

new IRELAND

EARRAIGH
2025 SPRING
EAGRÁN ISSUE 9



éire NUA

A Plan for Unity

Sinn Féin is a United Ireland party. Our core political objective is to achieve Irish Unity and the referendum on Unity contained in the Good Friday Agreement that is the means to secure this.

In a new publication Sinn Féin sets out our Plan for Unity: A United Ireland – A Plan for Reunification/Plean d'Aontacht na hÉireann.

Our goal is to build a new Ireland – based on the 1916 Proclamation – that is home to all of our people and which is dedicated to equality, reconciliation, opportunity, and prosperity.

A new Ireland which ends divisions, embraces those who define as British and unionist and which in the words of Wolfe Tone unites Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter.

A United Ireland offers a new beginning. A new start which will provide a greater range of economic, employment and improved public services than ever before.

SEE PAGES 23-27



KEEP TALKING ABOUT PALESTINE



Seasann Muid Leis an Phalaistín

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

Clár an Abhair

EARRAIGH 2025 SPRING
EAGRÁN ISSUE 9

- 2 'IRISH UNITY DEFINING ISSUE OF OUR TIME'
- SEANADÓIR CONOR MURPHY
- 5 A UNITED IRELAND IS A SHARED IRELAND
- 7 THE ALL-ISLAND ECONOMY IS GROWING
- 10 ÉIRE AONTAITHE
- 12 COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF IRELAND UPDATE
- 14 COMMISSION OF THE FUTURE OF IRELAND ANNUAL
REPORT PUBLISHED
- 16 SHAPING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER
- 18 IRISH UNITY: A COMMON SENSE APPROACH TO THE
FUTURE - INTERVIEW WITH JOHN MCDONNELL
- 23 A UNITED IRELAND - A PLAN FOR REUNIFICATION
- 28 QUIZ
- 29 THE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS ARE SITES OF
REPUBLICAN STRUGGLE
- 31 IRISH DIASPORA - A ROLE TO PLAY
- 33 MOMENTUM GROWS FOR IRISH UNITY IN USA
- 36 BOOK REVIEW: IN GOOD TIME — A MEMOIR BY REV.
HAROLD GOOD
- 38 BOOK REVIEW: THE IRISH REPUBLICAN
BROTHERHOOD 1914-1924'

'Irish Unity defining issue of our time' - Seanadóir Conor Murphy

Conor Murphy is a life-long republican from Camlough in South Armagh. He is married with two children and is an active member of his local GAA Club. In January he was elected to the Seanad for the Industrial and Commercial Panel and in February he was appointed Seanad group leader for Sinn Féin.

Conor's election to the Seanad marks a significant move by Sinn Féin in its strategy to advance the United Ireland agenda in the Oireachtas.

Conor Murphy has been a key negotiator throughout the peace process negotiations, including at the time of the Good Friday Agreement. He is also an experienced political leader, public representatives, and former Minister in the Northern Executive. He most recently held the post of Economy Minister.

He brings to the Oireachtas and to the uniting island project an unparalleled level of experience and confidence.



Within the Seanad Conor will lead a six-strong Sinn Féin team as part of the 45-strong Oireachtas team.

Following his election Conor did an interview with Éire Nua:

What is your earliest political memory?

I grew up in a very political republican household where the events of the time were regularly discussed and debated. I remember as a child the aftermath of a riot in Newry when we were being driven to school and the B Specials were lined up at the top of Monaghan Street in their black coats and white helmets. I had only seen them up to that point on television but we had a real sense that, while these were the forces of the state, they were there to do harm to our community and the campaign for civil rights.

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

The attitude of the Nationalist community. While my parents were not defeatist they didn't see a way possible to change the system of British/Unionist rule and, like many other parents, advocated education as a way to advance your own personal circumstances. My children would not understand discrimination because they don't have to tolerate or fight it. The confidence in our future among the young generation is something their grandparents could only have dreamed of.

Are you encouraged by the conversation on constitutional change?

Yes. Despite the attempts to suppress it, from across the political establishments on these islands, the desire for a discussion on what the future can hold for all of us has grown organically and significantly. In my time as Economy Minister I had many opportunities to talk to business organisations and businesses, many from a traditional unionist background, who are actively engaging with the prospects of reunification and the business opportunities it will bring. This is also true for many other sectors. Those conversations need to be anchored by those who have a statutory responsibility for planning for the future on this island.



Is Irish Unity a realisable goal and when?

Absolutely. The changing demographics in the North, the complete disregard by the British government for our interests financially, in terms of legacy and Brexit have all contributed to a growing exploration of a different future in which we are not tied to a failing, inward focussed state. Support for a united Ireland has remained solid in the South. We now need to get on with the necessary preparation and planning for the democratic decision on self-determination.

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

We should listen as much as talk. Those who have fears and concerns about constitutional change are entitled to bring those to the conversation. The Good Friday Agreement is very clear about the numerical requirement for self-determination but we must make that as smooth a journey as possible. That means engagement and dialogue with all the identities that make up this country and utilising the principles of respect and equality which underpin the GFA.

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

Both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael committed to increased activity in preparation for Unity as part of their election manifestos. Those pledges have been significantly watered down in the programme for government they finally agreed. As a government they have a duty, not just to tap into support for Irish unity during election

campaigns but to seriously engage with the change that is happening across the country and to provide formal structures for the preparation and planning necessary. They also need to engage with the British government to fulfil its responsibilities under the GFA.

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

Citizens' Assemblies have proved a very useful model for participation, dialogue and proposals in recent constitutional changes in the South. They need to be structured, resourced, afforded the best advice and opinions available and open to the broadest possible input from all sides of the conversation on unity. They also need to ensure there is sufficient time and space to deal with all the issues that require discussion.

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

I see us on the other side of a democratic exercise on self-determination with the next generation setting about the exciting task of nation building, harnessing all of the talent across all sectors of society on this island and the international goodwill that would accompany our new journey.

I would hope that this would create a country where those who felt it necessary to leave could come home to be part of that task and that reconciliation would be fostered to help us deal with the legacy of a divided past. We will work hard. We won't let people down."



A united Ireland is a **shared** island

By Colin Harvey

Something odd is happening to discussions of a united Ireland. You hear it in talk of the Good Friday Agreement and references to a shared island. A subtle attempt to airbrush constitutional change from the picture. Even worse, some think they are different things. Here is the difficulty: Calling for full implementation of the Agreement includes, guess what? A border poll.

Work the Agreement, they say – that's exactly what we're doing, we say. The compromise at the core of our peace process recognises a fundamental choice: Our collective right to self-determination. The same with a shared island. Language from Article 3 Bunreacht na hÉireann, now regularly pitted against reunification. Strange times indeed.

How to respond? One way forward is to play along and promote a separate dialogue about Irish unity. But why should we do that? An alternative is to reject false and unhelpful divisions: A united Ireland is a shared island, the choice at the heart of everything. Implementing the Agreement and giving us a say about our future, these are the same things. Don't make distinctions that are not there.

Beyond the words, there are practical consequences. The Irish government's Programme for Government drops the modest provision on future constitutional arrangements that was in Fianna Fáil's own manifesto. A weird omission. A shared island dominates the field. It will attract funding, with initiatives completed, ongoing and planned. Worth watching to see what is supported. And time to insist a bit more assertively that unity not be excluded.

If your focus is on governmental action, then the above is sensible. People are right to insist that the Irish State does more. Planning responsibly for the future of your own country should be a priority for any government. That said, consider how much we have achieved without them. The work of political parties and civil society remains magnificent. With limited resources genuine progress is being made. That must continue. It will only ever take preparations so far though. Hard also to see Westminster triggering a referendum without the question being posed by the Irish Government. They really must stop walking away.

What should be done? Continue to build a broad and inclusive coalition for change. Encourage all political parties working for unity to use the legal and policy tools at their disposal. Take every opportunity to press the case, in Ireland and elsewhere. Try to work together if possible, acknowledging the value of diversity and pluralism. Explore the best case for a new and united Ireland. Consider substance and messaging. What will work, North and South? The shared island initiative needs to lose its narrow focus and face the future. We're going to inhabit this space in a new way reasonably soon, get used to thinking about it. We know enough to commence intergovernmental, political and civic negotiations on a timetable. The lack of clarity and ongoing uncertainty are

destabilising. And this is where a hardening of position is required. A choice is being denied, there should be polite but firm insistence on establishing the parameters now.

Everyone knows we're heading towards a border poll. With that in mind, a practical exercise for you. The next time an establishment figure jets in and gets misty eyed about our shared island and our peace agreement, do not forget to remind them: We really want to have our say soon.

Colin Harvey is a Professor in the School of Law, Queen's University Belfast

THE ALL-ISLAND ECONOMY IS GROWING

By Paul Maskey MP



Sinn Féin is a United Ireland party. We make no apologies for that. Our core political objective is to achieve Irish reunification and the unity referendums that are a core promise of the Good Friday Agreement. By any reasonable measure partition has been an abject failure for people North and South and its negative effects continue to shackle the potential opportunities of citizens across this island.



Several months ago Conor Murphy, while still Minister for the Economy in the Northern Executive told a conference in Tyrone examining the economic implications of unity: "We can't afford not to end partition. We need to end duplication. We are currently working with two different tax systems.

Two different currencies. One economy within the European Union and the other outside of it. It's not efficient."

As we work

toward Irish reunification there is an increasing focus on the all-island economy and the evidence it provides for the economic benefits of unity.

At the time of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 cross border trade was worth around €2 bn. In 2001 this had increased to an estimated €3.1bn/£1.9 bn. However, since Brexit growth in cross-border trade has increased dramatically. It has seen a 125% growth since 2018. In 2022 cross border trade was valued at €10.2/£7.0 bn. In 2023 it was worth €10.1/£8.8 bn. In the first six months of last year the value of trade between the two jurisdictions on the island was valued at €6bn/ £5.1 bn. This will mean that 2024 will have witnessed the largest ever movement of trade between North and South.

As part of his approach to promoting the all-island economy Conor Murphy last September opened Invest Northern Ireland's new business Hub and event space in Dublin – a strategic meeting space for businesses. At the Dublin event Murphy pointed to the substantial growth in trade between North and South in recent years as evidence of the potential economic and societal benefits a single island economy could mean for the people of the island of Ireland.

Report by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the GFA

In a report published last July InterTradeIreland told the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Good Friday Agreement that growth in all-island trade



“is taking place across all sectors, with almost 90% of commodity groups growing year on year. Manufacturing accounts for €4billion or around one third of all cross-border trade. Construction accounts for over €1 billion in cross border trade, while agrifood makes up €2 billion.

Commenting on this growth in trade, InterTradelreland’s Martin Robinson said, “The key message, from our perspective, is to encourage businesses to look to the cross-border market. It is a thriving market on our doorstep... people do not think about a border when they are doing business. There are great opportunities for all businesses of all sizes across all sectors.”.

Mr. Robinson commented that the growth in cross-border trade has come against a background of economic challenges, including recessions, Brexit, the pandemic and the geopolitical shocks of the wars in Ukraine and in Gaza. He told the Committee that this is indicative of the resilient, innovative and enterprising nature of the businesses on this island. He added that InterTradelreland’s research shows that firms that trade across the Border tend to be more resilient and innovative and generally outperform their non-exporting peers.

This growth is taking place at a time when the British economy is stagnant. In February the Bank of England cut by half its growth forecast for the British economy for 2025 from 1.5% to 0.75%. The British government’s Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) - which monitors the government’s spending plans and performance - is also expected in March to downgrade its forecasts for the health of the British economy.

At the same time the economy in the South is significantly outperforming both the North and Britain. The evidence strongly supports the conclusion that the union with Britain is not aiding the North’s economy but is, on the contrary, holding it back through its ties to Britain’s failing economic model.

ESRI Report

In January a new economic model of the North was produced by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR), supported by Ibec. It provides new insights into the North’s economy.



Rose Conway Walsh TD welcomed the report pointing out that this is the first time that this type of data can be interrogated on an all-island basis, and it will prove vital for the development of economic policy on the island... The Executive in the North, although significantly hampered by the lack of devolved fiscal powers and the limitations of the block grant, will also be better able to target economic interventions to ensure positive all island results.”

The report’s authors are confident that “we can

use this model to produce economic forecasts for Northern Ireland, Ireland, and the all-island economy. The framework allows us to examine the effects of economic policies and shocks – both emanating from within Northern Ireland and from the outside world – on Northern Ireland, Ireland, the all-island economy, the UK and the international economy.”

In its conclusion the report states that its, “projections are for growth in the all-island economy to average around 2.2 per cent per annum over the medium term. With the period of high inflation rates over, real wage growth is expected to support increases in real personal disposable income in the all-island economy over the medium term.”

The Dublin- Belfast Economic Corridor

Addressing the ‘Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor’ conference in Belfast on 27 February

First Minister Michelle O’Neill



reflected on the positive contribution it has made to the economy of the east coast of Ireland. It is she said “a fantastic example of what can be achieved by working together to create the conditions for growth and investment...” “And she praised

the working of the eight councils, two universities and all the partners who have come together with a shared ambition and a determination to turn this region, along the east coast of Ireland, into a leading economic corridor in Europe.”

Reflecting on the all-island economy the First Minister said: “The all-island economy is already thriving, and it presents vast untapped potential for both domestic growth and foreign investment. This corridor represents an unparalleled opportunity to drive sustainable growth, harness innovation, and build a resilient economy.

An economy that will bring about inclusive prosperity for our communities and achieve real benefits for people.”

Michelle O’Neill added: “We have a unique opportunity in that we are able to trade goods freely with markets in both Britain and the European Union, we can position the corridor as a hub for international investment, attract new business and expand export opportunities to our local enterprises. We will work with you, and all stakeholders, to remove barriers to trade, strengthen supply chains, and create a business-friendly environment that encourages entrepreneurship and investment.

Through policy interventions, regulatory alignment, and targeted trade arrangements, we can make it easier for businesses to expand, compete, and thrive on the global stage. And of course, we must ensure that our businesses, both large and small, are well-supported in accessing international markets and navigating the evolving economic landscape.”



CONCLUSION

The evidence has been growing over the last decade that a single island economy will be more efficient, providing significant new potential for jobs, wages and a higher standard of living for working families. Support among economists for Irish unity has also growing. In 2015 economist Michael Burke concluded that: "Quite simply put, the whole population of Ireland would benefit economically from reunification."

Professor Kurt Hübner has concluded that Irish unity would likely result in a sizable boost in economic outcomes and incomes North and South.



And economist David McWilliams has stated that while there is talk about the British subvention and how the Irish state could not afford the North, the reality is "When you look at the numbers it becomes clear that this is just that – talk."



He added: "In short, in pure budgetary terms, there is little doubt that the Republic's economy could absorb the North, even before the commercial dynamism of unification kicks in."

Last summer's report by the Oireachtas based Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement - 'Perspectives on Constitutional Change: Finance and Economics' – examined the economic relationship between the two jurisdictions and the potential of the all-island economy.

Its call on the government to begin immediately planning for a referendum on constitutional change is a significant departure for an Oireachtas Committee and reflects the growing consensus for progress on Irish Unity. Its conclusion is best summed up in the final sentence of the summary of the report which states: "Preparation for referenda on Irish unification will be a historic task. The Committee calls for preparation to begin immediately". ment, to its development will benefit all the people of this island.

If you want to read the Joint Committee report it is available here:





Éire Aontaithe

Le Antaine ó Fearghail

Chuir mé chun bóthair ag triall Éireann Aontaithe agus mé lán dóchas sa bhliain 1975 gan ionam ach óganach glas gan mórán céille. Bhí mo bhealach an-cham ar fad lán de chora agus de chastaí ach lean mé orm. Anois, áfach, agus an tseanaois ag teacht orm tá ár gCeann Scríbe faoi scread asail dinn. Is mé atá lán de mhuinín agus

de dhóchas anois go bhfeicfidh muid go léir 'éirí na gealaí'. Goilleann sé orm go minic gur fhág muid cairde móra inár ndiaidh ar an bhealach. D'imigh siad uainn róluath faraor ach réitigh siad an bealach dúinn. Ó 1975 go dtí an lá atá inniu ann maireann íomha na hÉireann agus í aontaithe i m'intinn. Tháinig mé chun tsaoil ar an

tSraith Bán. B'shin an áit ar fhás mé aníos. Ba mise duine ba shine de chúigear clainne. Agus mé ag fás aníos thuig mé go raibh rudaí go holc ó thaobh cúrsaí polaitiúla de sa tír seo. Thuig mé gur dhuine den dara grad mé dar leis an dream eile. In isle brí a bhí mo phobal féin. Bhí cuis mhór leis sin. Níor caitheadh go rómhaith linne

mar phobal ó bunaíodh an stát bréagach seo agus tháinig cúrsaí go cnámh na huillinne ag deireadh na seascaidí Tháinig na milte amach ar na sráideanna ag éileamh ceartaí sibhialta. Bhí cíocras chun saoirse le sonrú i ngach áit. Bhí Éire Aontaithe i mbéal an pobail. Saoirse a bhí uainn. D'éirigh muid dár ngluin. Ba mhór an tionchar a d'imir ina himeachtaí a bhí ag titim amach thart ormsa. Cé nach raibh mé in ann friotal a chur ar mo chuid smaointe bhí gach rud socair i m'intinn agam. Nuair a d'fhág mé an mheánscoil, chuaigh mé leis na hóglaigh agus dianrún agam Éire aontaithe a bhaint amach. 'An ruaig a chur ar na Sasanaigh', b'shin an dearcadh a bhí agam. Níor thóg sé i bhfad orm a fhoghlaim nach mbeadh sé chomh simplí sin ar an ábhar nár Chúba nó Vítneam í Éire.

Gabhadh sa bhliain 1977 mé. Cosúil le neart daoine óga eile, cuireadh i ngéibheann i mBóthar Chromghlinne mé. Gearradh pionós ceithre bliana déag orm sa bhliain 1979. Dá bharr sin, cuireadh isteach sna H-blocanna mé. D'aistrigh láthair na coimhlinte chun na H-blocanna. Bhí agóid na Pluide faoi lánseol ag an am. Ar ndóigh chuaigh mé ar an phuilld.

Ollscoil cheart a bhí sa Cheis Fhada. Cuireadh ar bhealach mo leasa ansin mé. Cé nach raibh pinn nó pár ag na fir mhóra seo chuir siad oideachas iontach orm. Bhí comhlaidar ar dóigh agam le linn domh bheith ar phluid. Bhí na cimí agus gluiseacht na poblachta ar an taobh amuigh ag obair ar a ndícheall chun deareadh cuí a chur leis an agóid.

Bhain na Sasanaigh Stádas Speisialta ar shiúl dinn i mí an Mharta 1976 nuair a d'fhéach lenár gcogadh a choiriúlú. Bhí orainn mar Chimí Cogaidh seasamh ina n-éadan. Chreid na sasanaigh dá dtiocfadh leofa na cimí a chur faoi chois istigh gurbh amhlaidh go dtiocfadh deireadh leis an chogadh taobh amuigh. D'fhág sin go raibh orainn an fod a seasamh ar ais nó ar éigean. Bhí todhchaí na poblachta agus Aontú na hÉireann ina luí ar ghualainn na gcimí.

Luigh an cúram sin go trom orainn ach níor feall muid ar Ghluaiseacht na Poblachta. Ní raibh an dara suí againn. Aistríodh láthair ár gcatha go deimhin go dtí na príosúin. Leis an agóid a thabhairt chun críche agus i ndiaidh dúinn dianiarrachtaí a dhéamh lena sheachaint, rinneadh cinneadh go tromchroíoch dul ar stailc ocrais.

Ar an 27 Deireadh Fómhair 1980 chuaigh seachtár ar stailc ocrais. Cúig éileamh a bhí uainn. Ní raibh an feachtas rathúil. Cuireadh stad leis nuair a tháinig támhnéal ar ár gcomhadaí Seán Mac Cionnaith. Tharla go doiciméad ar an bhealach ó na Sasanaigh ag an bhiomaite chinniúnach seo. Fuair muid cóip de cháipéis; ar an drochuair níorbh fhiú dada é. Bhí muid i gcruachas ceart agus chuaigh muid ar ais go dtí an tús arís. Ar thairseach domhain a bhí muid, mar dúirt Bobby.

Ar an chéad lá de mhí Mhárta 1981 chuaigh Bobby Sands ar stailc ocrais. Le linn na stailce cailleadh Frank Mc Guire MP. Chuir sin cor i meon na gluaiseachta ó thaobh cúrsaí polaitíochta de. Cinneadh cinniúnach a bhí ann don pháirtí. Sheas Bobby sa toghchán agus d'éirigh go maith leis. Níor leor é áfach agus cailleadh é agus naonúr n-óglach eile. D'oscail siad doras toghcháin dúinn agus ní raibh cúrsaí polaitíochta le bheith a choíche go deo mar a bhíodh siad go dtí sin.

Mhair mé i dtréimhse a bhí stairiúil agus a bhí corrach. Dhéanfainn arís dá mba ghá, ar an dea-uair ní gá. Arbh fhiú é? B'fhiú go mór é. Sa bhliain 2025 tá Éire aontaithe ar na bacáin. Bhí dianrún ag Gluaiseacht na Poblachta i gcónaí páirtí láidir cumasach a thógáil agus tá sin déanta anois ag Sinn Féin. Tchí muid níos soiléire anois na ariamh roimhe íomha d'Éirinn agus í aontaithe. Níor ligeadh ár gcuspóir ariamh chun dearmaid: Éire Aontaithe.

Antaine Ó Fearghail
Is Comhairleoir áitúil
de chuid Shinn Féin é
Antaine Ó Fearghail. Is
as an tSrath Bán dó ó
dhúcas. Iarchime cogaidh
agus iarfhear pluide atá
ann. Tá dúspéis aige sa
Ghaeilge. Tá sé pósta
ar Chairméal agus tá
beirt mhac aca. Tá sé ina
chónaí i Muileann an
tSiáin le blianta anuas.



COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF IRELAND

AN COIMISIÚN UM THODHCHAÍ NA hÉIREANN

UPDATE MARCH 2025

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 hosted discussions on our future, across Ireland and internationally.

Since the last edition of Éire Nua, People's Assemblies have been hosted in Armagh and Mid Ulster.

ARMAGH PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

The Armagh People's Assembly was a great success. It was hosted on the 29th October 2024, in the Armagh City Hotel. The meeting was opened by Declan Kearney MLA and was chaired by Darragh Mackin (Human Rights Lawyer) and the panel for the event included Sinead Hughes (Health Professional), Ian Marshall (Centre for Advanced Sustainable Energy at QUB & former Senator) and Dr Anne Devlin (Economist). Topics covered on the night included cross border cooperation in agriculture, an all island health service, the benefits of an all island economy and ensuring everyone is respected in the conversation, particularly those who may be undecided or not in support of unity.

A report of the event was published which can be accessed here:

[Armagh People's Assembly report](#)

[Armagh report Gaeilge](#)

[Footage can also be found on YouTube: Armagh Peoples Assembly](#)

MID ULSTER PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

The Mid Ulster People's Assembly was hosted in the Seamus Heaney Homeplace in Bellaghy on the 26th of February. Sinn Féin Leas Uachtarán Michelle O'Neill delivered the opening address. The discussion was chaired by local GP Dr Laurence Diamond and the panel included Siobhan McElhinney- Trade Unionist, Ola Sobieraj -Project manager for 'the 3million', Seamus McWilliams - local farmer & business man and Tony Scullion - all Ireland winner & former Derry GAA star.

The main topics of discussion included agriculture, the benefits of an all island health service, integrated education, workers rights in a new Ireland and the role of Gaels in the discussion on Irish Unity.

[Michelle O'Neill's main address can be viewed here: Let's build the future of Ireland together - major speech by Michelle O'Neill](#)

[The report and footage of the Mid Ulster People's Assembly will be available soon and will be posted on \[www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland\]\(http://www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland\)](#)

IN ADDITION TO THE TWO PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLIES A SECTORAL EVENT ON THE ECONOMY WAS ALSO HELD.

'Irish Unity & the All Island Economy' was hosted in Canavans, Garvaghey, Co Tyrone in November 2024. The discussion was hosted by Independent Chairperson Dr Anne Devlin (Economist) and the panel included Sinn Féins economic, finance and Infrastructure spokespersons Pearse Doherty TD, Caoimhe Archibald MLA, Conor Murphy MLA & John O'Down MLA.

West Tyrone MP Órfhlaith Begley launched the report of the event last month and said:

"Partition makes no economic sense. The duplication of government and public service structures imposes unnecessary and additional costs. So too does the imposition of unnecessary administrative burdens on businesses on both sides of the border due to different regulations, currencies and taxation systems North and South. Reunification will unlock an economic dividend that would benefit the entire island economy. This is supported by many leading economists. It is time for the Irish government to move from a position of discussion to a position of pro-active planning for the unity referendums as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement through the establishment of a truly representative, all-Ireland citizens' Assembly or Assemblies."

The report of the event can be viewed here:

[Irish Unity & the all island Economy BEARLA](#)

[Irish Unity & the all island Economy GAEILGE](#)

[Catch up on footage from the event here: IRISH UNITY and the ALL ISLAND ECONOMY - full debate and discussion](#)



**Grace
McDermott**
Ul Committee



UPCOMING EVENTS

TIONÓL POBAIL BHAILE GHIB

Beidh Tionól Pobail Bhaile Ghib sr siúl i Halla Bhaile Ghib ag a 7 i.n. Dé hAoine an 14 Márta. Is féidir clárú le freastal ar an imeacht anseo: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tionol-pobail-bhaile-ghib-tickets-1235960413869>

SALUT MONTRÉAL, LA COMMISSION SUR L'AVENIR DE L'IRLANDE ARRIVE BIENTÔT!

Venez et participez à la conversation et faites partie de l'histoire. The first of Friends of Sinn Féin Commission events in Canada is to take place in Montreal on the 15th March in the Concordia University Hall Building from 2pm-4pm. Louise O'Reilly TD will speak at this event and the discussion will be led by leading members of the Irish community in Montreal. Inscrivez-vous pour assister à cet événement GRATUIT: [Commission on the Future of Ireland Tickets, Sat, Mar 15, 2025 at 2:00 PM | Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/Commission-on-the-Future-of-Ireland-Tickets-Sat-Mar-15-2025-at-2-00-PM-Eventbrite)

ONE ISLAND, ONE ENVIRONMENT

This event is being hosted jointly by Lynn Boylan MEP and Sinn Féin's Commission on the Future of Ireland in the Ballymun Rediscovery Centre in Dublin on Friday 4th April from 11am-1pm.

The discussion will be led by an independent Chairperson and panel and is an opportunity for environmental activists to become involved in the discussion on Irish Unity.

Registration is available through the following link: [One Island One Environment - Commission Event](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/One-Island-One-Environment-Commission-Event)

WHAT CAN THE EU INSTITUTIONS DO TO SUPPORT THE TRANSITION TO IRISH UNITY?

MEP's Lynn Boylan and Kathleen Funchion will join with the Commission to host an event in the European Parliament on Tuesday 8th April. The purpose of this event is to engage with leaders in the European Parliament on what institutional arrangements can be/or should be put in place to support the transition to Irish Unity and as information for people pre referendum. More details on this event are coming soon.

The Commission on the Future of Ireland also have plans to host an event at this year's Balmoral Show on May 15th, an event themed on Health in May and an event on Tackling Regional Imbalance in Sligo in June. All details will be posted on www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland and the Commission social media pages.



LA COMMISSION DE L'AVENIR DE L'IRLANDE

MONTREAL

Présenté par Les Amis(e)s du Sinn Féin

Membres éminents de la communauté Irlandaise de Montréal

- Donal Gill - Professeur adjoint de politique canadienne à l'Université Concordia
- Eoin Ó hUiginn - partenaire fondateur de Power Sustainable, Gaeilgeoir
- Neal Cunningham - directeur des investissements chez Interlogix, Montréal Shamrocks GAC

Inscrivez-vous sur Eventbrite en utilisant le code QR ou sur <https://bit.ly/4NDGSD3>

AN COIMISIÚN UM THODHCHÁI NA hÉIREANN

Conférencière invitée du Sinn Féin Louise O'Reilly

Samedi 15 mars
14h - 16h
Concordia University Hall Building (H12.20)
1455 De Maisonneuve ouest



SÁBHÁIL AN DÁTA

TIONÓL POBAIL BHAILE GHIB

AN COIMISIÚN UM THODHCHÁI NA hÉIREANN
DÉ HAOINE 14 MÁRTA
HALLA BHAILE GHIB, AN UAIMH,
7 i.n.



SAVE THE DATE | SÁBHÁIL AN DÁTA

WHAT CAN THE EU INSTITUTIONS DO TO SUPPORT THE TRANSITION TO IRISH UNITY?

**TUESDAY 8TH APRIL
EU PARLIAMENT
6PM-8PM**

**MORE DETAILS
COMING SOON**



REPORT OF COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF IRELAND PUBLISHED



By Grace McDermott
UI Committee

In December 2024, Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald TD and National Party Chairperson Declan Kearney, published a report of the work on the Commission on the Future of Ireland since its establishment.

This report covers all of the events hosted so far and provides an overview of the themes covered.

You can read the report here:

[COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT BEARLA.pdf](#)

[COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT GAELIGE.pdf](#)

Footage of the report launch can also be watched here:



Speaking at the launch of the report Sinn Féin National Party Chairperson Declan Kearney MLA has written to all party political leaders on the island of Ireland inviting them to meet with Sinn Féin to discuss future constitutional change and the shape of a new Ireland.

Speaking at the public launch of report on the work of the Commission on the Future of Ireland, Declan Kearney said:

“Over the past year, the Commission has made significant progress through People’s Assemblies and sectoral events held across the island and internationally. These initiatives have been instrumental in fostering a positive and inclusive dialogue on constitutional change. The level of discussion on this issue today is unprecedented, and there is now a cross party political consensus on the need to plan and prepare for Irish Unity.”

Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald commended the work of the Commission and its positive engagement with community groups, women’s and youth organisations, rural Ireland, the business sector, Irish language community, economists, academics and the wider public. “This work has been enormously helpful in encouraging an optimistic discussion around constitutional change and for Irish Unity.

The report highlights something very important - people want to be part of the conversation on the future of Ireland, on the shape of constitutional change and how best to navigate the next length of the journey to reunification. They like to be asked and are pleased to be part of this process of dialogue.

They want to talk about how we build an inclusive future, one that gives every person, regardless of tradition, background or identity, an equal stake in a new Ireland.

The breadth of the panellists from all sectors of society, including unionist and Protestant voices, willing to participate in the Peoples Assemblies and the Sectoral events is very encouraging.

If Sinn Féin and others can facilitate dialogue on constitutional change how much more effective and inclusive would the discussion be if the Irish government fulfilled its constitutional responsibilities and obligations and took up a more positive role.

For this reason, the Irish government should establish as a priority a Citizen’s Assembly or Assemblies on constitutional change. A

**ABAIR LEAT
HAVE YOUR SAY
HAE YER SPAKE**
THE NEW IRELAND IS FOR EVERYONE

THE COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF IRELAND

AN COIMISIÚN UM THODHCHAÍ NA hÉIREANN

REPORT

Reports of each event published

Protestant/ Unionist participation

Thousands of attendees

21 public events

Quarterly updates published

Hundreds of written contributions

Events hosted internationally

Events held in each province of Ireland

74 independent speakers

www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland

Citizen’s Assembly would be a forum for discussing ideas and perspectives on unity, facilitating debate on the shape of the future constitutional arrangements, and allowing participants to tease-out the social, economic, and political challenges.

Unity must be about the possibilities of tomorrow moving forward bravely to a new Ireland for all. That is why a Citizens’ Assembly must be a warm house for every citizen of every persuasion, a place where everyone can air their views in a spirit of generosity, respect, and common purpose.”





SHAPING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER

– MICHELLE O'NEILL, LEAS UACHTARÁN SHINN FÉIN

The Sinn Féin Commission on the Future of Ireland held a very successful People's Assembly in the Seamus Heaney Homeplace in Bellaghy on Wednesday 26 February. Over 150 people from across the constituency participated in the conversation on constitutional change and Irish Unity.

The theme of the conference was 'The New Ireland is for Everyone – Have Your Say.' The panel was chaired by local GP Dr Laurence Diamond and the panel included Siobhan McElhinney - Trade Unionist; Ola Sobieraj; Seamus McWilliams; and Tony Scullion.

Sinn Féin Leas Uachtarán Michelle O'Neill MLA was the guest speaker.

Addressing the audience Michelle O'Neill said:

"I think that the significant crowd here this evening demonstrates, once again, that the conversation around constitutional change is very much live and growing.

The work of Sinn Féin's Commission, along with Ireland's Future, the SDLP's New Ireland Commission, the work of the all-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Good Friday Agreement and the Shared Island Initiative and others, have ensured the progress of this important conversation.

Taken together the work of all of these groups and individuals has helped foster a positive atmosphere that has encouraged unprecedented discussion of future constitutional arrangements.

The all-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Good Friday Agreement called last July for the Irish government to begin planning for Irish Unity. This was a very welcome and important development.

Grassroots Consultation

A new all-Ireland framework of governance must be carefully planned and resourced. Those of us who want a united Ireland must be prepared to listen to and take on board the views of everyone.

Since its establishment in July 2022, the Commission on the Future of Ireland has worked to create an environment where dialogue is encouraged, and feedback is valued. The Commission has taken its message all over Ireland and abroad to gather the thoughts, hopes, and concerns of as many people as possible. This is not merely about political discourse. It is about grassroots consultation.

We want to engage with every community, every demographic, every political perspective. These contributions to this dialogue are invaluable as we canvass the possibilities for a united Ireland that is a home for all our people.

A Changing Ireland

We are living in a time of change on this island. There is a growing recognition that the future of Ireland now rests in the hands of our people, North and South. For the first time in the history of the northern state - a nationalist, an Irish republican is First Minister.





My election was a moment of equality and progress and something that would have been unthinkable just a few short years ago. This shows that political change is possible. The North is now a shared place.

The Executive which I lead is based on power sharing and equality of representation. I stand as joint head of government in the North and a convinced Irish republican - something which Partition was designed to prevent. I share an office with a deputy First Minister who is a proud unionist.

Together, we manage the day-to-day challenges of administration and the difficulties of dealing with the British Government. My vision for our people and our country however is ambitious. We have a real opportunity now to build a better, shared future for all on this island.

The Good Friday Agreement provides a democratic pathway to build a stronger, more prosperous and more efficient democracy on this island. When a unity referendum is called, the campaign offers an opportunity for a real, inclusive and constructive debate on the future. It will allow citizens, north and south, to participate in an informed, reasoned and respectful dialogue on creating new political, social and economic policies which guarantee the optimum outcomes for the people of this island.

Nation Building

This is about more than just bolting the North onto the South. It is a real process of nation building in our time. We have the opportunity to discard the division and inequality of the past and build anew. Collectively, we must be determined to secure and to win unity referendums North and South.

We need to ensure that the British Government honours its obligations and acts with rigorous impartiality. That is what the Good Friday Agreement commits the British Government to do. That is how it should act.

There is also, though, a constitutional imperative on the Irish Government that unity is the "firm will of the Nation". There is an urgent need for the Irish government to prepare constructively for Irish unity.

Reflections on Irish Identity

As we gather here in this beautiful part of the world, we are reminded of the collective journey we have undertaken as a people. An island imbued with rich history and diverse stories. Our identity is multifaceted.

Our national narrative is woven together with threads of

resilience, hope, and a shared aspiration for a better future. Irish unity is not just a political aspiration - it is about people, families, and communities. It's about recognising the interconnectedness of our lives, celebrating our differences, and embracing our shared values.

An Ireland where our differences are seen as strengths rather than divisions.

I am committed to a vision for Ireland that is inclusive, where everyone has a seat at the table and where every voice is heard.

Opportunity for Irish Unity

Unity is an opportunity - a chance for growth, for connection, and for collective prosperity. The future Ireland which republicans envisage is one where healthcare is free, housing is a right, our education system is world-class, and our economy truly serves the interests of all our people.

A genuinely shared future means pooling our resources, talents, and ideas to create a society in Ireland that cherishes our heritage, while looking confidently towards the future.

Together, we have an opportunity to shape a future that our children and grandchildren will inherit - one built on collaboration, respect and solidarity.

So, I urge everyone to engage openly and honestly in the debate on our shared future. Your voices matter. Engage with the Commission on the Future of Ireland or Ireland's Future or any of the other platforms that exist to share your hopes, your dreams, and your concerns.

Whether you're a young person with aspirations for your education and career, a parent concerned about the kind of world your children will inherit, or someone who has experienced the weight of past divisions, your voice matters.

We want to hear from you. We want to learn from your experiences and insights.

The future of Ireland will emerge from the collective engagement of all our people, and I am excited to see where the discussion will lead us. To that end I will work with others, and across all sectors of society, to foster unity, understanding, and progress.

The journey ahead will not be without its challenges, but together, there is nothing we cannot achieve. Together, let's build an Ireland that reflects our various identities as well as our collective values and aspirations - a place where all can belong, thrive, and prosper.

The New Ireland is for everyone - let us shape it together.

IRISH UNITY: A COMMON SENSE APPROACH TO THE FUTURE...

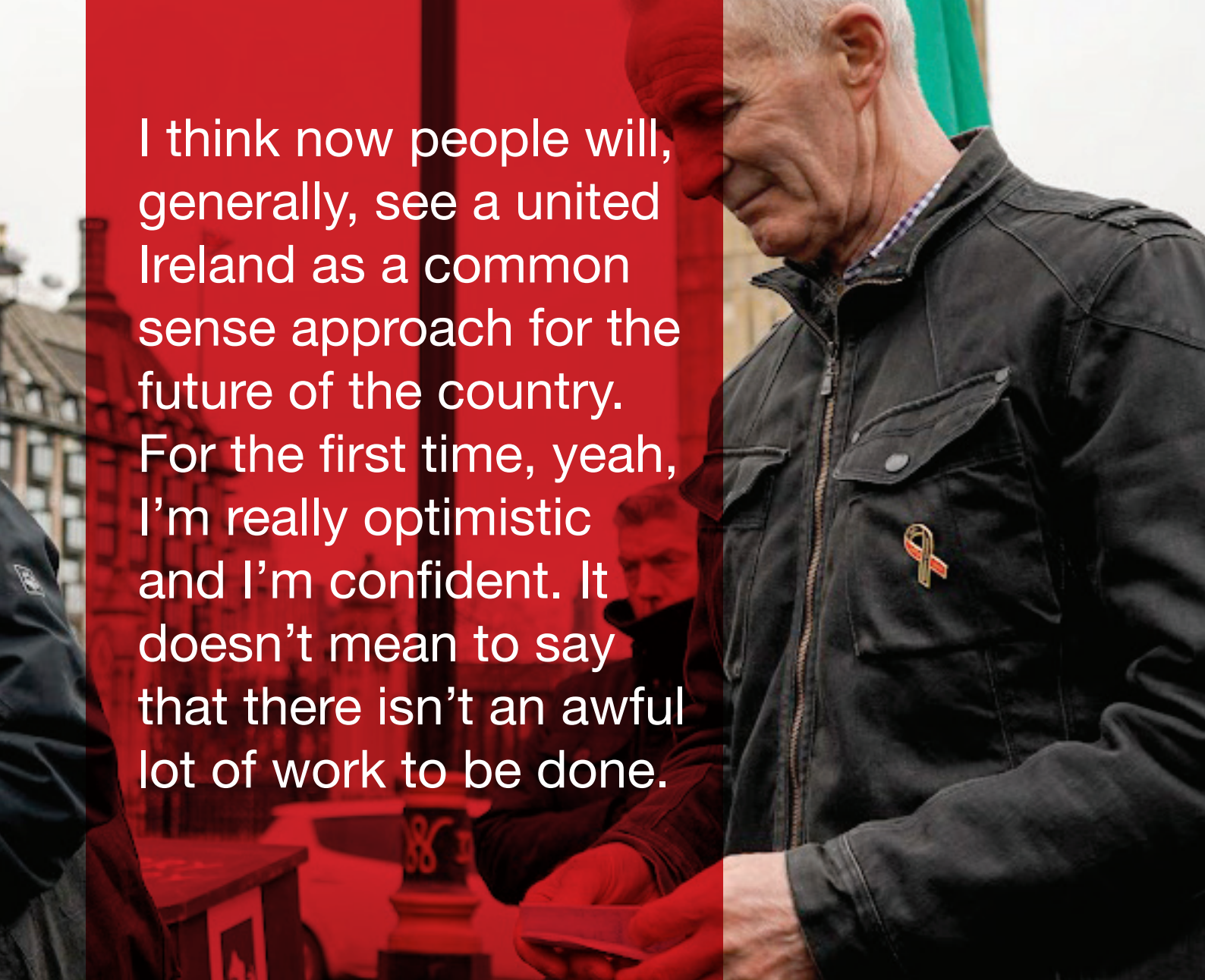


JUST BEFORE THE CHRISTMAS BREAK, THE VETERAN BRITISH LABOUR PARLIAMENTARIAN AND FORMER SHADOW CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, JOHN MCDONNELL MP HOSTED A PUBLIC MEETING IN WESTMINSTER IN SUPPORT OF THE PRESSURE GROUP LABOUR FOR IRISH UNITY.

ALONGSIDE MR MCDONNELL, FOR THE EVENING'S DISCUSSION WAS SINN FÉIN'S DÁIRE HUGHES MP, PLAID CYMRU'S LIZ SAVILLE ROBERTS MP, PROFESSOR COLIN HARVEY OF IRELAND'S FUTURE, DANIEL HOLDER OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE (CAJ), AND THE RETIRED KILBURN COUNCILLOR AND FORMER-ACTIVIST WITH THE LONDON IRISH WOMEN'S CENTRE ANGIE BIRTILL.

JOE DWYER SAT DOWN WITH JOHN MCDONNELL IN HIS PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE TO REFLECT ON A LIFETIME OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM, HIS SUPPORT FOR THE GOAL OF IRISH UNITY, AND THE EXACT ROLE THAT HE ENVISIONS FOR LABOUR FOR IRISH UNITY IN THE TIME AHEAD...





I think now people will, generally, see a united Ireland as a common sense approach for the future of the country. For the first time, yeah, I'm really optimistic and I'm confident. It doesn't mean to say that there isn't an awful lot of work to be done.

Joe Dwyer: *So, to begin – you were born in Liverpool, often called “the Irish capital of England”. Your Dad came from an Irish migrant background. How Irish was the McDonnell family? How informative was your Irish identity growing up?*

John McDonnell: Well, my grandfather was from Drogheda and my granny was from Dublin. Within the Liverpool setting we lived round the corner from the Parish Church. We were just off Scotland Road, in that big Irish community there.

We moved to Great Yarmouth when my dad was conscripted in the Second World War. So, he was in the Army, and he was stationed in Norfolk before he went onto Germany. He met my Mum there. She had been working in the local factory. She was a welder during the war. So, they got together and then when he came back, they got married.

I thought we were going on holiday and kept on saying, ‘When are we going home?’ So, they always called me a Scouse in exile. But in the family, there

was always that Irish connection. Particularly, in the labour and trade union movement. My dad was an active trade unionist in the T&G, he was a branch secretary for about thirty years, maybe longer!

In the labour and trade union movement, there's a large Irish population. If you look at our history in England, how many Irish leaders are there. So, it's interesting how the Irish did come together in terms of mobilisation through the trade union movement.

Joe Dwyer: *So, by your early to mid-twenties, you've relocated to Hayes and you start engaging in Labour politics and local community activism. Was that where “the politics” began?*

John McDonnell: Well, before that – classic Irish family! – at the age of twelve, I'm an altar boy and all the rest and the local Irish priest says, ‘Do you think this lad's got a vocation?’ So, I said, ‘Yeah, I think I have.’ So, I volunteered! I went to a De La Salle Brothers College. I was there from twelve to sixteen. Which was when I had a slight problem with going onto being a priest. Well, I had got

girlfriends by then, but also, I was beginning to doubt my faith as well. But I was honest about it. I saw the Brother Director and said, "I don't think I've got a vocation anymore." So, I went back to my local grammar school.

I left school. Went on the shop-floor. I was working up North. In all sorts of factory jobs. Making beds, making TVs, and all the rest. Then, I got married. I did A-Levels at Burnley Tech and then moved to West London. I settled there and got actively involved in Hayes' community politics. Hayes had a huge Irish community.

Joe Dwyer: *In a recent interview you spoke about confronting the National Front in Hayes. Obviously, we've recently seen the face of the far-right in Ireland. So, how did you confront it then?*

John McDonnell: People were beginning to find it tough economically, so there was a vulnerability that the far-right took advantage of. It was the usual thing, 'you're suffering these housing problems, you're suffering wages being cut. It's nothing to do with the system, it's those people over there at fault!' At the time there was largely Asian migration coming in and around Southall. So it was very easy for the far-right to do their usual scapegoating, rather than have political debate about how the system was treating people.

I had eventually joined the Labour Party and we took a very conscious decision that, where there were issues in the local community, we had to be there first. We had to have a discussion that involved the community – and then we had to have a solution. And you turn that solution into campaigning. And it worked. We isolated the far-right, the National Front, and the BNP.

Joe Dwyer: *At the end of last October you addressed the annual Terence MacSwiney Commemoration in Brixton You referenced how the Greater London Council (GLC) used to have an Irish panel and how it strategically funded political events to support the London-Irish community. How did that come about and why did you think it was necessary?*

John McDonnell: I was elected in 1981. The reason the GLC elections were important was that – Thatcher was elected in 1979 – so this was the first major election after Thatcher's ascension; we were trying to establish a programme to demonstrate an alternative to Thatcherism. But also to try to ensure that we took power in a part of the state where we could exemplify the implications of those policies. So, it was almost like looking at the GLC as a socialist experiment. In contrast with what Thatcher was doing.

Irish communities came together and said, 'actually, we need to recognise what we've suffered in terms of anti-Irish racism for generations and let's stop kidding people that it's gone away! Because it's still there!' And it was. So we set up the Irish Panel. One of the things that came forward was: how do we empower the Irish community? Well, one way of doing that is you make sure they have the resources out there to enable them to have a stronger voice. So, we funded lots of individual Irish organisations, self-organisation on the ground.

Then secondly, we had to recognise that we'd been isolated and ignored for so long culturally. So, we said, 'right let's go for it!' Book fairs, festivals, you name it! And what was really fascinating is that when we laid on Irish cultural events, it wasn't just Irish people who turned up; first, second or third generation. Everyone turned up! It became incredibly popular.

Cultural work enabled us to also talk about anti-Irish racism and where that came from. The history of Ireland in all its different aspects. There was that wonderful book, *Nothing But The Same Old Story*, which demonstrated the way the 'Irish-joke' had been used to subjugate Irish people. To humiliate them and dehumanise them.

Then, of course, we raised the issue of the Troubles. There were bombs going off in London. I – very naively – put a motion to the Labour group saying that we shouldn't just stand-by and allow the Troubles to continue, to have an impact on our own capital city, without taking some form of action. So – very naively – I said, 'if the government is refusing to talk and negotiate peace, we should take on the initiative.' Now, you can imagine the reaction was to be condemned by everybody, every political party – including the Labour Party! And also the media campaign was pretty horrendous. I know it was naïve but it was stumbling towards the concept of 'we've got to start talking about peace.' If the government wouldn't do it, maybe as the representatives of Londoners we should be doing it.

That enabled us to broaden the discussion into the impact of the Troubles on the community here. We organised a conference on the use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and what was interesting was a number of the speakers were picked up!

Joe Dwyer: *One of the initiatives you were involved in during the late-1980s, was the 'Sinn Féin council tours'. Just how easy were those tours to organise?*

John McDonnell: We decided to try and use every vehicle we could to raise the level of consciousness of Ireland. Of course, there was the history and culture, but really it was about the immediacy of



So, Alex Maskey and team toured around and actually they were incredibly successful. For the first time, people were seeing Sinn Féin councillors who were performing the same role as them but in the most difficult of circumstances.

the issues and the need for a breakthrough to move towards a just and peaceful settlement. So where can these debates and discussions take place? The idea came up that because we were Labour councillors on the GLC, we had Labour Councils right the way across London – who were open to that debate – why not do a Sinn Féin council tour?

So, Alex Maskey and team toured around and actually they were incredibly successful. For the first time, people were seeing Sinn Féin councillors who were performing the same role as them but in the most difficult of circumstances. To have that face-to-face from one councillor to another was important. Just talking about the issues and what the similarities were. Housing, deprivation, employment issues, that sort of thing. Then to overlay that with what Sinn Féin councillors were having to endure as well, because of the occupation. It was an eye-opener for many of them.

Of course, the media went ballistic! We got all sorts of abuse as it went round. But they were all successful meetings.

Joe Dwyer: *You were finally elected to Westminster in 1997. You had a Labour leadership, which very broadly speaking, was doing right towards Ireland. How was it working with the Labour leadership rather than against them?*

John McDonnell: In 1997 I got elected in my constituency in Hayes and Harlington. The issue for us then was to ensure that, as the peace process went on, that the Irish community here was engaged. That it understood the nature of the debate and the discussions that were taking place.

And then, lending whatever support we could. Convincing people that actually, having secured peace, we should never give up the whole demand and – I don't even call it a dream anymore – the reality of a united Ireland.

As an individual MP, there is very little you can do apart from voice the views of your constituents and, also, voice principled positions. But anything that Mo Mowlam wanted, she knew that she had a group on the backbenches that would give her that support. Jeremy and I were often working on that.

Joe Dwyer: *It's easy to forget how close Corbyn's Labour came to political power in 2017. What lessons do you think there are for the left globally in making that leap from opposition to government?*

John McDonnell: There are stark differences between what's happening today with Sinn Féin, in particular, and what happened to us. The main difference is this – I'd always said to people on the left, 'you've got to do the work now on the basis that tomorrow you could be in government.' And no one would take me seriously!

The issue for us, to be honest, was we hadn't done enough preparation for two things. Firstly, for when you get into a leadership position. And secondly, in building the movement behind us to sustain us. So, we had to do that all in a rush. The policy programme was there basically. We knew what we wanted to do in political terms. Building a movement that's convinced of its own role, understands its own history. But also has the cadres that can be able to organise on the ground. That's

the difference. It's a stark difference.

Over time, Sinn Féin has built its base and, I think, at each stage consolidated it. Everyone's looking for the great leap forward, I don't think that happens. I think what happens, if you're coming from a left progressive position, you have to build slowly, laying the bricks at each turn. And the bricks are just competence, as well as building that movement.

We had to do it virtually overnight. We had to do it with a Parliamentary Labour Party with less than twenty-per-cent support behind us.

Joe Dwyer: *You recently hosted a Westminster meeting for the Labour for Irish Unity pressure group. Why do think there's space for reviving this conversation around the Irish unity debate within the broader British labour movement?*

John McDonnell: I think people shouldn't underestimate Labour for Irish Unity. I know its embryonic but I think there's a real potential of growing into something numerically sizeable but also quite influential. But the reason I think it's important within the labour and trade union movement is because there has still been that long history of the progressive left – and the labour and trade union movement here – having that interest in Ireland. Largely because our movement is populated by people of Irish extraction. So there's an interest there that needs to be held together.

Once the Good Friday Agreement was signed; people breathed a sigh of relief and their attention moved elsewhere. You can understand that, there's so many crises in the world, not least in Palestine at the moment. But the attention sort of moved on. So, now there is that potential for a referendum, which I think would bring about a united Ireland, we need to ensure that the labour and trade union movement here does bring its attention back to Ireland.

So, I think Labour for Irish Unity has a role to play. As long as we have a fully conscious labour and trade union movement here, exerting influence on a Labour Government, I think then there's a real chance that we won't have a Labour Government making some of the mistakes of the past. That's a key



issue for us. So, I don't want to exaggerate it, but I just think the potential is enormous. If we can do the work now, it could be quite influential at that time.

Joe Dwyer: *Last question, do you think you'll see a united Ireland in your lifetime? Do you hope to?*

John McDonnell: Yes, yes. For the first time in my life, I do actually. I'm incredibly optimistic. I think that's because people have worked so hard on convincing people. It's that thing about hegemony, isn't it? Making sure that your ideas, your approach, is seen as common sense. I think now people will, generally, see a united Ireland as a common sense approach for the future of the country. For the first time, yeah, I'm really optimistic and I'm confident. It doesn't mean to say that there isn't an awful lot of work to be done.

GUILDFORD FOUR CAMPAIGN

During that period as well, I was approached by a bloke who worked for the Inner London Education Authority which came under us, Erroll Smalley.

I'd never met him before but Erroll was a very persistent person! He kept turning up to see me to talk about his nephew, Paul Hill. I'd obviously seen what had gone on in the media, with regards to the Guildford Four case, but I hadn't gone into the detail of it. So eventually, I met with Erroll and Theresa, his wife, and they took me through the case. So, at that stage then we started mobilising for the Guildford Four Campaign. The Birmingham Six Campaign was already there so we were supporting that too. But I chaired the Guildford Four Campaign. It was almost a moral duty to get involved. It was obvious that Paul and the others had been fitted up.



A UNITED IRELAND A PLAN FOR REUNIFICATION

ATHAONTÚ AGUS ÉIRE AMHÁIN:
PLEAN LE HAGHAIDH AONTAITHE



INTRODUCTION

The Irish government has both a duty and a constitutional obligation to prepare for reunification and the referendum that would enable it.

Partition continues to perpetuate many of the challenges facing the people of Ireland. Reuniting the island offers an unparalleled opportunity to unlock its full potential and foster prosperity for everyone.

Change is already in motion, and the call for a referendum is growing stronger.

This means the Irish government must:

- **Ensure the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, including the all-island institutions**
- **Set up an all-island representative Citizens' Assembly or Assemblies to plan for the future.**
- **Establish a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Irish Unity**
- **Publish a White Paper on Irish Unity**
- **Secure a referendum, north and south, on Irish Unity as set out in the Good Friday Agreement.**

A referendum on Irish unity is both attainable and winnable.

The time has come to set a date and allow the people to have their say.

Irish unity is no longer just an aspiration—it is a practical and achievable goal.

We call on the Irish Government to take the following steps:

- **Commence planning for and actively working toward the holding, by the end of this decade, of the referendums on Irish reunification provided for in the Good Friday Agreement**
- **Produce a government 'Green Paper' in the first 100 days setting out the vision for a new and United Ireland**
- **Establish a 'Reunification and One Ireland' unit within the Department of An Taoiseach**
- **Appoint a Minister of State for Reunification and One Ireland**
- **Initiate a diplomatic offensive to promote Irish unity through the many international forums and bodies of which the Irish government is a member, including the United Nations and the European Union**
- **Establish a joint Oireachtas Committee on reunification and future constitutional change**
- **Begin the necessary planning and preparation for unity by establishing a Citizens' Assembly or Assemblies on our constitutional future**
- **Hold a referendum within the lifetime of the next Dáil on voting rights in Presidential elections for**

RÉAMHRÁ

Tá dualgas bunreachtúil ar rialtas na hÉireann ullmhú d'athaontú na tíre agus don reifreann trína bhféadfaí é a bhaint amach.

Tá an chríochdheighilt fós ag cur le cuid na dúshláin atá roimh mhuintir na hÉireann. Tugann athaontú an oileáin deis nach raibh riamh ann a lánacmhainneacht a bhaint amach agus rathúnas a chothú do gach duine.

Tá athrú ag teacht cheana féin, agus tá an t-éileamh ar reifreann ag éirí níos láidre.

Dá bhrí sin, caithfidh rialtas na hÉireann:

- **Cur i bhfeidhm iomlán Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta a chinntiú, lena n-áirítear na hinstiúidí uile-oileáin**
- **Tionól saoránach nó Tionól uile-oileáin a bhunú chun pleanáil don todhchaí.**
- **Comhchoiste Oireachtais um Aontacht na hÉireann a bhunú**
- **Páipéar Bán ar Aontacht na hÉireann a fhoilsiú**
- **Reifreann a fháil, thuaidh agus theas, ar Aontacht na hÉireann mar atá leagtha amach i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta.**

Is féidir reifreann a fháil ar Aontacht na hÉireann agus é a bhaint.

Tá an t-am tagtha chun dáta a shocrú agus deis a thabhairt do na daoine a dtuairimí a chur in iúl.

Ní uailmhian amháin atá in aontacht na hÉireann a thuilleadh—is sprioc phraiticiúil agus indéanta í.

Iarrimid ar Rialtas na hÉireann na céimeanna seo a leanas a ghlacadh:

- **Tús a chur le pleanáil agus oibriú go gníomhach i dtreo na reifreann ar athaontú na hÉireann dá bhforáiltear i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta a reáchtáil faoi dheireadh na ndeich mbliana seo**
- **'Páipéar Glas' rialtais a chur le chéile ina leagfar amach an fhís atá acu d'Éirinn nua aontaithe**
- **Aonad 'Athaontú agus Éire Amháin' a bhunú mar chuid de Roinn an Taoisigh**
- **Aire Stáit um Athaontú agus Éire amháin a cheapadh**
- **Tús a chur le feachtas taidhleoireachta chun aontacht na hÉireann a chur chun cinn tríd an iliomad fóram agus comhlacht idirnáisiúnta a bhfuil rialtas na hÉireann ina bhall díobh, lena n-áirítear na Náisiúin Aontaithe agus an tAontas Eorpach**
- **Comhchoiste Oireachtais ar athaontú agus athrú bunreachtúil amach anseo a bhunú**
- **Tús a chur leis an bpleanáil agus an t-ullmhúchán riachtanach d'aontacht trí Thionól Saoránach nó Tionól a bhunú ar ár dtodhchaí bhunreachtúil**
- **Reifreann a reáchtáil laistigh de shaolré na chéad Dála eile ar chearta vótála i dtoghcháin Uachtaránachta do mhuintir an Tuaiscirt agus don diaspóra**

the people of the North and of the diaspora

- Continue the work of the North South Ministerial Council in maximising the benefits for all citizens. And where possible expand in areas such as education, health, All-Ireland economy and other areas of mutual interest and benefit
- Give MPs from the North speaking rights in the Oireachtas
- Maximise the benefits of the all-island economy to ensure prosperity and growth, delivering social, environmental and economic benefits improving the lives of people across the island
- Prepare for an Irish National Health Service

PLANNING AND PREPARING FOR UNITY

It is critically important that the Irish Government begin planning for an Irish unity referendum to fulfil its constitutional responsibility and to ensure a smooth and democratic transition.

Growing international opinions recognise that the potential for constitutional change is now on the political horizon.

Economists, business organisations and academic researchers are all extensively modelling the economic opportunities and changes that would derive from a new constitutional settlement.

The Shared Island Unit is an important project that is contributing to this work.

Preparing for a referendum and establishing a citizens' assembly allows for informed debate, careful economic and social planning, and the resolution of practical issues such as healthcare and education.

GROWING SUPPORT FOR UNITY

In the 2022 Assembly election, Sinn Féin emerged as the largest party in the Assembly and Michelle O'Neill became First Minister; an historic achievement.

In the last local government election in the North, the pro-unity vote was greater than the pro-union vote.

The General Election Survey 2024 report confirmed that the proportion of people in the North supporting the union with Britain is now below 50% of the population while the numbers positively looking at Irish Unity has increased by five percentage points.

When the voting pattern for those under 25 years of age is examined, those supporting Irish Unity is now equal (47%) to those in favour of retaining the link with Britain.

Polling conducted in 2025 by the Irish Times reported growing support for Irish Unity in the North and if continued, by 2028 60% will be in favour of Irish reunification.

Civic engagement and dialogue around the prospect of

- Leanúint le hobair na Comhairle Aireachta Thuaidh Theas chun na buntáistí is mó is féidir a bhaint amach do gach saoránach. Agus, nuair is féidir, leathnú i réimsí amhail oideachas, sláinte, geilleagar Uile-Éireann agus réimsí eile leasa choitinn agus tairbhe
- Cearta labhartha a thabhairt d'Fheisirí Parlaiminte an Tuaiscirt san Oireachtas
- Na buntáistí a bhaineann leis an ngeilleagar uile-oileáin a uasmhéadú chun rathúnas agus fás a chinntiú, chun tairbhí sóisialta, comhshaoil agus eacnamaíocha a sholáthar chun saol daoine ar fud an oileáin a fheabhsú
- Ullmhú do Sheirbhís Sláinte Náisiúnta na hÉireann

PLEANÁIL AGUS ULLMHÚ DON AONTÚ

Tá sé ríthábhachtach go dtosódh Rialtas na hÉireann ag pleanáil do reifreann aontachta in Éirinn chun a fhreagracht bhunreachtúil a chomhlíonadh agus chun aistriú rianúil daonlathach a chinntiú.

Aithnítear i dtuairimí idirnáisiúnta atá ag dul i méid go bhfuil an fhéidearthacht ann anois athrú bunreachtúil a dhéanamh.

Tá eacnamaíthe, eagraíochtaí gnó agus taighdeoirí acadúla go léir ag múnú na ndeiseanna agus na n-athraithe eacnamaíocha a bheadh mar thoradh ar shocrú bunreachtúil nua.

Is tionscadal tábhachtach é Aonad na nOileán Comhroinnte atá ag cur leis an obair seo.

Trí ullmhú do reifreann agus tionól saoránach a bhunú, is féidir plé eolasach, pleanáil chúramach eacnamaíoch agus shóisialta, agus réiteach saincheistanna praiticiúla amhail cúram sláinte, oideachas a bheith ann.

TACAÍOCHT DON AONTÚ AG DUL I MÉID

I dtoghchán an Tionóil in 2022, tháinig Sinn Féin chun cinn mar an páirtí is mó sa Tionól agus rinneadh Céad-Aire de Michelle O'Neill; éacht stairiúil.

Sa toghchán rialtais áitiúil deireanach sa Tuaisceart, ba mhó an vóta ar son na haontachta ná an vóta ar son an aontais.

Deimhníodh i dtuarascáil Shuirbhé Olltoghcháin 2024 go bhfuil céatadán na ndaoine sa Tuaisceart a thacaíonn leis an aontas leis an mBreatain sna toghcháin is deireanaí anois faoi bhun 50% den daonra agus go bhfuil méadú cúig phointe céatadán tagtha ar líon na ndaoine atá ag breathnú go dearfach ar Aontacht na hÉireann.

Nuair a scrúdaítear an patrún vótála dóibh siúd faoi bhun 25 bliain d'aois, tá na daoine a thacaíonn le hAontacht na hÉireann comhionann (47%) anois leo siúd atá i bhfabhar an nasc leis an mBreatain a choinneáil.

Léirigh pobalbhreith a rinne Lucid Talk ag deireadh 2024 gur chreid 51% de na freagróirí go mbeadh reifreann ar aontacht na hÉireann ar siúl as seo go ceann deich mbliana, rud a thug le fios go raibh níos mó tacaíochta ann d'athrú bunreachtúil.

unity are also increasing across the island, a majority view unity as the most sustainable solution to the economic, social, and political issues created by partition.

The Irish Government must act on the growing momentum for unity, ensuring we are ready to seize this historic opportunity.

CONCLUSION

There is an obligation on the Irish government to deepen the conversation about unity, to acknowledge that change is in motion and to accept that working together to accommodate that change is the way forward.

This means having a mature, confident and pragmatic approach to managing constitutional change between Dublin and London.

In 1998, a generation of courageous peacemakers came together and achieved what many thought impossible - The Good Friday Agreement - a peaceful and democratic alternative to conflict and an opportunity to design a better future for everyone in the North, across Ireland and between these islands.

The achievement of the Good Friday Agreement was a watershed moment in our political relationship.

As part of this agreement 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.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Good Friday Agreement, which includes representatives of all the major parties in the Dáil, pointed the way forward in July 2024.

It called on the Irish government to begin planning for Unity. It stated that **“There are no insurmountable economic or financial barriers to unification.”**

That the economic success of a new Ireland is in our own hands. What is needed now is detailed and ambitious preparations.’ It concluded that: **“Preparation for referenda on Irish unification will be a historic task. The Committee calls for preparation to begin immediately.”**

The Sinn Féin Commission on the Future of Ireland has organised People’s Assemblies and sectoral meetings throughout the island of Ireland. These efforts aim to actively encourage citizens to voice their opinions on future constitutional changes and the vision for a new Ireland. Additionally, we have engaged with the Irish Diaspora, inviting their input through similar gatherings.

Ultimately, the future of this island will be decided by its people, as outlined in the Good Friday Agreement.

Let us embrace this opportunity and work together to create a better, fairer, and stronger country, a United Ireland that serves all its people.

Tá rannpháirtíocht shibhialta agus idirphlé maidir leis an fhéidearthacht go mbeidh aontacht ann ag méadú ar fud an oileáin freisin, dar le mórán gurb í an aontacht an réiteach is inbhuanaithe ar na saincheisteanna eacnamaíocha, sóisialta agus polaitiúla a chruthaigh an chríochdheighilt.

Ní mór do Rialtas na hÉireann gníomhú ar an móiminteam atá ag dul i méid ar son na haontachta, ag cinntiú go bhfuilimid réidh chun an deis stairiúil seo a thapú.

CONCLUÍD

Tá dualgas ar rialtas na hÉireann tuilleadh a dhéanamh maidir leis an gcomhrá faoi aontacht, a admháil go bhfuil athrú ag teacht agus glacadh leis gurb é an bealach chun cinn é oibriú le chéile chun freastal ar an athrú sin.

Is ionann sin agus cur chuige aibí, muiníneach agus pragmatach a bheith ann maidir le hathrú bunreachtúil idir Baile Átha Cliath agus Londain a bhainistiú.

Sa bhliain 1998, tháinig glúin de lucht síochána misniúla le chéile agus bhain siad amach an rud a shíl go leor nárbh fhéidir a dhéanamh - Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta - rogha shíochánta dhaonlathach ar choimhlint agus deis chun saol níos fear amach anseo a chruthú do gach duine sa Tuaisceart, ar fud na hÉireann agus idir na hoileáin seo.

Cor cinniúnach inár gcaidreamh polaitiúil ba ea comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta a bhaint amach.

Mar chuid den chomhaontú seo, tá freagracht ar rialtais na Breataine agus na hÉireann araon oibriú le chéile ar mhaithe leis an bpobal mar chomh-ráthóirí síochána, athmhuintearais agus todhchaí nua a bhaint amach.

Thug an Comhchoiste Oireachtais ar Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, ina bhfuil ionadaithe ó na mórpháirtithe go léir sa Dáil, an bealach chun cinn i mí Iúil 2024.

Iarradh ar rialtas na hÉireann tús a chur le planáil d’Aontacht. Cuireadh in iúl **‘nach bhfuil aon bhacainní dosháraithe eacnamaíochta ná airgeadais ar aontú.**

Cuireadh in iúl freisin rath eacnamaíoch Éire nua inár lámha féin. An rud atá ag teastáil anois ná ullmhúcháin mhionsonraithe uailmhianacha.’ **Ba é an chonclúid a baineadh as: ‘Tasc stairiúil a bheidh san ullmhúchán do reifrinn ar aontú na hÉireann. Iarrann an Coiste go gcuirfí tús láithreach leis an ullmhúchán.’**

D’eagraigh Coimisiún Shinn Féin um Thodhchaí na hÉireann Tionóil Daoine agus cruinnithe earnála ar fud oileán na hÉireann. Tá sé mar aidhm ag na hiarrachtaí seo saoránaigh a spreagadh go gníomhach chun a dtuairimí a chur in iúl maidir le hathruithe bunreachtúla amach anseo agus an fhís d’Éirinn nua. Ina theannta sin, chuaigh muid i gcomhairle le diaspora na hÉireann gafa againn, ar lorg ionchuir uathu ag cruinnithe den chineál céanna.

I ndeireadh na dála, is iad muintir an oileáin a chinnfidh todhchaí an oileáin seo, mar atá leagtha amach i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta.

Glacaimis leis an deis seo agus oibrímis le chéile chun tír níos fearr, níos cothroime agus níos láidre a chruthú, Éire Aontaithe ina ndéantar freastal ar a muintir go léir.

POBLACHT NA hÉIREANN. THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the

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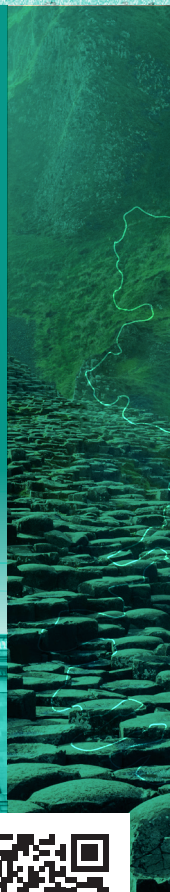
We place the cause of the Irish Repu

blessing we invoke upon our arms, and v

it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour

and discipline, and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good,

prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.



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of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and vouch for the fact that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline, and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on behalf of the Provisional Government:

THOMAS J. CLARKE,

SEAN Mac DIARMADA.

P. H. PEARSE,

JAMES CONNOLLY

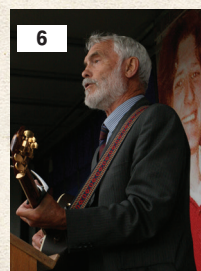
THOMAS MacDONAGH

EAMONN CEANNT

JOSEPH PLUNKETT.

Quiz

- 1 Name the internee who penned the anti-internment anthem *The Men Behind the Wire* -
- 2 Name the husband and wife who founded the Flying Column and recorded *Four Green Fields* -
- 3 Who wrote the ballad *Only Our Rivers Run Free* -
- 4 In 1972 an LP record was produced from tapes smuggled from Long Kesh. Name the LP -
- 5 One of Bob Dylan's best known anti-war song's is based on a Dominic Behan song. Name the songs.
- 6 Who wrote *The H Block Song*:
- 7 Christy Moore wrote *Ninety Miles from Dublin*, about the Blanket Protest. What song did he write about Armagh Jail?
- 8 Name the poitín maker immortalised in a song by Bobby Sands
- 9 What Wolfe Tones song celebrated the escape from Mountjoy prison of Séamus Twomey, Kevin Mallon, and JB O'Hagan -
- 10 What Wolfhound song was written to mark the escape of nine prisoners from Crumlin Road Jail
- 11 The song *Sunday Bloody Sunday* was written by which of the Beatles and his wife?
- 12 Who wrote *Come Out Ye Black and Tans* -
- 13 What ballad about the execution of a republican prisoner in 1920 was recorded by both Paul Robeson and Leonard Cohen?
- 14 Originally titled *Lines written by a republican soldier 1923*, by James Ryan, what is a re-written version of this song by Dominc Behan better known as today?
- 15 What former Uachtarán of Sinn Féin (in 1931-33) wrote *The soldiers of Cumann na mBan* -
- 16 The ballad *Take me home to Mayo* is about Michael Gaughan. What hunger strike is remembered in the song *Shall my Soul Pass through Old Ireland*?
- 17 14 of 16 leaders of 1916 are buried in this 'sacred spot' the title of a song written and recorded by Declan Hunt. What is the song?
- 18 An Dord Féinne. written by Pádraig Mac Piaras sings about what Irish woman who took on the English navy and won. Who was she?
- 19 Name the song written by Bik Mc Farlane in memory of his comrade Bobby Sands.
- 20 Anna Johnstone, who died in 1902 wrote the ballad *Roddy Mac Corley*. By what pen name was she better known?



For the answers turn to the back page

The political institutions are sites of

Republican struggle

By Emma McArdle



The road to reunification and building an Ireland that cherishes all its citizens will always be full of twists and turns, highs and lows. Steps are taken forward, big, bold steps that everyone can see and recognise and appreciate. But for all of these momentous advancements, there are countless steps taken that nobody ever sees, there are also side steps, elegant pirouettes, and the odd clumsy misstep along the way.

That's life, it rarely moves in a linear sweep towards a pre-determined ending, that's part of the beauty of it, we get to live every day, as Martin McGuinness put it, every day in all its chaos!

I think it's human to crave the predictable, synchronised swim of routine. The familiarity of the systems and structures that make up our lives help us feel safe, secure and grounded. Sometimes we haven't really much choice but to conform to the norms, we have to go to school and to work, everyone has family and caring responsibilities that ebb and flow throughout our lives, particularly for women. There are always demands on our time and business to be taken care of.

Life is so busy that there can be some comfort in surrendering to someone else's clár, to busy ourselves with the very important but mundane detail of our lives. It's not something I readily admit as an activist, but if you are looking for an excuse not to be active there are always ten or 15 other things that you can be doing that aren't remotely linked with advancing the republican struggle, and the difficulty is they're all worthy things to be at as well.

The life of an activist is always going to be a balancing act. We cannot and should not neglect our families, but neither can we allow ourselves to become so distracted by our own surroundings that we fail in our duty to be the change makers.

These day's republican activism takes place across many sites of struggle. There must always be a campaigning element to activism, that is where grass roots supporters can get on board and play their part in advancing our objectives. Our campaigning needs to be more open and inclusive. There are many people from all walks of life who support our aims, they may never wish to become members of Sinn Féin or any other party and while we make every effort to grow the party, we have to create space for them too.

Our struggle must also be progressed in the institutions to which we elect representatives. The Oireachtas, the Assembly and local coun-

cils, our MPs and MEPs all make a real difference to people's lives. Our activists in those institutions are unbelievably busy and all of the work they do is to make life better for people.

Much of the time though this amounts to making life better within the system, not changing the system.

It's extremely worthy work to lobby for a person's operation, or for more housing or better roads and facilities, but while it might change life for one person, or a group of people, unless the system is changed in 20 or 30 years from now some other activist is going to be making the same representation for some other group or individual.

So what we in Sinn Féin are doing is actually unique on this island. We are working on an all island basis, contesting different sets of elections, to change the system, to reunite our country and deliver an Ireland of equals. No other party is doing this.

We have to use our institutional strength to further those ends.

This work is well underway in the Assembly with numerous initiatives being led by Michelle O'Neill in the North. In the 26 counties the old rival parties have come together once again to block the establishment of a republican government. Although I wish this wasn't so and that Mary Lou McDonald was leading the government, our activists in the Oireachtas have a massive opportunity to put Irish unity front and centre and make it impossible for the government not to act.

The Good Friday Agreement Committee has done some amazing work through its Constitutional Futures series. It has published reports on the economic impact of Irish Unity and on Women and on Constitutional Change.

The volume of work involved in getting these documents to publication is immense; witnesses must be invited to attend the committee, discussions are held with the witnesses, there are differences of opinion and many differing views on the way forward, cross party support on the final publication needs to be secured and all committee members need to agree on the recommendations going to the government.

Both of the reports published so far have urged the government to begin the detailed planning work necessary to lay the foundations for reunification to happen. The government is yet to do so but its major initiative - the Shared Island Unit - is engaging in useful research and discussion work and investing in cross-border projects.



The next theme which the GFA Committee will examine is Healthcare in the context of a united island. I don't need to state how impactful this piece of work could potentially be.

I urge activists to familiarise yourselves with this work that's ongoing in the institutions and which is being driven by Sinn Féin elected representatives.

The reports to date have called on action from the government. The more people are aware of this work, the more leverage for change exists.

Our representatives are not elected to institutions just to critique the government, they are elected because institutions are a site of struggle and the work of our elected reps so far has created momentum and dynamism in our movement. Let's keep it up.



Emma McArdle
Parliamentary Assistant to
Teachta Rose
Conway-Walsh
Am le Aontacht

Time for Unity
**SO WHAT WE IN SINN FÉIN ARE
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NO OTHER PARTY IS DOING THIS.**





By Ciarán Doolin

'Waiting for Godot', the existential cycle. That is the story of emigration from Ireland. A phenomenon that has touched every generation for hundreds of years.

From 'an Gorta Mór' (Great Hunger) in the nineteenth century, straight through to the 'lost decade' of the 1950s, the 1980s 'new wave', to the modern times following the '2008 Great Recession', generations and generations have left these shores. The consequence of British colonialism, partition and systematic conservative socio-economic negligence.

For many it is a lived experience very close to home, no further than my own. I was born in Liverpool to Irish parents, raised in its Irish community, and understand very well the story and impact of the emigration cycle. Unfortunately, it is still not an issue that we can discuss in the past tense.

A sense of frustration lingers to this day, greater opportunities for financial income and personal development are seen as only being achievable abroad. Employment and starvation are no longer the defining issues that previous generations faced; rather, the lack of infrastructural investment surges a spiralling housing crisis. Why would you want to live in your parents' house till your late thirties?

Why would a teacher, nurse, doctor or any professional not want to move to a sunnier climate with enhanced financial benefits and living conditions?

That is the situation many young people face today. The endeavour of seeking a better standard of living is what each generation shares. The technological age has softened the blow, eroding great fears of loneliness and isolation from family and friends, making it easier to communicate.

Not all see Ireland as a place of return.

To some Ireland has become a thing of the past, a place they return periodically, or the memory a distant generation left behind. But for others, they hold a romantic yearning to return.

In recent times we have heard the call from the diaspora: 'Give us a reason to come home'. A cry made by hundreds of Irish nurses standing outside the Sydney Opera House in 2019 asking the Irish government for

better working terms and conditions.

That section looks to the achievement of a better Ireland, one that breaks the generational cycle.

An Ireland that resembles the 'from cradle to grave' Beveridge idealism.

To achieve that dream, to see a new Ireland, the diaspora will play a central role. Throughout Irish history the diaspora has always been an influential aid in support of change at home. From Clare's Dragoons to the Fenian raids, to hoisting the tricolour over the GPO in 1916, the diaspora was always there.

During the most recent period of conflict their voice raised awareness to issues at home, of inequality and discrimination to injustice, eventually advancing the peace process. Whether by returning home to support campaigns or advocating from abroad, their contribution stands the test of time.

Today there still remain those in the political establishment in the South who refuse to allow those voices to be heard. They prefer instead to ignore the core principle of the 1916 Proclamation which seeks to "cherish all of the children of the nation equally." They view the voices of the diaspora as a threat to maintaining political power, instead of a means by which to move forward.

It is for this reason Irish citizens in the North and in the diaspora find themselves asking the same question every seven years: 'Why can't I vote for my President?'

The existential discourse around presidential voting rights is longwinded and mundane. The denial of rights for citizens living in the North and in the diaspora occurs perpetually every presidential cycle, followed by endless promises of electoral change.

Contemporary discussions around Irish unity and planning for constitutional change cannot afford to ignore the experience of the diaspora. By the same vein, we must also not exclude engaging with voices of those who have found refuge in Ireland in recent times.

To achieve a new Ireland, we must ensure that mistakes of the past are not rehearsed. To move forward we must first know where we have come from.

For that, the future of Ireland requires all its citizens at home and abroad to be heard. It depends on it.

Ciarán Doolin

Sinn Féin International Desk Manager

In recent times we have heard the call from the diaspora: 'Give us a reason to come home'. A cry made by hundreds of Irish nurses standing outside the Sydney Opera House in 2019 asking the Irish government for better working terms and conditions.





Momentum grows for Irish Unity in USA

By Greg O'Loughlin

Planning for Irish Unity continues to gain ground thanks to the discussions and workshops happening at the People's Assemblies: Diaspora in cities across the United States.

The Irish diaspora were the centre of events in Cleveland, OH, Columbus, OH, Rockland County, New York, and Washington, DC. Hundreds of recent Irish immigrants and generational Irish Americans have come together to weigh in on key questions and plans for next steps in the work towards a new and united Ireland.

With events planned for Chicago, IL, Cincinnati, OH, and Nashville, TN, in the coming months, momentum

keeps growing and the need to prepare for unity is clearer than ever!

Here's a look at how the Assemblies have gone so far:

CLEVELAND, OHIO

At a sold-out event, hundreds of members of the Irish-American community gathered to discuss their role in securing Irish unity. The meeting was addressed by Sinn Féin's Newry and Armagh MP Dáire Hughes.

Addressing the Cleveland event, the Newry and Armagh MP said, "Irish unity requires an Irish government to plan, prepare, and advocate for unity. The Irish government needs to hear the voice of Irish America."

Questions and topics that were raised in the small-group discussions included questions on how to integrate two separate economies and public services, how to ensure a peaceful transition, governance issues, and many more.

COLUMBUS, OHIO

Nearly 200 gathered in Columbus Ohio to hear from Sinn Féin Representative to North America Ciarán Quinn. He told the gathering "The US was essential in reaching the Good Friday Agreement. It also acted to safeguard progress when the British government sought to impose a hard border across the island as part of Brexit.

"Since its signing, the US has acted as a strong guarantor of the agreement. The agreement provides for Irish unity referendums. If you support the Good Friday Agreement you support the democratic right of the people to have their say. It is now time for that right to be vindicated. The US should continue to act as a guarantor of the agreement, ensuring its full implementation, including unity referendums."

In the small group discussions, participants focused their attention on the types of activism it will take to move the needle at local, state, and national levels with their representatives and elected officials. Small groups worked on a variety of options for activism with their civic groups, unions, and other community organizations.

WASHINGTON, DC

The event sold out weeks before the evening everyone gathered at the headquarters of the Laborers International Union of North America on Black Lives Matter Boulevard in Washington, DC.

Members of many Irish American organizations, including the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Irish American Unity Conference, and Irish Network DC came together for the discussion and to hear from John Finucane, MP for Belfast North.

He told attendees, "For supporters of Irish unity, the objective is clear. We need to secure and win unity referendums. To ensure that the right of the people to referendums is vindicated and that we persuade the majority in both jurisdictions that Unity is in their best



interests.

"We are engaged in a project of nation-building. To demonstrate to the world that a peaceful transition is possible. A united Ireland must be a new Ireland. We want to reconcile past differences and build a home for all."

Many of the people and the groups worked together to make plans for outreach to their representatives, newspapers, and unions to make clear the growing support for unity. Additionally, many in attendance made plans to raise the issue at their upcoming St. Patrick's Day events with attendees and visiting dignitaries.

Rockland County, NY

The largest GAA club in America played host to the first People's Assembly to be held in New York. People travelled from as far as Boston, MA, Hartford, CT, and Providence, RI, to join the attendees from the New York area at the Rockland GAA club.

John Finucane again addressed the crowd, saying, "This Irish government fails to grasp the historic opportunity of our time. Instead they tell us that now is not the time.

"One hundred years after partition. Twenty-Seven years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. Five years after the Unionist electoral majority came to an

end. When is the time?"

"To effectively prepare, the Irish government must establish a Citizens' Assembly on Irish unity and use its resources to lay out a vision of a new and united Ireland.

The small group discussions were invigorating as many seasoned activists shared their thoughts about how best to make it clear to American political leaders as well as Irish political leaders that there needs to be a plan for Irish Unity. Conversations were focused on the importance of maintaining and growing bipartisan support all over the United States as well as raising awareness at local, state, and national levels.

At every one of the events, the calls for the US to continue to support the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement - including the provision for unity referendums - echoed from table to table, around the room. Just as clear were the calls for the Irish Government to act and seize the opportunity to build a new Ireland.

These events offer an opportunity to connect with other activists from around the country, to share strategies and ideas, brainstorm, teach, and learn from one another. Stay connected to learn more details about upcoming events across the United States and Canada.



BOOKREVIEW

In Good Time – A Memoir by Rev. Harold Good

Reviewed by Jim Gibney

In national and international media and political circles the names of the Reverend Harold Good and Fr. Alex Reid are linked through one of their most important joint peace missions – the witnessing of IRA weapons being put beyond use. An occasion of immense historical importance – second only to the decision by the IRA to end its armed campaign. An event which few, including me, thought possible.

The Rev Harold Good and Fr Alec Reid were exceptional individuals known as life-long peace makers. They were non-judgemental with those they met on their peace journey always insisting that peace and justice were inseparable. They shared a conviction that “the resolution of conflict lay in building relationships and dialogue rather than fruitless finger-pointing and ritual condemnation.”

Harold’s book, ‘In Good Time: A Memoir’ is autobiographical in the finest of details. It is not possible to do justice to Harold’s expansive, now in his late 80s, life of public service as a Methodist minister and peace maker and his many roles in the community, statutory and voluntary sectors. By necessity this review is a fleeting account of the epoch-making times he lived in and helped to shape.

From a very young age Harold’s life was to be governed by his deep Christian faith in the Methodist Church. He was confirmed at 15 and made “a conscious and public commitment to be a follower of Christ and did so in his father’s Knock Church in Belfast” and at 17 he felt the “call to ministry”. At the same church he had the “joy and privilege of confirming several of his own children”

Unknown to him at this early stage in his religious vocation he would follow his father and grandfather to the highest office in the Methodist Church – President of the Methodist Church of Ireland. And like his father, who met members of the IRA leadership in 1959 to ask them to end its border campaign, Harold was also to meet senior IRA figures.

One of Harold’s grandfather’s was a member of Carson’s UVF, and helped land and distribute 20,000 rifles from



Larne harbour in 1911. The other grandfather, a member of the RIC, refused to evict tenants from their homes.

The book’s prologue is akin to a template of Harold’s mission for peace: it is structured around, the need to talk, the need for truth and the need for trust.

He believed that “listening and journeying with each other is a prerequisite for the resolution of conflict”.

When tracing his family’s history, he considered it a ‘badge of honour’ and therefore ‘independence’ that none of the Good family was ever part of the establishment in church or state.

Harold’s ‘independence’ was a primary concern of his and it ensured that he was respected and welcome in his ministerial duties as a peacemaker.

He immersed himself in religious instruction which took him to university in the USA and in Ireland. He took a master’s degree in Pastoral Psychology and Counselling and a yearlong internship in Pastoral care in

BOOKREVIEW

the Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis and worked in a community-based pastoral counselling service.

His teachers in the Methodist Church and in university instilled in him the need for “non-judgemental empathetic and unconditional acceptance” of those he met or assisted in his ministry.

The core tenets of Methodism also guided him in his life’s work, ‘Be friends of everyone. Be enemies of no one’ and minister with “openness and inclusiveness” in the spirit of ‘social holiness’ and ‘ecumenism’.

Harold was to employ these core beliefs throughout his life as he and his ever-present, loyal and dedicated wife Clodagh faced into married life, bringing up children while they provided pastoral care to those they met.

Two episodes tested these values very early on in Harold’s ministry and the experience was to stay with him. Harold and Clodagh’s first assignment was to the First Methodist Church in Warren Ohio. They arrived there one week after they were married in August 1964. The US was a cauldron of racial unrest with the Black Civil Rights Movement marching amid protests about the Vietnam War.

Harold immediately saw the human effect of racist attitudes and it reminded him of the impact of sectarianism back home. While Martin Luther King was marching from Selma to Montgomery in 1965 for civil rights Harold marched in Warren in solidarity.

He befriended Duane a young black man and his white girlfriend. Mixed relationships were frowned upon. Both were arrested and fined for ‘speeding’ by the state police. Duane was released to get the money for the fines. His girlfriend was held in gaol overnight where she experienced appalling racist abuse from the police. Duane borrowed the money from Harold.

For their safety Harold, Clodagh and their infant daughter Carolyn, escorted Duane and his girlfriend out of the state followed by the menacing state trooper police.

The second defining episode was in 1969 when Harold stood with Fr. Des Wilson in the ruins of Bombay Street after it was burned to the ground by loyalists

colluding with the RUC and ‘B’ Specials. Harold’s congregation in the Shankill’s Agnes Street Methodist Church generously donated to the distraught Catholics who had to flee from their

Bombay Street homes.

Harold was a prison Chaplain in Crumlin Road and Long Kesh prisons and throughout the 1970s, at the height of the conflict, he was the director of the Corrymela Centre for reconciliation.

He was a senior adviser to the Methodist Church and led most of its engagements for peace over decades – meeting without preconditions republicans, Gerry Adams, Tom Hartley, Mitchel McLaughlin, Alec Maskey and me.

He dedicates two chapters of the book to his meetings with Ian Paisley senior and Martin McGuinness, which are detailed and comprehensives and reflect the personal and political qualities of both leaders and their commitment to peace and his gentle and persuasive manner of moving both leaders together.

In a glowing tribute he describes Fr Alex as “an indefatigable peacemaker, but for good reason a little known one for most of his ministry, his singular and courageous contribution to the Irish peace process was incalculable.”

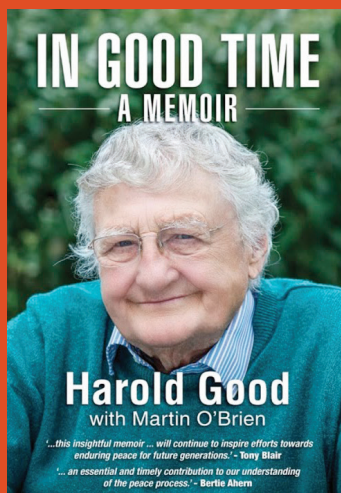
He is critical of all the main Christian churches – their strengths and weaknesses and challenges many of their policies which he believes contributed to division and injustice. But he does so, as he says, “in the spirit of a lover’s quarrel”.

He is also critical of the “subjective and partisan attitudes” that have dismissed balanced and nuanced proposals about dealing with the past to help those most affected – the relatives who lost loved ones or those who were injured in the conflict.

A few weeks ago, I met Harold at an event organised by the ‘Four Corner’s Festival’ about reconciliation. Now in his late 80s, he shook my hand with a firm grip, smiled broadly and with a spring in his heel climbed the steep steps of St Mary’s auditorium to his seat.

His renowned peace-making skills were to be employed to good effect in the Basque Country and in Colombia in assisting their peace processes. He has rightly received numerous awards for his peace work.

But there is another Good story which weaves its way through this book from beginning to end and its principal is ‘the young girl from Waterford’, Clodagh, who was by Harold’s side as they shepherded young Duane and his girlfriend to safety in 1965; shepherded political guests around their kitchen table and was with him throughout his decades of peace-making. Clodagh – his constant made his life’s work possible.



In Good Time – A Memoir by Rev. Harold Good with Martin O'Brien

Published by Red Stribe Press and available in all good bookshops.

BOOKREVIEW

'The Irish Republican Brotherhood 1914-1924'

by John O'Beirne Ranelagh

Reviewed by Chris Turley

John O'Beirne Ranelagh's "The Irish Republican Brotherhood 1914-1924" provides a comprehensive examination of one of the pivotal organisations in Irish history, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). This book explores the political machinations, social dynamics, and the ideological undercurrents that shaped Ireland's struggle for independence during a tumultuous period. With a focus on the years leading up to and following the Easter Rising of 1916, it discusses the role of the IRB who without the rising would not have taken place. Ranelagh's work stands as a significant contribution to the scholarship on late 19th and early 20th century Irish Republican Brotherhood.

Ranelagh's narrative is meticulously organized, guiding the reader through the historical landscape of early revolutionary Ireland. He begins with a contextual overview of the IRB's founding and its early activities in the late 19th century, which serves to establish the organisations roots and motivations. Chapter 1, Conspirators charts the foundation of the IRB in Dublin on St Patrick's Day 1858 and the work of James Stephens who escaped to France after the failed Young Irelanders uprising in 1848, alongside the formation of the IRB other Young Irelanders who escaped to America formed the Fenian Brotherhood, a forerunner to Clan na Gael which became the principal Irish republican organisation in the United States, a relationship that continued over many decades.

Ranelagh's detailed portrayal of key figures within the IRB, such as John Devoy and Michael Collins, adds depth to the narrative. He skillfully weaves biographical sketches with broader historical trends, allowing readers to grasp the interplay between individual and collective action. In Chapter 6 Supreme Council, the author's analysis of the internal dynamics of the IRB, including ideological rifts and leadership disputes, reveals the complexity of the organisation and the challenges it

faced. The weakness and the need to reorganise the IRB outside of Dublin and the emergence of key figures like Clarke, McDermott and Hobson is particularly well discussed, detailing the efforts made by a new and energetic leadership under the watchful eye of veteran Fenian Tom Clarke.

Moreover, Ranelagh situates the IRB within the broader context of Irish nationalism. In Chapter 11 Rising, he deftly connects the organisations's actions with developments in the broader political landscape, such as the rise of Sinn Féin and the impact of the 1916 Rising. This chapter discusses the secretive nature of the IRB and their determination that unlike other rebellions, the rising would not be compromised by informers. A quote from a participant Sam Irwin offers an insight into the mindset of those who participated, 'we were mobilised for a parade, and we walked into a rebellion'. The author's exploration of the IRB's eventual decline and the emergence of alternative republican organisations provides a comprehensive overview of the shifting tides of Irish politics.

O'Beirne also discusses the interplay between the IRB and other groups, such as the Irish Volunteers and Sinn Féin. This exploration of relationships and rivalries adds depth to the narrative, illustrating the complexities of the independence movement. The emergence and prominence of Arthur Griffith and his relationship with Collins is of particular interest and the challenges that this provided for figures like Cathal Brugha is well analyzed in Chapter 22. A telling quote from Michael Collins in July 1922 sums up the complexity of the civil war when he said, 'When many of us are forgotten, Cathal Brugha will be remembered'.

The book does not shy away from the challenges faced by the IRB, including internal divisions and the impact of external events, like the First World War. O'Beirne critically assesses the organisations's effectiveness and the consequences of its actions, particularly regarding the civil strife that followed the establishment of the Irish Free State.

In conclusion, John O'Beirne Ranelagh's "The Irish Republican Brotherhood 1914-1924" is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in the history of Irish republicanism and the complexities of the struggle for Irish independence. Through its detailed examination of the IRB, the book sheds light on the intricate interplay of ideology, leadership, and social context that defined this critical era. Ranelagh's rigorous scholarship and engaging writing style make this work accessible to both scholars and general readers alike. Ultimately, Ranelagh's book serves as a reminder of the enduring significance of the fight for national identity and self-determination in Ireland's history.

'The Irish Republican Brotherhood 1914-1924' by John O'Beirne Ranelagh is available at most good book shops, online and through An Fhuiseog 55 Falls Road BT12 4PD www.thelarkstore.ie

