

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



FERMANAGH PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

**Westville Hotel,
Enniskillen
22 February 2024**



Sinn Féin

www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland

HOPE AND CHANGE

The Commission on the Future of Ireland was established by Sinn Féin in July 2022.

Its remit is to undertake a grassroots consultation with the people of Ireland and internationally on the future of Ireland. This will be achieved in a number of ways: through the hosting of public People's Assemblies across the country and internationally; through the collection and collation of written submissions; through hosting sectoral meetings and through private engagements.

A final report will be compiled at the culmination of the project.

This is a report of the Fermanagh People's Assembly which took place in the Westville Hotel, Enniskillen on Tuesday 22 February.

The meeting was addressed by Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald.

A video of the Fermanagh People's Assembly is available on YouTube:

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

Currently the Commission on the Future of Ireland has received almost 200 contributions from a broad range of interested individuals and groups.

It is important to note that contributions can still be made to the Commission at commission@sinnfein.ie or via the following webpage www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland

- Thus far 12 Peoples Assemblies have been held and a thirteenth is planned for Lurgan in June.
- The Commission is also planning to hold a meeting on Rights in the New Ireland at the beginning of May.
- An event at the Balmoral Show on Rural Communities in the New Ireland on 17 May.
- An event on the all-island economy in the Europa Hotel in June.

Introduction

Fermanagh South Tyrone MP Michelle Gildernew opened the 11th People's Assembly held in Enniskillen Fermanagh on 22 February, saying, "This is an exceptional time to be involved in Irish politics", because "We are at the birth of a nation." Gildernew framed the evening by saying that, "This event is an opportunity to explore the opportunities for Fermanagh in a new and united Ireland," and that "We want to hear about your hopes and aspirations."

The panellists on the night were: Chairperson Noelle McAloon, Enniskillen BID Manager; along with Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Irish Language Interpreter; Dr Niall McVeigh, Director Cavan Institute; Mairaid Kelly, Local School Campaigner; and Producer and Director Trevor Birney.

Key themes:

- The role of education
- An inclusive united Ireland
- Decentralisation in the new Ireland
- Regional imbalances
- Infrastructure
- Access to services



Opening Address from Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald TD

The Sinn Féin President's address focused on the need for dialogue and respect for differences. McDonald said, "We have seen people gather in rooms and halls like this up and down the island. We have heard very different views, very different perspectives. We have heard different challenges. And we have heard some genuine concerns. All of that is good. That is what respectful dialogue is all about."

In terms of the evening's discussion, McDonald suggested that, "We need to not alone respect difference, but we need to embrace it. Because it is through difference that we are going to test our ideas."

McDonald told the audience that, "We don't need to be afraid, any of us, whatever our perspective, of the challenges that are ahead. And we should look to the future only with hope and optimism."

Addressing the core of Sinn Féin's values today, McDonald said, "I have thought very deeply about what modern Irish republicanism is offering. What are we saying? What are our values?"

McDonald explained that, "If I was to choose two words that sum up what we as Irish republicans are standing for in the here and now I would say hope and change. That is what we are offering to people all across the island in 2024."

Turning to the planning for and imagining of the future Ireland, McDonald told the audience that, "We need to address the questions of what an all-Ireland health service would look like. What would our education system look like? How do we build our economy in a just and equal way? And how do we achieve decent jobs, decent work? What does a truly equal society look like? How will all identities - how will the British identity on the island be cherished and protected in a new Ireland. And how do we guarantee everybody's civil and religious liberties, democratic human rights, political rights and entitlements."



Opening remarks and introductions from panel

The independent chairperson, Noelle McAloon, welcomed the audience and highlighted how the conversation about Irish unity is already happening in pubs and at kitchen tables across the country. She said it was a very relevant conversation for young people. She has three daughters, and they are all very hopeful for the future.

McAloon introduced the panel members and then commenced the discussion by asking the question “How can Irish unity benefit the people of Ireland?”

Dr Niall McVeigh - addressed the issue first from an educational perspective. He said, “There is a partition in education now and this has big implications for society. Whilst we have two good education systems, North and South, they are not delivering for all and there are those on the margins not being served by those education systems. In our ambition to create something new, we must address the deficiencies, have a system that delivers for all and leaves nobody behind.”

McVeigh also highlighted the, “abuses of power successive British and Irish governments have created socially/economically through partition in education and in wider society.” He stressed that, “We need to keep in mind the purpose of education which is personal development and providing the cultural capital for people to progress in life.” He said, “We need a new vision for individuals, society and the economy,” said McVeigh.

Mairaid Kelly described herself as “someone who isn’t to be messed with, someone who is all about the practicalities” and she’s “focused on getting the job done.”

For Kelly, “a United Ireland isn’t about getting one more person out to win a vote but to build a better society.” The challenge according to Kelly is “all about building a better society that would leave no one behind. A United Ireland can’t just be adding the almost two million population of the North on to the South - it has to be about having a New Ireland.”

Kelly talked about the focus on integration in schools between Catholic and Protestants. However, in some ways having, “socio-economic integration was just as important.” Kelly believes that an “opportunity is there with a New Ireland with a blank page to start again - perhaps there could be a motorway, trains, etc. in Fermanagh.” She welcomed the Irish government’s recent announcement of financial assistance for projects in the North. “These are,” she said, “just small examples of what could be done.”

However, Mairaid said that, “the Irish government’s promise from 2017 about extending voting rights in Irish Presidential elections to citizens in the North and overseas was never fulfilled and would be a step forward if it was introduced.”

Kelly believes strongly that, “Nobody should be left behind in a New Ireland. Everyone’s identity should be respected and there should be safeguards in place to protect them. Pride parades and orange parades would have to be respected as well as St. Patrick’s Day and the 12 July.”

Trevor Birney talked about his experiences growing up in a working-class protestant estate in Enniskillen during the 70s and 80s. He comes from a unionist family. He remembered clearly, “the day in 1981 when Bobby Sands was elected as the MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone.” He said, “The feeling in my community was that it was a very dark day as the Catholics/Nationalists of the town had outed themselves as IRA supporters.”

Birney talked about how Unionists always viewed themselves as more economically prosperous and business oriented than Catholics. He recounted how, “a local unionist politician called Cooper, lived at the top of Derrychara and drove a very fancy car with “1690” on the number plate.” Birney could tell from very early on that although Mr. Cooper was a unionist, in reality he “didn’t have much in common with working class Protestants such as himself.”

Trevor talked about his decision to become a journalist. Most of the lads around his age would have talked about careers in the British Army or the UDR, as these were well regarded and stable jobs, but he didn’t have those thoughts. Birney left school at 16 and eventually got a job in the local unionist paper, the ‘Impartial Reporter’. In those days, the ‘Reporter’ was owned by the Trimble family and would never have reported things about Sinn Féin or the GAA.

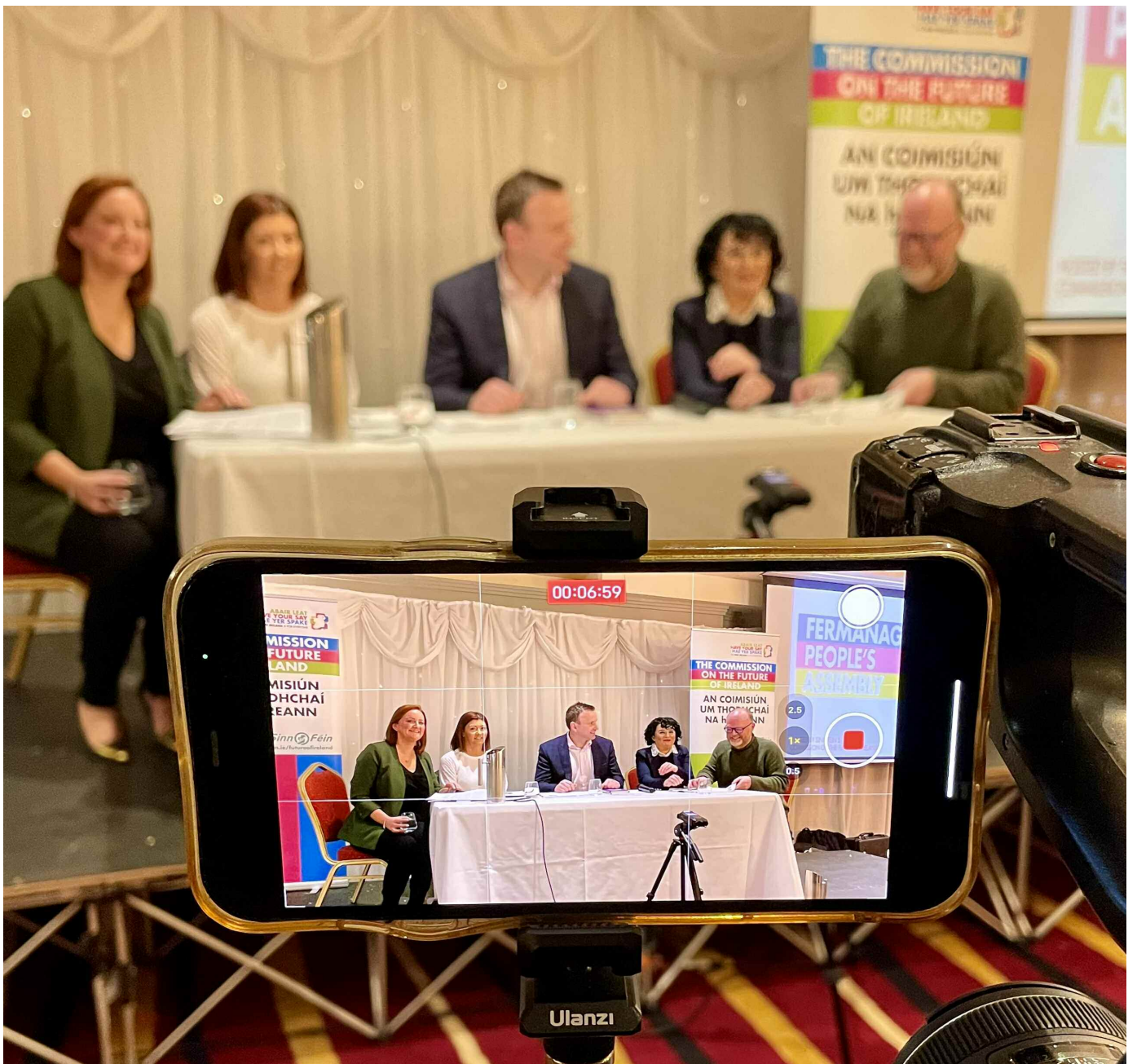
Birney talked about the influence Denzil McDaniel had on him as, “Denzil was another working-class Protestant from Enniskillen, who took over the editorship of the paper in the 1980s, and fundamentally changed the paper to be more inclusive.” He recalled how, “there was quite a pushback from prominent unionist businessmen at these changes.”

“Fermanagh people” he said, “are by nature sceptical about the future. This is in part because of the 100 years of neglect which Fermanagh has endured since partition.” He told how he used to “drive to Dublin quite often and the roads would be in such a bad condition once he crossed into the South. Today, however, the opposite is true.”

According to Birney, “a United Ireland is inevitable. There are several things which point to this, not least demographic trends.” Birney believes, “Fermanagh people would welcome change, but only if it means we actually have a seat at the table and aren’t left behind once again. Switching London rule for Dublin rule with no changes would not be in our best interests. So, a more decentralised Ireland is the way forward.”

Birney believes that “many of the Unionist arguments against a united Ireland are based on fear and paranoia, and not based in reality.” He said that, “We now have a blank page to start over and build whatever type of society we want to see for our kids and grandkids.”

THE COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF IRELAND
FERMANAGH PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY 22 FEBRUARY 2024



Questions to the Panel

Noelle McAloon - asked the panel, “How do we see ourselves negotiating change?”

Mairaid Kelly

“The starting point is for all minorities to be protected. All identities need to be embraced. We need to create a society that can flourish. The place that we’re trying to create doesn’t exist yet.

“The best way to achieve the society we want is through civic dialogue not just with politically motivated people but with people from all backgrounds and we need to include the trade union movement, schools, sports clubs etc. You will trust the outcome if you are part of the conversation.”

Dr. Niall McVeigh

McVeigh agreed with previous speakers about having a civic forum to discuss unity. It would have to give people a vision. He used Bobby Sands’ quote about a vision - “Our revenge will be the laughter of our children” and said, “This is a great vision for the future.”

Niall highlighted how, “education has been underfunded by over £143 million in the North and educational outcomes are poor in the North compared to the South.” He pointed out how “two thirds of the prison population in the North don’t have 5 GCSEs and that’s no coincidence”.



McVeigh said, “We’re now in the 5th Industrial revolution - the first one took 2-300 years and the last one only took 20 years- change can happen quickly.”

He stressed that, “it’s crazy that in 2024 we have children in our society who don’t have hope for the future. It’s also crazy that we still have academic selection. According to the latest figures of children who are entitled to free-school meals - it’s 1 in 8 in grammar schools and 1 in 3 in non-grammar schools. Subsequently less than 6% of children fail their GCSEs (less than 5 grades A-C) in Grammar schools compared to around 40% in non-grammar. These statistics aren’t good enough.”

McVeigh believes that, “The British government is happy to allow this and create a culture where too many young people have a lack of hope.” He gave an example of where the British government is “spending more money on juvenile detention centres but cut the ‘engage’ programme which helped stop young people dropping out of school early - it doesn’t make any sense.”

He said that, “There’s a real need to offer better hope for young people - and create a cultural capital in primary education. The education system in the South isn’t perfect but there are targeted interventions in education to address inequality such as DEIS schools. The current status quo creates barriers and this needs to be challenged and needs to give hope for the future.”



Main Discussion - Contributions from the audience in response to panellists' remarks:

Noelle McAloon asked the audience "Is this a decade of change?"

Eithne McNulty from Leitrim stated that, "There is still a view in the South that the Irish Government can't afford a United Ireland. Politicians must make a very strong case that Unity is affordable."

McNulty mentioned that the Good Friday Agreement allowed for a civic forum and asked, "Why is there no civic forum for the unity debate". She also said she agreed with a decentralised Ireland in the event of unity.

Paul Nolan, a business owner from Enniskillen, was "concerned that Fermanagh will continue to be left behind and there are many examples of this including the plans for the all-Ireland train service that the county hasn't been included in."

In terms of education, Paul believes in an "all-Ireland integrated education system." He continued that, "as a businessman, some things have been a bit romanticised" and cited talk of an All-Ireland Health Service. He had been expecting a presentation of a business plan for this service at the event.

Paul has concerns about paying for healthcare, and asked, "Can a good healthcare service be provided across Ireland", citing the NHS as being a great service.

Trevor Birney responded to the question comment about the NHS. He said, "We have to be real about the Tory myth of the NHS being a pillar of society. On their watch, Tories have allowed the health system to collapse." He said that there is "clear evidence that the NHS is already collapsing. Unionists are well aware of this as well."

Birney spoke about a documentary he helped make - "When Hospitals Kill." It was "about the dysfunction of the NHS and how parents were lied to through solicitors, etc. about how their children died." He said, "For some who are against a United Ireland, it's a comfort blanket to talk about there being no NHS in a United Ireland but as Fermanagh people we know too well already about the failure of the NHS."

Birney said he agreed with the band member of Kneecap, Mo Chara, who said the real enemy is the Tories and pointed to what they've done through austerity. Trevor finished by asking, "Could a Health care system in a United Ireland be better to what they have today? There's no reason it couldn't be."

Caroline from Derrylin said, "Our future will be decided by what happens in the next 10 years. Our healthcare system in Fermanagh is in crisis, with the removal of emergency general surgery at South West Acute Hospital (SWAH). SWAH needs cross border attention in order to get back the Emergency General Surgery. Education is also essential."

Darragh McElroy, a young person from Enniskillen, told the meeting that he, “believes that it is a foregone conclusion that a devolved government in Stormont will continue to operate once unity happens.”

Darragh would “feel more comfortable with a federal system” as he doesn’t “want [Fermanagh] to be side-stepped and ignored” and believes “a federal system for Ulster and other provinces outside of Dublin would serve us better.”

John McCluskey from Roslea said there was no GP service in his local area and thinks, “It was a criminal act to close the service and leave nothing behind for the people. It’s almost impossible to get an appointment in the Health Centre in Lisnaskea.” He brought up a recent case where an elderly man was sick and turned up at the Health Centre and was turned away. “Is this a way to treat a sick person in this day and age?”

McCluskey said that, “The SWAH is like a battlefield at the present also.” He told the audience that he was “down there recently on a Sunday night and there was no one to see anyone and relatives had to sit with a patient all night.” He invited local MLAs to, “go into the SWAH late at night unannounced at the weekend to see first-hand what it is like.”

John finished by saying, “It is great to see such a large crowd here tonight to discuss this and it’s clear that we need change” and that “the fight with the Roslea group to restore GP services to the village will continue.”

Mairaid Kelly wanted to respond to some of the comments around integrated education. She doesn’t believe Integrated Education is “a panacea or silver bullet which will solve all problems.”



For Kelly, “What’s missing in the integrated education debate is class integration.” She believes strongly that it shouldn’t be forced on anyone, and that parental choice must be respected. Mairaid also says that, “If integrated education delivered better outcomes for children, then she has no doubt it would take off amongst parents.”

Dr Niall McVeigh responded to the discussion saying that, “There needs to be a plan in terms of laying out the next steps”, and that socio-economically “Irish reunification is a monumental task.”

McVeigh said that, “20% of those who go away to study don’t come back.” And that, “There is a 40% deficit in productivity rates between the North and the South.” Concluding, he asserted that, “We have empirical evidence of socio-economic barriers.”

McVeigh believes, “We should be looking at the benefits of co-educational/shared schools and looking at models that work in other countries - not the French model.” And that this needs to be, “built on a moral base, not elitism”.

Seamus Carolan from Roslea, said his father “used to tell me almost 70 years ago when they were digging spuds that this country shouldn’t have two governments and he was right.” He agreed with John McCluskey’s earlier comments about Roslea. In his opinion, “It would come down to those with the biggest vested interests to agree to a United Ireland.” He queried how Sinn Fein will deal with this, because things aren’t equal at all at the moment.

Carolan said he visited his daughter in America recently and there is a complete separation there between Church and State. He said this was “the opposite in the South after partition where education and healthcare were given over to the Church to manage.” Seamus asked, “How can the country start with a blank page if this separation isn’t made” and he emphasised “how multi-national companies, vulture funds and those with vested interests still want to exploit the situation.”

Eileen Drumm said she was “very agreeable to change, but it must be an inclusive society for disabled people.” For Eileen, one of the main issues is the lack of accessible transport in Fermanagh and she was “dismayed by the exclusion of Fermanagh from the all-island rail review.”

As a disabled person, Eileen faces daily struggles in accessing reliable transport. She said that, “Fermanagh is basically inaccessible.” She related how “a friend said she was planning on travelling by train,” and Eileen responded jokingly, “What’s a train?”

Pauraig Uí Dhubhshlain lives in Enniskillen and was reared on Upper Lough Erne. Pauraig told the meeting how, “His mother took him on the last train that left this town in 1957.” He had a friend killed in the Enniskillen bomb in 1987. Following the bombing, he and a friend made posters on A4 paper calling on people to attend a vigil in the Diamond in Enniskillen. 3,500 people turned up and the “result of that is that we got an integrated school.”

In concluding, Pauraig said, “We’ve come a long way since then and we ought to reflect back on how far we have come.”

Nathan, who is a member of Enniskillen Pride organization, and an advocate for disability rights, told how he has “lived in Fermanagh for many years and he is a past pupil of Erne Integrated College,” something he’s “very proud of.”

Nathan said he was, “a little disappointed there are not more politicians here tonight” and believes “there needs to be a broader conversation” and “wants the ball rolling to put plans into action.”

Nathan related how as someone with a disability (cerebral palsy) “they have to overcome barriers all the time.” Nathan feels with almost all of the issues raised tonight, “It seems there are barriers facing people but it’s not impossible achieve change.” He said, “I don’t want to use the cliché that every journey starts with a small step, but it’s true.”

Nathan stated that he’s also on the Committee for Fermanagh Pride organisation - which he’s “very proud of” and “Fermanagh/Enniskillen’s first Pride event will be going ahead later this year - which shows there is a broader optimism in the area.” Finally, Nathan invited everyone to come along to the Fermanagh/Enniskillen Pride event.

A healthcare worker from Bellanaleck said she was “looking at the debate from a health point of view,” as that’s her background. She believes, “the biggest issue in any referendum will be the NHS,” and that “there’s a belief that the NHS would be lost.” This would, “put people off voting for change,” but she “believes that the NHS is not any better than the system they have in the South.”

She also said in many ways, “The south has a more advanced health system as they pay more in wages and have better facilities” and that, “The NHS should seek to have greater co-operation with the south on health matters.”

A young audience member was “sceptical about what Unity would bring.” He is a university student and doesn’t plan to stay here. “There is nothing here for me.” And cites absence of services and proper infrastructure. “What prospects does unity create for me?” He sees better prospects for himself in England, but would be hopeful for unity to create better prospects in Fermanagh.

Michael Keown, formerly of Garrison and now living in Enniskillen, “was glad to hear that Michelle Gildernew was in Garrison recently and hopes someone sold her a community fundraising raffle ticket.”

Keown focused on the “discussion about starting with blank pages.” He has three blank pages at home - “his three kids.” Keown told the meeting that one of his children was recently going to secondary school and for their choices, their number one choice was St Michael’s and their number three choice was Enniskillen Royal and that “it’s a sign of the times” and they’d have “supported them going to that school.”

Michael fears for the future. He pointed out that 10 years ago he was on half the money that he is currently on, but he's worse off with the cost of living. Not the only person like this and it's a big problem.

Keown addressed an earlier speaker who said they saw no future staying in Fermanagh and would likely leave in the future. He pointed out that increasingly people can work from home and that this was one of the positive developments that came about during the Covid pandemic.

Mairaid Kelly said she chose to live in Fermanagh. Her work is based in London, but allows her to live here because of remote working. Remote working can allow people who have moved for work to one day return to Fermanagh.

Kelly said that, "Young people are the future, and the decision will ultimately be for them to make, and that they must shape the world as they see fit." with challenges like climate change also "a huge consideration."

Mairaid agreed with the points made around disability access. She knows of, "disabled children who must get taxis to and from school, because there is no proper transport, and that there are not enough places in the additional needs schools to support all those children who should have places."



Dr Niall McVeigh said that, “the workforce in the South is in full employment and workers are actively being sought to fill positions”. There are, he said, “huge differentials in salary North and South with the standard of living being significantly better in the South which creates good opportunities in a reunified Ireland.”

However, “There are many challenges for the South too and lots of vulnerabilities” and he reiterated his earlier point that, “a reunified Ireland needs to deliver for everyone.”

Orla Smith from Roslea wanted to point out “one of the disadvantages of living along the border.” She was recently in a minor car collision coming from Monaghan. The insurance company informed her that, “the Republic of Ireland was classed as a foreign country and she wasn’t insured.” She wasn’t covered for the damage and had to pay herself. Smith wanted to make people aware of this issue.”

Jim Ledwith - Srúth na hÉirne

‘Is mise Jim Ledwith. Is cathaoirleach mé den ghrúpa Srúth na hÉirne. Grúpa a chuireann an Ghaeilge chun cinn sa chontae. Ba mhaith liom fáilte a chur roimh Mary-Lou McDonald go Fear Manach anocht agus fáilte a chur roimh gach duine atá anseo anocht’. Ledwith wanted to highlight the issue of a shortage of Irish language tutors in Fermanagh.

He also said that, “Fermanagh is like the Donegal of the North - too often an afterthought or left behind in areas.” He said, “The SWAH was an example. It was meant to be joined up with Sligo for patients to use just like Altnagelvin in Derry is for Donegal people but this never happened.”

On the issue of Irish language tutors Ledwith wants people to fight the University of Ulster (UU) to bring the Irish diploma to the South West College (SWC). He doesn’t feel that it is right that Fermanagh people have to travel long distances to do this.

Ledwith said, “The promotion of Irish culture and language is a positive thing and we need to work better and more on a cross-border basis for this too.” He looks around at other counties having St. Brigid celebrations and a National Famine commemoration and wonders why Fermanagh can’t do the same.

Mairtín Ó Gormlaith - ‘Is múinteoir scoile mé. Ó thaobh oideachais de, caithfear an ceist a chur cén bealach a bheas an córas oideachas níos fearr, ag fanacht sa Ríocht Aontaithe nó in Éire Aontaithe? Bhí sé ar lá stailce ar na mallaibh san Omaigh agus dúirt múinteoir eile leis go bhfuil na Torys ag déanamh ciorruithe sa córas oideachais ón bhliain 2014. Ní thuigeann an poiblí an tíochar atá ag na ciorruithe seo ar dhaoine óga’.

Translated himself, Ó Gormlaith said that he’s a teacher and, from an education perspective, the question has to be where will they be best served? Staying as part of the UK or in a United Ireland? He was on a day’s strike last month at the event in Omagh and a colleague told him that the Tories have been making cuts to education every year since 2014. There are no investments in young people and the public don’t fully understand the effects these cuts are having.

Closing remarks from panel

Trevor Birney returned to talk about, “the potential of the Economy in a united Ireland.” Talking about his own industry, Birney said the film industry was very siloed, with so many different bodies such as NI Screen and Screen Ireland, there was too much bureaucracy, which discourages big film and TV productions. One organisation could service the whole industry on the island.

Birney talked about the lack of regional balance, and how “any new Ireland needs to share the economic benefits more equitably.” He said, “We need to think bigger in our aspirations for what a New Ireland could look like.” And “now Stormont is back a lot of people will be watching to see if it can bring positive change.”

Mairaid Kelly closed by saying that “people are more interested in a better standard of living and feeling better off. People want to see their community thriving.” She feels that, “North and South needs to be working well for people to have confidence in the future.” Kelly said, “We need to move on from hope to belief.” And, “We need something well defined that people can reach for to improve their lives and their families”.

Niall McVeigh said he agreed with previous panel members remarks. He emphasized that, “We need a new society. We need radical thinking for this and deal with the mismanagement that we currently have. We need better synergy in areas on the island.” McVeigh said that, “In education, there’s the least synergy between North and South of all compared to other areas. Any synergy in education between North and South is in an ad-hoc arrangement.

“We need to push the Irish government for there to be further synergy in education. Need to push for a citizens’ assembly”.

McVeigh highlighted that, “the Education system in the North has faced approximately £143 million of cuts in the last seven years and the school population has risen by 7%.” McVeigh feels, “All who work in the education system- teachers, principals, classroom assistants, Boards of Governors - should be applauded.”

In concluding, McVeigh, said, “we’ve two teaching councils on the island for qualified teachers to register with. This doesn’t make sense.” He welcomed the fact that the Southern Teaching Council recently went to St. Mary’s in Belfast to explain to student teachers there how to register with them and “we need more synergy like this.”

Conclusion

The Fermanagh People's Assembly in the Westville Hotel, Enniskillen on 22 February was a great success. The hall was packed to capacity and the discussion went beyond the two hours that was allotted for it.

The contributions ranged across the adverse impact of partition on Fermanagh and the border economy; the imperative of an all-island economy; the advantages of building a single all-island health service funded by direct taxation; the importance of education; the damage done by Brexit; engaging with the Protestant/unionist people, and the imperative of creating a new Ireland that embraces everyone on the basis of equality and respect.

The debate on Irish Unity is now centre stage. It is a daily topic of conversation for many and the demand for the unity referendum that is part of the Good Friday Agreement is growing.

The Irish government is a co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement. It has a responsibility to defend and promote the Agreement and part of this must be to plan for the future. We all plan for the future in our lives. The Irish government has to end its resistance to this.

It is crucial that those of us who want a united Ireland also create the space for those who are opposed to it or those who have not made up their minds and who may be persuadable, to become part of the conversation on unity.

It is clear that a growing number of people from a unionist background are questioning their support for the union and in some cases have become united Irishmen in their political outlook.

Sinn Féin is seeking a new, agreed and united Ireland. We want to build a just, fair, and equal Ireland, an economically prosperous and socially and culturally inclusive Ireland. We want to protect our most vulnerable, the elderly, children, the ill, ethnic minorities, those with disabilities - and ensure that equality is the touchstone upon which all policies are formulated.

Finally, Sinn Féin appeals to all citizens who are interested in the possibility and potential of Irish Unity to become active on this issue. Join in the conversation.

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



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Tionól an Phobail i bhFear Manach

22 Feabhra 2024



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Dóchas agus Athrú

Bhunaigh Sinn Féin an Coimisiún um Thodhchaí na hÉireann i mí Iúil 2022.

Is é an sainchúram atá air ná dul i gcomhairle le cosmhuintir na hÉireann agus go hidirnáisiúnta maidir le todhchaí na hÉireann. Bainfear é seo amach ar roinnt bealaí: trí Thionóil Phoiblí an Phobail a reáchtáil ar fud na tíre agus go hidirnáisiúnta; trí aighneachtaí i scríbhinn a bhailiú agus a chomhthiomsú; cruinnithe earnála a reáchtáil agus trí thabhairt faoi rannpháirtíochtaí príobháideacha.

Cuirfear tuarascáil dheiridh le chéile ag deireadh an tionscadail.

Seo tuairisc ó Thionól an Phobail i bhFear Manach a bhí ar siúl in Óstán Westville, Inis Ceithleann Dé Máirt an 22 Feabhra.

Labhair Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald ag an chruinniú.

Tá físeán de Thionól an Phobail i bhFear Manach ar fáil ar YouTube:

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

Faoi láthair, tá beagnach 200 aighneacht faighte ag an Choimisiún um Thodhchaí na hÉireann ó réimse leathan daoine aonair agus grúpaí leasmhara.

Is tábhachtach a thabhairt faoi deara gur féidir ranníocaíochtaí a dhéanamh go fóill leis an Choimisiún ag commission@sinnfein.ie nó tríd an leathanach gréasáin seo a leanas www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland

- Go dtí seo tionóladh 12 Tionól Pobail agus tá an tríú ceann déag beartaithe don Lorgain i mí an Mheithimh.
- Tá sé i gceist ag an Choimisiún fosta cruinniú faoi Chearta in Éirinn Nua a reáchtáil ag tús mhí na Bealtaine.
- Ócáid ag Seó Balmoral ar Phobail Tuaithe in Éirinn Nua ar an 17 Bealtaine.
- Ócáid ar an gheilleagar uile-oileáin in Óstán Europa i mí an Mheithimh.

Réamhrá

D'oscail feisire Fhear Manach Thír Eoghain Theas Michelle Gildernew 11ú Tionól an Phobail a tionóladh in Inis Ceithleann Fear Manach ar an 22 Feabhra, go ndúirt, “Is am eisceachtúil é seo le bheith páirteach i bpolaitíocht na hÉireann”, mar gheall ar “Tá náisiún nua ar tí teacht ar an tsaoil.” Dúirt Gildernew tráthnóna, “Is deis í an ócáid seo chun iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar na deiseanna atá ann d’Fhear Manach in Éirinn nua aontaithe,” agus “Ba mhaith linn cloisteáil faoi na huaimhianta agus na hábhair dóchais atá agaibh.”

Ba iad seo a leanas na painéalaithe ar an oíche: An Cathaoirleach Noelle McAloon, Bainisteoir CFG Inis Ceithleann; in éineacht le Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Ateangaire Gaeilge; An Dr Niall McVeigh, Stiúrthóir Institiúid an Chabháin; Mairaid Kelly, Feachtasóir Scoile Áitiúil; agus an Léiritheoir agus Stiúrthóir Trevor Birney.

Príomhthéamaí:

- Ról an oideachais
- Éire aontaithe chuimsitheach
- Dílárú in Éirinn nua
- Míchothromaíochtaí réigiúnacha
- Bonneagar
- Rochtain ar sheirbhísí



Aitheasc Tosaigh ó Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald TD

Díríodh in aitheasc Uachtarán Shinn Féin ar an ghá atá le hidirphlé agus meas ar dhifriochtaí. Dúirt McDonald, “Chonaic muid daoine ag bailiú le chéile i seomraí agus i hallaí mar seo ar fud an oileáin. Tá tuairimí an-difriúla cloiste againn, dearcthaí an-éagsúla. Tá dúshlán éagsúla cloiste againn. Agus tá roinnt ábhar imní dáiríre cloiste againn. Tá sé sin go léir go maith. Is é sin an rud atá i gceist le hidirphlé measúil.”

Maidir le plé an tráthnóna, mhol McDonald, “Ní mór dúinn meas a bheith againn ar an difríocht, agus caithimid glacadh leo. Is tríd na difríochtaí sin a dhéanfar ár gcuid tuairimí a mheas . “

Dúirt McDonald leis an lucht féachana, “Níor chóir go mbeadh aon eagla ar dhuine ar bith againn, is cuma cén dearcadh atá againn, faoi na dúshlán atá romhainn. Agus níor cheart dúinn breathnú ar an todhchaí ach le dóchas.”

Agus í ag labhairt faoi na luachanna atá ag croílár Shinn Féin sa lá atá inniu ann, dúirt McDonald, “Tá machnamh an-domhain déanta agam ar a bhfuil á thairiscint ag poblachtánachas nua-aimseartha na hÉireann. Cad atá á rá againn? Cad iad na luachanna atá againn?”

Mhínigh McDonald é sin, “Dá mbeinn chun dhá fhocal a roghnú a dhéanann achoimre ar an méid a bhfuil muid ag seasamh ar a shon mar phoblachtánaigh Éireannacha anseo i láthair na huaire. Déarfainn dóchas agus athrú. Is é sin atá á thairiscint againn do dhaoine ar fud an oileáin in 2024.”

Agus í ag caint ansin faoin phleanáil d’Éirinn amach anseo agus í a shamhlú mar thír, dúirt McDonald leis an lucht féachana,

“Caithimid aghaidh a thabhairt ar na ceisteanna faoin chineál cuma a bheadh ar sheirbhís sláinte uile-Éireann. Cén chuma a bheadh ar ár gcóras oideachais? Cad é mar is féidir linn ár ngeilleagar a fhorbairt ar bhealach cóir agus cothrom? Agus cad é mar is féidir linn poist mhaithe agus fostaíocht fhiúntach a bhaint amach? Cén chuma atá ar shochaí atá cothrom i ndáiríre? Cad é mar a chaifear le gach féiniúlacht – cad é mar a chothófar agus a chosnófar féiniúlacht na Breataine ar an oileán in Éirinn nua. Agus cad é mar is féidir linn saoirsí sibhialta agus reiligiúnacha gach duine, cearta daonlathacha an duine, cearta polaitiúla agus teidlíochtaí a chinntiú.”



Ráitis tosaigh agus réamhrá ón phainéal

Chuir an cathaoirleach neamhspleách, Noelle McAloon, fáilte roimh an lucht féachana agus leag sí béim ar an dóigh a bhfuil an comhrá faoi aontacht na hÉireann ag tarlú cheana féin i dtithe tábhairne agus ag boird chistine ar fud na tíre. Dúirt sí gur comhrá an-ábhartha a bhí ann do dhaoine óga. Tá triúr iníonacha aici, agus tá siad go léir an-dóchasach don saol amach anseo.

Chuir McAloon baill an phainéil in aithne agus ansin chuir sí tús leis an phlé nuair a chuir sí an cheist “Cad mar is féidir le muintir na hÉireann leas a bhaint as aontacht na hÉireann?”

An Dr Niall McVeigh – a thug aghaidh ar an cheist ar dtús ó thaobh an oideachais de. Dúirt sé, “Tá críochdheighilt san oideachas anois agus tá impleachtaí móra aige seo don tsochaí. Cé go bhfuil dhá chóras oideachais mhaithe againn, Thuaidh agus Theas, níl siad ag déanamh soláthair go leor d’achan duine agus tá daoine ar an imeall nach bhfuil freastal á dhéanamh orthu ag na córais oideachais sin. Agus muid ag iarraidh rud éigin nua a chruthú, caithfidh aghaidh a thabhairt ar na heasnaimh, córas a bheith againn ina ndéantar soláthair d’achan duine agus nach bhfágann aon duine taobh thiar de.”

Tharraing McVeigh aird chomh maith ar an méid seo a leanas: “chruthaigh mí-úsáid cumhachta rialtais na Breataine agus na hÉireann i ndiaidh a chéile go sóisialta/go heacnamaíoch tríd an chríochdheighilt san oideachas agus sa tsochaí i gcoitinne.” Dúirt sé, “Ní mór dúinn cuimhneamh ar chuspóir an oideachais, ar forbairt phearsanta é agus an caipiteal cultúrtha a chur ar fáil do dhaoine chun dul chun cinn a dhéanamh sa saol.” “Tá fíis nua de dhíth orainn do dhaoine aonair, don tsochaí agus don gheilleagar,” a dúirt McVeigh.

Dúirt Mairaid Kelly gur “duine í nár chóir do dhaoine eile dul i ngleic léi, duine a bhíonn ag plé le cúrsaí praiticiúla” agus go bhfuil sí “dírithe ar an jab a dhéanamh.”

Maidir le Kelly, “ní bhaineann Éire Aontaithe le duine amháin eile aimsiú chun vóta a bhuachan ach sochaí níos fearr a thógáil.” Is é an dúshlán, dar le Kelly, ná “sochaí níos fearr a thógáil nach bhfágfar aon duine ina dhiaidh inti. Ní féidir le hÉirinn Aontaithe a bheith ag cur beagnach dhá mhilliún duine sa Tuaisceart leis an Deisceart – caithfidh sé a bheith faoi Éire Nua a bheith againn.”

Labhair Kelly faoin bhéim ar imeascadh i scoileanna idir Chaitlicigh agus Phrotastúnaigh. Mar sin féin, ar bhealaí áirithe, “tá imeascadh socheacnamaíoch chomh tábhachtach céanna.” Creideann Kelly go bhfuil “deis ann Éire Nua le leathanach bán le tosú arís – b’fhéidir go bhféadfadh mótarbhealach, traenacha, srl a bheith i bhFear Manach.” Chuir sí fáilte roimh fhógra rialtas na hÉireann le déanaí maidir le cúnamh airgeadais do thograí sa Tuaisceart. “Is léiriú é seo,” a dúirt sí, “ar shamplaí beaga den mhéid a thiocthadh linn a dhéanamh.”

Dúirt Mairaid, áfach, “nár comhlíonadh riamh gealltanas rialtas na hÉireann ó 2017 maidir le cearta vótála i dtoghcháin Uachtaránachta na hÉireann a leathnú chuig saoránaigh sa Tuaisceart agus thar lear agus gur céim chun tosaigh a bheadh ann dá dtabharfaí isteach é.”

Creideann Kelly go láidir, “Níor cheart aon duine a fhágáil ar lár in Éirinn Nua. Ba cheart go mbeadh meas ar fhéiniúlacht gach duine agus ba cheart cosaintí a bheith i bhfeidhm chun iad a chosaint. Chaithfí meas a léiriú ar pharáidí Bród agus ar pharáidí den Ord Oráisteach chomh maith le Lá Fhéile Pádraig agus an 12 Iúil.”

Labhair Trevor Birney faoin eispéireas a bhí aige ag fás aníos in eastát protastúnach den aicme oibre in Inis Ceithleann le linn na 70idí agus na 80idí. Tagann sé ó theaghlach aontachtach. Chuimhnigh sé go soiléir, “an lá i 1981 nuair a toghadh Bobby Sands mar fheisire d’Fhear Manach agus do Thír Eoghain Theas.” Dúirt sé, “An mothú i mo phobal ná gur lá an-dorcha a bhí ann mar go raibh Caitlicigh/Náisiúnaithe an bhaile tar éis iad féin a chur amach mar lucht tacaíochta an IRA.”

Labhair Birney faoin dóigh ar bhreathnaigh Aontachtaithe orthu féin i gcónaí mar dhaoine a bhí níos rathúla ó thaobh na heacnamaíochta de agus níos dírithe ar chúrsaí gnó ná Caitlicigh. Dúirt sé, “bhí polaiteoir aontachtach áitiúil darb ainm Cooper, a bhí ina chónaí ag barr Dhoire Chora agus thiomáin sé carr an-mhaisiúil le “1690” ar an uimhirphláta.” D’fhéadfadh Birney a rá ó thús deireadh cé gur aontachtach é an tUasal Cooper, i ndáiríre “ní raibh mórán i gcoiteann aige le Protastúnaigh aicme oibre cosúil leis féin.”

Labhair Trevor faoina chinneadh a bheith ina iriseoir. Bheadh an chuid is mó de na leids thart ar a aois i ndiaidh labhairt faoi ghairmeacha in Arm na Breataine nó san UDR, mar go raibh meas maith orthu agus poist sheasmhacha, ach ní raibh na smaointe sin aige. D’fhág Birney an scoil ag 16 bliana d’aois agus sa deireadh fuair sé post sa pháipéar aontachtach áitiúil, an ‘Impartial Reporter’. Sna laethanta sin, ba le muintir Trimble an ‘Reporter’ agus ní bheadh rudaí tuairiscithe acu riamh faoi Shinn Féin ná faoi Chumann Lúthchleas Gael.

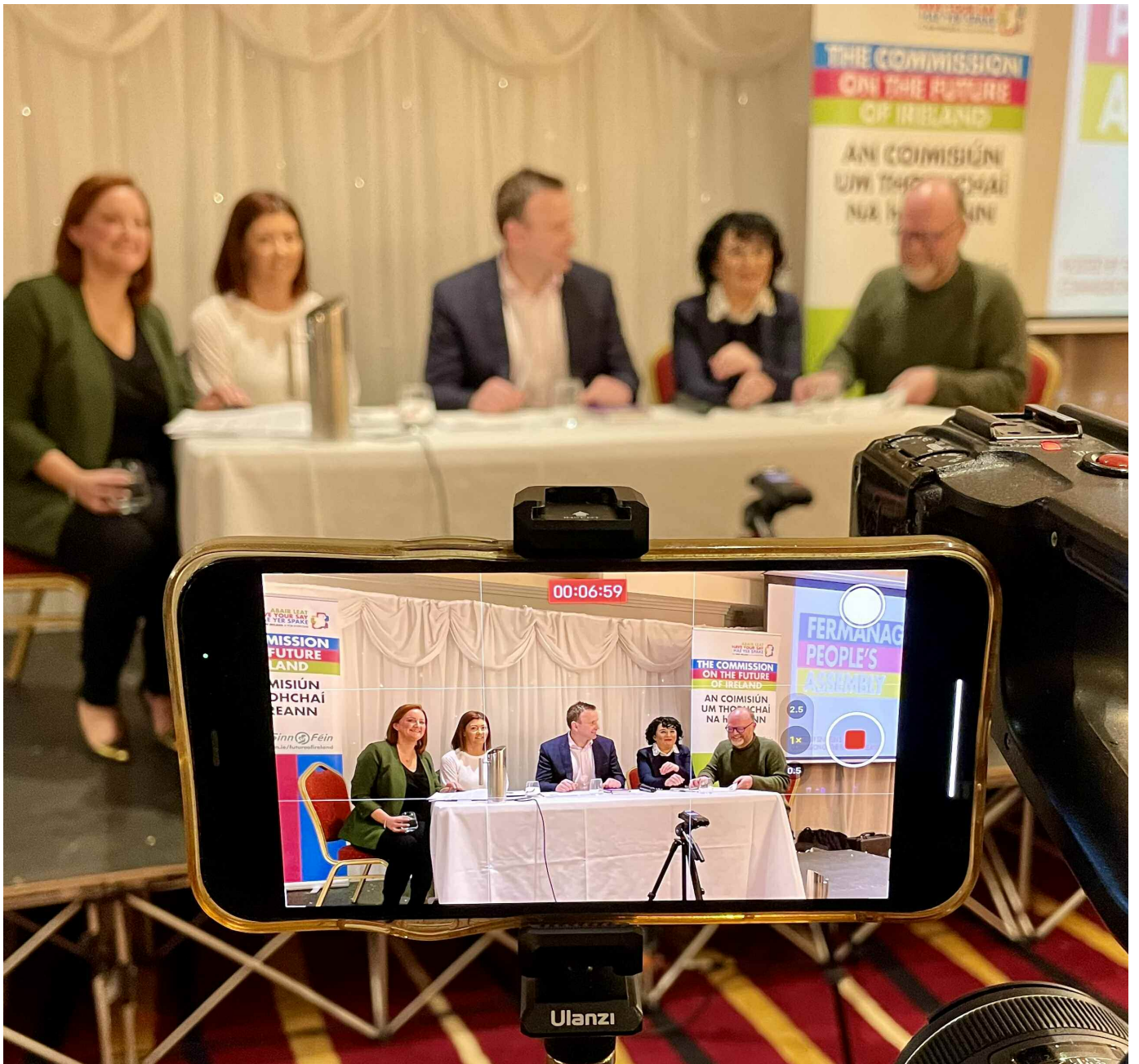
Labhair Birney faoin tionchar a bhí ag Denzil McDaniel air mar, “Protastúnach eile den aicme oibre as Inis Ceithleann ba ea Denzil, a ghlac seilbh ar eagarthóireacht an pháipéir sna 1980idí, agus a d’athraigh an páipéar go bunúsach le bheith níos cuimsithí.” Mheabhraigh sé an dóigh, “go raibh go leor brú ó lucht gnó aontachtach mór le rá mar gheall ar na hathruithe seo.”

“Tá muintir Fhear Manach” a dúirt sé, “amhrasach faoin todhchaí. Tá sé seo i bpáirt mar gheall ar an fhaillí 100 bliain atá déanta ar Fear Manach ón gcríochdheighilt.” Dúirt sé gur ghnách leis “tiomáint go Baile Átha Cliath minic go leor agus go mbeadh drochbhail ar na bóithre nuair a chuaigh sé isteach Deisceart. Sa lá atá inniu ann, áfach, a mhalairt atá fíor.”

Dar le Birney, “beidh Éire Aontaithe ann gan amhras. Tá roinnt rudaí ann a léiríonn seo, go háirithe treochtaí déimeagrafacha.” Creideann Birney, “Chuirfeadh muintir Fhear Manach fáilte roimh athrú, ach amháin má chiallaíonn sé go bhfuil suíochán againn ag an bhord agus nach bhfágfar ar gcúl arís iad. Ní chun ár leasa a bheadh sé riail London a athrú do riail Bhaile Átha Cliath gan aon athrú. Mar sin, is í Éire níos díláraithe an bealach chun cinn.”

Creideann Birney go bhfuil “go leor de na hargóintí Aontachtacha i gcoinne Éire aontaithe bunaithe ar eagla agus paranóia, agus níl siad réalaíoch.” Dúirt sé é sin, “Tá leathanach bán againn anois le tosú agus cibé cineál sochaí a theastaíonn uainn a fheiceáil dár bpáistí agus dár ngarpháistí a thógáil.”

AN COIMISIÚN UM THODHCHAÍ NA HÉIREANN
TIONÓL AN PHOBAIL I BHFEAR MANACH 22 FEABHRA 2024



Ceisteanna ar an Phainéal

Noelle McAloon – d’fhiafraigh sí den phainéal, “Cén dóigh a rachaimid i mbun idirbheartaíochta?”

Mairaid Ní Cheallaigh

“Is é an pointe tosaigh ná go gcosnófar gach mionlach. Ní mór glacadh le gach féiniúlacht. Ní mór dúinn sochaí a chruthú a d’fhéadfadh bláthú. Ní hann don áit atáimid ag iarraidh a chruthú go fóill.

“Is é an bealach is fearr chun an tsochaí atá uainn a bhaint amach ná trí idirphlé sibhialta, ní hamháin le daoine atá spreagtha ó thaobh na polaitíochta de ach le daoine ó gach cúlra agus ní mór dúinn gluaiseacht na gceardchumann, scoileanna, clubanna spóirt srl a chur san áireamh. Beidh muinín agat as an toradh má tá tú mar chuid den chomhrá.”

An Dr. Niall Mac an Bheatha

D’aontaigh McVeigh le cainteoirí roimhe seo go mbeadh fóram cathartha ann chun aontacht a phlé. Chaithfeadh sé fíis a thabhairt do dhaoine. D’úsáid sé luachan Bobby Sands faoi fhís – “Is é ár díoltas gáire ár bpáistí” agus dúirt sé, “Is fíis iontach é seo don todhchaí.”

Dúirt Niall “go bhfuil an t-oideachas tearcmhaoinithe le beagnach os cionn £143 milliún sa Tuaisceart agus go bhfuil torthaí oideachais go dona sa Tuaisceart i gcomparáid leis an Deisceart.” Thug sé le fios nach bhfuil “5 GCSE ag dhá thrian de dhaonra an phríosúin sa Tuaisceart agus ní haon chomhtharlú é sin”.



Dúirt McVeigh, “Táimid anois sa 5ú réabhlóid thionsclaíoch - thóg an chéad cheann 2-300 bliain agus níor thóg an ceann deireanach ach 20 bliain- is féidir le hathrú tarlú go gasta.”

Dúirt sé, “tá sé ar mire go bhfuil páistí againn inár sochaí in 2024 nach bhfuil dóchas acu don todhchaí. Tá sé ar mire freisin go bhfuil rogha acadúil againn go fóill. De réir na bhfigiúirí is déanaí de pháistí atá i dteideal béilí saorscoile – tá sé 1 as 8 i scoileanna gramadaí agus 1 as 3 i scoileanna nach scoileanna gramadaí iad. Ina dhiaidh sin, teipeann ar níos lú ná 6% de pháistí ina gcuid GCSEanna (níos lú ná 5 ghrád A-C) i scoileanna Gramadaí i gcomparáid le thart ar 40% i neamh-ghramadach. Níl na staitisticí seo maith go leor.”

Creideann McVeigh, “Tá rialtas na Breataine sásta ligint dó seo tarlú agus cultúr a chruthú ina bhfuil easpa dóchais ag an iomarca daoine óga.” Thug sé sampla den áit a bhfuil rialtas na Breataine “ag caitheamh níos mó airgid ar ionaid choinneála ógánaigh ach ghearr sé an clár ‘engage’ a chuidigh le stop a chur le daoine óga ag fágáil na scoile go luath – níl ciall ar bith leis seo.”

Dúirt sé go bhfuil géarghá le dóchas níos fearr a chur ar fáil do dhaoine óga – agus caipiteal cultúrtha a chruthú sa bhunoideachas. Níl an córas oideachais sa Deisceart foirfe ach tá idirghabhálacha spriocdhírthe san oideachas chun dul i ngleic le neamhionannas ar nós scoileanna DEIS. Cruthaíonn an status quo reatha bacainní agus caithfear dúshlán a thabhairt dó sin agus caithfidh sé dóchas a thabhairt don todhchaí.”



Príomhphlé- Tuairimí ón lucht féachana mar fhreagra ar ráitis na bpainéalaithe:

D'fhiafraigh Noelle McAloon den lucht féachana “An ré é seo de dheich mbliana ina mbeidh athrú ann?”

Dúirt Eithne McNulty as Liatroim, “Tá tuairim go fóill sa Deisceart nach bhfuil sé d'acmhainn ag Rialtas na hÉireann íoc as Éirinn Aontaithe. Caithfidh polaiteoirí cás an-láidir a dhéanamh go bhfuil Aontacht inacmhainne.”

Luaigh McNulty gur cheadaigh Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta fóram cathartha agus d'fhiafraigh sí, “Cén fáth nach bhfuil fóram cathartha ann don díospóireacht ar aontacht”. Dúirt sí freisin gur aontaigh sí le hÉirinn dhílártaite i gcás aontachta.

Bhí Paul Nolan, úinéir gnó as Inis Ceithleann, “buartha go mbeidh Fear Manach fágtha ar lár i gcónaí agus tá go leor samplaí de sin ann, ina measc na pleananna don tseirbhís traenach uile-Éireann nach bhfuil an contae curtha san áireamh inti.”

Ó thaobh an oideachais de, creideann Paul i “gcóras oideachais imeasctha uile-Éireann.” Dúirt sé freisin, “mar fhear gnó, go bhfuil rudaí áirithe beagáinín rómánsaithe” agus luaigh sé caint ar Sheirbhís Sláinte Uile-Éireann. Bhí sé ag súil le plean gnó don tseirbhís seo a chur i láthair ag an ócáid.

Tá imní ar Paul faoi íoc as cúram sláinte, agus d'fhiafraigh sé, “An féidir seirbhís mhaith cúram sláinte a chur ar fáil ar fud na hÉireann”, agus dúirt sé gur seirbhís iontach í an NHS.

D'fhreagair Trevor Birney trácht na ceiste faoin NHS. Dúirt sé, “Caithfidimid a bheith dáiríre faoi mhíotas na dTóraithe den NHS a bheith ina chrann taca ag an tsochaí. Le linn a dtréimhse a bheith i gceannas, lig na Tóraithe don chóras sláinte titim as a chéile.” Dúirt sé go bhfuil “fianaise shoiléir ann go bhfuil an NHS ag titim as a chéile cheana féin. Tá a fhios ag aontachtaithe go maith faoi sin chomh maith.”

Labhair Birney faoi chlár faisnéise a chuidigh sé a dhéanamh – “When Hospitals Kill.” Bhí sé “mar gheall ar mhífheidhmiú an NHS agus an dóigh ar insíodh bréaga le tuismitheoirí trí aturnaetha, srl. faoi dóigh a bhfuair a gcuid leanaí bás.” Dúirt sé, “I gcás roinnt daoine atá i gcoinne Éire Aontaithe, is ábhar sólais é labhairt faoi nach bhfuil aon NHS in Éirinn Aontaithe ach mar mhuintir Fhear Manach tá a fhios againn go maith cheana féin faoi theip an NHS.”

Dúirt Birney gur aontaigh sé le ball an bhanna de Kneecap, Mo Chara, a dúirt gurb é an namhaid fíor na Tóraithe agus dhírigh sé ar an méid atá déanta acu trí dhéine. Chríochnaigh Trevor ag fiafraí, “An bhféadfadh córas cúraim sláinte in Éirinn Aontaithe a bheith níos fearr ná mar atá againn faoi láthair? Níl aon chúis nach bhféadfadh sé a bheith.

Dúirt Caroline as Doire Fhlainn, “Déanfar cinneadh faoina bhfuil i ndán dúinn faoin méid a tharlóidh sna 10 mbliana amach romhainn. Tá géarchéim inár gcóras cúraim sláinte i bhFear Manach, toisc gur cuireadh deireadh le máinliacht ghinearálta éigeandála in Ospidéal Géarmhíochaine an Iardheiscirt (SWAH). Ní mór aird trasteorann a thabhairt ar SWAH chun an EGS a fháil ar ais. Tá oideachas riachtanach fosta.”

Dúirt Darragh McElroy, duine óg as Inis Ceithleann, leis an chruinniú go gcreideann sé go bhfuil sé “den tuairim go leanfaidh rialtas cineachta in Stormont ag feidhmiú nuair a tharlóidh aontacht.”

Bheadh Daragh “níos compordaí le córas feidearálach” mar nach bhfuil sé “ag iarraidh go mbeadh [Fear Manach] taobh le taobh agus neamhaird a dhéanamh de” agus creideann sé go ndéanfadh “córas feidearálach do chúige Uladh agus do chúigí eile taobh amuigh de Bhaile Átha Cliath freastal níos fearr orainn.”

Dúirt John McCluskey as Ros Liath nach raibh aon seirbhís dochtúra teaghlaigh ina cheantar féin agus go gceapann sé, “Gníomh coiriúil a bhí ann an tseirbhís a dhúnadh agus gan tada a fhágáil ina ndiaidh do na daoine. Tá sé beagnach dodhéanta coinne a fháil san Ionad Sláinte i Lios na Scéithe.” Thug sé cás le gairid ina raibh fear aosta tinn agus rinne sé iarracht freastal ar an Ionad Sláinte agus tugadh an bóthar dó. “An bealach é seo chun cóir leighis a chur ar dhuine breoite sa lá atá inniu ann agus san aois seo?”

Dúirt McCluskey é sin, “Tá an SWAH cosúil le blár catha faoi láthair fosta.” Dúirt sé leis an lucht féachana go raibh sé “thíos ansin le déanaí oíche Dé Domhnaigh agus nach raibh duine ná deoraí ann le freastal ar dhaoine agus go raibh ar ghaolta fanacht le hothar ar feadh na hoíche.” Thug sé cuireadh do CTR áitiúla, “dul isteach sa SWAH go déanach san oíche gan fógra ag an deireadh seachtaine chun a fháil amach cad é mar atá sé.”

Chríochnaigh John ag rá, “Is iontach an rud é slua chomh mór sin a fheiceáil anseo anocht chun é seo a phlé agus is léir go bhfuil athrú ag teastáil uainn” agus “go leanfar leis an troid le grúpa Ros Liath chun seirbhísí dochtúirí teaghlaigh a chur ar ais sa tsráidbhaile.”

Bhí Mairaid Kelly ag iarraidh freagra a thabhairt ar chuid de na tuairimí faoin oideachas imeasctha. Ní chreideann sí gur “réiteach gach faidhbe nó piléar airgid é An tOideachas Imeasctha.”



Maidir le Kelly, “Is é an rud atá in easnamh sa díospóireacht ar an oideachas imeasctha ná imeascadh aicmí.” Creideann sí go láidir nár cheart iallach a chur ar dhuine ar bith, agus go gcaithfear meas a léiriú ar rogha na dtuismitheoirí. Deir Mairaid freisin, “Dá gcuirfeadh an t-oideachas imeasctha torthaí níos fearr ar fáil do pháistí, níl aon amhras uirthi ach go mbeadh tuismitheoirí ní ba bháúla dó.”

D’fhreagair an Dr Niall McVeigh an plé agus dúirt sé, “Caithfear plean a bheith ann maidir leis na chéad chéimeanna eile a leagan amach”, agus gur “tasc suntasach é athaontú na hÉireann.”

Dúirt McVeigh nach dtagann 20% de na daoine a théann ar shiúl chun staidéar a dhéanamh ar ais.” Agus sin, “Tá easnamh 40% i rátaí táirgiúlachta idir an Tuaisceart agus an Deisceart.” Mar fhocal scoir, dhearbhaigh sé, “Tá fianaise eimpíreach againn ar bhacainní socheacnamaíocha.”

Creideann McVeigh, “Ba chóir dúinn a bheith ag féachaint ar na buntáistí a bhaineann le scoileanna comhoideachais/comhroinnte agus ag féachaint ar mhúnlaí a oibríonn i dtíortha eile – ní ar mhúnla na Fraince.” Agus go gcaithfidh sé seo a bheith, “tógtha ar bhonn morálta, ní scothroghnachas “.

Dúirt Seamus Carolan as Ros Liath gur ghnách lena athair “a rá liom beagnach 70 bliain ó shin nuair a bhí siad ag tochailt fá choinne prátaí nár chóir go mbeadh dhá rialtas sa tír seo agus go raibh an ceart aige.” D’aontaigh sé leis an méid a bhí le rá ag John McCluskey níos luaithe faoi Ros Liath. Dar leis, “Bheadh an cinneadh le déanamh acu siúd a bhfuil na leasanna dílsithe is mó acu maidir le comhaontú a dhéanamh faoi Éirinn Aontaithe.” Cheistigh sé cén dóigh a ndéileálfadh Sinn Féin leis seo, mar níl rudaí cothrom ar chor ar bith faoi láthair.

Dúirt Carolan gur thug sé cuairt ar a iníon i Meiriceá le gairid agus go bhfuil deighilt iomlán ansin idir Eaglais agus Stát. Dúirt sé gurb é seo “a mhalairt sa Deisceart i ndiaidh na críochdheighilte inar tugadh oideachas agus cúram sláinte don Eaglais le bainistiú a dhéanamh uirthi.” D’fhiafraigh Séamus, “Cad é mar is féidir leis an tír tosú le leathanach bán mura ndéantar an scaradh seo” agus leag sé béim ar “an dóigh a bhfuil comhlachtaí ilnáisiúnta, cistí dílse agus iad siúd a bhfuil leasanna dílsithe acu go fóill ag iarraidh leas a bhaint as an scéal.”

Dúirt Eileen Drumm go raibh sí “i bhfách go mór leis an athrú, ach caithfidh sé a bheith ina sochaí chuimsitheach do dhaoine faoi mhíchumas.” Maidir le Eileen, ceann de na príomhcheisteanna ná an easpa iompair inrochtana i bhFear Manach agus bhí “díomá” uirthi gur fágadh Fear Manach as an athbhreithniú iarróid uile-oileáin.”

Mar dhuine faoi mhíchumas, bíonn deacrachtaí laethúla ag Eileen rochtain a fháil ar iompar iontaoifa. Dúirt sí, “Tá Fear Manach dorochtana go bunúsach.” Bhain sí leis an dóigh “a dúirt cara léi go raibh sé i gceist aici taisteal ar an traein,” agus d’fhreagair Eileen go magúil, “Cad is traein ann?”

Tá cónaí ar Phauraig Uí Dhubhshlain in Inis Ceithleann agus tógadh é ar Loch Éirne Uachtarach. Dúirt Pauraig leis an chruinniú faoin dóigh, “Thóg a mháthair é ar an traein dheireanach a d’fhág an baile seo i 1957.” Maraíodh cara leis i mbuama Inis Ceithleann i

1987. I ndiaidh na buamála, rinne sé féin agus cara leis póstaer ar pháipéar A4 ag iarraidh ar dhaoine freastal ar airdeall sa Diamant in Inis Ceithleann. D’iompaigh 3,500 duine suas agus is é an “toradh air sin ná go bhfuair muid scoil imeasctha.”

Mar fhocal scoir, dúirt Paurag, “Tá bóthar fada siúlta againn ó shin agus ba chóir dúinn machnamh siar a dhéanamh ar cé chomh fada agus a tháinig muid.”

Dúirt Nathan, atá ina bhall d’eagraíocht Enniskillen Pride, agus atá ina abhcóide ar son cearta míchumais, go bhfuil sé “ina chónaí i bhFear Manach le blianta fada agus gur iardhalta de chuid Choláiste Imeachta na hÉirne é,” rud a bhfuil sé “an-bhródúil as.”

Dúirt Nathan go raibh “beagáinín díomá air nach bhfuil níos mó polaiteoirí anseo anocht” agus go gcreideann sé “go gcaithfear comhrá níos leithne a bheith ann” agus “gur mhaith leis go dtosófaí ag gníomh.”

Chuir Nathan in iúl faoin saol mar dhuine faoi mhíchumas (pairilis cheirbreach) “caithfidh siad bacainní a shárú an t-am ar fad.” Tuigeann Nathan beagnach gach ceann de na ceisteanna a ardaíodh anocht, “Dealraíonn sé go bhfuil bacainní roimh dhaoine ach níl sé dodhéanta athrú a bhaint amach.” Dúirt sé, “Níl mé ag iarraidh an cliché a úsáid a thosaíonn gach turas le céim bheag, ach tá sé fíor.”

Dúirt Nathan go bhfuil sé ar Choiste Bród Fhear Manach chomh maith – eagraíocht a bhfuil sé “an-bhródúil as” agus “beidh an chéad imeacht Bród ag Fear Manach/Inis Ceithleann ag dul ar aghaidh níos déanaí i mbliana - rud a léiríonn go bhfuil dóchas níos leithne sa cheantar.” Mar fhocal scoir, thug Nathan cuireadh do gach duine teacht chuig ócáid Bhróid Fhear Manach/Inis Ceithleann.

Dúirt oibrí cúraim sláinte ó Bealach na Leice go raibh sí “ag amharc ar an díospóireacht ó thaobh na sláinte de,” mar gurb é sin a cúlra. Creideann sí, “gurb í an NHS an cheist is mó in aon reifreann,” agus go bhfuil “tuairim ann go gcaillfí an NHS.” Chuirfeadh sé sin “daoine as vótáil ar son athraithe,” ach creideann sí “nach bhfuil an NHS níos fearr ná an córas atá acu sa Deisceart.”

Dúirt sí fosta ar go leor bealaí, “Tá córas sláinte níos forbartha ag an deisceart mar go n-íocann siad níos mó pá agus go bhfuil áiseanna níos fearr acu” agus, “Ba chóir don NHS iarracht a dhéanamh comhoibriú níos fearr a bheith acu leis an deisceart maidir le cúrsaí sláinte.”

Bhí duine óg den lucht féachana “amhrasach faoin méid a bhainfí amach leis an Aontacht.” Is mac léinn ollscoile é agus níl sé i gceist aige fanacht anseo. “Níl aon rud anseo domsa.” Agus luann sé easpa seirbhísí agus infreastruchtúr ceart. “Cad iad na féidearthachtaí amach anseo a chruthaíonn aontacht domsa?” Feiceann sé féidearthachtaí níos fearr dó féin i Sasana, ach bheadh sé dóchasach go gcruthódh aontacht ionchais níos fearr i bhFear Manach.

Bhí Michael Keown, arb as Garastún ó dhúchas dó agus atá anois ina chónaí in Inis Ceithleann, “sásta a chloisteáil go raibh Michelle Gildernew i nGarastún le déanaí agus tá súil aige gur dhíol duine éigin ticéad raifil bailithe airgid pobail léi.”

Dhírigh Keown ar an “phlé faoi thosú le leathanaigh bhána.” Tá trí leathanach bhána aige sa bhaile – “a thriúr páistí.” Dúirt Keown leis an chruinniú go raibh duine dá pháistí ag dul ar mheánscoil le déanaí agus gurb é Naomh Micheál rogha uimhir a haon agus gurbh é Enniskillen Royal a rogha uimhir a trí agus gur “comhartha é ar na hamanna” agus go mbeadh siad “ag tacú leo dul ar an scoil sin.”

Tá faitíos ar Mhicheál maidir leis an saol amach anseo. Thug sé le fios go raibh leath an tuarastail aige deich mbliana ó shin ná mar atá aige anois ach gur boichte é mar gheall ar an chostas maireachtála. Ní hé an t-aon duine mar seo agus is fadhb mhór í.

Labhair Keown le cainteoir níos luaithe a dúirt nach bhfaca siad aon todhchaí ag fanacht i bhFear Manach agus gur dócha go n-imeodh sé amach anseo. Thug sé le fios gur féidir le níos mó daoine obair ón bhaile agus go raibh sé seo ar cheann de na forbairtí dearfacha a tharla le linn na paindéime Covid.

Dúirt Mairaid Kelly gur roghnaigh sí cur fúithi i bhFear Manach. Tá a cuid oibre lonnaithe i Londain, ach tugann sí deis di cónaí anseo mar gheall ar chianobair. Is féidir leis an chianobair deis a thabhairt do dhaoine a d’imigh chun obair a fháil filleadh ar Fhear Manach lá amháin.

Dúirt Kelly, “Is iad na daoine óga an todhchaí, agus gurb iad féin a dhéanfaidh an cinneadh, agus go gcaithfidh siad an domhan a mhúnlú de réir mar is cuí leo”. Chuir sí in iúl freisin go bhfuil dúshlán mhóra ann ar nós an athraithe aeráide.



D'aontaigh Mairaid leis na pointí a rinneadh maidir le rochtain ar mhíchumas. Tá a fhios aici, "leanaí faoi mhíchumas a gcaithfidh tacsaithe a fháil chuig an scoil agus ar ais ón scoil, toisc nach bhfuil aon iompar ceart ann, agus nach bhfuil go leor áiteanna sna scoileanna riachtanais bhreise chun tacú leis na leanaí sin go léir ar chóir dóibh áiteanna a bheith acu."

Dúirt an Dr Niall McVeigh go bhfuil "go bhfuil lánfhostaíocht sa Deisceart agus go bhfuil oibrithe á lorg go gníomhach chun poist a líonadh". Tá, a dúirt sé, "difreálaigh ollmhóra sna tuarastail Thuaidh agus Theas agus an caighdeán maireachtála i bhfad níos fearr sa Deisceart, rud a chruthaíonn deiseanna maithe in Éirinn athaontaithe."

Mar sin féin, "Tá go leor dúshlán ann don Deisceart fosta agus go leor leochaileachtaí" agus d'athdhearbhaigh sé an pointe níos luaithe, "go gcaithfidh Éire athaontaithe beart a dhéanamh do gach duine."

Bhí Orla Smith as Ros Liath a ag iarraidh a chur in iúl "ceann de na míbhuntáistí a bhaineann le maireachtáil cois teorann." Bhí sí i miontaisime gluasteáin ag teacht ó Mhuineachán le déanaí. Chuir an comhlacht árachais in iúl di, "go raibh Poblacht na hÉireann rangaithe mar thír iasachta agus nach raibh sí faoi árachas." Ní raibh sí clúdaithe don damáiste agus b'éigean di í féin a íoc. Bhí Smith ag iarraidh daoine a chur ar an eolas faoin gceist seo."

Jim Ledwith – Srúth na hÉirne

'An mise Jim Ledwith. Is cathaoirleach mé den ghrúpa Srúth na hÉirne. Grúpa a chuireann an Ghaeilge chun cinn sa chontae. Ba mhaith liom fáilte a chur roimh Mary-Lou McDonald go Fear Manach anocht agus fáilte a chur roimh gach duine atá anseo anocht'. Theastaigh ó Ledwith aird a tharraingt ar an cheist faoi ghanntanas teagascóirí Gaeilge i bhFear Manach.

Dúirt sé freisin, "Tá Fear Manach cosúil le Dún na nGall sa Tuaisceart - go rómhínic ina athsmaoineamh nó dearmad déanta de cheantair áirithe." Dúirt sé, "Ba shampla é an SWAH. Bhí sé i gceist go mbeadh sé in éineacht le Sligeach go mbeadh othair in ann úsáid a bhaint as díreach cosúil le Alt Uí Dhoibhleacháin i nDoire do mhuintir Dhún na nGall ach níor tharla sé sin riamh."

Maidir le ceist na dteagascóirí Gaeilge, tá Ledwith ag iarraidh ar dhaoine dul i ngleic le hOllscoil Uladh (UU) chun an diplóma Gaeilge a thabhairt go Coláiste an Iardheiscirt (SWC). Ní dóigh leis go bhfuil sé ceart go gcaithfidh muintir Fhear Manach taisteal achar fada chun é seo a dhéanamh.

Dúirt Ledwith, "Is rud dearfach é cultúr agus teanga na hÉireann a chur chun cinn agus caithfidh oibriú níos fearr agus níos mó ar bhonn trasteorann chuige sin freisin." Féachann sé thart ar chontaetha eile ina mbíonn ceiliúradh ar Naomh Bríd agus comóradh náisiúnta ar an Ghorta Mór acu agus ní thuigeann sé an fáth nach féidir le Fear Manach an rud céanna a dhéanamh.

Mairtín Ó Gormlaith - 'Is múinteoir scoile mé. Ó thaobh oideachais de, caithfear an cheist a chur cén bealach a bheas an córas oideachais níos fearr, ag fanacht sa Ríocht Aontaithe nó in Éire Aontaithe? Bhí sé ar lá stailce ar na mallaibh san Ómaigh agus dúirt múinteoir eile leis go bhfuil na Tóraithe ag déanamh ciorruithe sa chóras oideachais ón bhliain 2014. Ní thuigeann an poiblí an tionchar atá ag na ciorruithe seo ar dhaoine óga'.

Focal scoir ón phainéal

D’fhill Trevor Birney chun labhairt faoi, “poitéinseal an gheilleagair in Éirinn aontaithe.” Ag caint faoina thionscal féin, dúirt Birney go raibh tionscal na scannán neamh-chomhtháite, agus an oiread sin comhlachtaí éagsúla ar nós NI Screen agus Screen Ireland, go raibh an iomarca maorlathais ann, rud a chuireann as do léiriúcháin mhóra scannán agus teilifíse. D’fhéadfadh eagraíocht amháin freastal ar an tionscal ar fad ar an oileán.

Labhair Birney faoin easpa cothromaíochta réigiúnaí, agus faoin dóigh “a gcaithfidh aon Éire nua na buntáistí eacnamaíocha a roinnt ar bhealach níos cothroime.” Dúirt sé, “Ní mór dúinn smaoiniamh níos mó inár mianta maidir leis an chuma a d’fhéadfadh a bheith ar Éirinn Nua.” Agus “anois tá Stormont ar ais beidh go leor daoine ag faire féachaint an féidir leis athrú dearfach a dhéanamh.”

Dhún Mairaid Kelly ag rá “go bhfuil níos mó suime ag daoine i gcaighdeán maireachtála níos fearr agus mothú níos fearr as. Tá daoine ag iarraidh a bpobal a fheiceáil faoi bhláth.” Dar léi, “Caithfidh an Tuaisceart agus an Deisceart a bheith ag obair go maith chun go mbeidh muinín ag daoine as seo amach.” Dúirt Kelly, “Caithimid bogadh ar aghaidh ó dhóchas go creideamh.” Agus, “Ní mór dúinn rud éigin sainithe go maith gur féidir le daoine a bhaint amach chun feabhas a chur ar a saol agus a dteaghlach.”

Dúirt Niall McVeigh gur aontaigh sé leis an méid a bhí le rá ag baill an phainéil roimhe seo. Leag sé béim air sin, “Tá sochaí nua de dhíth orainn. Teastaíonn smaointeoireacht radacach uainn chuige sin agus déileáil leis an mhíbhainistiú atá againn faoi láthair. Tá sineirge níos fearr de dhíth orainn i gceantair ar fud an oileáin.” Dúirt McVeigh, “Ó thaobh cúrsaí oideachais de, is lú sineirge idir an Tuaisceart agus an Deisceart i gcomparáid le ceantair eile. Tá socrú ad hoc i gceist le haon sineirge san oideachas idir an Tuaisceart agus an Deisceart.

“Caithimid brú a chur ar rialtas na hÉireann tuilleadh sineirge a bheith ann san oideachas. Ní mór brú a chur chun tionól saoránach a fháil”.

Dúirt McVeigh go bhfuil thart ar £143 milliún de chiorruithe déanta ar an chóras oideachais sa Tuaisceart le seacht mbliana anuas agus go bhfuil ardú 7% tagtha ar dhaonra na scoileanna.” Dar le McVeigh, “Ba cheart moladh a thabhairt do gach duine atá ag obair sa chóras oideachais– múinteoirí, príomhoidí, cúntóirí ranga, Boird Ghobharnóirí.”

Mar fhocal scoir, dúirt McVeigh, “tá dhá chomhairle mhúinteoireachta againn ar an oileán do mhúinteoirí cáilithe chun clárú leo. Níl ciall leis sin.” D’fháiltigh sé roimh an scéal go ndeachaigh Comhairle Mhúinteoireachta an Deiscirt go Scoil Mhuire i mBéal Feirste le déanaí chun a mhíniú do mhúinteoirí faoi oiliúint ansin faoin dóigh le clárú leo agus “tá níos mó sineirge mar seo de dhíth orainn.”

Conclúid

D'éirigh go hiontach le Tionól an Phobail i bhFear Manach in Óstán Westville, Inis Ceithleann ar an 22 Feabhra. Bhí an halla lán go doras agus chuaigh an plé níos faide ná an dá uair an chloig a bhí leagtha amach dó.

I measc na dtuairimí a cuireadh in iúl bhí tionchar díobhálach na críochdheighilte ar Fhear Manach agus ar gheilleagar na teorann; an riachtanas a bhaineann le geilleagar uile-oileáin; na buntáistí a bhaineann le seirbhís sláinte uile-oileáin aonair a thógáil arna maoiniú ag cánachas díreach; tábhacht an oideachais; an damáiste a rinne Breatimeacht; dul i dteagmháil leis an phobal Protastúnach/aontachtach, agus an géarghá atá le hÉirinn nua a chruthú a chuimsíonn gach duine ar bhonn comhionannais agus measa.

Tá an díospóireacht ar Aontacht na hÉireann i lár an aonaigh anois. Is ábhar comhrá laethúil é do go leor daoine agus tá an t-éileamh ar an reifreann aontachta atá mar chuid de Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta ag dul i méid.

Tá rialtas na hÉireann ina chomh-ráthóir ar Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta. Tá freagracht air an Comhaontú a chosaint agus a chur chun cinn agus ní mór an phleanáil don todhchaí a bheith mar chuid de sin. Bíonn muid uile ag plleanáil don saol atá amach romhainn. Caithfidh rialtas na hÉireann deireadh a chur lena fhrithbheartaíocht ina leith sin.

Is ríthábhachtach go gcruthóidh na daoine sin againne atá ag iarraidh Éire aontaithe an spás dóibh siúd atá ina choinne nó dóibh siúd nach bhfuil a n-intinn déanta suas acu agus a bhféadfaí iad a mhealladh le bheith mar chuid den chomhrá ar aontacht.

Is léir go bhfuil líon méadaitheach daoine ó chúlra aontachtach ag ceistiú a dtacaíochta don aontas agus i gcásanna áirithe tá tuairim na nÉireannach Aontaithe ag teacht chun cinn anois ina ndearcadh polaitiúil.

Tá Éire nua, aontaithe á lorg ag Sinn Féin. Is mian linn Éire chóir chothrom a thógáil, Éire atá rathúil ó thaobh an gheilleagair de agus atá cuimsitheach ó thaobh na sochaí agus an chultúir de. Is mian linn na daoine is leochailí, daoine scothaosta, leanaí, na mionlaigh bhreithe, eitneacha, iad siúd faoi mhíchumas a chosaint – agus a chinntiú gurb é an comhionannas an bhunchloch ar a gcuirtear na beartais go léir le chéile.

Ar deireadh, impíonn Sinn Féin ar gach saoránach a bhfuil suim acu sa fhéidearthacht agus sna deiseanna a bhaineann le hAontacht na hÉireann a bheith gníomhach ar an cheist seo. Bí páirteach sa chomhrá.

Is am spreagúil é seo dúinn go léir; lán le deiseanna agus dóchas do shaol níos fearr amach anseo

