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THE **NEW IRELAND** IS FOR EVERYONE

RURAL COMMUNITIES IN A NEW IRELAND

BALMORAL SHOW
THURSDAY 16TH MAY 2024

Sinn Féin
www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland

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 through the hosting of public People's Assemblies across the country and internationally; through the collection and publication of written contributions; 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 Rural Communities in a New Ireland event which took place at the Balmoral Show on Thursday 16th May 2024. This was the 14th public event hosted by the Commission.

The meeting was addressed by Sinn Féin Agriculture Spokesperson Declan McAleer MLA and chaired by Michelle Gildernew MP.

The panel for the event included John McCallister (Beef & Dairy Farmer), Louise Coyle (Director- NI Rural Women's Network) and Elaine Houlihan (President- Macra na Feirme)

A video of Rural Communities in a New Ireland is available on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0BvsEuF3-c&t=4s

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

Upcoming events include the Lurgan People's Assembly on 11th June at 7pm in the Ashburn Hotel and Irish Unity and the Economy in the Europa Hotel Belfast on 28th June at 11am.

The Commission chairperson is Declan Kearney MLA and vice chairperson is Senator Lynn Boylan.

OPENING ADDRESS BY DECLAN MCALEER MLA

Declan McAleer welcomed everyone to the 14th public event hosted by Sinn Féin's Commission on the Future of Ireland. He said it was significant that this is the first event of this kind to be hosted at the Balmoral Show.

"Your presence here today demonstrates the growing momentum in the conversation about the future of Ireland.

"We want to encourage popular grass roots participation in the conversation about our shared future. We want everyone to have their say.

"Those who advocate Irish unity; those who are undecided and have questions; and those who at this time oppose change.

CONTINUED..

"We are here today at the Balmoral Show, the annual showcase for rural communities and all that is positive in rural Ireland, to give you the opportunity to contribute to the discussion and to listen to the points raised.

"Since the imposition of Partition our island has been forced to operate with one hand tied behind our backs and rural communities have especially suffered.

"Investment in the road network, better broadband, access to housing, healthcare, childcare and support for small businesses, including agriculture, are needed across Ireland to enable rural areas to prosper.

"We have all experienced the heartache of young people being forced to emigrate due to a lack of jobs, opportunities and housing in our county.

"In many rural areas across Ireland, Brexit threatens our excellent national standards of farm produce, it damages our reputation as a lead supplier of agri-produce across the world and it cuts farmers in the north out of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy.

"Decisions which affect our agri industries should be made on the island of Ireland, and not by Tory governments in Westminster.

"In the event of a successful unity referendum the entire island would be a member of the European Union and our full economic potential could be unlocked.

"A vast amount of academic research and modelling and new studies and books on all aspects of reunification are being produced regularly.

"Many, including Sinn Féin, urge the Irish Government to begin planning and preparing for constitutional change and there is now an urgent imperative for the government to establish a Citizens' Assembly to prepare the groundwork in advance of a unity referendum.

"Conversations are happening across the country – on our farms, at the mart, at our local GAA clubs and at our kitchen tables.

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

"It is absolutely crucial for farming families and rural communities to engage in the conversation around Irish unity to ensure they maximise the benefits that reunification could have for their communities."

Following Declan McAleers remarks the meeting was handed over to the Chairperson Michelle Gildernew MP.

MAIN DISCUSSION

In opening the main discussion Michelle Gildernew MP asked each of the panellists their thoughts on participating in the event.

John McCallister responded saying that he was delighted to take part, that he doesn't support a united Ireland but that it is important to have the discussion and look at the policy agenda around unity. He referenced Brexit stating that it was 'destabilising and unsettling' to him as a farmer and that it affected community relations across the UK.

Louise Coyle stated that her organisation provides a voice for rural women in their own communities, that rural women should be valued and be part of all conversations. She sees platforms like today's as an opportunity for women to say what's important to them, practical things such as the Childcare Strategy. Louise thinks that civic voices, not just those of politicians, must be heard in the discussions on the future.

Elaine Houlihan who travelled to Balmoral from Limerick remarked that as only the second ever female President of Macra na Feirme she had received some challenges and negativity which she called out in the media. In terms of Irish unity Elaine stated that its for her to think about as she's so far south, but the challenges in rural communities are the same in terms of suicide, succession and mental health and that she wants to work on solutions that benefit both sides of the border.

MICHELLE GILDERNEW MP POSED A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS TO THE PANEL

- **How could Irish unity benefit farming families & rural communities?**
- **How do you see the future unfolding from where we are now?**
- **How important is access to the EU market?**
- **What are the other challenges faced by rural communities?**

Louise Coyle responded by citing the impact of the cost of living crisis on women. Louise labelled it an 'income crisis' which is compounded by the fact that we don't like to talk about money and the shame that goes along with low income. Louise spoke about the British Tory policies which seem to be about shaming people with very punitive regulations. Louise said that people experiencing poverty also experienced poor mental health because they are struggling and feel they can't talk about it.

Lousie said that living in a rural area costs people more in terms of transport costs, with rural women sometimes cutting out their activities in order to enable their children to remain attending theirs.

She continued saying that a different constitutional future could offer something different but that many people are too busy surviving to think about thriving. She said it was good that the Executive in the north was back up and running but that when there was no Executive it made people think about alternatives.

In visualising the future **Elaine Houlihan** referenced a conversation she had had earlier that day with a young farmer from Ulster. They spoke about there being fewer family farms going forward with farms getting bigger and bigger.

Elaine said that in most farm families succession is a taboo word. In her own experience she has known since she was 12 who would be inheriting the farm, her parents had seen what this issue could do to siblings and they didn't want it for their children. She made the point that succession and inheritance are different. With succession the family farm is maintained but with inheritance there is a 50% chance that it will be put up for sale.

Referencing the lack of rural services Elaine said 'Would you like to bring up a family in an area with no school, no GAA club, no shop etc? No you wouldn't, more investment is needed in rural areas.'

Elaine also spoke about the loneliness she has experienced since taking on a leadership role in Macra and how this has affected her mental health. She said people in leadership positions come in for a lot of criticism that they're not doing enough and they can spend a lot of time fighting.

In terms of mental health **Elaine** believes that an all island approach is required. She spoke of an initiative run by Macra – Make the Move – which operates a helpline for farmers. She said that she was once operating the helpline at 2am talking a person out of doing something they shouldn't. She said that the people volunteering on this helpline needed to have a farming background – 'They need to understand what it means when someone says to you they have 2 bales left and a field of cows looking at them.' Elaine also referenced research from Trinity College Dublin which found that over 23% of young farmers were at risk of suicide.

John McCallister said that he didn't believe that unity would provide a 'silver bullet', he said 'it's about the policy agenda and resources to support services'. In visualising the future John said that he worked in a succession planning role for 6 years and said that farming families need to be supported to get better at talking about this, 'if we want a vibrant industry succession needs to be planned, families need paths and legal and financial support to manage the transition.'

Citing Margaret Thatcher John stated, 'EU access is vital. Mrs Thatcher's greatest achievement was creating the single market, it's odd that we have

bust a gut trying to get out of it.' He also referenced the size of the EU market saying 'We have 500 million potential customers at our door'

John said he's glad to see the Assembly and Executive up and running but the state of the north's finances will mean there are big challenges and the policy agenda is key.

Michelle Gildernew asked John if potential post unity readmission to the EU had changed his thinking on Irish unity. John responded saying that he is happy with the position of the north now that there is access to both the British and European markets.

AUDIENCE CONTRIBUTIONS

Rose Conway Walsh TD praised the discussion and said we have the opportunity now to create something really good. She asked 'Who will reshape Ireland? We need the voices that we don't hear too often', Rose said that we need to evaluate what are our values as a nation and island and how can we address iniquities in rural areas.

Jillian Reid from Rural Support spoke about mental health among rural dwellers. She said that Rural Support now has 14 counsellors and that rural poverty is a big issue. Jillian also praised Elaine for taking on a leadership position in Macra saying 'I have a daughter who is a farmer – you go for it!'

William Taylor from Farmers For Action spoke about the issue of climate change and big corporate food retailers and wholesalers saying that the latter have 'contributed to poverty across rural northern Ireland. William also referenced the NI Farm Welfare Bill which would guarantee fairer prices for farmers. He urged the Executive to progress the Bill saying 'Farmers used to be charity givers, now we are charity receivers.'

CLOSING REMARKS FROM THE PANEL

Elaine Houlihan outlined the challenges of Brexit saying, 'I wouldn't want to be President of Macra if we lost the Single Farm Payment'. She closed by again referring to mental health matters saying 'Farming is very high pressure and farmers are very isolated, machines can be replaced but people can't'.

Louise Coyle said that she thought Brexit might have provided the opportunity to have an 'indigenous Rural Development Programme' but that wasn't grasped and it's very unclear what replacement funding will be provided.

John McCallister closed saying that a number of themes and shared problems have been identified. John said he is 'galled' when people talk about the cost of living yet Tesco's profits exceed £2 billion. He said that farms have to be progressive and viable.

John said the future will be built on partnerships and that he will play his part. He thanked Sinn Féin for the invitation to participate in the event.

CONCLUSION

Closing the event Michelle Gildernew said,

"I'd like to sincerely thank all of those who contributed today, especially our fantastic panel. It has been an excellent meeting and I think we had some very insightful and at times personal testimony provided.

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

"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 have had our say and now we need to move in the planning and preparing phase in the new Ireland. It is vitally important that a Citizens' Assembly on Irish Unity is established by the Irish government and that rural voices will be heard.

"I hope this is only the first of a series of engagements and that these conversations will continue across rural communities in Ireland.

"I would appeal to citizens who are interested in the possibility and potential of Irish Unity to become active on this issue. Join in the conversation."

Sinn Féin

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POBAIL TUAITHE IN ÉIRINN NUA

Seó Bhaile Mhoireil
Déardaoin 16ú Bealtaine 2024

Sinn Féin

www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland

RÉAMHRÁ

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 na Pobail Tuaithe in imeacht de chuid Éire Nua a bhí ar siúl ag Seó Bhaile Mhoireil Déardaoin an 16 Bealtaine 2024. Ba é seo an 14ú imeacht poiblí a d'óstáil an Coimisiún.

Labhair Urlabhraí Talmhaíochta Shinn Féin Declan McAleer CTR ag an chruinniú agus bhí an Feisire Parlaiminte Michelle Gildernew ina cathaoirleach air.

Ar an phainéal don ócáid bhí John McCallister (Feirmeoir Mairteola & Déiríochta), Louise Coyle (Stiúrthóir- Líonra Ban Tuaithe TÉ) agus Elaine Houlihan (Uachtarán- Macra na Feirme)

Tá físeán de Phobail Tuaithe in Éirinn Nua ar fáil ar YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0BvsEuF3-c&t=4s

Faoi láthair, tá aighneacht faighte ag an Choimisiún um Thodhchaí na hÉireann ó réimse leathan daoine aonair agus grúpaí leasmhara. Tá sé tábhachtach a thabhairt faoi deara gur féidir ranníocaíochtaí a dhéanamh fós leis an gCoimisiún ag commission@sinnfein.ie nó tríd an leathanach gréasáin seo a leanas www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland

I measc na n-imeachtaí a bheidh ar siúl beidh Tionól Mhuintir an Lorgain ar an 11 Meitheamh ag 7pm in Óstán Ashburn agus imeacht eile ar Aontacht na hÉireann agus an Geilleagar in Óstán Europa, Béal Feirste ar an 28 Meitheamh ag 11am.

Is é Declan Kearney CTR cathaoirleach an Choimisiúin agus is í an Seanadóir Lynn Boylan an leaschathaoirleach.

AITHEASC TOSAIGH Ó DECLAN MCALEER CTR

Chuir Declan McAleer fáilte roimh gach duine chuig an 14ú imeacht poiblí a reáchtáil Coimisiún Shinn Féin um Thodhchaí na hÉireann. Dúirt sé go raibh sé suntasach gurb é seo an chéad imeacht den chineál seo a bheidh ar siúl ag Seó Bhaile Mhoireil.

"Léiríonn sibh a bheith anseo inniu an móiminteam atá ag dul i méid sa chomhrá faoi thodhchaí na hÉireann.

"Ba mhaith linn rannpháirtíocht chosmhuintir an phobail a spreagadh sa chomhrá faoinár dtodhchaí chomhroinnte. Ba mhaith linn go mbeadh a gcuid tuairimí ag gach duine.

"Iad siúd a thacaíonn le haontacht na hÉireann; iad siúd nach bhfuil cinnte agus a bhfuil ceisteanna acu; agus iad siúd atá i gcoinne an athraithe ag an am seo.

"Tá muid anseo inniu ag Seó Bhaile Mhoireil, an taispeántas bliantúil do phobail tuaithe agus gach rud atá dearfach faoin tuath in Éirinn, chun deis a thabhairt duit cur leis an phlé agus éisteacht leis na pointí a ardaíodh.

"Ó cuireadh an Chríochdheighilt i bhfeidhm, cuireadh iallach ar ár n-oileán oibriú le lámh amháin ceangailte taobh thiar dár ndroim agus tá pobail tuaithe thíos go mór leis.

"Tá gá le hinfheistíocht sa ghréasán bóithre, leathanbhanda níos fearr, rochtain ar thithíocht, cúram sláinte, cúram leanaí agus tacaíocht do ghnólachtaí beaga, lena n-áirítear talmhaíocht, ar fud na hÉireann chun cur ar chumas na gceantar tuaithe a bheith rathúil.

"Tá taithí againn ar fad ar an chrá croí a bhaineann le daoine óga a bheith ag dul ar imirce mar gheall ar easpa post, deiseanna agus tithíochta inár gcontae.

"In go leor ceantar tuaithe ar fud na hÉireann, tá an Breatimeacht ag bagairt ar ár gcaighdeáin náisiúnta den scoth maidir le táirgí feirme, déanann sé dochar dár gcáil mar phríomhsholáthraí táirgí talmhaíochta ar fud an domhain agus gearrann sé feirmeoirí ó thuaidh amach as Comhbheartas Talmhaíochta an AE.

"Ba chóir cinntí a dhéanamh a théann i bhfeidhm ar ár dtionscail talmhaíochta ar oileán na hÉireann, agus ní ag rialtais na dTóraithe in Westminster.

"Sa chás go n-éireodh le reifreann aontachta bheadh an t-oileán ar fad ina bhall den Aontas Eorpach agus d'fhéadfaí leas a bhaint as ár lánacmhainneacht eacnamaíoch.

"Tá an-chuid taighde agus samhaltú acadúil agus staidéir agus leabhair nua ar gach gné den athaontú á dtáirgeadh go rialta.

"Tá go leor daoine, Sinn Féin ina measc, ag tathant ar Rialtas na hÉireann tús a chur le pleanáil agus ullmhú d'athrú bunreachtúil agus tá géarghá anois go mbunódh an rialtas Tionól Saoránach chun an bhunobair a ullmhú roimh reifreann aontachta.

"Tá comhráite ag tarlú ar fud na tíre – ar ár bhfeirmeacha, ag an mhargadh, ag ár gclubanna áitiúla CLG agus ag boird na cistine.

"Is am spreagúil é seo dúinn go léir; lán le deiseanna agus dóchas do thodhchaí níos fearr.

"Tá sé fíorthábhachtach do theaghlaigh feirmeoireachta agus do phobail tuaithe páirt a ghlacadh sa chomhrá faoi aontacht na hÉireann chun a chinntiú go mbainfidh siad an leas is fearr is féidir as na buntáistí a d'fhéadfadh a bheith ag athaontú dá bpobail."

I ndiaidh do Declan McAleer an méid sin rá, labhair an Cathaoirleach, Michelle Gildernew.

PRÍOMHPHLÉ

Agus í ag cur tús leis an phríomhphlé, d'fhiafraigh Michelle Gildernew MP de gach duine de na painéalaithe a gcuid smaointe maidir le páirt a ghlacadh san ócáid.

D'fhreagair John McCallister ag rá go raibh áthas air páirt a ghlacadh ann, nach dtacaíonn sé le hÉirinn aontaithe ach go bhfuil sé tábhachtach go mbeadh an plé agus breathnú ar an chlár oibre beartais maidir le haontacht. Thagair sé don Bhreatimeacht ag rá go raibh sé 'díchobhsaithe agus míshocair' dó mar fheirmeoir agus go ndeachaigh sé i bhfeidhm ar an chaidreamh pobail ar fud na Ríochta Aontaithe.

Dúirt Louise Coyle go gcuireann a heagraíocht guth ar fáil do mhná tuaithe ina bpobail féin, gur cheart luach a chur ar mhná na tuaithe agus a bheith mar chuid de na comhráite ar fad. Feiceann sí ardáin ar nós an lae inniu mar dheis do mhná an méid atá tábhachtach dóibh a chur in iúl, rudaí praiticiúla ar nós na Straitéise Cúram Leanaí. Síleann Louise go gcaithfear guthanna sibhialta, ní hamháin guthanna na bpolaiteoirí, a chloisteáil sa phlé faoin todhchaí.

Dúirt Elaine Houlihan, a chuaigh go Baile Mhoireil as Luimneach, gur mhinic a tugadh a dúshlán agus a léiríodh diúltacht ina leith agus í mar an dara bean riamh mar uachtarán ar Macra na Feirme agus gur labhair sí ina n-éadan seo sna meáin. Maidir le haontacht na hÉireann, dúirt Elaine go bhfuil sí chun smaoineamh air mar go bhfuil sí chomh fada sin ó dheas, ach is ionann na dúshláin i bpobail tuaithe ó thaobh féinmharaithe, comharbais agus meabhairshláinte de agus go bhfuil sí ag iarraidh oibriú ar réitigh a rachaidh chun tairbhe an dá thaobh den teorainn.

CHUIR MICHELLE ROINNT CEISTEANNA AR AN PHAINÉAL

- **Cad é mar a thiocfadh le teaghlaigh feirmeoireachta & pobail tuaithe leas a bhaint as aontacht na hÉireann?**
- **Cad é mar a bheidh an saol amach anseo, dar leat??**
- **Cé chomh tábhachtach is atá rochtain ar mhargadh an AE?**
- **Cad iad na dúshláin eile atá roimh phobail tuaithe?**

D'fhreagair Louise Coyle trí thionchar na géarchéime costais mhaireachtála ar mhná a lua. Dúirt Louise gur 'géarchéim ioncaim' a bhí ann, rud a chuireann leis an nós nach maith linn labhairt faoi airgead agus an náire a théann chomh maith le hioncam ísehal. Labhair Louise faoi pholasaithe Thóraithe na Breataine ar léir go mbaineann siad le daoine a náiriú ach le rialacháin diana phionósacha ag dul leo. Dúirt Louise go mbíonn deacrachtaí meabhairshláinte ag daoine atá thíos leis an bhochtaineacht mar go bhfuil siad ag streachailt agus go mbraitheann siad nach féidir leo labhairt faoi.

Dúirt Lousie go gcosnaíonn cónaí i gceantar tuaithe níos mó ar dhaoine ó thaobh costais iompair de, agus go mbíonn mná na tuaithe ag cur deireadh lena gcuid gníomhaíochtaí féin ionas go dtig lena gcuid páistí freastal ar a gcuid gníomhachtaí féin, mar pháistí.

Lean sí uirthi ag rá go bhféadfadh todhchaí bhunreachtúil eile rud éigin difriúil a thairiscint ach go bhfuil go leor daoine róghnóthach ag smaoineamh ar rath. Dúirt sí go raibh sé go maith go raibh an Feidhmeannas ó thuaidh ar ais ar bun ach nuair nach raibh Feidhmeannas ann chuir sé daoine ag smaoineamh ar roghanna eile.

Agus í ag amharc ar a bhfuil i ndán di, thagair **Elaine Houlihan** do chomhrá a bhí aici níos luaithe an lá sin le feirmeoir óg as Cúige Uladh. Labhair siad faoi níos lú feirmeacha teaghlaigh a bheith ann amach anseo agus feirmeacha ag éirí níos mó agus níos mó.

Dúirt Elaine gur focal tabú é comharbas i bhformhór na dteaghlach feirme. Ina taithí féin tá a fhios aici ó bhí sí 12 bliain d'aois an té a bheadh ag fáil na feirme le hoidhreacht, chonaic a tuismitheoirí cad a d'fhéadfadh an cheist seo a dhéanamh do chlann agus ní raibh siad á n-iarraidh dá gcuid páistí féin. Rinne sí an pointe go bhfuil comharbas agus oidhreacht difriúil. Le comharbas coinnítear an fheirm teaghlaigh ach le hoidhreacht tá seans 50% ann go gcuirfear ar díol í.

Agus í ag tagairt don easpa seirbhísí tuaithe, dúirt Elaine 'Ar mhaith leat teaghlach a thógáil i gceantar gan aon scoil, gan aon chlub CLG, gan siopa srl? Níor mhaith leat, tá gá le níos mó infheistíochta i gceantair thuaithe.'

Labhair Elaine fosta faoin uaigneas atá uirthi ó ghlac sí ról ceannaireachta i Macra agus faoin tionchar a bhí aige sin ar a meabhairshláinte. Dúirt sí go ndéantar cáineadh ar a lán daoine i bpoist cheannaireachta isteach nach bhfuil

siad ag déanamh go leor agus gur féidir leo go leor ama a chaitheamh ag troid.

Ó thaobh na meabhairshláinte de, creideann **Elaine** go bhfuil gá le cur chuige uile-oileáin. Labhair sí faoi thionscnamh atá á reáchtáil ag Macra – Make the Move – a fheidhmíonn líne chabhrach d'fheirmeoirí. Dúirt sí go raibh sí ag feidhmiú na líne cabhrach uair amháin ag 2am ag moladh do dhuine gan gníomh a dhéanamh nár cheart dóibh. Dúirt sí go gcaithfeadh cúlra feirmeoireachta a bheith ag na daoine a bhíonn ag obair go deonach ar an líne chabhrach seo – 'Caithfidh siad tuiscint a fháil ar an bhrí atá leis nuair a deir duine leat go bhfuil dhá bhurla fágtha acu agus gort bó ag féachaint orthu. Thagair Elaine freisin do thaighde ó Choláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath a léirigh go raibh os cionn 23% d'fheirmeoirí óga i mbaol a bhféinmharaithe.

Dúirt John McCallister nár chreid sé go mbeadh aontacht ina 'piléar airgid', a dúirt sé 'baineann sé leis an chlár oibre polasaí agus acmhainní chun tacú le seirbhísí'. Agus é ag amharc ar an todhchaí, dúirt John gur oibrigh sé i ról pleanála comharbais ar feadh 6 bliana agus dúirt sé go gcaithfear tacú le teaghlaigh feirmeoireachta chun a bheith níos fearr ag caint faoi seo, 'más mian linn comharbas bríomhar tionscail a phleanáil, teastaíonn cosáin agus tacaíocht dhlíthiúil agus airgeadais ó theaghlaigh chun an t-aistriú a bhainistiú.'

Agus Margaret Thatcher á lua aici, dúirt John, 'Tá rochtain an AE ríthábhachtach. Ba é an t-éacht is mó a rinne Mrs Thatcher ná an margadh aonair a chruthú, is aisteach an rud é go bhfuil muid ar theann ar ndíchill ag iarraidh éirí as.' Thagair sé freisin do mhéid mhargadh an Aontais Eorpaigh ag rá 'Tá 500 milliún custaiméir féideartha ag cnagadh ar ár ndoras'

Dúirt John go bhfuil sé sásta go bhfuil an Tionól agus an Feidhmeannas faoi lán seoil ach go gciallóidh staid airgeadais an tuaiscirt go bhfuil dúshláin mhóra ann agus go bhfuil clár oibre an pholasaí ríthábhachtach.

D'fhiafraigh Michelle Gildernew de John an raibh athrú tagtha ar a chuid smaointeoireachta ar aontacht na hÉireann tar éis na haontachta san Aontas Eorpach. D'fhreagair John ag rá go bhfuil sé sásta le seasamh an tuaiscirt anois go bhfuil teacht aige ar mhargaí na Breataine agus na hEorpa araon.

TUAIRIMÍ ÓN LUCHT FÉACHANA AGUS ÉISTEACHTA

Mhol an **Teachta Dála Rose Conway Walsh** an plé agus dúirt sí go bhfuil deis againn anois rud an-mhaith a chruthú. D'fhiafraigh sí 'Cé a dhéanfaidh Éire a athshamhlú? Teastaíonn na guthanna nach gcloisimid rómhinic', a dúirt Rose, go gcaithfimid meastóireacht a dhéanamh ar na luachanna atá againn mar náisiún agus mar oileán agus an dóigh is féidir linn aghaidh a thabhairt ar éagothroime i gceantair thuaithe.

Labhair **Jillian Reid ó Thacaíocht Tuaithe** faoin meabhairshláinte i measc mhuintir na tuaithe. Dúirt sí go bhfuil 14 comhairleoir ag Tacaíocht Tuaithe anois agus gur ceist mhór í bochtaineacht na tuaithe. Mhol Jillian Elaine freisin as post ceannaireachta a ghlacadh i Macra ag rá 'Tá iníon agam atá ina feirmeoir – lean ort!'

Labhair **William Taylor ó Farmer Action** faoi cheist an athraithe aeráide agus miondíoltóirí agus mórdhíoltóirí móra bia corparáideacha ag rá gur chuir an dara ceann 'leis an bhochtaineacht ar fud na tuaithe i dtuaisceart na hÉireann. Thagair Liam freisin do Bhille Leasa Feirme TÉ a chinnteodh praghsanna níos cothroime d'fheirmeoirí. D'impigh sé ar an Fheidhmeannas an Bille a chur chun cinn ag rá 'Feirmeoirí a bhíodh ina ndeontóirí carthanachta, anois is glacadóirí carthanachta muid.'

FOCAL SCOIR ÓN PHAINÉAL

Rinne **Elaine Houlihan** cur síos ar na dúshláin a bhaineann leis an Bhreatimeacht agus dúirt sí, 'Níor mhaith liom a bheith i m'Uachtarán ar Macra dá gcaillfimis an Íocaíocht Feirme Aonair'. Chríochnaigh sí ag tagairt do chúrsaí meabhairshláinte ag rá 'Tá brú an-ard ar an fheirmeoireacht agus tá feirmeoirí an-scoite amach, is féidir meaisíní a chur ina n-áit ach ní féidir le daoine'.

Dúirt **Louise Coyle** gur shíl sí go mb'fhéidir gur thug an Breatimeacht deis 'Clár Forbartha Tuaithe dúchasach' a bheith ann ach nár tuigeadh é sin agus nach léir cén maoiniú eile a chuirfear ar fáil.

Dhún **John McCallister** ag rá go bhfuil roinnt téamaí agus fadhbanna comhroinnte aitheanta. Dúirt John go ngoilleann sé go mór air nuair a labhraíonn daoine faoin chostas maireachtála ach go bhfuil brabúis Tesco níos mó ná £2 billiún. Dúirt sé go gcaithfidh feirmeacha a bheith forásach agus inmharthana.

Dúirt John go dtógfar an todhchaí ar chomhpháirtíochtaí agus go mbeidh a chion féin aige. Ghabh sé buíochas le Sinn Féin as an chuireadh páirt a ghlacadh san ócáid.

CONCLÚID

Ag deireadh na hócáide dúirt Michelle Gildernew

"Ba mhaith liom buíochas ó chroí a ghabháil le gach duine a chuidigh inniu, go háirithe ár bpainéal iontach. Cruinniú den scoth a bhí ann agus sílim go raibh fianaise an-léargasach againn agus uaireanta cuireadh fianaise phearsanta ar fáil.

"Tá sé ríthábhachtach go gcruthóidh na daoine sin againne atá ag iarraidh Éire aontaithe an spás dóibh siúd atá ina choinne nó dóibh siúd nach bhfuil cinneadh acu agus a d'fhéadfadh iad a mhealladh ina leith."

"Tá Éire nua, aontaithe agus aontaithe á lorg ag Sinn Féin. Is mian linn Éire chóir, chothrom agus a thógáil, Éire atá rathúil ó thaobh an gheilleagair de agus atá cuimsitheach ó thaobh na sochaí agus an chultúir de.

"Bhí ár dtuairimí againn agus anois ní mór dúinn bogadh sa chéim pleanála agus ullmhúcháin san Éirinn nua. Tá sé fíorthábhachtach go mbunódh rialtas na hÉireann Tionól Saoránach ar Aontacht na hÉireann agus go gcloisfear glórtha tuaithe.

"Tá súil agam nach bhfuil anseo ach an chéad cheann de shraith rannpháirtíochta agus go leanfar leis na comhráite seo ar fud phobail tuaithe in Éirinn.

"Impím ar shaoránaigh a bhfuil suim acu sa fhéidearthacht agus san acmhainneacht atá ag Aontacht na hÉireann a bheith gníomhach ar an cheist seo. Bí páirteach sa chomhrá."

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