursing in 2016 and became the director of the College in NI in 2019. Pat is an honorary professor of Queen's University.



***What is your earliest political memory?***

My earliest political memory is the time of the blanket protest and then the no-wash protest. Whilst I was very young, I remember this so well. Every night, our mother brought us together for the rosary and she offered the first decade for the men on the blanket and the women in Armagh. The second decade was 'to banish' the British army from our shores and to keep us safe from their hands. I remember her very words and the significance of her prayers. I also knew the families around our townland and throughout Carrickmore that were suffering as a result of British rule and the impact it was having. I also remember the impact of our home being constantly searched and destroyed for no reason and the unjustness of this invasion of our rights and privacy.

***What is the biggest change you have seen in your lifetime?***

The biggest change, without question was the announcement of the Good Friday Agreement. I will never forget the 10 April 1998. My husband and I had taken the children away for the weekend to Ennis. It was my husband's birthday. The children were eight and three and they kept wanting us to build a snowman with them as it had snowed the previous night. They kept asking why we were watching the TV and crying. We knew their lives were going to be so different to ours. Both of us worked in the health service and seen first hand the impact of the conflict on everyone we treated and just knowing that change was ahead of us was unfathomable. I will never forget that day.

***Are you encouraged by the conversation on constitutional change?***

I am encouraged to see key figures from a range of backgrounds, be it the arts, business, health, trade unionism and many others engaging in constitutional conversations. People like the Rev Karen, James Nesbitt, Mick Lynch and many others who truly wish to see their communities represented, engaged and included. This is a great start but must be strengthened. Space must be made for others to join the conversations. As well as civic leaders taking the lead, we need to see greater

leadership from politicians who will find this a challenging space to enter but enter they must. They must make sure that a New and United Ireland is designed to equally reflect the people they represent, their cultures, traditions and economic aspirations, so they can flourish in the years ahead.

***Is Irish Unity a realisable goal and when?***

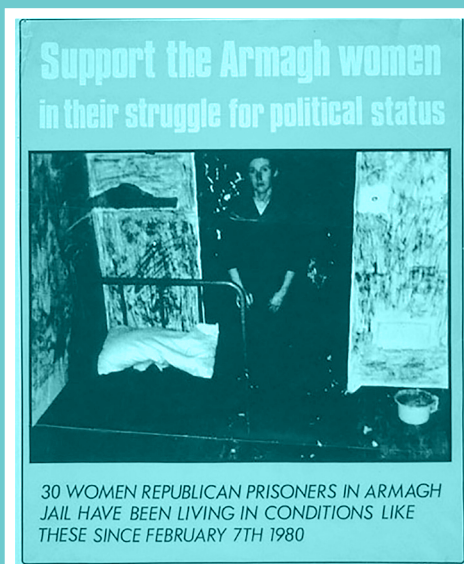
Personally, I believe Irish Unity is inevitable. Every aspect of life will be enriched through a unified Ireland. I can speak about the NHS and the importance of unified health and care services for the future of the NHS in the North. Improving healthcare clinical outcomes and managing healthcare costs are dependant on economies of scale. We will only truly address the NHS challenges we have by expanding North/South healthcare services. I was very fortunate to be part of the commissioning team leading the development and commissioning of Island wide Paediatric cardiac surgery services and radiology services across Derry and Donegal. I saw first-hand the marked increase in clinical outcomes for patients as well as the improvements in patient experience. There's so much more to do in this area alone.

***What advice would you give to those advocating for a united Ireland?***

My advice is to make sure we never repeat the mistakes the British government made with Brexit. Always be honest with the people. Planning and preparation is key. People must be taken on a journey – a journey of inclusive dialogue with a place at the table for all voices to be heard, no matter how diverse or difficult these conversations may be. Irish people pride themselves on leaving no one behind, so I would say let's build on our commitment to equity and equality.

***What role must the Irish government play in planning for the future?***

The Irish government must start preparing the ground work for referendums. It must be a key public policy priority for the next Irish government. I would expect to see



the commitment set out in all party manifestos. The next Irish government must commence immediate work by developing a detailed Green paper that lays out the framework for holding a unity referendum. The framework needs to recognise the need for establishing an All-Island citizens Assembly and establishing a dedicated government department that is properly resourced to progress the work at pace.

### ***Do you support the establishment of a Citizens' Assembly/Assemblies?***

I have experience of a number of citizen type Assemblies and wholeheartedly support an All-Island Citizens Assembly. It is important that such an Assembly comprises citizens and expert witnesses and is properly resourced with adequate facilitators and organisers. A citizens Assembly allows for open discussion and dialogue and for focussed questioning. It is only through a Citizens Assembly that recommendations can be made by citizens based on evidence and expert engagement.

### ***If you could look 10 years into the future what would you hope to see?***

I would like to see us using the next years preparing the groundwork for referendums and that we see these held within the next 5-6 years. In 10 years' time, I believe I will be living in a new and united Ireland that is a better place for everyone, in charge of our own decisions for everyone that calls the Island their home. I yearn for the day we are no longer depending on a British government who has no interest in the prosperity of our people. I bear the scars of trying to negotiate with a British government for a fair pay deal for frontline nurses and witnessed on a daily basis their lack of interest, compassion or respect for working class people. I hope the future is one where we never again have to go begging to a British government for the crumbs of their table.



# IRELAND'S FUTURE AND IRISH UNITY

*by Andree  
Murphy*

**I**t is eight years since England and Wales voted to leave the European Union, and took Scotland and the North of Ireland with it. To those of us living in Ireland this vote was nothing short of existential. There was, of course, the democratic implications – we overwhelmingly voted to remain in the European Union, yet our votes counted for nothing, compared to English and Welsh voters' narrow choice.

But equally there were the practical implications. For an island economy that relies on an open border and market. For lives lived with two jurisdictions but with common purpose. For a peace agreement that in 1998 relied heavily on membership of the EU for its accommodation of constitutional preferences,

British, Irish and none. This vote threatened what had become possible and practical. While some in Europe got confused and angry after the Brexit referendum, the island of Ireland got busy. Protecting the rights of citizens, the all-island economy and the Good Friday Agreement itself became the daily business of political, economic and civic spheres after 2016.

In 2017 the late Martin McGuinness was forced to resign and collapse the Executive under the pressure of DUP hubris and the continued denial of rights, and the lack of implementation of agreements. This became a compounding factor in the busyness of defending our citizens. Nearly 20 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement it was clear that nothing could be taken for granted. Without implementation of the agreement to secure the rights of all, and in particular Irish citizens and victims, and without a good faith co-guarantor in London which was consumed with a Brexit that confounded it, the Good Friday Agreement was

under unprecedented pressure, as were Irish citizens living North of the border.

In 2017, then Taoiseach Leo Varadkar spoke to those realities when he said that the Irish government was determined to protect those interests in the Brexit negotiations and pledged that northern nationalists would never again be left behind by an Irish government. For those citizens who had experienced second class status in Belfast, London and Dublin, this was a seismic change in the environment.

Also, in December that year over 200 people in civic nationalism wrote an open letter to An Taoiseach expressing dismay at the implications of Brexit and the lack of implementation of





basic human rights enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement. This was a letter of concern, and an assertion of the confidence of Irish citizenship expressing its rights and expecting their urgent compliance.

With a groundbreaking conference held in Belfast in January 2019 which brought together rights spokespersons and representatives of the main Irish parties on the island, that initiative developed into a progressive and forward-thinking conversation on constitutional change, and the group Ireland's Future was formally formed. With the pandemic came the unexpected, and unlikely, opportunity to develop the constitutional conversation using webinars that reached across the island and internationally, and thousands upon thousands of new people engaged in the conversation. It moved rapidly from the minutiae of the "Northern Ireland Protocol" and its implementation, and into questions of how to build a new Ireland for all. With experts on economics, health, community development, human rights law and so much more writing and expressing views on this conversation, Ireland's Future became a meaningful crucible of discussion for the wider acceleration towards constitutional change.

At the heart of that discussion was the Good Friday Agreement and relationship building. While the discussions in 2017 may have concentrated on the protection of Irish citizens in the Brexit negotiations the term "civic nationalism" gained much currency and by the summer of 2020 it was clear that this had become a discussion involving all citizens, from all backgrounds, many of whom were culturally British or unionist. The webinar "A Warm House for All" was by far the

most watched webinar as BBC presenter Andrea Catherwood interviewed Baptist Minister Karen Sethuraman, Alliance MLA Trevor Lunn, trade unionist Mark Langhammer, former British soldier Glenn Bradley and Impartial Reporter editor Denzil McDaniel. Irish and British citizens on this island were now involved in a 21st century Irish constitutional conversation. Since then, the matter of the future status of this island has become the concentrated work of professionals, academics, communities and the political class up and down this island. Sinn Féin and the SDLP has initiated meaningful assemblies and dialogues on a United Ireland and a Shared Ireland. It is the matter of our time. And a border poll is just a matter of time.

The Shared Island Unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin is an example of the efforts to build understanding and relationships in the shifting constitutional environment and provide substantial money towards infrastructure of the entire island. This development can only be viewed through the lens of the acceptance of increased responsibility for the future of the entire island, and early preparation for change. In July this year the Good Friday Implementation Committee, a cross party and cross jurisdictional committee, ably chaired by Fine Gael TD Fergus O'Dowd, reported on its findings after three years of research and evidence gathering on the constitutional question. Its recommendations are nothing short of groundbreaking. It recommended that the Irish government must begin immediate and extensive preparation for constitutional change. At a time when everything feels unprecedented this set the stage for the



implementation of the Border Poll element of the Good Friday Agreement for the incoming Dáil. Following on from this comments by Leo Varadkar TD in Belfast that no matter which parties make up that government, "what we'll see is a long-standing aspiration towards unification become a political objective" were widely welcomed. Mr. Varadkar explained that this meant "actively working towards it, preparing the ground for it, for the financial implications, talking about the model of the new Constitution and what it might look like". That these comments were made at an Ireland's







‘The question of Ireland is a question of democracy’

- Diane Abbott MP



**D**iane Abbott MP was in Belfast in August to address the annual Féile an Phobail. The former Shadow Home Secretary sits today as the ‘Mother of the House’ in the Westminster Parliament, having been returned to serve the people of Hackney North and Stoke Newington on ten occasions.

As she travelled to Belfast, she was joined by **Joe Dwyer** of Sinn Féin’s London Office who sat down with the veteran Labour politician to reflect on her years of political activism and long-standing support for the cause of Irish unity.

**Joe Dwyer:** Obviously, many Irish emigrants and many West Indians in the 1950s settled in West London; you grew-up in Paddington, which at that time was a melting pot of many of these newly arrived communities. This was also a time of hostility, suspicion, and outright racism – we cannot forget that “No Blacks, No Dogs, No Irish” was a common enough sign in the windows of lodgings. Do you think that growing up in such a climate had a formative effect on your later politics?

**Diane Abbott:** I think we are all a product of our environment. The area in Paddington was almost unique at that time in being such a mix of white West Londoners who were still recovering from World War II, the long-established Irish communities were really on the fringes of Kilburn and then the newer arrivals as part of the Windrush Generation. Obviously, Paddington is quite a way from the docks or the coast and what first attracted people from the Caribbean was that landlords would actually take them in, even if the accommodation was sometimes very expensive, small, and poor quality. It was quite an interesting environment because alongside poverty and discrimination there was also solidarity and possibility. But that became a shared experience of those communities, and it certainly seems to produce its share of radicals. Both Mick Lynch and Mick Whelan, who are the general secretaries of the two main rail unions in Britain grew up in Paddington. One of the London branch trade union banners is dedicated to Jim Larkin, so the connection is never forgotten.

**Joe Dwyer:** By the time you’re a young adult and you’re



becoming further politicised – Ireland was increasingly in the headlines and news bulletins. In 1973, you attend Newham College, Cambridge, to study history. It would have been very easy for a young black woman living in Britain to stay quiet when it came to Ireland as an issue. As a young black woman living in Britain, you already had plenty of your own battles to contend with – many people with closer ties to Ireland decided to keep their heads down. Why did you think it was important to take a stand on issues like Ireland?

**Diane Abbott:** For me, the question of Ireland is a question of democracy. No colony is ever a democracy because no-one ever chooses to be invaded, as the whole of Ireland was by Britain. I have always hated injustice and then later I became a socialist. Originally, us socialists were called social democrats because we want democracy throughout the whole of society. That includes national democracy in the form of freedom for the colonies.

In the 1970s there was this terrible conflict and events that echoed around the world, such as Bloody Sunday. I felt that I had to try to understand this conflict which included, among other things, British soldiers shooting unarmed civilians on the street. And I was not alone. A small minority emerged in Britain who questioned or opposed Britain's role in Ireland. Now, of course, the issue of democracy is front and centre. There is a pathway to a United Ireland if the people of Northern Ireland decide that is their will.

**Joe Dwyer:** As the decade progressed, you found yourself working at the National Council for Civil Liberties. This was a time of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and multiple miscarriages of justice; the Guilford Four, Birmingham Six and so on. Quite memorably, Gerry Adams visited Brixton in the early 1980s, and compared how similar it was for the working-class of Brixton and the working-class of Belfast – you had communities that were first criminalised, and then consequently over-policed, and then you get a vicious circle that embeds itself quite stubbornly. We see it today with the vilification of the Muslim community. What lessons are there to be learnt from that time, in terms of fighting back and standing up for marginalised communities and their rights, often against the State itself?

**Diane Abbott:** I think we have to accept that Britain frequently adjusts to change but it does so in a wrenching way. History tells us there were 'race riots' in Notting Hill in the 1950s and 1960s. That is not really true. They were attempted pogroms to drive out Caribbean people from the area. My family, and specifically me, were saved from one by my Irish 'Uncle Jimmy' who lived in the flat downstairs. They turned to extreme violence just because some of their neighbours were now Black.

When Thatcher launched her attack on society and her attacks on young people in particular, there were riots in most of the major English cities. What we saw was a conscious re-import of pervasive and brutal policing techniques that had been imposed on the Irish then being used on British youth and later in strikes

Anyone who genuinely wants peace will know that you have to talk to all the representatives of the Palestinian people and address all the injustices against them. Everything else is just play-acting, fake concern because politicians know how unpopular the Israeli carnage is.

such dialogue inevitable? Essentially, what does it take to unlock such intractable conflict?

**Diane Abbott:** Well Ken was right on Ireland, as he was right on so much else. We were called the "loony left" for talking to Sinn Féin, for advocating women's rights, for Black people's rights as citizens, and for saying that lesbians and gays should not be discriminated against. But we were right. Anyone who genuinely wants peace will know that you have to talk to all the representatives of the Palestinian people and address all the injustices against them. Everything else is just play-acting, fake concern because politicians know how unpopular the Israeli carnage is. And you have to address all the justified grievances, otherwise new forces will arise to express those grievances.

This has actually been the history of all those who tried to deny Palestinian rights. There is only one alternative to broad, comprehensive peace talks, which is Netanyahu's policy of genocide. He wants to eliminate the problem by eliminating the Palestinians. It is one of the greatest scandals of my lifetime that Western governments have allowed this to take place. Any US President could end this overnight with a single phone call, just telling the Israeli government there will be no more hand-outs and no more weapons. That is what is needed to force Israel into genuine talks.

**Joe Dwyer:** Famously, you were the first black woman elected to the Westminster Parliament. Now, if you look at Leinster House in Dublin or the Assembly in Belfast – our elected representatives might be less male, they might be less stale, but they're still very pale. How should political parties redress this? There's obviously a part of the Irish nation that is going under-represented in our political chambers and that can't be good for democracy.

**Diane Abbott:** Some time ago I learnt of the

In that sense, Ireland has often been used a testing-ground for what the armed parts of the state can do in Britain. The idea that you can police your way out of these upheavals is false, but that is the stock response. It is a police mentality. But history shows that political solutions are required.

Some time ago I learnt of the expression 'the new Irish', which I think is a great expression for welcoming immigration. Migration adds to prosperity, to diversity and enriches the culture.



expression 'the new Irish', which I think is a great expression for welcoming immigration. Migration adds to prosperity, to diversity and enriches the culture. When there is a housing shortage, or pressure on public services this is always and everywhere caused by politicians, never the migrants, who come to build new homes, or work as nurses and truck drivers. So, the first issue is to get the politics right. And then, listen to the migrants and their communities. We all have so much to learn from each other, and it really is stupid not to listen and learn. Unfortunately, in my experience you have to battle to make yourself heard. But I hope Ireland will not repeat Britain's mistakes in that regard.

**Joe Dwyer:** *You're obviously someone who's never shied away from being a thorn in the side of the establishment. We know today that you were spied on as part of the 'Spy cops' scandal. We know that your colleague Bernie Grant, another friend of Ireland, was too. In an Irish context, the last Tory government had its Legacy Act which seeks to sweep the violent acts of the British state under the rug entirely. We welcome that this current Labour Government is committed to repealing that act – although we wait to see their proposals – but do you think we'll ever truly find out what the British Security Services are doing in the name of the British public?*

**Diane Abbott:** One of Britain's former colonies was Kenya.

There was a huge uprising against British rule and it was suppressed by mass killings, mass imprisonment without trial, torture, rape and other atrocities. Over many decades the authorities simply denied this ever happened. But records were kept and so there was a denial that the documentation existed. Until one day there was no denial, when in 2011 a British civil servant refused to commit perjury and the state was forced to disclose that a British country house was full of the documents.

The Kenyan victims of terrible atrocities won their High Court case and now historians try to battle the authorities for access to the documents. It is human nature to cover up crimes, and the greater the crimes the greater the cover-up. But the heroines and heroes and the Kenyan struggle show it can be done.

**Joe Dwyer:** *After the last election, you became "Mother of the House of Commons". You have been a Member of Parliament for 37 years, since 1987. Over that time, you have seen momentous changes. The Berlin Wall fell. Apartheid South Africa collapsed and democracy was established. Closer to home there were big constitutional tests, the Scottish independence referendum and Britain exiting the European Union. Many things that were once thought to be unimaginable, and yet suddenly came to pass – often quicker and more unexpectedly than anyone envisaged. So, the big question... do you think you will see a United Ireland – do you think it will be in your political lifetime? And do you hope to see it?*

**Diane Abbott:** Yes, we have all seen some momentous changes, not all of them positive. I don't have a crystal ball and many of your readers will be far more expert than me on Irish politics. But I am very much in favour of a United Ireland, really for reasons of democracy as I mentioned earlier. The economic outlook is much brighter for Ireland than Britain, especially after Brexit. So that clearly favours reunification. There is also a further reason, which is about British democracy. Colonial powers are never democratic by their nature. They are overly secretive. They have an over-mighty state and highly unaccountable security services. Political parties draw on the

I am very much in favour of a United Ireland, really for reasons of democracy as I mentioned earlier. The economic outlook is much brighter for Ireland than Britain, especially after Brexit. So that clearly favours reunification.



well of reaction in the colony itself, as traditionally the Tories in particular have openly done on many occasions. So, actually, there is a selfish and strategic interest for all progressive forces in Britain that Ireland is reunited and Britain withdraws.

**Joe Dwyer:** *Lastly, now is arguably a difficult juncture for the left across Europe and globally. What gives you hope for the next generation of political activists?*

**Diane Abbott:** I would be a bit more hopeful. In the Global South generally, with a few hiccups, many developments are very positive, and co-operation and development is the dominant theme. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said in the leading Western countries. But even here, there are positive signs. In France, the left beat back the far-right in the legislative elections, while the centre pursuing a right-wing agenda was shredded. And of course, Sinn Féin is now established as the leading party across Ireland. Hopefully, we will see much more of this in the period ahead. None of it will be easy, but that is the reason it is called the struggle.



# Belfast Conference on Economic Benefits of Irish Unity

*by Conor Murphy*

**S**inn Féin's Commission on the Future of Ireland returned to Belfast's Europa Hotel in the summer to host a discussion on Irish unity and the all island economy. The event was independently chaired by Cathy Gormley-Heenan, Professor of Politics at the Ulster University and former member of the north's Independent Fiscal Commission.

The panel for the discussion consisted of Sinn Féin's senior finance spokespersons Pearse Doherty TD, Caoimhe Archibald MLA and Conor Murphy MLA.

Speaking following the event Conor Murphy said,

"The scale of discussion around constitutional change has never been higher, it's now a mainstream topic of conversation among citizens. As that conversation deepens, people are increasingly questioning what Irish unity might mean for our island economy and for their own financial situation.

In the past civic and business leaders such as Sir George Quigley, a Presbyterian, argued that regardless of how Ireland was governed, it made sense for such a small island to operate as a single economic unit. I believe that this can only be properly realized when economic decisions that affect this island are made by people here and not by the political class in Britain, many of whom have never set foot in Ireland. London will always rule in London's interest, we need to rule ourselves in our own interests. As a result of membership of the EU single market and the cross-border institutions established by the Good Friday Agreement, all-Ireland trade has been developing for decades. It has been turbo charged by Brexit and shows no signs of diminishing.

However, with the North tied to Britain's economic model and its problems of low productivity and low growth, for many years economic performance in the South has surpassed that of the North.





In this context it is apparent that being tied to Britain does not deliver a strong economy in the North. Modelling by the eminent Professor Kurt Hubner shows that the economic boost delivered by unity would quickly eliminate the north's subvention, which is often cited as a barrier to reunification.

Professor John Doyle of Dublin City University has published quite extensively on the subvention. He also states that, in reality, the low level of the subvention, when it is properly calculated, means that the economic opportunities provided by reunification outweigh the North's fiscal deficit.

Irish unity has become even more economically necessary as a result of the British Government's decision to leave the EU, the largest market in the world, removing the north against the expressed wishes of the electorate.

Thankfully the protocol protects the all-Ireland economy by keeping the whole of the island in the EU market for goods. Cross-border trade is surging, and now there is a degree of certainty on our trading arrangements, it is time to build upon this success.

However, we must go further. The best economic scenario would be a reunified all-Ireland economy which combines the best of the south and the best of the north. That is where the conversation needs to go.

The Irish Government must begin to plan and prepare for constitutional change. It should establish an all island Citizens' Assembly and Oireachtas committee to discuss Irish unity and bring forward a detailed plan and program of work. This should include publishing an economic plan for unity."

A detailed report from 'Irish Unity & the all Island Economy' can be accessed here: [ECONOMY\\_REPORT\\_FINAL.pdf](#) ([sinnfein.ie](http://sinnfein.ie))

[Economy\\_REPORT\\_GAEILGE\\_FINAL.pdf](#) ([sinnfein.ie](http://sinnfein.ie))



Footage from the event can be viewed here:

[Irish Unity and the All Island Economy - A Major Debate and Discussion](#) ([youtube.com](http://youtube.com))





# COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF IRELAND

# AN COIMISIÚN UM THODHCHAÍ NA hÉIREANN

## update *by Grace McDermott*

In July 2022, Sinn Féin established the Commission on the Future of Ireland to undertake a broad and deep consultation with people all across the island and beyond on our shared future. Chaired by Declan Kearney, with Lynn Boylan as vice chair, the Commission has held 17 public events to date. There have been 9 People's Assemblies and 8 sectoral assemblies.

Since the last edition of Éire Nua a People's Assembly was held in Lurgan.

The Lurgan People's Assembly was a great success. The contributions ranged across the imperative of an all-island economy; the advantages of building a single all-island health service; the importance of education; workers rights; climate change; engaging with the Protestant/unionist people, and the importance of creating a new Ireland that embraces everyone on the basis of equality and respect. A report of the event was published which can be accessed here:

[https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/LURGAN\\_REPORT\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/LURGAN_REPORT_FINAL.pdf)

[https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/LURGAN\\_REPORT\\_GAEILGE.pdf](https://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2024/LURGAN_REPORT_GAEILGE.pdf)

Footage can also be found on YouTube:

*People's Assembly on the Future of*

### *Ireland held in Lurgan - YouTube*

Following the People's Assembly two sectoral events were hosted.

'Irish Unity & the All Island Economy' was hosted in the Europa Hotel, Belfast on Friday 28th June. The discussion was hosted by Independent Chairperson Cathy Gormley Heenan (Professor of Politics and Public Policy & University of Ulster Provost) and the panel included Sinn Féin's economic and finance spokespersons Pearse Doherty TD, Caoimhe Archibald MLA & Conor Murphy MLA. Catch up on footage from the event and read the detailed report at the links below :

*Irish Unity and the All Island Economy - A Major Debate and Discussion (youtube.com) ECONOMY\_REPORT\_FINAL.pdf (sinnfein.ie)*



'Rural Communities in a New Ireland' was hosted at this year's National Ploughing Championships in Laois. This event was an opportunity to discuss the benefits of Irish Unity for rural communities. Issues raised on the day included access to the EU market, protection of Gaeltacht communities, cost of living and the importance of rural women being given their say in matters relating to the future. The report of this event will be launched soon.



### SÁBHÁIL AN DÁTA

### SAVE THE DATE | SÁBHÁIL AN DÁTA



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OSTÁN CHATHAIR ARD MHACHA  
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Arna óstáil ag Coimisiún um Thodhchaí na hÉireann Sinn Féin

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**TUESDAY 29TH OCTOBER 2024  
ARMAGH CITY HOTEL  
7PM**

HOSTED BY SINN FÉIN'S COMMISSION  
ON THE FUTURE OF IRELAND

**Sinn Féin**  
[www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland](http://www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland)

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### ARMAGH PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

The Armagh People's Assembly has been scheduled to take place in the Armagh City Hotel on Tuesday 29th October at 7pm. More details and the link to register to attend will be released soon.



# Ní uasal aon uasal ach sinne bheith íseal – éirímis!

Róisín  
 Nic Liam

I Lúnasa na bliana 1969 a labhair an tÓglach Máirtín Ó Cadhain ar “Athghabháil na hÉireann, an Réabhlóid, réabhlóid intinne agus réabhlóid anama, réabhlóid i gcúrsaí maoinne, seilbhe agus maireachtála, maireachtáil mar Ghaeil leis na rudaí is dual dúinn mar Ghaeil”. Síneadh is ea an fhealsúnacht chéanna, dar ndóigh, ar an aisling a leagadh amach d’Éirinn i bhforógra 1916 agus arís i gClár Oibre Poblacánaighe 1919. Ag treabhadh an ghoirt chéanna a bhíonn Poblachtánaigh ár linne agus sinn ag saothrú i dtreo Éireann Aontaithe. Slabhra neamhbhriste is ea é. Leathchéad bliain i ndiaidh na cainte úd agus sinn ag tógáil Éireann nua, mar sin, níor mhiste dúinn filleadh ar a raibh le rá ag an gCadhach. Eisean ba chumhachtaí a nasc ceist na teanga le ceist na haicme, ag áiteamh gurb í “lucht labhartha na Gaeilge sa nGaeltacht an aicme is direoile agus is buailte den mhuintir seo againn in Éirinn.” I bhfocail eile, “b’ionann na boicht agus lucht na Gaeilge” agus ba sa Ghaeltacht ba mhó a shonraítí an t-idirdhealú aicmeach. Ní chuirfí an méid sin i gceart dar

le hÓ Cadhain nó go dtabharfaí “seilbh na hÉireann agus a cuid maoinne uilig [...] ar ais do mhuintir na hÉireann.” Cháin sé anuas air sin “na Petie O’Sheas, na Fullers agus óstáin na Rosa” as “coga aicmíocht” a fhógairt ar mhuintir na Gaeltachta. Óstlannaithe agus lucht gnó Gallda ab ea na dreamanna céanna, dar leis, a bhí “[ag] feidhmiú go nimhe neánta ó lá go lá agus ó bhliain go bliain in aghaidh an aicme íochtair agus a gcultúir”, mar is dual don ardaicme ar fud an domhain. D’impigh sé ar mhuintir na hÉireann dá bharr “féachaint chuige ar ais nó ar éigin nach ndéanfar aon ostáin [sic] eile sa nGaeltacht nach i seilbh na ndaoine a bhéas agus nach ndéanfar ann ach óstáin Ghaelach[a] feasta.” Cad a déarfadh an Cadhnach le cruth comhaimseartha na Gaeltachta agus an t-idirdhealú aicmeach inti inniu, más ea? Ba shuarach an mhaise dó é líon na dtithe samhraidh folmha a fheiscint; tithe breátha móra i seilbh lucht rachmais na Galltachta agus iad á dtréigean ar a chaoithiúlacht acu, fad is atá cead pleanála agus a gceart maireachtaint ar a dtalamh féin á shéanadh ar mhuintir na

Gaeltachta. Cad a déarfadh sé le polasaithe nualioibrálacha tithíochta Fhine Gael agus Fhianna Fáil, a thugann tús áite do lucht AirBnB agus turasóirí thar mhuintir na háite, agus a thachtann an Ghaeltacht dá bharr? Is dócha go meabhródh Ó Cadhain dúinn gur i bhfad ó shin a d’fhógair sé “nach bhfuil i ndán don Ghaeilge faoi réim Fhianna Fáil ach an bás.” Ní gá, áfach, glacadh leis an gcóras mar atá, agus léiríonn na gnéithe is radacaí de stair na gluaiseachta teanga gur féidir gaiscí ón mbonn aníos a bhaint amach, ach saothrú chuige. Cheana féin tá grúpaí feachtasaíochta geall le Bánú agus Todhchaí na Tuaithe á n-eagrú féin ar son na Gaeltachta, agus tá an obair úd le moladh go hard na spéire. Cuimhnimis, áfach, nach leor athrú polasaithe tithíochta, dá fheabhas é, más córas nualioibrálach a bheidh i réim i gcónaí. Athrú claochlaitheach sochaíoch atá de dhíth le fíis athghabhála Uí Chadhain a bhaint amach. “Sé dualgas lucht na Gaeilge a bheith ina sóisialaigh” an port a bhíodh in airde aige agus tá sé thar am dúinn glacadh leis an dualgas úd. Is i dtreise a raghaidh





galldú, bánú agus tráchtearrú na Gaeltachta fé chóras caipitlíoch ar bith eile. Ná saothraímis laistigh de shrianta ár bpobail bhig féin amháin, áfach. Cuimhnímis go bhfuil dúshlán bhreise chomhaimseartha le sárú chomh maith; tá ciníochas binbeach na heite deise ag

dul ó neart go neart agus pobail nua á sceimhleadh fud fad na hÉireann, tá an aeráid agus córais éiceolaíocha mórthimpeall orainn ag cliseadh, agus tá cine á dhíothú sa Phalaistín. Ní cúram dúinn athghabháil na hÉireann agus na Gaeilge amháin, mar sin, ach

athghabháil na daonnachta agus an domhain. Géillimis do gháir an Chadhnaigh más ea, a d'impigh ar na Gaeil a bheith i lár an aonaigh "[san] áit is tréine an dúshlán in aghaidh an rachmais, in aghaidh na héagóra, ar son na bhfann agus na mbocht."

Is minic ráite agam nach luíonn an téarma 'Éire nua' i gceart liom. Comrádaí liom, Oisín Ó Síocháin, a thug an lón machnaimh úd dom nuair a d'áitigh sé go bhfuil Éire chomh sean le Brú na Bóinne, agus nár cheart neamhshuim a dhéanamh d'ársaíocht ár dtíre. Ach caithfidh tódhchaí nua a shamhlú. Chun leas na mboc mór amháin atá an Éire chomhaimseartha. Ní mór dúinn sochaí nua, agus saol nua a shamhlú má táimid le héaló ón tsáinn ina bhfuilimid, agus ní mór dúinn troid go fríochmhar ar a s(h)on. Thug an tÓglach Máirtín Ó Cadhain treoirphlean dúinn amhlaidh a dhéanamh. Fágfar an focal scoir ag an bhfathach fir úd más ea:

"Ní hé amháin gur cóir do lucht na Gaeilge a bheith páirteach i gcoga seo Athghabhála na hÉireann – is é an t-aon rud é ar fiú a bheith páirteach ann [...] – ach is é ár ndualgas é a bheith dhá chinnireacht agus dhá threorú. Bíodh an Ghaeilge ag stiúra [sic] na réabhlóide, ar an gcaoi seo bíodh an Ghaeilge ar na smaointí is forásaí in Éirinn: is ionann sin agus slánú na Gaeilge. 'Sí an Ghaeilge Athghabháil na hÉireann agus is í athghabháil na hÉireann slánú na Gaeilge. 'Sí teanga na muintire a shlánós an mhuintir."

# “Dúirt Siad”

These quotes are drawn from the Ireland's Future event held in the SSE Arena in Belfast in June 2024

Sinn Féin exists to achieve Irish reunification. It is the reason why I stand for election.

***Uachtarán Shinn Féin***

***Mary Lou McDonald TD***

There is no contradiction between working the power sharing institutions while also advocating for constitutional change.

***Michelle O'Neill, First Minister***

I am interested in the unification of our country. It is something I believe in.

When the referendum comes I want to advocate for it; to campaign for it. In the next government we need to see a long-standing aspiration become a political objective. And the government needs to drive the objective forward.

***Leo Varadkar TD***

I am glad to be in a city that is playing its part in driving a conversation we all need to have about the future constitutional arrangements that its people will choose in the coming years. And when it comes the decision making fora of our organisation will have a role in articulating a position on behalf of a membership that exceeds 6000,000.

***Jarlath Burns, President Cumann  
Lúthchleas Gael***

I have consistently viewed partition as failing the people of Ireland. The primary focus for us is the unity of Ireland. The next government in Dublin needs to have a Department of Unification.

***Jim O'Callaghan TD***

We have to build on the Good Friday Agreement and the Shared Island Unit.

We need to develop the North/South bodies and the North West. We need all-Ireland strategies for health, education and cancer.

***Fergus O'Dowd TD***

We want to see a united Ireland to ensure a new 32 county social democratic republic. This can be achieved through the adoption of a Green Paper and White Paper; the formation of Citizens Assemblies or Consultative Forums followed by a unity referendum.

***Ivana Bacik TD, Leader of the  
Irish Labour Party***

The SDLP set up a New Ireland Commission a few years ago. We have been working quietly meeting people and debating a new Ireland. We are guided by principles: reconciliation, pluralism, outward looking and hope.

***Clare Hanna MP, Leader of the SDLP***



The debate on the constitutional future should be based on research on a non prejudicial outcome. We are not so far apart on the constitutional question. By working together and listening to each other about every day issues we can have a debate.

***Nuala McAllister MLA***

People are 'border curious'. What is the proposition? What type of new Ireland is it?

Is it modern, pluralist, a diverse state.

***Malachy O Hara, Green Party leader and Senator***

Unionists are on a journey. We need to talk to each other as we think things through. To republicans I say engage with loyalists with Protestants. Change is going to happen. I used the word 'inevitable' about a new Ireland and I've been caught on that since but it is on the way at some stage in the future.

***Wallace Thompson founding member of the DUP***

For some time I have been saying that I detected a change in attitude of English people particularly who have no emotional attachment of Northern Ireland.

Relationships change. And relationships have changed between England and Northern Ireland. I am really glad to hear people say 'we need to spell out what exactly we are talking about here'. I think that is absolutely right and extremely important. If you don't spell it out what it is people, will be suspicious of it because of Brexit.

***John Alderdice, former Alliance Party leader***

Reconciliation is important. The practice of it. The work of it will continue. It is ongoing. Whatever our future looks like reconciliation is a driving force for a better tomorrow.

***Reverend Karen Sethuraman***

We passed a motion to support a 32 county Irish republic. We believe in a new republic with a new health service and a new education system. We support a social democratic republic.

***Gary Gannon TD***

I will vote for whatever option I believe promises the best future for our children and grandchildren. It won't matter the slightest to me if that future lies within a new Ireland or a UK constitutional framework. Reconciliation is absolutely vital. Reconciliation is at the core of the Good Friday Agreement. No one on this island can reduce this period in our history to a zero sum enterprise where one side wins and the other side loses. Because the reality is either we all win or we all lose.

***David Adams former loyalist leader***

For a lot of people, unification is an aspiration, it's an idea. Whereas I think it needs to become an objective for the next government in Ireland, no matter who's in that government. I'm not saying it should just be in the Fine Gael manifesto, I'm saying that it should be in the manifesto of all the parties...

***Leo Varadkar, Irish Times 26 Sept 24***







# Féile an Phobail highlights Irish Unity

*by Jim  
Gibney*

**F**éile an Phobail has become one of the most important events annually for discussion and debate on the issue of Irish Unity. It's a summer school par excellence.

From its formation in 1988, in the midst of the conflict, Féile has been and is, the place where people go to air their views on a variety of pertinent topics related to the peace process, constitutional change and societal issues affecting the quality of people's lives.

This year, most of the debates took place in the newly refurbished St. Mary's University College, on the Falls Road. The face-lift added to the overall positive experience for those attending the debates and discussions and over 80 events helped shape Féile's world in the ten days of the summer school. The centre piece of the experience is the transformed assembly hall- now the main auditorium which holds an audience of 400. The horror of Israel's genocidal assault on the Palestinian people was an ever present constant in all our thoughts throughout Féile. The appalling human cost of Israel's apartheid regime was debated in detail at five separate events, including at the annual Palestine Day. Ireland's 19th century genocide An Gorta Mór, the great hunger, was also discussed.

The political mood at the debates reflected the broad political temperature across the island about future constitutional change. The immediate political

context for Féile was the outstanding Westminster election result in July for Sinn Féin; the very impressive Ireland's Future meeting at the SSE Arena in Belfast, and the comments from former Taoiseach Leo Varadkar which amounted to a call on the incoming Irish government to lead the next stage of the process for constitutional change.

In addition, First Minister Michelle O' Neill's comments that in office she can 'do both', that is work the power-sharing institutions and work to bring about a united Ireland; the powerful and inspiring speech by the President of the GAA, Jarlath Burns, and the comments from DUP founder Wallace Thompson that a new Ireland is coming and encouraging republicans and unionists to engage with each other, helped set a positive tone for the ongoing debate on constitutional change and a united Ireland.

Ireland's constitutional future was the overriding theme of the debates which ranged from the emotional dimension of voting in a referendum on unity - 'will we vote with our heart or the head'; the impact of the result of the next election in the South on Irish Unity; a woman's view on what matters most 'union or unity' ; peace building by women; a cold place for women in the North at the state's





*Ireland's  
constitutional  
future was the  
overriding theme  
of the debates*

...

formation and a tribute to Inez Mc Cormack, a feminist and trail-blazing leader of the trade union movement; workers' rights now and in a future united Ireland; the economics of Irish Unity and throughout all of these debates unionists participated.

While others marked the 50th anniversary of the UWC Strike in the Shankill Road Library; the history of Presbyterians in West Belfast was discussed and two former Presbyterian Moderators spoke of being born and growing up on the 'wrong side of the border' at partition. Linda and Brian Ervine provided a humorous and serious insight into unionists and Protestants.

Also discussed were the consequences of partition: the Irish Civil War; the impact of the Boundary Commission; pogroms; war, ceasefires and peace; legacy and truth, policing and the colourful history of wall murals.

The lives and deaths of Michael Gaughan and Frank Stagg were entwined in a presentation to mark the 50th anniversary of Michael Gaughan's death on hunger strike in June 1974; Frank Stagg died in February 1976.

Féile's headline events included: 'Rita - A Memoire', a biography about republican leader, Rita O Hare; Mick Lynch the charismatic trade union leader, Blinne Ni Ghralaigh, the world renowned Irish barrister who presented to the International Court of Justice, South Africa's genocide action against Israel; Dianne Abbot MP spoke on many topics including racism and Jeremy Corbyn MP and Len McCloskey spoke about their love of poetry and new book, 'Poetry for the Many'.

And many packed into the new auditorium to listen to West Belfast Talks Back with the local MP Paul Maskey sharing the platform with journalists Amanda Ferguson, Allison Morris and barrister Joe Brolly and chaired by RTE journalist Vincent Kearney.

The North's Minister for Finance, Caoimhe Archibald launched Fobairt Feirste's five-year strategic plan for the future development of the Gaeltacht Quarter in west Belfast with several other Irish language events also on Féile's clár.

The rights of nature in the Irish constitution; the environmental crisis in Lough Neagh; the race to get a climate bill for the north; climate justice now and the connection between the Irish language, land and culture provided a much-needed discussion about the threat to earth by climate warming.

Campaigning for the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community over the last 25 years and hidden same-sex relationships among revolutionary women in early 20th century Ireland reminded us of the progress that has been made over the last century. And this year's Féile also reminded us of the importance of continuing to campaign for progress and to collaborate with each other to bring that progress about.

The Féile an Phobail summer school is an amazing experience. Over the ten days and the 84 debates thousands participated. It was at all times respectful, with panellists and the audiences engaging positively. Each year this part Féile is getting bigger with more debates – and bigger audiences. So if you like thoughtful, enjoyable and relevant debates make plans now to come to next years Féile an Phobail.



# *The Commission on the Future of Ireland:*

# *Our chance to engage is now*

*by Judge  
Michael C. Mentel*



Mark Guilfoyle,  
President Friends  
of Sinn Féin

**U**achtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald announced in July of 2022 that first People's Assembly, organised by the newly established Commission on the Future of Ireland, would be held in October in Belfast. Since then 17 such events have been held across the island of Ireland.

President McDonald stated in her announcement that “this is an opportunity for citizens to have their say on the future of Ireland; our economy, our constitutional arrangements; political and democratic structures and governance; the role of the Irish government; [and] the rights and equality agenda...” in addition to other important considerations such as health care and pensions. Mary Lou McDonald added that the “Commission on the Future of Ireland is also an opportunity for alternative proposals to be presented by those with different visions of Ireland.”

Now, the Friends of Sinn Féin in the USA and Canada are planning a significant series of similar Commission style events giving the



Irish diaspora in the United States and Canada the opportunity to voice their unique views and perspectives on the future of a new United Ireland.

The North America events will be held in cities throughout the United States. They are intended to provide an opportunity for the Irish diaspora to offer their perspectives on a new Ireland. During a conversation with Greg O'Loughlin, the Executive Director of Friends of Sinn Féin in the United States, he emphasized that the Assemblies are not focused on complex Irish constitutional provisions or policy issues, nor are attendees expected to delve into such complex issues. The goal of the assemblies in the USA and Canada is to obtain their unique viewpoints and to find out how they envision a new Ireland. These viewpoints for a new Ireland are valuable and it is important that they are provided with a means to give voice to them.

To be clear, the People's Assemblies are not intended to be a simple get together of people from the Irish diaspora for a feel good moment. The Assemblies will be conducting real work. They are a component part of a planning process in the preparation for the unification of Ireland; and to that end attendees should feel good about their participation. The initial input from these Assemblies is just the beginning. The intention is to engage with the diaspora on a regular basis following the initial Assembly session.

The likelihood of a border poll on Irish reunification within the next six years is real. "We've run the numbers, and it is adding up to a vote in 2030 that will create a United Ireland" declared Mary Lou McDonald during the Irish Unity summit in New York City earlier this year. She added, "... we need to rally the United States and Canada to the reunification agenda. We are hitting a reset button here. It is part of the same journey, but it has a different focus now. There will be a new US President elected in November. We have to make Irish Unity part of the White House agenda moving forward."

Declan Kearney, Sinn Féin MLA and Chair of the Commission on the Future of Ireland, shares President McDonald's viewpoint. Mr. Kearney has stated that, "the transition towards constitutional change and a new national, democratic, framework of governance in Ireland needs to be carefully planned and resourced... Irish unity has become the defining issue for our generation. The debate on future constitutional change is now centre stage... There is a new future for Ireland waiting to be authored. One which is positive, progressive, inclusive, anti-sectarian, and multicultural. We can do this together. But we need to prepare and plan."

Dr. Brendan O'Leary, Political Science Professor at the University of Pennsylvania, speaking at the Irish Unity Summit in New York earlier this year, opined that political support for unification is growing albeit such support would not exist today.

The necessity of addressing multifaceted cultural, economic, and governing issues must be resolved if voters in Ireland are to be made comfortable with unification. A critical factor to the realization of unification is the involvement of the United States and the Irish diaspora. Summit presenters in New York emphasized that major support from the United States is vital to making any unification plan workable.

Sinn Féin is the largest party on the island of Ireland, and among that growing support are those who are 30 years old and younger. Many of these young women and men are disenchanted with Brexit and the North's separation from the European Union. Many across the island are looking for a change economically, politically, and multi-culturally. The perspectives of these young women and men are ones that will be addressed in the planning initiative on Irish unification. The Irish diaspora in the United States and Canada can offer perspectives on these same issues. Our perspectives offered at the Assemblies will fit hand in glove with the Assembly work conducted in Ireland. One such example is economics. While Ireland must internally address certain economic challenges when unification occurs, the viewpoints from the Irish diaspora could provide perspectives on how we see our governments working with Ireland. There are multiple issues open for discussion that will mutually coincide with the Assembly discussions both here and in Ireland.

The planning process for a United Ireland is now upon us. The momentum for unification in Ireland is growing, making a border poll on the question inevitable. Friends of Sinn Féin in the USA and Canada giving the Irish diaspora the opportunity and privilege to participate in the discussion and planning for a United Ireland. Each of us should take this opportunity to participate in the People's Assembly and provide our perspectives for the future of Ireland.

Future events:

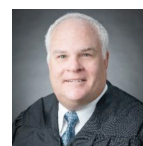
Friends of Sinn Féin will host a People's Assembly in Cleveland, Ohio on Tuesday, October 8th which is to be addressed by Dáire Hughes MP.

This will be followed closely by another event in Columbus, Ohio on October 10th which will be addressed by North America & Canada representative Ciaran Quinn.

Both speakers will provide a briefing on the party's work to date towards Irish reunification and outline the next steps and how the diaspora can contribute to these efforts. This will be followed by a discussion with the audience.

Information, dates, and tickets for events in New York, DC, New England, Nashville, and other cities will be released soon.

**Judge Michael C. Mentel is the Presiding Judge on the Ohio Court of Appeals for the Tenth District**





# A United Ireland: The environmental imperative for transformation



In the wake of escalating ecological crises, Ireland stands as a stark example of environmental distress. Once a land rich in Atlantic rainforest and biodiversity, it now ranks among Europe's most ecologically depleted regions. This sobering reality challenges us United Irishers to confront a critical question: How can Ireland's constitutional future disentangle us from our current ecological trajectory? Reunification offers an opportunity to take the measures that we need to ensure a sustainable future. A United Ireland offers a new beginning, and if the opportunity is seized, it could mean a wider range of opportunities become available than has been the case in the past. Before discussing those, it is worth examining why the current dominant approach is failing so miserably.

*by Lynn  
Boylan MEP*



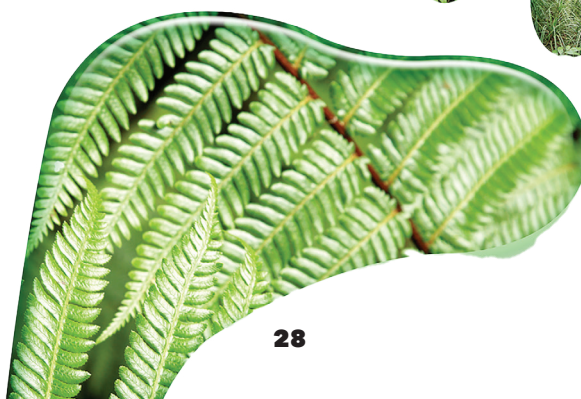
A United Ireland would  
give us the ability to  
take the bolder actions  
necessary to address  
ecological catastrophe  
which are currently  
impossible under  
partition.

## Problems with mainstream environmentalism

The status quo is dominated by a strain of mainstream environmentalism sometimes called green liberalism. Like the name would suggest, it's an ideology which sees problems as fundamentally problems with the market. Where neo-liberal economists recommend austerity as the cure to the economy's ills, green liberals prescribe 'eco-austerity'. Eco-austerity, like austerity, entails cutting back and reducing public support for personal consumption while private consumption of industry is encouraged unabated. The preferred mechanisms to achieve this are market mechanisms which inherently favour the rich.

As an example of eco-austerity, take Eamon Ryan's response to the economic crisis in 2009. Unemployment was through the roof and prices of electricity were rising. As a result, households were

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We don't need to reinvent  
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struggling to pay bills. The government maintained that because they were “living beyond their means”, they needed to tighten their belts: supports for households would have to be cut back and extra charges would be lobbed on bills. Additionally, a carbon tax would be imposed to further reduce personal consumption, particularly consumption by the least well off. Meanwhile, the government sold off state-owned electricity power stations and used the proceeds not to support households but to subsidise the cost of electricity for private industry. At the same time, they charged households a secret levy – the Large Energy User Rebalancing Subvention – which would further subsidise industry’s electricity at the expense of households in perpetuity.

The contradiction of this approach sums up why we are failing to meet so many of our environmental targets. On the one hand, we have a government encouraging the intensification of the extractive, post-colonial economy by sowing the seeds for the invasion of data centres through subsidised electricity and thereby driving up our emissions, while on the other, as an effort to resolve environmental problems through carbon tax it drives up the cost of energy for households. We’re still dealing with the results: entrenched corporate consumption baying for evermore public subsidisation, a portion of the public who are cynical and distrustful of environmental measures in general by association, all the while, a reactionary right is resurgent and happy to make political capital off the mess while offering no solutions.

It is clear that we need a new approach to environmental problems.

## Reunification: a fresh start

What we need is transformational change: a progressive antidote to the ills of green, liberal environmentalism. We need a future in which people’s lives are improved, rather than made harder through measures which improve the environment. We don’t need to reinvent the wheel. Straightforward measures such as ample and affordable (or free) public transport, sustainable energy systems that meet people’s needs instead of big corporations, and a sustainable food system are

all implementable if the political will is there. The popular measures could start a virtuous cycle where environment measures would increase owing to increased public support.

Unfortunately, the public debate about the environment rarely strays from framing environmental problems through the lens of eco-austerity. How often is an environmentalist pitted against some stakeholder in a zero-sum game between the stakeholder’s livelihood and a positive environmental outcome? “Tough choices need to be made”, we’re told. “Households will feel the pain”. The ideology of environmentalism-as-cutting back is so embedded, so ubiquitous that in the words of

Margaret Thatcher, There Is No Alternative.

The Unification debate will be an opportunity to break with the dominant green liberal discourse on the environment and instead to look further into the future. It will be an opportunity to imagine

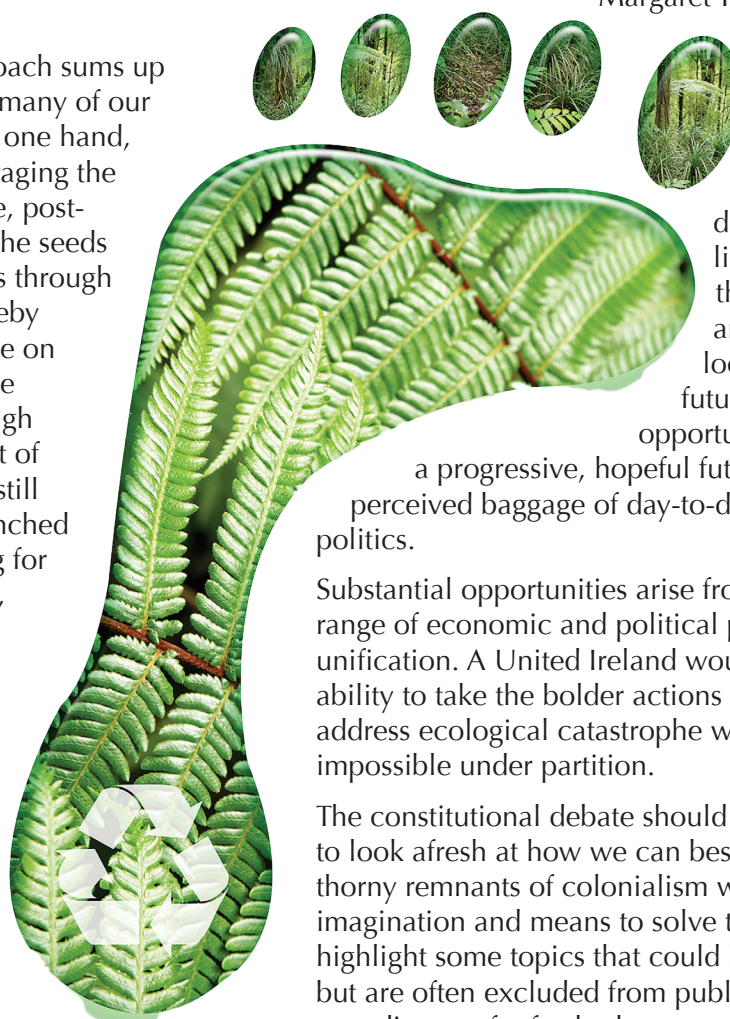
a progressive, hopeful future, without the perceived baggage of day-to-day environmental politics.

Substantial opportunities arise from gaining the full range of economic and political powers through unification. A United Ireland would give us the ability to take the bolder actions necessary to address ecological catastrophe which are currently impossible under partition.

The constitutional debate should be an opportunity to look afresh at how we can best deal with the thorny remnants of colonialism with renewed imagination and means to solve them. Let me highlight some topics that could be put on the table but are often excluded from public discussion for sounding too far-fetched:

## 1. Rethinking Land Ownership and Use

How should we govern ownership, access, and use of Ireland’s land, seabed and airspace? In light of the ecological catastrophe unfolding in Lough Neagh (owned by the Earl of Shaftesbury), the role of ownership in ecological conflict is coming into sharper relief. In the south, Lord Dunsany objected to the path of the Navan railway through his estate. The anti-colonial strain of the environmental movement is alive and engaged in questions of unification and the environment, and new solutions





Reunification offers an opportunity to take the measures that we need to ensure a sustainable future. A United Ireland offers a new beginning, and if the opportunity is seized, it could mean a wider range of opportunities become available than has been the case in the past.

to these questions are being explored. For an example, see the series of articles on the topic including Sean Fearon's 'Reunification – A Roadmap to Eco-Social Transformation On the Island of Ireland'.

## 2. Maximising Natural Resources

Ireland's transition to a green economy could be more effectively managed through unification. Current policies, such as those concerning forestry and wind energy, often prioritise export over local benefits. A United Ireland could better leverage its natural resources for the benefit of its own people, ensuring that environmental and economic policies work in tandem to support sustainable development.

## 3. Constitutional Rights to a Healthy Environment

Globally, there is a growing movement to enshrine environmental rights in constitutions. A United Ireland would have the opportunity to follow this trend by incorporating constitutional rights to a healthy environment in the new entity. This could include the right to clean air, water, and a stable climate, aligning with global efforts to protect both people and nature.

## 4. Addressing climate justice

Finally, the issue of climate justice must be addressed. The wealthy disproportionately contribute to climate change, yet it is often the most vulnerable who suffer the consequences. A United Ireland could explore fairer ways to transition to a green economy, ensuring that the burden of change does not fall unevenly on those least able to bear it, while the spoils of the transition are not hoarded by the few.

## Conclusion

We find ourselves in dire ecological straits

and the current models and tools aren't up to the task. To properly address the ecological crises we face, we have to look to solutions which heretofore would have seemed unthinkable or unfeasible.

But as republicans, this is something we are used to. By integrating progressive environmental policies into the vision for a united Ireland, we can create a future that not only heals our natural environment but also fosters a more equitable society. The opportunity is before us—if we seize it, Ireland could lead the way in crafting a sustainable and just future for all.



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# MAKING THE CASE FOR IRISH UNITY AT THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE



The British Labour Party met in Liverpool this year for its annual party conference. In July the Labour Party moved from the opposition to government benches. Therefore, for the first time in fifteen years, the Labour conference was addressed by sitting British Cabinet Ministers.

On the first evening of conference, Sinn Féin hosted its annual fringe meeting in the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Marking a change from previous year's fringes, there was no top-table panel discussion. Instead, the evening saw an opening keynote address by Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald TD. This was followed by a an 'in conversation...' interview with the journalist and broadcaster Andrea Catherwood.

The meeting was well-attended, with over one-hundred people seated. The assembled audience included sitting Members of Parliament, former-Members of Parliament, Labour Party councillors, conference delegates, trade unionists, and members of the local Liverpool-Irish community.

The Sinn Féin President used the occasion to press for a genuine transformation of British-Irish relations, going way beyond a mere 'reset' back to the status quo. Emphasising the need for future constitutional change, the Sinn Féin leader spelt out, in practical terms, precisely what steps a Sinn Féin-led government in Dublin would take to advance the cause of Irish unification. The address, and subsequent interview, was well-received and generated notable headlines across Ireland and Britain.







**For the interest of our readers, we include an edited version of Mary Lou McDonald's address to the Sinn Féin fringe meeting:**

Friends,

Earlier this year Michelle O'Neill made history when she was elected First Minister of the Northern Executive, the first nationalist to ever hold this post, in a place designed to ensure that this could never happen. The political landscape was to change once again in July when Sinn Féin emerged as the largest party in the Westminster elections, confirming the change underway in Ireland.

At a time of such change, it is both timely and necessary to step up the conversation about the future of Ireland, about how we confidently manage constitutional change, and build the momentum for the achievement of Irish Unity in our time.

This is an important moment in advancing this journey. Ireland's future will be determined by choices made today, by decisions of this generation. The future will be defined by how we rise to the challenges and how we seize the opportunities. We must demonstrate the determination and the ambition to bend the arc of history towards reunification, ending partition.

Transforming British-Irish relations

The relationship between Ireland and Britain is a

complex one. A relationship shaped by colonisation, oppression, occupation, conflict. Thankfully now changed by a transformative peace that once seemed unimaginable.

A relationship where emigration and the search for work formed connections between people over generations tying together real bonds of friendship and family.

The achievement of the Good Friday Agreement was a watershed in our political relationship. Driven by a shared hope for a peaceful future, the agreement forged a new dynamic and a partnership anchored by respect and cooperation...

Both the British and Irish governments have a responsibility to work together for the good of the people as co-guarantors of peace, reconciliation and the realisation of a new future.

It is by working in the spirit of friendship that we will together write a new and successful chapter in British-Irish relations.

A mature conversation on constitutional change

Part of this new chapter must be the realisation that constitutional change in Ireland is coming. I am very aware that this is the subject of genuine conviction and opinions right across Irish society. It also stirs deep emotions for people.

We need a mature and respectful conversation about



constitutional change. It's a conversation that should be approached with optimism, ambition and a real sense of opportunity. The conversation must be inclusive. It must recognise that people hold different and competing views about the future.

I am the leader of Sinn Féin. I am an Irish republican. I see a United Ireland as the very best, most exciting prospect for the future, for nationalists, unionists and everyone else on our small island. The reunification of Ireland presents the single greatest opportunity to unlock the potential of our island, to deliver prosperity for all.

We are living in a time when history will be made by the people. That is why referendums on Irish unity should be held by the end of this decade to allow the people to have their say. The moment will come to name the date but first the British government must make clear its intention to trigger referendum as per the Good Friday Agreement and set out the threshold for the referendum as they see it. No more dodging. Clear honest conversations.

Our countries are each other's nearest neighbourhoods, and good neighbours always want what is best for each other. What is best for Ireland is that Britain ends its involvement in our affairs, and that the people of Ireland finally get to decide our future together.

I believe that is what is best for Britain too. In this democratic conversation, I see every single person who argues for the preservation of the Union with Britain and their British identity as an equal, no caveats or exceptions. Equal.

The New Ireland we seek to build belongs every bit as much to the families of the Shankill as it does to the families of the Falls. Every bit as much to the families of Fermanagh as the families of Dublin, Cork and Galway.

Whether you argue for Irish reunification or for the preservation of the union, the nature and quality of the conversation matters. We must listen to each other, engage with the facts, and resist the urge to be driven

by fear or misinformation as witnesses during Brexit. Let us commit to a conversation that is thoughtful, measured, and above all, respectful.

This dialogue must transcend party politics and focus on what is best for all citizens. We must create spaces where all voices are heard and where no perspective is dismissed out of hand.

Ultimately, it is the people who will decide their future as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement. But it is our responsibility to ensure that this decision is made through an informed and respectful process between both the new Labour Government and the next Irish Government.

If Sinn Féin is given the chance to lead the next government, we will advance this conversation. In government, we will make the reunification of Ireland and its people a key priority.

We will take the following practical steps:

- Establish a Reunification and One Ireland unit within the Department of An Taoiseach.
- Appoint a Minister of State for reunification and One Ireland.
- Produce a Government 'Green Paper' in the first 100 days setting out our vision for a New Ireland.
- Establish a joint Oireachtas Committee on reunification and future constitutional change.
- Begin the necessary planning and preparation by establishing a Citizens' Assembly on our constitutional future.
- We will give MPs from the North of Ireland speaking rights in the Oireachtas.
- And we will commence planning and actively work towards the holding of referendums on Irish Unity by the end of this decade.

Friends.

Generational change is happening in Ireland, and what we do now is what counts. A new and united Ireland and is about everyone. A new and united Ireland is for everyone.

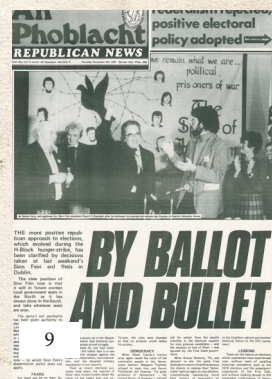
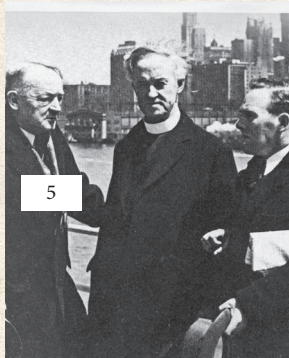
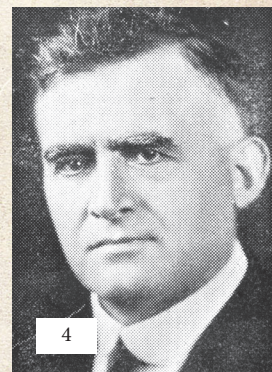




# Quiz

To mark Ard Fheis 2024 this quiz looks at past Ard Fheiseanna and tests your knowledge of Sinn Féin:

1. The first Sinn Féin 'Ard Fheis' was billed as a National Convention, in November 1905 where Sinn Féin was officially founded. Where was it held?
2. In what year did Eamonn de Valera split from Sinn Féin to form Fianna Fáil?
3. The year 1937 saw Sinn Féin elect its first female Uachtarán, a former Civil War activist who held office for the next 13 years. Who was she?
4. The President of Sinn Féin between 1926 and 1931 was an Irish language author who used the name Sceilg. Like a later Uachtarán, he was elected to represent Louth and held many government offices between 1919 and 1923.
5. Between 1933 and 1935 the Uachtarán of Sinn Féin was an ordained priest. He had also spent periods during the Tan War as acting President. Who was he?
6. The Sinn Féin Ard Fheis was held in a Dublin hotel in January 1970. What was it called in 1970?
7. When the Split occurred at that Ard Fheis those who walked out reconvened in the Kevin Barry Hall. Where is the Kevin Barry Hall located?
8. In October 1976 the Vice President of Sinn Féin, Máire Drumm, was murdered in her hospital bed. In what hospital was Máire receiving medical treatment?
9. In the 1981 Ard Fheis an electoral strategy was beginning to form in the wake of the Hunger Strikes. What did Danny Morrison suggest that Republicans could hold in their two hands to progress the struggle?
10. In what year did Ruairí Ó Brádaigh resign as Uachtarán of Sinn Féin?
11. In what year was abstentionism from Leinster House removed as party policy?
12. In 1991 as part of a concerted effort to stop the rise of Sinn Féin Dublin City Council refused permission to the party to hold the Ard Fheis in the Mansion House. The Ard Fheis was held in February 1992 in what welcoming Dublin community?
13. In 1998 four welcome and long absent visitors were given a ten minute standing ovation when they arrived at the Ard Fheis. Who were they?
14. In what year was Mary Lou McDonald elected Uachtarán Sinn Féin, the second woman to hold the office?
15. When the Ard Fheis was held in Kilarne Community Centre, RTÉ attended for the first time in 23 years. What year was it?
16. In 2007, two separate Ard Fheiseanna were held five weeks apart, in January and in March. The January event was a special Ard Fheis to debate what major policy?
17. What year was the Ard Fheis held in Belfast for the first time?
18. What Presbyterian minister set a precedent when he was introduced by Martin McGuinness as a guest speaker at that Ard Fheis?
19. In November 2017 Uachtarán Shinn Féin Gerry Adams made a major announcement. What did he announce?
20. In the years 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 the Ard Fheis moved from Belfast to four other venues outside Dublin. Name two of the four venues.



For the answers turn to the back page



# Academic research on reunification

by Rosa McLaughlin

Professor Colin Harvey of Queen's University Belfast (QUB) is probably one of the best known academics connected with the debate and research around the issue of Irish reunification. He is a prominent academic known for his extensive work in human rights law, constitutional law, and the legal implications of Brexit, particularly concerning the North of Ireland. But he has also contributed significantly to the research and debate around the legal aspects of reunification. Colin has been a regular contributor to various media outlets, including Éire Nua, explaining the legal and political foundations and ramifications around future referendums on the island's constitutional status.

Professor Colin Harvey published a paper in 2019 entitled 'The Future of our Shared Island: A paper on the logistical and legal questions surrounding Referendums on Irish Unity'. The paper is co-authored with Mark Bassett in which he looks at the issues before and in the run up to a referendum.

Published as part of the Constitutional Conversations Group, this paper explores the intensifying debate on Irish unity, particularly in the context of Brexit, which has reshaped conversations around the island's constitutional future. The paper tackles two central questions: How can referendums on Irish unity be conducted; What strategies could ensure their success?

It emphasises the need to normalise discussions around a potential "border poll" and suggests that there are significant legal and procedural questions that require clear answers. The paper also explores how the peace process, North-South relations, and border control issues could be affected by such referendums. Harvey and Bassett argue for more structured and thoughtful preparations as momentum builds towards these crucial decisions on the future governance of the island.

Colin Harvey has also published research as part of the ARINS project. 'Let the People Decide: Reflections on Constitutional Change and Concurrent Consent' (2021) examines the evolving political landscape in Ireland, particularly the prospect of constitutional change through referendums on Irish unity. The article reflects on the mechanisms and principles that should govern such referendums, focusing on the importance of public consent and democratic participation.

Harvey discusses the significance of ensuring that constitutional changes, especially in relation to Irish unity, are driven by the will of the people. He emphasises the need for clear, inclusive processes that allow for concurrent consent, meaning that both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland must have a say in any proposed changes. This approach reinforces the principle of democratic legitimacy and underscores the importance of respecting diverse voices within the shared island framework. It also states that both governments must work closely together to map out the next steps for the future of the island of Ireland.

His latest paper is another significant contribution and was published in late 2022 entitled 'Making the case for Irish Unity in the EU.' The paper is co-authored again with Mark Bassett, a barrister and lecturer, from QUB and was commissioned by 'The Left in the European Parliament'. This paper is important as it looks at the preparatory work and consistency of reunification with European and International Law as well as the merits of



reunification from the perspective of the EU.

The authors had completed another paper in 2019 entitled: 'The EU and Irish Unity: Planning and Preparing for Constitutional Change in Ireland'. That paper looked at how Irish unity would take effect in EU law while the 2022 paper looks at why Irish unity pursuant to the terms of the GFA should be welcomed and supported by the EU. The authors argue that this paper is intended as a modest first step in articulating the case for a policy on Irish unity from Brussels.

The paper states that there is no restriction on the EU adopting a policy position favouring a united Ireland and that the current position of the EU could be seen as lagging in terms of the pace of discussion on unity. They quite rightly point out that an EU policy in support of reunification does not contravene the Good Friday Agreement or the element of the Withdrawal Agreement that states respect for UK territory. They also make the point that Irish unity will have practical, political and economic consequences for the EU, making it a reasonable ask that Europe makes objective assessments about our shared interests.

Colin Harvey's research work is integral to the reunification debate as it deals with the many legal and constitutional aspects that need to be considered both before and after a referendum, some of which can be hard to grasp for non-legal minds. His ability to consider, argue and articulate these legal considerations in the context of the GFA, UK, EU and international law while considering human and civil rights and the democratic mandates and processes involved, make his contribution to the debate a necessary and valuable one.

*Professor Colin Harvey's articles are all available online*

**Rosa McLaughlin is a member of the Irish Unity Committee**



# WIN

by Gerry Adams

The theme of Irish Unity was front and centre in the fringe meeting at this year's Ard Fheis that focussed on the life and activism of our friend and comrade Rita O'Hare who died last year. Several hundred people packed into the room where a panel discussed Rita's contribution to the struggle for freedom and self-determination and then listened as people in the audience reminisced about their personal memories of Rita.

I chaired the event and was joined by Rita's husband Brendan Brownlee, Dawn Doyle and Danny Morrison.

Rita correctly believed that Irish Unity is at the heart of the politics of change. It is at the core of our republican politics, our anti-colonial, anti-sectarian, desire for social justice, and for equality. All the speakers touched on this. On the need for planning and cohesion and the obligation on United Irishmen to harmonise the national and the local.

I read an extract from the speech Rita gave at Bodenstown in 1996 which for me sums up her republicanism and is as much a manifesto for change today as it was almost 30 years ago when she spoke at the graveside of Wolfe Tone. Rita said: "The future we seek is for a transformation of Irish society. We seek constitutional change which places in the hands of the Irish people the sovereign power to determine our own future."

"We seek reconciliation among Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter, people of every religious belief and none, leading to unity in the common name of Irishmen and Irishwomen. We seek equality and respect for the rights of all in place of discrimination, sectarianism, and second-class citizenship."

"We seek employment in place of unemployment, prosperity at home in place of emigration. We seek a society which measures economic well being in terms of the proper education of our children, the provision of a free and comprehensive health service for all, jobs and facilities in our communities for our young people, freedom from the scourge of drug abuse and the crime it brings, and a secure old age for senior citizens."

"We seek a place for Ireland in the world which accords with our history of anti-colonial struggle. The development of our natural resources and the fostering of industry with respect for the environment. This is the vision which unites us as republicans".

If Rita's long life in struggle teaches us anything it is about

the power of activism – the ability of a single person to make a difference, to make a stand and by their example to encourage others to make a stand and to ask 'what can I do to advance Irish unity.'

Richard McAuley was the last speaker at the Rita gig. He told us, as she was close to dying, how she answered that question for him. As he and I were leaving her he went in for a last word and she looked at him defiantly, lifted her clenched fist and gave him his orders – 'Win'.

That was the message which summed up the spirit and energy of the Ard Fheis.

