



EARRAIGH
2026 SPRING
EAGRÁN ISSUE 12

IRELAND ÉIRE NUA



PREPARING FOR A NEW IRELAND

Uachtarán Shinn Féin
Mary Lou McDonald TD

SEE PAGE 2

**KEEP TALKING
ABOUT
PALESTINE**

SEASANN MUID LEIS AN PHALAISTÍN



Clár an Abhair

EARRAIGH 2026 SPRING
EAGRÁN ISSUE 12

- 2 **PREPARING FOR A NEW IRELAND**
- UACHTARÁN SHINN FÉIN MARY LOU McDONALD TD
- 4 **GAEIL NA TÍRE AG BAILIÚ FÉ SCÁTH ÉIREANN AONTAITHE AG ARD-FHEIS CHONRADH NA GAEILGE** - RÓISÍN NIC LIAM
- 6 **'HISTORIC' VOTE AT CONRADH NA GAEILGE ARD FHEIS**
- AISLING REILLY MLA
- 7 **IRISH UNITY - LET THE PLANNING BEGIN** - PROFESSOR MIKE TOMLINSON
- 10 **WESTMINSTER WILL NEVER ACT IN OUR INTERESTS**
- DECLAN KEARNEY MLA
- 12 **UNRAVELLING THE UNION** - PAT CULLEN MP
- 14 **'UNITY IS STRENGTH'**
- JOE DWYER INTERVIEW WITH EDDIE DEMPSEY RMT
- 18 **CREATING A NEW PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE- PART 1** - EMMA MCGARDLE
- 21 **THE COST OF IRISH UNITY** - PEARSE DOHERTY TD
- 23 **WOMEN SHAPING THE NEW IRELAND** - GRACE MCDERMOTT
- 25 **PUBLIC MEDIA IN A NEW IRELAND** - DR. STEPHEN BAKER
- 26 **AN TÁBHACHT A BHAINNEANN LE HÚSAID AGUS LE CUR CHIN CINN AN BUN-LEAGAN GAELACH DE LOGAINMNEACHA**
- COLMÁN MAC AN CHROSAIN
- 29 **LOGAINMNEACHA** - EOGHAN MAC CORMAIC
- 30 **THE GERRY ADAMS INTERVIEW - PART 2**
- WE NEED A MASS MOVEMENT
- 35 **COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF IRELAND UPDATE**
- GRACE MCDERMOTT
- 37 **GROWING SUPPORT FOR UNITY ACROSS NORTH AMERICA**
- CIARÁN QUINN & GREG O'LOUGHLIN
- 39 **'WHAT PRICE AN IRISH SOUL'** - FRANK FITZPATRICK
- 44 **THINKING ABOUT UTOPIA** - LOUISE FERGUSON
- 45 **THE TRAVELLERS TALE**- RAY BASSETT BOOK REVIEW BY JIM GIBNEY
- 47 **DUIRT SIAD** - AOIFE FERGUSON

Preparing for a New Ireland

Sinn Féin Leader Mary Lou McDonald TD has described recent comments on Irish unity by An Taoiseach Micheál Martin as out of step with political reality across the island.

Mary Lou McDonald was responding to an interview Micheál Martin gave to Máirín Ní Ghadhra, on 7 Lá on TG4 in February. The Sinn Féin leader dismissed Martin's claim that there is 'not much substance' behind the growing demand for a referendum on Irish unity, as both wrong and revealing. It shows, she said, "a government that is content to drift, rather than lead, on the most important constitutional question facing the people of the island of Ireland.

Mary Lou McDonald said: "Irish unity is not just a 'campaign'. It is a democratic objective enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement. It is grounded in the lived experience of people across this island who want better public services, economic opportunity, political stability and a future free from division.

"The responsibility to prepare for constitutional change rests squarely with the Irish Government. On that front, this government has failed."

Mary Lou McDonald said that while practical cross-border projects are welcome, they cannot substitute for political leadership.

"Connections between communities'



“Public opinion is shifting. The conversation is advancing. Citizens’ assemblies, independent research, and cross-community dialogue are all pointing to the need for structured preparation. Pretending that change is not happening will not stop it.”

matter. Reconciliation matters. Sinn Féin has consistently championed dialogue, respect and partnership.

“But building a bridge at Narrow Water, while positive, is not a strategy for constitutional change.

“Cultural exchanges and poetry readings are no substitute for serious preparation.

“The Shared Island initiative, while useful in parts, is not a plan for unity.

“It does not address the core questions of healthcare, taxation, public services, rights protections or economic transition in a new Ireland. These are the issues that require detailed, structured planning now – not in some vague future beyond 2030.”

The Sinn Féin President said that the Taoiseach’s assertion that there is “no prospect” of a referendum before 2030, “ignores the demographic and political changes that are taking place across the island.”

She added: “Public opinion is shifting. The conversation is advancing. Citizens’ assemblies, independent research, and cross-community dialogue are all pointing to the need for structured preparation. Pretending that change is not happening will not stop it.

“The Good Friday Agreement provides a clear democratic pathway. It is not for any Taoiseach to dismiss that pathway because it is politically inconvenient.”

Addressing the Taoiseach’s suggestion that unity talk is premature, she added:

“Leadership means preparing for the future, not postponing it. The role of the Irish Government should be to plan, to inform, and to engage people honestly about what unity would look like – socially, economically and politically.

“Sinn Féin will continue to work constructively with all communities on this island. Irish unity must be achieved by consent, through peaceful and democratic means, with protections and guarantees for all traditions.

“This is a defining decade. The government can either lead responsibly and prepare for constitutional change, or it can continue to pretend that the conversation is not already well underway. Sinn Féin will not wait for complacency to catch up with reality.”



GAEIL NA TÍRE AG BAILIÚ FÉ SCÁTH ÉIREANN AONTAITHE AG ARD-FHEIS CHONRADH NA GAEILGE

Róisín Nic Liam

Gach bliain, bailíonn baill Chonradh na Gaeilge – an eagraíocht Ghaeilge is sine sa tír – le chéile le clár oibre na heagraíochta a mhúnlú. Fé théama Éireann Aontaithe a bhí Ard-Fheis na bliana seo, agus aghaidh á tabhairt ag Gaeil ó gach cearn den tír ar na deiseanna agus na dúshláin a bhainfeadh leis an athrú bunreachtúil ó dhearcadh na teanga de. Ag teacht le toil dhaonlathach na mball a bhí an téama céanna, agus glacadh forleathan ina measc le rúin éagsúla a d'impigh ar an eagraíocht pobal na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta a eagrú i gcomhthéacs Éireann aontaithe le blianta beaga anuas.

Mar chuid den Ard-Fheis i mí na Feabhra, tugadh léargas do phobal na Gaeilge ar thuairisc taighde liom dar teideal 'Éire Aontaithe mar dheis chneasaithe: ré nua don Ghaeilge agus don Ghaeltacht'. Léirítear sa tuairisc chéanna go bhfuil an Ghaeilge cheana féin neadaithe mar cheist lárnach sna díospóireachtaí ar Éirinn aontaithe, agus gur minic go gcuireann lucht léinn agus an bhunaíocht pholaitiúil in iúl í mar a bheadh cipín idirbheartaíochta ann le buairteanna an phobail Aontachtaigh a mhaolú. Fágann an t-ionad céanna go bhfuil pobal na Gaeilge ag freagairt go cosantach do chlár atá claonta in aghaidh na teanga más ea, in áit deis stairiúil aontacht na hÉireann a thapú lena fhís fhorásach dhearfach féin a leagan amach don teanga agus don Ghaeltacht amach anso.

Moltar dá bharr sin gur gá do phobal na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta tiontú ón seasamh leochaileach céanna chuig ionad réamhghníomhach dearfach, agus deimhin á déanamh de go dtógfar ar chearta na nGael in Éirinn Aontaithe seachas a mhalairt. Go deimhin, trí stair an choilíneachais agus teip na críochdheighilte ó thaobh na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta de a chíoradh, aithnítear aontacht na hÉireann mar dheis nach bhfacthas riamh an caidreamh idir an státchóras, muintir na hÉireann trí chéile agus teanga dhúchais na tíre seo a athshocrú ó bhonn – is cuma más Caitliceach, Protastúnach nó eile tú. Trí an Ghaeilge a fhréamhú mar chuid de chlár ceartais níos leithne i gcomhthéacs Éireann aontaithe is fearr is féidir amhlaidh a dhéanamh.

Leagtar sraith moltaí amach sa tuairisc dá réir sin do Chonradh na Gaeilge lena rannpháirtíocht – agus rannpháirtíocht phobal na Gaeilge is na Gaeltachta – sa slógadh náisiúnta i dtaobh an athaontaithe a mhéadú. Ní hamháin go n-aithnítear na deiseanna a bhaineann le hÉirinn aontaithe don Ghaeilge más ea, ach áitítear anuas air sin go bhfuil de chumas ag an gConradh agus pobal na teanga ról ceannaireachta a imirt sa tsochaí shibhialta – le hais grúpaí eile ar nós Chomhairle Náisiúnta na mBan, Gaels le Chéile agus eile – trí ról lárnach a imirt i dtógáil Éireann nua trí lionsa na gceart teanga agus na saoirse cultúrtha.

“Is í an Ghaeilge athghabháil na hÉireann, agus is í athghabháil na hÉireann slánú na Gaeilge.”



Go deimhin, aithnítear an ról claochlaitheach a d’fhéadfadh pobal na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta a imirt i dtogra na haontachta trí chéile agus tarrac acu ar thraidisiún saibhir feachtasaíochta – traidisiún a chumasaíonn gníomhaithe athrú sóisialta stairiúil a bhaint amach ón mbonn aníos. Glactar le pobal na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta más ea mar dhream a bheidh lárnach agus ríthábhachtach i múnú thodhchaí na hÉireann, seachas mar dhream a ligfeadh i ndearúid nó a ndéanfar tuilleadh imeallú orthu i socrú bunreachtúil nua. Ní hamháin gur chun leas phobal na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta atá Éire nua más ea, ach is chun leas thogra na haontachta é rannpháirtíocht phobal na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta freisin. I bhfocail Mháirtín Uí Chadhain féin: “Is í an Ghaeilge athghabháil na hÉireann, agus is í athghabháil na hÉireann slánú na Gaeilge.”

Scáthán is ea téama Ard-Fheis Chonradh na Gaeilge i mbliana, mar aon leis an tuairisc choimisiúnaithe seo, ar an bhforbairt leanúnach atá ar an bplé ar Éirinn aontaithe. Bíodh na Gaeil lárnach san fheachtas céanna agus tapaímis an deis todhchaí níos fearr a bhaint amach don nGaeilge agus don nGaeltacht inti.

Is taighdeoir PhD agus gníomhaí Róisín Nic Liam. Foilseofar an tuairisc ‘Éire aontaithe mar dheis chneasaithe: Ré nua don Ghaeilge agus don Gaeltacht’ ina hiomláine (agus go dátheangach) i mí Aibreáin 2026. Conradh na Gaeilge a rinne coimisiúnú ar an obair sin, ach beidh Ollscoil na Banríona, Béal Feirste, mar chomhfhóilsitheoir uirthi freisin.



‘HISTORIC’ VOTE AT CONRADH NA GAEILGE ARD FHEIS

Aisling Reilly MLA

At the end of last year Oireachtas na Samhna in Belfast was a huge success. Thousands of Irish speakers, including Uachtarán Catherine Connolly, spent several days enjoying the music, dance, culture, arts, craic and discussions that are part of the oldest Irish language and arts event on the island of Ireland. In August Belfast will host the Comhaltas Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, the world’s biggest celebration of Irish music and culture.

All of this, and the Conradh na Gaeilge Ard Fheis vote on unity, is evidence of the societal change that is taking place. The conference was alive and vibrant with a new generation of young gaeilgeoirí determined to assert their Irishness, proud of their language and determined to stand up for their language and national rights.

The vote when it came was overwhelmingly positive. It changed Conradh’s constitution and restored its historical objective of working “towards a united Ireland in the interests of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht”.

At a time when momentum is increasing daily around the demand for the Unity Referendums provided for by the Good

Friday Agreement, and the need to prepare for this, Conradh na Gaeilge is now committed to joining that conversation and advocating for Unity.

This is a historic vote and reflects the growing momentum for a better future in a new and united Ireland.

I commend everyone who supported the motion, especially its proposers, Comhairle Ceantair Bhéal Feirste.

There are significant opportunities in the years ahead to advance reunification and to build a fairer island for workers, families and communities.

Aisling Reilly MLA represents West Belfast. She works closely with West Belfast MP Paul Maskey and is deeply ingrained within the community. Aisling is also a Junior Minister in the Executive.



IRISH UNITY - LET THE PLANNING BEGIN



Mike Tomlinson

HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO A UNITY REFERENDUM? WITH A TARGET DATE OF 2030 RAPIDLY APPROACHING AND MUCH TALK OF THE NEED FOR PREPARATION, NO ONE HAS PRODUCED EVEN AN OUTLINE OF WHAT A REFERENDUM PROSPECTUS MIGHT LOOK LIKE. THIS IS UNDERSTANDABLE. IT IS AFTER ALL THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE IRISH GOVERNMENT, NOT THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION OR ANY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION, TO TAKE REFERENDUM PLANNING FORWARD. BUT CALLS FOR PROPER PLANNING ARE NOW SO WIDESPREAD THAT THE TASK OF SHAPING THE PROSPECTUS NEEDS TO BE TAKEN FORWARD WITH OR WITHOUT THE IRISH GOVERNMENT, ALL THE MORE SO GIVEN CURRENT TAOISEACH MICHEÁL MARTIN'S RELUCTANCE TO ENGAGE BEYOND THE 'SHARED ISLAND' INITIATIVE AND THE NOTION OF 'UNITING IRISH PEOPLE'.

Ten years ago popular discussion of Irish unity was a discreet affair which took place among trusted families, friends and neighbours, mainly behind closed doors. Then the right wing of the British Tory party won their long battle to hold a referendum on leaving the EU. A number of important political decisions followed.

First came the Brexit vote itself. Disturbingly for unionism, a clear majority in the North of Ireland voted differently (56% remain) from British voters (England and Wales, 53% leave), symbolising a rupture in the union. The DUP and some of its right-wing allies scrambled to turn the overall UK leave vote (52%) into a vote for a hard Irish land border which, with the aid of technological fixes from the likes of Fujitsu (the architects of the Post Office's Horizon

software scandal), would be relatively inconspicuous, they argued. They lost that battle and instead have the displeasure of seeing customs labels on their parcels arriving from 'the mainland' across the Irish sea. Brexit became a catalyst for intense political focus on the border and discussion of partition.

The second significant political decision was taken by the European Council in April 2017. The Council decided that, in the event of Irish unity, "the entire territory of such a united Ireland would thus be part of the European Union".

A third important decision came in July 2024. The Joint Committee of the Oireachtas on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) published a report recommending "preparation for a united Ireland to

begin immediately". The report proposes a deepening of North/South cooperation between Invest NI and the IDA, cooperation on cross-border opportunities for teachers including Irish language supports, on further and higher education student opportunities, on energy, climate action and transport infrastructure, and on "civil service and governance, including developing a North/South exchange programme for civil servants".

The Committee recommended "a whole of government approach... with comprehensive examination of the implications of constitutional change across all Departments and State Agencies, led by the Department of the Taoiseach."

Fourthly, both the Dáil and Seanad approved a motion on Irish Unity, unopposed by the government, in October 2025. Tabled by Sinn Féin, the motion called on the Irish government to plan and prepare for Irish unity through setting up citizens' assemblies, producing a plan towards unity, engaging with Protestant and unionist opinion, and working to secure a date for the referendums as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement. The Oireachtas mandate for active planning is clear.

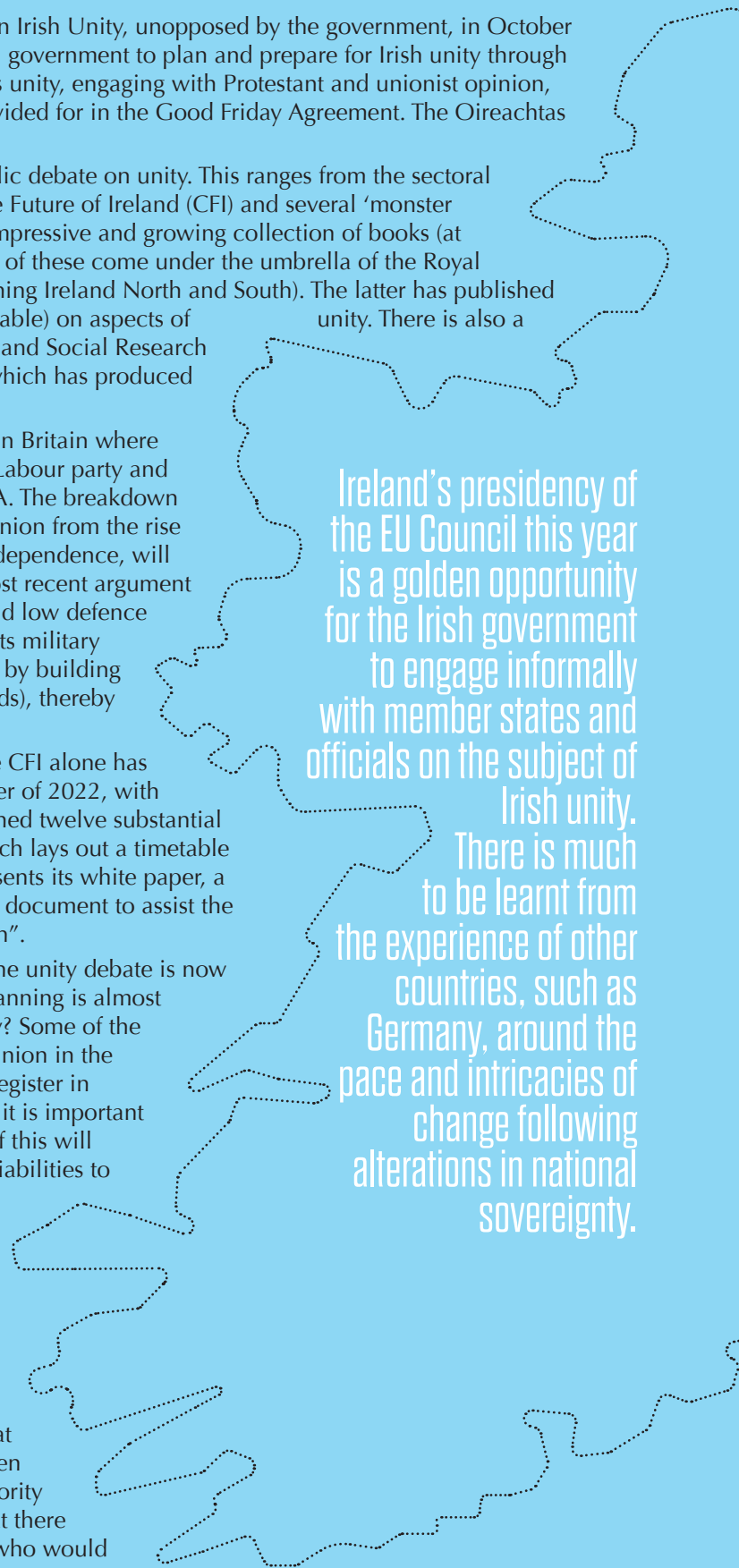
The above political decisions reflect the broadening public debate on unity. This ranges from the sectoral and thematic discussions held by the Commission on the Future of Ireland (CFI) and several 'monster meetings' organised by Ireland's Future, through to the impressive and growing collection of books (at least ten since 2021), research papers and articles. Some of these come under the umbrella of the Royal Irish Academy's ARINS initiative (Analysing and Researching Ireland North and South). The latter has published over one hundred academic research papers (freely available) on aspects of unity-focused research programme within the Economic and Social Research Institute, funded by the Taoiseach's Shared Island Unit, which has produced fifteen reports.

The work of Irish Border Poll promotes the unity debate in Britain where pro-unity supporters have been marginalised within the Labour party and where right-wing voices campaign to undermine the GFA. The breakdown of two-party politics and the threatened breakup of the union from the rise of Plaid Cymru and the on-going demand for Scottish independence, will further accelerate the unity discussion in Ireland. The most recent argument from the English right is that, given Ireland's neutrality and low defence spending, the British government should radically grow its military commitments in the North eastern corner of Ireland (e.g. by building a new naval base in Derry and expanding military airfields), thereby taking any prospect of reunification off the table.

It would take weeks to read through all this material. The CFI alone has held 44 assemblies since it was established in the summer of 2022, with follow-up videos and reports. Ireland's Future has published twelve substantial reports including the forward-looking 'Ireland 2030' which lays out a timetable for unity. By 2028, it suggests, the Irish government "presents its white paper, a programme for a new and united Ireland as a framework document to assist the referendum campaigns for reunification, North and South".

So clearly, we have come a long way in a short period: the unity debate is now a mainstream part of public discourse and the call for planning is almost universal. But is public opinion shifting in favour of unity? Some of the research may have had a negative effect on pro-unity opinion in the South. Spurious claims about the ruinous costs of unity register in opinion polls as reduced support for a united Ireland, so it is important to produce a convincing financial plan for unity. Some of this will depend on negotiations with the British over assets and liabilities to be settled when sovereignty over the North is transferred to a new Irish government. As it is, around two-thirds of voters in the South consistently favour unity, while a third are undecided or opposed, according to the ARINS/Irish Times surveys.

Opinion in the North, surveys show, is moving towards unity and against the union. For instance, the NI Life & Times surveys found that in 2019, 51% were against unity "if there was a referendum tomorrow". By 2024 that figure had fallen to 42% while the pro-unity vote had risen to 36%. Should this trend continue, some suggest, a majority may favour unity as soon as 2028. Surveys also show that there is a significant decline in the proportion of 'Protestants' who would



Ireland's presidency of the EU Council this year is a golden opportunity for the Irish government to engage informally with member states and officials on the subject of Irish unity. There is much to be learnt from the experience of other countries, such as Germany, around the pace and intricacies of change following alterations in national sovereignty.

find a pro-unity referendum result “almost impossible to accept”, down to 20%. This result matters because some discussions of unity talk up the threat of loyalist violence, especially cross-border bombings, as the reason why it is far too soon to hold a referendum, even when polling may show in the near future that a majority are in favour of unity. Incidentally,

the only clue the British government has ever given as to the criteria for holding a unity referendum came from Fleur Anderson (a junior minister at the NIO) who stated in April 2025 that the decision “would be based on opinion polls”.

Possible violent loyalist reaction to a successful unity referendum is not an excuse to postpone planning. In fact a 2024 survey showed that 38% of Protestants think unity planning is important. So good planning may well reduce fears over what unity may look like and militant opposition to it.

What could the Irish government be doing now? In implementing the will of the Oireachtas, it could start by putting ‘planning for unity’ on the agenda of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and stepping up the number of meetings.

It could seek to establish with the British a programme of work around the items that will require mutual agreement in the event of sovereignty transfer of the North. For example, what would the list of

liabilities transferring to the new Ireland look like? State and public sector superannuated pensions will be major items for consideration.

Public debt will be another. And what about assets? Will Ireland be expected to buy out the archaic Crown Estate’s ownership of the foreshore of counties Derry, Antrim and Down, rents from which make a contribution (albeit

very minor) towards funding the monarchy? Presumably, the century-old territorial dispute over Foyle and Carlingford Loughs will be resolved (if not the one over Rockall). Britain’s role in maintaining British citizenship rights under the GFA will need to be considered. The identification of administrative and statistical records on Northerners that are held in Britain is another matter.

Ireland’s presidency of the EU Council this year is a golden opportunity for the Irish government to engage informally with member states and officials on the subject of Irish unity. There is much to be learnt from the experience of other countries, such as Germany, around the pace and intricacies of change following alterations in national sovereignty.

Such preliminary work will begin to frame expectations around the immediate costs of the transfer of sovereignty, the timetable for that transfer and longer-range ambitions for the integration and development of public services and state functions. A Green Paper should articulate protective principles such as no diminution or dilution of economic and social rights. It will of necessity be a mixture of ‘what’ and ‘when’: what the future goals for public policy built on best practice in either jurisdiction will be, and an indicative timetable of when changes will be implemented, i.e. the sequencing of change. It should include post-referendum processes such as the possibility of a constitutional convention. Among other things, the latter could result in building economic and social rights into the constitution, a belated fulfilment of the GFA’s promise of a Bill of Rights, and could include the rights of nature.

A dominant theme in the unity literature to date concerns the design of political institutions and the status of Stormont. What we might call ‘reluctant unifiers’ tend to favour keeping Stormont, as if ‘unity’ simply means that Dublin pays the bills instead of London. Whatever the case for a temporary retention of Stormont, or the merits of greater devolution to local authorities across Ireland (including federalism) in the future, an immediate post-referendum priority is to hold elections to a new united Irish parliament and to form an all-Ireland government (almost inevitably a coalition government). Another priority is for the North to switch over to the Euro. A third priority is to bring workers and businesses into an all-Ireland tax regime, including social insurance payments, complemented by a unified scheme of social insurance benefits. There is scope here for promoting the immediate advantages of unity by, for instance, paying the higher Southern rates of child benefit to Northerners as soon as possible.

Finally, any planning documents should name the date for the transfer of sovereignty. This should be as close as practicable to the date of the referendums. Early planning makes all this realistic.

Mike Tomlinson - Emeritus Professor of Social Policy, Queen’s University Belfast

So clearly, we have come a long way in a short period: the unity debate is now a mainstream part of public discourse and the call for planning is almost universal. But is public opinion shifting in favour of unity?

WESTMINSTER WILL NEVER ACT IN OUR INTERESTS

Declan Kearney MLA

The peace process has opened a peaceful and political road to achieve self-determination and Irish unity. That change is in evidence all around us.

The North has been demilitarised. The RUC and Ulster Defence Regiment militia have been disbanded. Sectarian discrimination in employment has ended. The Irish national identity has parity of esteem and the Irish language enjoys official status. Political unionism's dominance has crumbled.

Yet powerful sections within the British security and intelligence agencies remain politically and psychologically at war with the Sinn Féin leadership. That's the subtext to the recent civil case against Gerry Adams in London. These are the same people who are using the so-called Legacy Act as a new effort to cover up Britain's dirty war in Ireland.

So, the challenges are many, however, those of us who champion a new vision for Ireland have momentum. But, still there is much more to be done.

The DUP in particular, and political unionism generally, is attempting to subvert the capacity of the power-sharing Executive and Assembly to work effectively.

The state of public finances and ability to deliver sustainable and decent public services has arguably never been more difficult. That, combined with inflationary pressures and extremity of the cost of living crisis, are creating unprecedented challenges for the Northern Executive. The British Labour government has not reversed the chronic underfunding of the North by the Tories since 2010.



However, there is a change occurring within the protestant section of the community in the North. Protestant people, including those who have been traditionally unionist, are questioning the benefits of being part of a decaying union, and where their best interests lie in the future.

As a result, schools in the North of Ireland are crumbling; children with special educational needs, and adults with additional and complex needs are being failed; the health service itself is in crisis; the wastewater infrastructure system is in a state of collapse; our environmental and agricultural challenges are immense.

Westminster rule has systemically undermined the political process in the North. It will never act in our interests, and that pattern will continue in the absence of constitutional change. However, the prospect of achieving Irish unity is now firmly on the political horizon.

It's this reality which is driving the increasing arrogance, negativity and confrontational approach of the DUP, and others in political unionism. Of course, intra-unionist electoral rivalry is a factor, but DUP tactics are totally focused upon causing political demoralisation. The DUP is hell-bent on pursuing a wreckers' agenda within the Assembly and Executive, no matter what the consequence.

However, there is a change occurring within the protestant section of the community in the North. Protestant people, including those who have been traditionally unionist, are questioning the benefits of being part of a decaying union, and where their best interests lie in the future.

They are watching political and economic developments in Britain and feel increasingly distant from decisions being made in London, by a government which neither understands nor cares. It is a particularly strong sentiment being expressed by young people.

The British Labour austerity approach to the North is mutually reinforcing with the stance of political unionism. That is unsurprising, English politicians do not care about citizens in the North. British indifference provides cover for the DUP in its efforts to block and frustrate positive progress within the North's political institutions.

All this underlines the fact that the Good Friday Agreement is a peace agreement, but not a political settlement. The political institutions established by the agreement are important mechanisms to try and make change on behalf of all citizens, but they are not an end

in themselves.

The road to a better future and Irish unity is clear. In moving forward, we need to remain cohesive, to continue increasing popular support, and leveraging our political strength to secure a unity referendum by 2030, and then win the popular debate for national reunification.

Republicans need to take every opportunity to engage collectively and discuss the challenges and opportunities within this political phase.

The Assembly and council elections in 2027 will be another key beachhead from which we can advance the project of national and social change.

Young people are at the fore of an exciting, democratic movement aimed at decolonising Irish society, through language, music, cultural expression, and international solidarity with peoples denied their rights across the world: A recent Ard Fheis of Conradh na Gaeilge exemplified that dynamic.

Today's youth are shaping our future in spite of the conservative forces in the North and south.

They are the new change makers – setting the pace for the march of the Irish nation towards a new, modern progressive republic.

You can read Declan's full An Phoblacht article here: anphoblacht.com/contents/28792



UNRAVELLING THE UNION

*Pat
Cullen
MP*

As the celebrated constitutional-in-surrectionist - Tony Benn - once observed: "The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, to give it its full title, is neither united nor great..."



It is an observation that has only become increasingly more evident with each passing year. Indeed, it is becoming entirely possible that the upcoming May elections in Britain could result in a Scottish nationalist First Minister in Holyrood, a Welsh nationalist First Minister in the Senedd - alongside an Irish nationalist First Minister in the North of Ireland.

This would constitute a political terrain that the original framers of the present constitutional scaffolding never intended. The 'devolution project' was calculated to stymie the cry for independence, not facilitate it. Indeed, in 1995, the British Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, George Robertson, stated that a devolved Scottish Parliament would kill the idea of an independent Scotland "stone dead."

Reflecting this potential constitutional milestone, on Wednesday 11 February, in the heart of the supposed

'Mother of all Parliaments'; Irish, Welsh, and Scottish nationalists met to discuss the unravelling of the 'Union'.

The gathering was a Westminster panel discussion organised by IrishBorderPoll.com. The line-up of speakers included myself, the SNP's Seamus Logan MP, Plaid Cymru's Baroness Smith of Llanfaes, and the independent author and commentator Kevin Meagher. The evening was chaired by Kevin Rooney, editor of IrishBorderPoll.com.

I opened the evening's discussion reflecting on the negative impact of British Government interference. In the North, we have literally seen a litany of English Ministers who have been flown into our part of the world - very often for the first time in their lives! - completely detached from the interests of our people, and completely clueless about our politics.



The late Martin McGuinness used to often re-tell the story of the first time he sat down privately with Ian Paisley, and how the DUP leader had said to him, “We don’t need Englishmen to rule us. We can do that for ourselves.”

Imagine that coming from Ian Paisley! But on that basis, they found common ground. We can manage our own affairs.

The pro-Irish unity argument is gathering momentum like never before. Sinn Féin is now the largest party in the North at local government, Assembly, and Westminster level. And according to every piece of information, the pro-union plurality in the North could be reversed as soon as 2027. So, the unity conversation is live and it’s happening in real time.

Turning the conversation to Wales, Plaid Cymru’s Baroness Carmen Smith told the meeting, “They often say for Wales: ‘see England’ - as if our needs, our geography, our economy and our people are interchangeable. History is repeating itself with the Crown Estate, wealth generated in Wales, extracted from Wales, going to the Crown instead of being reinvested in our communities.” Noting how successive British Governments have classified rail infrastructure projects that run through England-alone as ‘England and Wales’ projects.

She added, “What is clear is that more and more people are realising the status quo is unsustainable, particularly our young people. Our task now is to build the confidence in the people of Wales, that independence is the future. That future won’t be written here in Westminster - it will be written by the people of Wales - for the people of Wales.”

Baroness Carmen was followed by Seamus Logan, the MP for Aberdeenshire North and Moray East, who gave a brief overview of the constitutional conversation taking shape in Scotland. As Mr Logan remarked, “This is not a union of equality, of respect, of parity of esteem - the basic ingredients for a successful democracy. This is a union where advantage, prioritisation, and

key decision-making powers have been placed in the hands of one partner at the expense of others. We are locked into a ‘Union’ which is convenient for one and oppressive for the others.”

The SNP representative identified Britain’s decision to leave the European Union as “the rock upon which ‘the Union’ perished,” and condemned the “self-serving, insidious culture” that dominates Westminster politics. He concluded his remarks by noting that, “For 20 years, we have elected a government whose policy is independence, and yet we are denied. This will not continue. We will not be denied.”

The final speaker was Kevin Meagher, author of ‘A United Ireland: Why Unification Is Inevitable and How It Will Come About’, who provided an assessment of the present political situation. As he noted, “all the energy in British politics, I think, is now at the periphery. It may be a case of the charisma or the snake oil - depending on your point of view of Nigel Farage or Zach Polanski of the Greens - or for the yearning of nationhood represented by my fellow panellists here tonight.” Either way, “the Red/Blue politics that’s dominated this country for the last 100 years has never looked more parlous. The electricity of British politics now takes place at the edges of the circuit board, not in the centre of it.”

As he concluded, “the threads that bind each of the constituent parts of the United Kingdom to ‘the Union’ are fraying. They’re not going to get any stronger, they’re only going to get weaker.” The contributions were followed by a round of probing questions from the floor.

To paraphrase W.B. Yeats, it’s when the centre cannot hold that things fall apart. That was the overriding message of the night. It would be naïve to place a timescale on it. But the direction of travel is increasingly clear. There can be little doubt, the ‘Union’ is falling apart.

Pat Cullen is the MP for Fermanagh South Tyrone

'UNITY IS STRENGTH'

Eddie Dempsey

RMT *Joe Dwyer*



Eddie Dempsey is the general secretary of the National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers (RMT). The RMT is a fast growing trade union in Britain with more than 83,000 members across almost every sector of the transport industry - from the mainline and underground railways, shipping and offshore, buses and road freight.

Dempsey previously served as the RMT's assistant general secretary from October 2021 onwards. As assistant general secretary, he supported Mick Lynch, the then general secretary, on media duties throughout the high-profile railway strikes of 2022-23. After Lynch announced his intention to stand down as general secretary in January 2025, Dempsey was elected as his successor on 7 March 2025. In late February, Joe Dwyer interviewed Eddie Dempsey for Éire Nua.

In a wide-ranging discussion the pair discussed the politics of industrial trade unionism, the influence of Irish migrant workers within the British labour movement, and the campaign for a new and united Ireland.



JOE DWYER: You come from a big Irish family - am I correct it's Co. Offaly where your people come from?

EDDIE DEMPSEY: Yes, my family are from Offaly. My mum and her people are still there. My father's people were originally from there, but my father and his people were mainly from Castlecomer, Kilkenny. Around Deerpark, so they were mining people.

JOE DWYER: How formative was this Irish identity for your early political development?

EDDIE DEMPSEY: I moved around a lot. I went to the Boys National School in Ireland and Kilcormac Vocational School. I would travel back and forth. I'd be living in Ireland for a few months then I'd be in London - backwards and forwards.

So, it was very formative. I was part of a big Irish community in southeast London and I'd spend every minute that I wasn't in London in Ireland. I stayed at my grandmother's place in Co. Offaly.

JOE DWYER: When you enter the workforce you join the RMT - a transport trade union that emerged from a merger of the National Union of Railwaymen and National Union of Seamen.

It's a union with a very curious and intertwined history when it comes to Ireland. How do you reflect on that history and how does it inform your politics?

EDDIE DEMPSEY: My father was a member of the NUS. And his father, when he retired early from work in Comer, came over here to work in West Ealing and he was a member of the NUR.

It was a bit odd for my father because his people were mainly miners. They had formed the Irish Mine and Quarry Workers' Union (IMQWU) under Nixie Boran. They ended up going in as the first miner section of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. So, it was quite a Red History. They went on strike for 11 months and were kept going by from the South Wales Miners. That was formative years in politics.

My father always remembered that support from the South Wales Miners and at the time of the 1984-85 Miner's Strike raised £10,000 and sent it over to South Wales. They never forgot the solidarity that they had previously received.

So, there's always been a strong Irish tradition in this union. During the early history of the NUR, particularly during the 1913 Lock-Out for example, a lot of our members, on both sides of the Irish Sea, refused to move any goods in solidarity with locked-out workers. In 1919 we had the first National Strike on the Railways and when the agreement was finally signed to settle that dispute; the agreement - and we've still got it - sets out what the settlement of the dispute was in terms of pay. And it's typed out. And then, in pencil, written at the end, is: "... and Ireland." So, tells a story in of itself. By the time you get to the 1920 Munitions Strike, it was often our members who refused to move military equipment and soldiers around Ireland. There were many cases where multiple workers were sacked in a row for refusing to move carriages. Of course, many of

the trade unionists back then were also involved in the independence movement. But we also had branches in the North, and there was that sectarian divide even then before things got very heated, it was still a live issue.

By the 1950s the Executive Committee here took a position to withdraw entirely from Ireland, North and South. We regarded it as a foreign country and our organisation that was there in Ireland ended up in what is now SIPTU.

There was also a strong current of Irish migrant workers here in Britain who had always played a strong role in our union. We had some remarkable figures on our Executive, men like Jim Prendergast, who was a member of the Republican Congress and a founding member of the Connolly Association here in Britain. He was an International Brigader, who fought out of Jarama. He helped to break 'the colour bar' on British Railways, helping to bring about race discrimination law. He fought in the Second World War because he was a dedicated anti-fascist. He formed the King's Cross Anti-Fascist Railman's Association and marched to Cable Street. He fought the Blue Shirts in Dublin. When I joined the union as a railway worker, that republican leaning tradition was still very strong. The President of our union at the time, Tony Donaghy, was a member of the Connolly Association. In fact, many of the most impressive people I met would have revolved around that traditional left current, with strong Irish connections. That informed me when I was a young trade unionist coming through the movement.

JOE DWYER: Beyond that Irish tradition you cite, I've also previously heard you speak highly about the radical tradition of the English working-class. How can United Irelanders today build solidarity with the English working-class?

EDDIE DEMPSEY: I think it's worth having an appreciation of the working-class history in this country. A lot of republican thought and the radical liberal tradition here in Britain was very close to that which informed the United Irelanders and Wolfe Tone. They were all drawing from a common political wealth. I mean, there's a reason why Trade Unions were first established in Britain. It is a direct result of that English tradition that stretches back to the ideas of Magna Carta. That English tradition of liberty, habeas corpus and so on is the reason why the Guilds formed into Trade Unions.

Yes, we had the Combination Laws and yes, the British ruling class can be absolutely brutal in the application of control. But there was this older tradition that endured from John Ball to Thomas Rainsborough and so on. "The poorest he that is in England has a life to live as the greatest he." These ideas have always been there.

If you look at how transatlantic trade developed over time, I believe, the first real working-class was not in factories; it was on ships. There was also a mixing of traditions, and this naturally included some of

the Irish Secret Societies. You had people who had been involved in the land movement and early forms of republicanism in Ireland, and they were mixing with people from the radical English tradition and with freed and escaped slaves, and all these different experiences came together in this weird mix. The transatlantic current really brought people together who had common interests and gave rise to a really cosmopolitan working-class that was rooted in maritime structures.

If you come forward to today, then British people who are democrats, who are interested in progressive politics understand that Ireland is divided and that there is northern Irish state that poisons democracy in both countries. The clearest example of this was in the Election of 2017, where we might have had a left-wing Labour Government - with an agenda to drastically improve the condition of working-class lives - but it was scuppered because we ended up with a Conservative Government propped up in Parliament by a kind of 'reserve position' from the North of Ireland. So, it's in the interest of workers in Britain to press to end the connection, for reasons of their own democracy and future.

JOE DWYER: Turning to more recent times, the RMT's industrial action in and around 2022, saw yourself - and your predecessor Mick Lynch - become overnight media sensations. Both of you managed to communicate your message very effectively. Why did your message land when so many other left-wing voices are failing?

Everything we do is based on unity. If you have no unity, you have no strength.

EDDIE DEMPSEY: In part it was circumstantial. The circumstances were right for the arguments that we were making. We took a decision to not make a narrow argument for our own members but to try to, as far as we could, make a case for a whole class of people who are all experiencing much of the same thing.

Over the past 40 years, and I suppose we've seen it's horrific culmination in the revelations around Peter Mandelson, a group around New Labour and the interests that they represented captured the institutions of our movement. Going right back to 1997, the neoliberal project that they pursued, off the back of Thatcherism, did great harm to our movement. It smashed the Trade Unions up and it fractured the labour movement.

The damage that these people did is incalculable because they removed working-class institutions from huge swathes of this country. The biggest damage done



to the British working-class was not even the anti-trade union laws, it was the floating of the pound. Because that meant was that, all of a sudden, it was cheaper to offshore manufacturing. They sold the country. And any industry they couldn't sell, they privatised. As a result, all the country's wealth and wealth-making processes are gone.

I'm always reminded of what Liam Mellows said, "whoever controls the wealth of a country and the processes by which wealth is attained, controls also its government." You've only got to look at the nervousness of Rachel Reeves to see that!

We understood this. We talked about hard class issues based on people's interests. You can have right-leaning views, left-leaning views - you can have a tin foil hat on! - but at the end of the day; if you've got to pay your rent and you've got to earn a living, your interests are the same as mine. So long as we're focused on that, it's hard to find a gap. I mean it does irritate some people the lines we take sometimes but we're unapologetic about it. The other thing was we didn't pull any punches. We just decided that we would go out in front of anyone who wanted to talk to us. Because we will argue with anyone. We're not going to apologise for what we're doing because we're proud of it. We are going to make the case for our class.

JOE DWYER: The RMT comes across as a very member-led and bottom-up union. Obviously, the working-class isn't a monolith, as you say you might not always agree with the person you stand beside on a picket, so how do you maintain that unity? Particularly, when you're building a campaign and perhaps not everyone is onboard with it?

EDDIE DEMPSEY: Well, without being too romantic, our motto is: 'Unity is Strength' - and our colours are gold and green. They're gold and green because those were the colours of the Levellers and the motto was on a banner found at the Peterloo massacre. That's why we adopted those as our colours and our motto. Everything



we do is based on unity. If you have no unity, you have no strength. It's as simple as that. Now, we're not a monolith. How do we deal with the differences of opinion? To be honest... a lot of arguing. We're very democratic.

Every official in our union is elected, and all of us are elected from our rank-and-file. There's no one in our organisation who's from the outside. I was a railway worker. I ended up a driver, but I worked in the stations. Mick Lynch was a fitter. Mick Cash before him, another Irishman from a travelling family, he was a signalling and telecommunications technician. All the way along, every single one of them. All our executives are elected, and they've all got to go back to their jobs after a three-year term. So, they can't get comfortable here! You've got to go back and work beside the people that you've been representing. So, you've got to do a good job! And if they don't like what I'm doing, I won't be elected next time around. That's it! It keeps us all honest.

JOE DWYER: Last September, you spoke at the Labour Movement for Irish Unity fringe meeting at the TUC Congress. I thought your address was very challenging and, arguably, very realistic in terms of what can be expected from the British labour movement. How do you see the campaign for unity going forward?

The RMT believe in a united, independent Ireland and we would try to act as persuaders for that within the labour movement.

EDDIE DEMPSEY: Well, we have to start from where we are. You need a cold assessment of where you are,

and the fact is that the trade union and the labour movement in Britain are very fragmented. If you're going to have a Government in Britain that takes a positive stance on the national question in Ireland, then the most likely place you're going to find that – despite all the flaws – is through the Labour Party. And the only way you're going to influence the British Labour Party, from the point of view of the working-class movement in Britain, is through the trade union movement and the TUC.

I believe the interests of Irish workers in Britain are the same as the interests of British workers in Britain. There's no contradiction in that. So, people who are coming here from Ireland to work, or people who are from an Irish descent here in Britain, ought to play their role in the British labour movement. The only place you're going to find any game here is through trying to use the trade union movement to influence the Labour Party to have a good position on Ireland.

The RMT believe in a united, independent Ireland and we would try to act as persuaders for that within the labour movement. That position is based on the interests of the British working-class. We're able to take that stance because we don't organise in Ireland. For those Trade Unions who do organise there – and some do – this question becomes more fraught and difficult because you're inviting a whole range of conflicting opinions from within Ireland into that debate. The instinctive position for those unions then is to adopt a neutral position.

Our focus must be to not lose to those pushing for a pro-union with Britain position. A neutral position that accepts the Good Friday Agreement as the democratically expressed will of the people of Ireland is the democratic option.

JOE DWYER: And finally, the last question we usually do for this series, do you think that you'll see United Ireland in your lifetime?

EDDIE DEMPSEY: I do!



CREATING A NEW PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

*Emma
McArdle*

PART 1



This is part I of a two part article looking at health provision on the island of Ireland. Part I looks at the evolution of health in the past. Part 2 will look at the future.

The old adage, 'your health's your wealth' never goes stale and there isn't a person among us who would put anything above ourselves and our families being fit and healthy and well.

There never seems to be enough money to properly fund health services, curious when you consider that both parts of the island operate in highly sophisticated economies with the southern state running budget surpluses since 2022.

The economy of the North is more opaque of course with the British government insisting that the northern state routinely requires a subvention of many billions just to maintain the status quo. Perhaps if the North was not funding the remnants of the Empire it would be in a better financial position?!

Of course it is the prerogative of sovereign governments to decide how to raise the revenue to fund services and what services will be funded. Unfortunately, the northern Executive does not possess the power to make changes to income tax, VAT, corporation tax, and other levies. Consequently, the North remains wedded to

whatever the British Government deems is suitable for its economy.

The purported cost of reunification has long been used as a conversation stopper, however the paltry funding of services in the North by the British Government over the past two decades has laid bare the disdain with which northern citizens are held by their imperial rulers.

The unblinkered view shows that being bound to the British government and economy is not working out very well for inhabitants of the northern polity.

Even the most ardent unionist must be struggling to outline a unique selling point for 'Northern Ireland'. In halcyon days the NHS was a big argument for maintaining the union. But the NHS in the North is a shrivelled husk of its former self, and the vulture of privatisation is circling. There are also significant funding and organisational issues around the Health Service Executive (HSC) in the South.

On our island the divergences and convergences in health which have developed from the imposition of back to back health services bring into sharp focus the question of health in a reunified Ireland. Research can be said to show that the South offers 'better' in terms of health, but the North offers more in terms of 'free'.

In truth it is difficult to gauge how much 'better' the southern system might be. In terms of life expectancy there is an emerging trend of longevity among southern residents beyond that of their Northern counterparts. But of course it's possible to have a long but unhealthy life filled with pain and disease, and measuring quality of life is extremely subjective.

The 'free' NHS in the North operates in name only, a shoestring service hallowed out under a decade of Tory rule with rampant privatisation currently underway. People in the North know that the current service is a shadow of its former self.

Currently, we have a piecemeal integration of some services, lacking the political direction to drive it forward. Crucially though, medical practitioners across disciplines agree, that further integration of healthcare planning and delivery is the only sensible way to proceed.

The Health Minister in the North, unionist Mike Nesbitt agrees. He recently told an Oireachtas Committee that he had no ideological aversion to all island healthcare

provision.

It is increasingly obvious that Irish unity provides a once in a lifetime opportunity to develop a new and better public system for the island of Ireland.

In looking at the development of a new all island service it is important to examine how our health systems developed. Their origins provide an insight into the ethos of healthcare and how it has changed over decades.

Pre Partition Healthcare in Ireland

Healthcare in Ireland was originally driven by the need to contain infectious diseases among the population. In 1838 the Irish Poor Law Act was passed in the British Parliament. This established the workhouse system in Ireland

Originally the workhouses were only meant to cater for the destitute but An Gorta Mór devastated Ireland's healthcare, causing an estimated 1 million deaths primarily from infectious diseases rather than starvation alone. It overwhelmed existing medical services, killing



over 25% of physicians, and forced the rapid expansion of fever hospitals and workhouse infirmaries.

During the early 1900's two types of health provision emerged from the reform of the Poor Law system. The infirmaries, which were viewed as the provider of last resort and the voluntary hospitals which were the provider of healthcare to the wealthier in society. Under the medical charity framework the notion of the 'deserving and undeserving poor' was highly influential.

On the establishment of the First Dáil in 1919, the Democratic Programme stated; "The Irish Republic fully realises the necessity of abolishing the present odious, degrading and foreign Poor Law System"

Scientific advances at this time meant that doctors could perform a much wider range of medical interventions and the practise of medicine became much more curative. This resulted in increased power and status for doctors.

Post Partition – 26 Counties

In 1924 the Department of Local Government was renamed the Department of Local Government and Public Health, but this administrative change did not lead to the delivery of new services. Instead workhouses were converted to public hospitals, county homes, county hospitals, district and local hospitals. From its inception the Irish healthcare system contained an element of privatisation and contemporary Dáil records show that numerous TDs raised the difficulty of obtaining medical treatment for those unable to pay for it.

In 1933 the Hospitals Commission First General Report showed that a massive 56.7% of the income for all general voluntary hospitals across the state had come from patient's pockets.

In 1945 an investigation into shocking levels of infant mortality, proposed radical changes to the delivery of health services. Under the plan, free healthcare was to be introduced on a phased basis to the whole population, mirroring the NHS in Britain.

Opposition came from the Irish Medical Association, which represented GPs. They feared that the 'socialisation' of medical care would threaten their position and income from private practise.

A standalone Department of Health was established in the 26 counties in 1947 and one of the first tests came in 1951 with the attempted introduction of the Mother and Child Scheme. However, opposition from the Catholic Church and the Irish Medical Association meant that the scheme was not implemented.

A version of the scheme was adopted in the 1953 Health Act, which provided free antenatal care for women and infants up to 6 weeks old but left GP provision private and hospital services means tested. It also precipitated the formation of Voluntary Health Insurance (VHI) in 1956 which introduced private medical care, paid for by private insurance.

Post Partition – 6 Counties

The first ever Department of Health and Local Government for the North was established in 1944 on the recommendation of a select committee which found 'woefully inferior' levels of healthcare in the North in comparison to the standard of healthcare in England and Wales.

In 1948 the British Labour Minister for Health Nye Bevan founded the National Health Service (NHS). In the North the Health Services Act 1948, established a similar scheme.

Many in the Unionist government were deeply suspicious of the reforms and they grappled with their desire to maintain equivalence with the British model, relishing the higher social care provision afforded to citizens in the North compared with those in the South, while also maintaining their right-wing ideology.

From Partition in 1921 until 1972 the Unionist government had complete control of all public services in the North.

Direct rule from Westminster was the response to the state's violent response to the Civil Rights Movement in the North. This ensued for the following 24 years until the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

The first Programme for Government published by the Executive in 2001 contained a commitment to review the whole devolved system of public administration. The power sharing institutions in the North were extremely fragile and direct rule was imposed on numerous occasions between 1998 and the present time. However, the Review of Public Administration continued and it included the reform of health structures.

The legacy of long periods of direct rule from Westminster has, some have argued, meant that health policy was 'devised in London' with little input from locally elected public representatives or citizens.

The future could be better than the past

No persuader for Irish unity is naïve enough to think that as ballot boxes are counted and a successful unity Referendum proclaimed the issues in healthcare on the island will magically evaporate.

The process of change is often painful and difficult and it will be up to the government of the day in the new Ireland to steer the development and delivery of health provision.

Healthcare must be more than simply curative; it must also prevent illness and promote well-being. It must be augmented by changes in other areas including the provision of adequate housing and measures to eradicate poverty.

The opportunity exists to establish, for the first time ever, an all island system in which citizens are treated on the basis of medical need alone, we owe it to the future children of the nation to use our collective energies and intelligence to make it a reality.

In Part 2 I will look at what this might mean for the future development of an all-island public health system.

Emma Quinn McArdle – Uniting Ireland Core Group



THE COST OF IRISH UNITY

Pearse Doherty TD



In recent years there has been growing support for Irish unity. The evidence is plain to see in successive electoral results, demographic changes, contributions from civic society, in opinion polling and in public commentary.

People as diverse as former Fine Gael leader Leo Varadkar, SDLP leader Claire Hanna, former SDLP leader Colm Eastwood, Labour leader Ivana Bacik, Archbishop Eamonn Martin, DUP founder Wallace Thompson, actors like Adrian Dunbar and James Nesbitt, and many others, including academics, health professionals, and economists, have all spoken out in support of a new Ireland. Former President Mary McAleese recently described unification as “a really noble undertaking” that can offer “a new rising tide of energy and momentum”. And our recently elected Uachtarán na hÉireann Catherine

Connolly has said she believes a united Ireland is “a foregone conclusion” and “there must be preparations for it on all sides.” She committed to giving “voice to the firm will of the Irish people in Article 3 of the Constitution in every way I can to promote that objective.” For many, Irish Unity is a long held national ambition. It’s about the right of the people of the island of Ireland to self-determination – to decide our own future without outside interference. It’s about ending partition and the union with Britain. These are a core part of our Irishness. Understandably, many people also

want to know what it will mean for them in terms of jobs, pensions, a future health and care system, governance arrangements, the environment and other matters. What does Irish Unity mean? Will it make life better or worse? Can we afford it? According to Professor John Doyle of Dublin City University we can. His report last summer was the first peer reviewed study to calculate the cost of Irish Unity over the first ten years. It delivered a fatal blow to those who claim that Irish Unity would be too expensive. Professor Doyle reported that the cost of a united Ireland had long been exaggerated and he

concluded that the potential for economic growth in an all-island economy, where the North is once again inside the European Union, has not received sufficient attention.

John Doyle was not alone in his view that there is no economic obstacle to forging ahead with Irish Unity.

In the summer of 2024 the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement produced a detailed report looking at the potential of the all-island economy and the likely cost of Irish Unity. It concluded that there “are no insurmountable economic or financial barriers to unification” and it called for “preparation to begin immediately”. It is a remarkable report which involved representatives from all of the main parties in the Oireachtas.

It called for a whole of government approach; the publication of a government Green Paper setting out a vision for a united Ireland, and it emphasised the key role played by Citizens’ Assemblies.

- ▶ *To add to this momentum, we have seen in recent years’ cross border trade surging from less than £2 billion in 1998 to £14.3 billion annually today.*
- ▶ *There are jobs being created across the island of Ireland.*
- ▶ *Cross-border tourism is also growing. More jobs.*
- ▶ *Evidence has shown that lives are being saved by all Ireland collaborations on health, including children’s heart services and cancer services.*

At a time when health provision in the two jurisdictions is facing increasing pressures a single all-island public health service makes sense. Many medical professionals already agree that this is the way forward.

A few months ago Queens University Belfast and Dundalk Institute of Technology announced a new all-island university college which will be the first of its kind in Ireland.



In addition, opinion polling and demographic shifts regularly point to changing attitudes on the issue of Unity. Opinion polls show that those who support the union in the North are less than 50% of the population. There has been a consistent growth in support for Irish Unity with one poll reporting that the gap between those who support unity as against those who support the union with British, has shrunk to 6%.

Lucid Poll concluded that those who are Pro-Unity is 42% while those who are pro-Union stands at 48%.

In the Assembly unionism has lost its majority. A remarkable result when you consider that the North was created with what was believed to be a permanent two thirds majority for the Union. People from a Protestant background are also now discussing Irish Unity in growing numbers and confidence. Most of the events organised by the Sinn Féin Commission on the Future of Ireland now consistently have voices from within the Protestant community. Davy

Adams, a former senior figure in the UDA, acknowledged a few months ago that he now believes that a new Ireland is where the future lies. Protestants and Unionists have a central role in this conversation. Their sense of identity must be respected.

A new Ireland must be shared, inclusive, and welcoming. A place where unionists belong. It must be planned for.

We need a Citizen’s Assembly or Assemblies to encourage a positive dialogue. Regrettably, An Taoiseach Micheál Martin has set his face against making any preparations. He calls for reconciliation first before we can talk about unity but as Leo Varadkar pointed out last March, had reconciliation been a pre-requisite there would have been no Good Friday Agreement. The reality is that planning for Unity is common-sense. We all plan. Planning is part of our DNA, so let’s plan for Unity.

Pearse Doherty TD is Sinn Fein spokesperson on Finance in the Oireachtas

Women shaping the New Ireland

Grace
McDermott



The 8th March marked International Women's Day. Gatherings were hosted across Ireland and beyond, to celebrate the strength, courage and resilience of women — women who have shaped our communities, defended our rights, and carried forward struggles for justice and freedom.

In Belfast, Órlaithí Flynn hosted an event under the theme 'Women in Struggle' which, as she remarked, "reminds us that progress is never handed down". Speaking at the event Órlaithí said, "Progress is fought for, organised, and built by those who refuse to accept injustice. In Ireland, the story of struggle is inseparable from the story of women.

For generations, women have been at the heart of the fight for Irish freedom. They organised, resisted and mobilised their communities, carrying forward the ideals

of equality and justice even when the odds were stacked against them.

From the revolutionary women of the early twentieth century to those who organised in communities during the darkest years of conflict, women have always stood at the centre of Ireland's journey toward freedom.

We remember women like Countess Constance Markievicz, a revolutionary, a leader of the 1916 Rising, and the first woman elected to Parliament. A woman who refused privilege and dedicated her life to the cause of Irish independence and social justice.

We remember Winifred Carney, who stood inside the GPO during the Easter Rising with typewriter in one hand

and revolver in the other, symbolising both the intellectual and political struggle for freedom. These women were not simply part of history. They helped shape it. But the struggle for Irish freedom did not end with the revolutionary generation.

Across the decades that followed, women continued to organise, to lead, and to sacrifice in pursuit of a united Ireland and a fairer society.

We remember women like Óglach Máiread Farrell, whose life and death remain deeply significant within our republican history. Máiread was a committed political activist who, like many women of her generation, became involved in the struggle during a time of deep conflict and upheaval in the North. Her story is one of courage, conviction and political commitment.

And today we remember her, and all the women of that generation, whose lives were shaped by the struggle and whose legacy continues to inspire many working today for peace, equality and the reunification of Ireland.

Women in our communities challenged injustice. They supported prisoners and families. They organised politically. They built movements that demanded dignity, equality and self-determination. And many women paid the ultimate price. We honour all those women who lost their lives in the struggle, and remember their courage and their commitment."

In Strabane, Órfhlaith Begley MP hosted an event under the theme 'Women Shaping the New Ireland'. At that event Órfhlaith emphasised that International Women's Day is not only about looking back — it is about recognising the struggles that continue today. Speaking at the event Órfhlaith said, "Across Ireland, women continue to fight for equality, for justice and for dignity. Women are fighting for proper healthcare and for their voices to be heard. They are fighting against poverty, against discrimination, and against violence. They are fighting for a society that values care, equality and

community.

Women are at the forefront of building the future of this island. Because the struggle for Irish unity is not just about constitutional change — it is about building a new Ireland.

A new Ireland rooted in equality. A new Ireland where women's voices are heard and respected. A new Ireland where every child, every family, every community can thrive. And today we stand at a tipping point in Irish history.

For the first time, we have strong women leading our movement at the highest level — with Mary Lou McDonald and Michelle O'Neill leading showing the kind of leadership, determination and vision that this island needs.

Their leadership reflects how far we have come and how central women continue to be in shaping the future of Ireland. And today, women across Ireland continue that work — in our communities, in our workplaces, in politics, and in grassroots movements.

As republicans, we believe that the new Ireland we are working to build must be one that places equality at its heart. It must recognise the leadership of women. It must ensure women's rights are protected. And it must honour the legacy of those who struggled before us by continuing their work. So on International Women's Day, we remember the women who fought for freedom, who organised communities and who gave everything for the cause of Irish independence.

And we recognise the women who today continue that struggle — quietly, courageously and collectively.

The greatest tribute we can give them is not simply remembrance, it is to continue their work. To build a society rooted in equality and justice. And to achieve the united Ireland that generations struggled for. Let us commit ourselves to building the equal, united Ireland that so many women before us believed in and worked towards."





Public Media in a new Ireland

Dr Stephen Baker

What would happen to the two largest cultural institutions on the island – RTÉ and the BBC – if Ireland were united? An answer to that question is found in a recent report written by researchers at Ulster and Dublin City universities. Entitled *Public Media Ireland: A New Public Service Media Organisation for a New Country*, it sets out a plan for a new organisation, one that is a decentralised, democratically accountable national media, funded by progressive taxation rather than a licence fee.

In the overall scheme of things, the media probably sit low-down the to-do list of the preparations for a united Ireland. Health, education, housing and policing can all probably make greater claims for immediate attention. And yet, thinking about a new public media provides a means by which to approach one of the thorniest issues confronting a new Ireland. That issue is cultural identity and its display in language, flags and anthems, and all the symbols and emblems of allegiance.

In what are often bad tempered exchanges, culture emerges as a finite resource that some fear they might lose by accommodating others or in the transition from one state to another. However, in truth, culture is not something we absentmindedly misplace or that others steal from us or diminish. We overemphasise the notion that culture is a thing: a thing that can apparently be lost or retrieved. Instead, we should appreciate culture as what we do, together. Culture is as much a verb as a noun.

This is captured in the origins of the word culture, in the Latin *cultus*, which means care, and *colere*, to cultivate

– concepts that imply reaching out to others, growth, and nourishment, ideas far removed from tedious so-called culture wars. In a new Ireland we would wish to see the generous and outward looking conception of culture elevated to a national level. A new public media provides the means and space to do that – somewhere culture can happen in the conversations and actions that take place between us and others, as a dynamic and transformative force.

We might think of *Public Media Ireland (PMI)* as a cultural commons – a shared space that we all have access to, that we manage collectively and to which no person or group can lay exclusive claim. The PMI report calls for a new media organisation that has a “fully independent and democratic form of governance”, its leadership appointed by the legislature rather than the government, with an enhanced role for regulators. Crucially, it envisages workers and trade union representatives within the governance structures of the new organisation, as well as an impactful role for Audience Councils in setting the strategic direction of the organisation.

In fact, ensuring that media workers and audiences are at the heart of its governance might be important for a number of reasons. Governments come and go, but the investment of workers and audiences in a new public media is long-term, so removing the organisation from political short-termism, as well as the vagaries of the market and influence of oligarchic power. Also, in an era when government regulation of the media is regarded with growing suspicion by the public, and many corporate media platforms are owned by bad faith actors,

determined to corrode democracy in pursuit of nefarious sectional interests, worker and audience empowerment can provide an important regulatory and democratic function, building trust in the media and securing its legitimacy. More than this, it gives people in Ireland a sense of ownership over a key institution where they can collectively participate in culture and so actively imagine and make the new Ireland, together. It has the potential to be a democratically enriching experience, shaping a future rather than being defined by the past and its inanimate emblems that sometimes hold us there. None of this, of course, will be easy. Bitter legacies that will require careful navigation. The future holds challenges that will test us. But Ireland's past, present and future is so much harder to contemplate without a public media capable of contributing to a rich, participatory cultural democracy – one that aspires to be both truthful and as culturally creative, wonderfully varied and convivial as the people who live here.

***Public Media Ireland: A New Public Service Media Organisation for a New Country* is authored by Dr Phil Ramsey (UU), Dr Roddy Flynn (DCU), Dr Stephen Baker (UU) and Dr Dawn Wheatley (DCU). It is available for download here or use the QR code.**



An tábhacht a bhaineann le húsáid agus le cur chin cinn an bun-leagan Gaelach de logainmneacha



The importance using and promoting of the Irish language version of our place names

Colmán Mac An Chrosain - An Srath Bán



Cuidíonn bun-leagan Gaeilge dár logainmneacha brí agus tuiscint áite a thabhairt dóibh- rud nach féidir leat a fháil ó leagan a Bhéarla. Tá athbheochan, úsáid agus cur chun cinn logainmneacha Gaeilge lárnach d'athbheochan na Gaeilge.

Is minic a bhíonn suim i logainmneacha Gaeilge mar shíol as a bhfásann grá níos leithne don Ghaeilge agus, dá bharr, forbairt ar fhéiniúlacht láidir Éireannach. Insíonn an bun-leagan Gaelach de logainmneacha scéalta dúinn faoi húsáidí an talaimh fadó fadó rud nach bhfaighfeá (we-ha) leis an leagan Bhéarla.

Cuireann siad síos ar thopagrafaíocht na háite go foirfe nuair a bhíonn an leagan Béarla gan bhrí. Ar bharr sin, insíonn siad scéalta saibhre dúinn faoi mhiotaseolaíocht a bhaineann le háiteanna áirithe. Agus faoi dheireadh, cuireann siad in iúl dúinn faoi dhaoine agus theaghlach ar cuireadh futhu in áiteanna I bhfad siar agus faoi shean ráthanna agus uaigneanna nach maireann níos mó.

Is féidir leat a rá gurb ionann taighde ar logainmneacha agus an tseandálaíocht ach amháin nach mbíonn spád de dhíth ort!

The original Irish language version of our place-names helps give meaning and a sense of place to them which you just cannot get from the Anglicised version. Reviving, using and promoting the Irish language version of our placenames is central to the revival of the Irish language. Interest in Irish language place names is often the seed from which grows a wider love for the Irish Language and, in turn, the development of a strong Irish national identity outlook.

The original Irish version of place-names tells us stories about the uses of the land long ago, something you wouldn't find with the English version.

They describe the topography of the place perfectly- when the English version is meaningless. On top of that, they tell us rich stories about mythology associated with certain places. And finally, they tell us about people and families who have been buried in places and about old ruins and graves.

You could say that researching place names is the same as archaeology except that you don't need a spade!

Cad é mar a tharla Galldú na logainmneacha Gaelacha?

Ní de thaisme a tharla sé ach de dheasca phróiseas choilíneachais agus impiriúlachas cultúrtha ó Shasanna ó na meánaoiseanna ar aghaigh. Thosaigh siad le próiseas an Ghaeilge a chur faoi chois mar theanga labhartha i ndáiríre in aimsir na Péindlíthe nuair a thug na Sasanaigh faoi gach aon ghné den tsochaí a galldú agus galldú ár logainmneacha mar chuid de.

Tig leat a rá gur chríoch an phróisis é 'Suirbhéireacht Ordanáis na h-Éireann' i dtíochaidí an naoiú haois déag nuair a ceapadh John Ó' Donovan agus foireann s'aige chun litriú a' Bhéarla a chur ar gach baile, baile

fearainn cnoc, loch agus abhainn in Éirinn. Ce go ndéarna Donovan a seacht ndíchill fuaimeanna Gaelacha a choinneáil sna haistriúcháin go litriú an Bhéarla an oiread agus is féidir, bhí formhór ár logainmneacha fágtha gan chiall gan bhrí ina dhiaidh.

It did not happen by accident but as a result of a process of colonialism and cultural imperialism from England from the Middle Ages onwards. They began the process of suppressing the Irish language as a spoken language and particularly from the time of the Penal Laws, when the English undertook to Anglicise every aspect of society and the Anglicisation of our place names as part of it. The 'Ordnance Survey of Ireland' which began in the 1830s was the final stage of this process. John O'Donovan and his team were appointed to create an anglicised spelling for every town, hill, lake, river in Ireland. Although Donovan tried his best to keep Gaelic sounds in the Anglicised spelling as much as possible, most of our place-names were rendered meaningless as a result.

Deacrachtaí ag iarraidh theacht ar bhunús Gaelach de logainmneacha?

Bíonn roinnt deacrachtaí ann agus tú ag iarraidh theacht ar bhunús Gaelach de logainmneacha. Mar shampla: Go mion minic agus i gCúige Uladh ach go háirithe, tá a lán logainmneacha de bhunús Shasanach- cosúil le Rabstown agus Kennystown i mo cheantar féin. De dheasca easpa foirmeacha stairiúla, ta sé dodhéanta aon réamhtheachtaí Ghaelach d'ainmneacha mar seo a aithint.

Deacracht eile ná go raibh roinnt mhaith logainmneacha de bhunús Gaelach mí-aistrithe go Béarla. Mar shampla, mheas Joyce go raibh suas le 700 logainm mí-aistrithe go 'Cill' in áit 'Coill' mar ba chóir do a bheith ann agus uaireanta ní mór dúinn amharc ar an fhianaise seandálaíochta chun idirdhealú a aimsiú.

There are a number of difficulties when trying to find an Irish origin of place-names.

For example, and in Ulster in particular, there are many place-names of English origin - such as Rabstown and Kennystown. Due to the lack of historical forms, it is impossible to identify any Gaelic predecessors of names like this.

Another difficulty is that many place-names of Gaelic origin were mistranslated into English. For example, Joyce estimated that up to 700 place-names were mistranslated to 'Cill' instead of 'Coill' as it should have been and sometimes we have to look at the archaeological evidence to find a distinction.

Na focail is coitianta, ar bhunús Gaeilge iad, atá le feiceáil i logainmneacha áitiúla?

Is dócha gurb iad 'Achaidh', 'Cluain', 'Coill', 'Cnoc'

'Droim' 'Gleann', 'Gort,' 'Lag,' Machaire agus Mín ar na focail is coitianta a chuireann síos ar thopagrafaíocht agus gnéithe nádúrtha logainmneacha agus bailte fearainn taobh seo tíre.

Ach is minic a bhíonn níos mó ná focal amháin ann chun cur síos ar ghné nádúrtha amháin. Mar shampla, scríobhann Manchen faoin dhá leagan is tríocha difriúla den fhocal 'páirc' atá le haimsiú i logainmneacha in Éirinn agus Achaidh, 'Cuibhreann,' 'Faiche,' 'Garraí' agus Gort, san áireamh.

Tá na focail dún, lios, ráth le feiceáil go forleathan ar fud na tíre chomh maith. Cuireann tagairt de na hainmneacha seo iúl dúinn gur áitribh ársa ár sinsear iad chun iad féin agus a mbeithigh a chosaint ó ruathairí, ó namhaid, nó ó hainmhithe fiáine.

Tá neart logainmneacha ina bhfuil na focail 'Carn' agus 'Gallán' iontu. Nuair a chasaim ar na focail seo, smaoiním ar ár shinsir atá curtha faoi na cloiche seo ina n-ómós seo I bhfad sula dtáinig an chríostaíocht go hÉirinn.

Some of the more common component words, which are of Irish origin, that appear in placenames 'Achaidh', 'Cluain', 'Coill', 'Cnoc', 'Droim', 'Gleann', 'Gort,' 'Lag,' Machaire and Mín are probably the most common words describing the topography and natural features of the place-names and townlands of this country.

But there is often more than one word to describe a single natural feature. For example, Manchán Magan wrote about the thirty-two different versions for the

word field that can be found in place-names in Ireland including: Achaidh, 'Cuibhreann,' 'Faiche,' 'Garraí' agus Gort

The words Dún, Lios, Ráth are also very common throughout the country. A reference to these names informs us that they were the ancient dwellings of our ancestors to protect themselves and their beasts from raids, enemy, or wild animals.

There are many placenames that contain the words 'Carn' and 'Gallán'. When I turn to these words, I think of our ancestors who were buried under this stone in their honour long before Christianity came to Ireland.

Acmhainní atá ar fáil chun taighde a dhéanamh ar logainmneacha:

- Tá bailiúchán mór leabhar scríofa ag Patrick Joyce ar an ábhar agus leabhar údarásach ag tús an chéid seo caite.
- Ach tá réimse mór acmhainní ar líne ar fáil sa lá atá inniu ann, lena n-áirítear: Logainm.ie & Placenamesni.org

Resources available for researching placenames:

- Patrick Joyce has written a large collection of books on the subject and an authoritative book at the beginning of the last century. But there are a great range of online resources available nowadays including: Logainm.ie & Placenamesni.org



LOGAINMNEACHA

In the following place names, connect the correct Irish language placenames to the English version:

Tóin re Gaoith	Cushendun
Ros Mhic Thriúin	Portglenone
Port Chluain Eoghain	Lisnaskee
Meathas Troim	Carrick on Shannon
Mainistir Laoise	Newmarket on Fergus
Lios na Scéithe	Feakle
Cúl an tSudaire	Ardee
Cora Droma Rúisc	Kells
Cora Chaitlín	Ashbourne
Clochán an Aifir	Wicklow
Cill na Seanrátha	Abbeyleix
Cill Mhantáin	Westport
Cill Dhéagláin	Portarlington
Ceanannas Mór	Castleblaney
Cathair na Mart	Giants Causeway
Bun Abhann Duinne	Burtonport
Baile na Lorgan	New Ross
Baile Atha Fhirdhia	Edgeworthstown
An Fhiacail	Tandragee
Ailt an Chorráin	Killyshandra

Quiz

Eoghan Mac Cormaic

Killyshandra 20	Cill na Seanrátha
Tandragee 19	Tóin re Gaoith
Edgeworthstown 18	Meathas Troim
New Ross 17	Ros Mhic Thriúin
Burtonport 16	Ailt an Chorráin
Giants Causeway 15	Clochán an Aifir
Castleblaney 14	Baile na Lorgan
Portarlington 13	Cúl an tSudaire
Westport 12	Cathair na Mart
Abbeyleix 11	Mainistir Laoise
Wicklow 10	Cill Mhantáin
Ashbourne 9	Cill Dhéagláin
Kells 8	Ceanannas Mór
Arde 7	Baile Atha Fhirdhia
Feakle 6	An Fhiacail
Newmarket on Fergus 5	Cora Chaitlín
Carrick on Shannon 4	Cora Droma Rúisc
Lisnaskee 3	Lios na Scéithe
Portglenone 2	Port Chluain Eoghain
Cushendun 1	Bun Abhann Duinne

Answers



A portrait of Gerry Adams, an older man with white hair, a full white beard, and glasses. He is wearing a light-colored, textured cable-knit sweater over a blue and white striped collared shirt. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Gerry Adams

Interview
PART 2



WE NEED A MASS MOVEMENT

Last August saw the publication of a new magazine, *An Clogán*. It is a socialist republican online magazine of politics and culture, that focuses on Ireland but with an international perspective.

The aim of the magazine is to facilitate debate and discussion and to foster this dialogue through its website, through public forums, and in an annual themed magazine. The theme of that first edition was “The Republic”, a topic of central importance to the Irish left, but rarely addressed directly.

In the last edition of *Éire Nua* we carried the first part of an extensive interview given by Gerry Adams. In this edition we publish Part 2.

In this edition of *Éire Nua* we are carrying the second part of Gerry Adams interview with *An Clogán*. The interview addresses a number of issues including the need for Sinn Féin to be more than an electoral machine; engaging with our young people; the importance of building a mass movement; the scourge of sectarianism; the growth of the right; and the importance of the Irish language.

An Clogán is available at:
www.connollybooks.org/product/an-clogán-vol-1
www.facebook.com/people/An-Clog%C3%A1n/6157800261605/

An Clogán:

Central to your account is the need for a republican leadership that is capable of continuing after reunification to build a more equal society. I'd like us to talk a bit about the kind of movement that republicans need to build. Of course, the big story in recent years has been the electoral success of Sinn Féin. Michelle O'Neill has become First Minister, and in the south Sinn Féin are by far the largest party of the left and may lead the government after the next election. But I wonder if you think the movement needs to be larger than electoralism?

Gerry Adams: Yes. We need to be and are a movement. It's understandable that with our electoral successes, much of our effort is focused on power-sharing in the North, the Oireachtas in Dublin, and our elected representatives at all levels—MPs, MEPs, councillors. Electoralism is essential, but it takes significant resources to sustain.

However, not everyone can be a TD, a councillor, or a party staffer. We need to be more than just an electoral machine. While elections are crucial and we must continue to improve our performance, we must also remain radical, rooted, and relevant.

Republicans are diverse. We all have different abilities and commitments—some are more confident - some have family responsibilities. Not everyone can be a Bobby Sands or a Mary Lou McDonald, but everyone can contribute. Wherever we are, we should work to improve our communities, ensuring that people—whether they vote for Sinn Féin or not—see local republicans as decent people who make a difference.

We also need to convert passive support into active engagement. Many people vote for us, and we are grateful for that, but true progress requires building a politically conscious, active movement. People become involved in struggle because something moves them—something they see, something they disagree with, or something they are passionate about. Young people are particularly important. We are fortunate to have strong youth involvement, but we must constantly ask: why aren't more young people joining? Our movement has undergone generational shifts in leadership and strategy, moving from armed to unarmed modes of struggle. But for long-term success, we must be part of a wider movement, not just an electoral party.

An Clogán:

How do you see the process of building the republican movement connecting with the idea of empowerment—both within the movement itself and in the communities Sinn Féin represent, whether electorally or more broadly? How can Sinn Féin foster both collective and individual self-empowerment in this context?

Gerry Adams: It's not necessary—or even desirable—for everyone to be a member of Sinn Féin. The more the better of course but there are people in other political parties, in credit unions, sports clubs, community groups, and farming organizations who share our vision of a better society. They may not call it a political objective, but they hope for the same things we do.

In the North, where the republican community is more concentrated, this solidarity is more visible. But in the South, you realize—when you get out and engage with people—that many share the same aspirations as us. Our task is to work with them, cooperate with them, and avoid narrow party political sectarianism.

This is a key part of empowerment—walking into a room and realizing that many others share our views. I have been to countless meetings where this becomes clear. Through Sinn Féin's Commission on the Future of Ireland, we have made a real effort to bring people together and create spaces for discussion. Often, at these events, local activists will say, “I don't know most of the people in this room.” That's a good thing—it



means people are engaged, interested in ending partition, in building a united Ireland, and perhaps even in creating a real republic. But it also might mean some of us are not as connected to our base as we could be.

Success breeds expectation. The more progress we make, the more potential we have. We must never limit people's aspirations for themselves, their families, their communities, or the world.

An Clogán:

You've touched on this already, but I'd like to explore it further. You're suggesting that republicans should avoid only working with other republicans but also on connecting with people outside the movement—whether in other social, political, or cultural movements. Could you share your thoughts on how republicans can approach this and engage effectively with these broader movements?

Gerry Adams: I believe we need a mass movement to bring about the changes we're discussing. If we get too caught up in technicalities—crossing every "t" and dotting every "i"—we can end up in exhausting cul-de-sac debates that drain our energy. Some on the left fall into this trap.

A broad mass movement should be enough for people working in their own localities. Naturally, a national movement will be stronger in some areas and weaker in others. We shouldn't crucify ourselves over this. In the past, there was confusion about principles, tactics, strategies, and objectives. We must avoid those distractions, remain open, and not see ourselves as "God's gift" to Ireland. We're just ordinary people doing our best.

If we can gather a collective of people with good democratic practices, discipline, comradeship, a good heart and good communication, we will have the foundations of an efficient movement. Empowerment isn't just about gaining political strength—it's about how we use it. It's about constantly increasing support, persuading opponents to at least be neutral, then open, then passive supporters, then active participants. We must use our political strength strategically to bring about change in line with strategic objectives and our primary aims.

An Clogán:

We've talked a bit about party-political sectarianism, but a bigger problem in Ireland is religious sectarianism. How do you see the relationship between sectarianism and partition? And when we succeed in ending partition, how might politics develop in a reunified Ireland?

Gerry Adams: Sectarianism remains one of the unresolved issues in our society, particularly in the North, but not exclusively. In the South, where the majority are culturally Catholic—though not necessarily practicing—it tends to be less of an issue. Instead, racism is more prevalent. But in the North, sectarianism remains a deeply entrenched problem,



making it a national issue.

Sectarianism was historically used as a tool of division—just as conquest in other societies was based on skin colour or nationality. When Ireland was colonized, they brought in settlers. My own surname, Adams, is of settler origin, so I have no issue with anyone who considers Ireland their home. Ireland belongs to everyone who lives here, regardless of their roots.

For centuries, the ruling class used sectarianism to remain in power. There was little economic or social difference between Protestant and Catholic working-class communities, yet sectarianism kept us apart. Generations were raised on slogans like "We are the people", "What we have, we hold" and "No surrender." Breaking through that conditioning is crucial.

History shows that major moments of unity were often led by Protestants—such as the United Irishmen movement. When it was violently crushed, particularly in the North, it was effectively erased from public memory. Tackling sectarianism means acknowledging this hidden history and moving towards a secular Republic.

Modern Ireland is already shifting in that direction, especially with changes to constitutional rights and evolving attitudes in both North and South. There's



an “official Ireland” that lags behind the real Ireland, which is more tolerant and open. The overwhelming public support for marriage equality and reproductive rights proves this. Ordinary people live in the real world.

People, especially mothers and grandmothers, know their sons or daughters are gay; they don’t need to be told. They see the harm caused by lack of recognition and fairness. The same applies to how women continue to be mistreated. Ultimately, we should be striving for a caring, secular, and pluralist society—one that empowers people and treats everyone with kindness and respect. The way Ireland has treated the Traveller community, for example, remains a national disgrace.

An Clogán:

In recent years we have unfortunately seen the rise of a fascist movement that calls itself Irish nationalist and that tries to claim the legacy of republicans and of dead Irish volunteers. As someone who knew so many volunteers who died during the war in the North, what do you think of the attempts by fascists to claim their legacy?

Gerry Adams: Racism has to be challenged, but we shouldn’t exaggerate the support racists have. And at the same time, we must recognize that if a government

fails to properly integrate new communities, tensions can arise. In deprived areas, a lack of resources can fuel resentment, which is easily exploited.

I recall a conversation from about 30 years ago with a waitress in a café near our Ard Oifig. She was angry about immigrants arriving because her daughter, struggling in an overcrowded flat, couldn’t get a house. I’ve heard similar complaints countless times. But after a simple conversation—pointing out that the issue wasn’t new arrivals but government failures—she acknowledged that the fault lies with the Government and its policies and not the immigrants. .

The Irish, of all people, should be the last to be racist, given our own history of migration and discrimination. But if people feel abandoned by the state, they can be susceptible to anti-immigrant rhetoric. That’s why engagement is key.

Certain groups exploit national symbols, quoting figures like Patrick Pearse to justify their views. They need to be challenged. But we must also stand up for the real legacy of our patriots. Take Bobby Sands, for example, his writings reflect a deep humanity and solidarity with oppressed people everywhere. If anyone doubts where he stood on these issues, they only need to read his poetry and prose.

So, we must stand up against racism, stand up for those

forced to flee their homelands, and stand up for the true values of our patriot dead while understanding that it is wrong to brand as racists all those citizens who may be perplexed by the arrival of immigrants. Some have genuine concerns – like the waitress – so we need to engage with them and encourage them to direct their energies at the Establishment instead of scapegoating immigrants or supporting racists.

An Clogán:

Finally, could you explain the importance of the Irish language and Irish culture to Irish republicanism?

Gerry Adams: The Irish language constantly faces the legacy of colonialism and the threat posed by the growth of globalization. The almost complete destruction of the Irish language took place as part of a policy decision by the British to eliminate the Gaelic way of life in their first colony. The belief that “as the tongue speaketh so the heart thinketh” decreed that any social or political discourse in Ireland must be in English. Despite this, elements of the Gaelic way of life persisted in many parts of Ireland up to the nineteenth century in one form or another, but by then the language had become the language of the poor, mainly rural and marginal regions. In the mid-century, a combination of factors around the Great Hunger and mass emigration and the school system all caused what Seán de Fréine named “The Great Silence”, when a generation stopped speaking the language and the next lost the language base from which to pass their knowledge on.

Languages die out when fewer new speakers replace those of previous generations. Irish used to be in that category, but today interest in the Irish language is growing and many young people North and south want to speak Irish.

The key to growth in the language is to ensure that it is seen as a vibrant language which is relevant to our everyday lives. So government support and a grass-roots revival is needed. Throughout Ireland there are initiatives which work, where individuals and communities promote the language in the face of governmental indifference or outright opposition. A graphic example for me can be found in the North where the political prisoners, particularly in the cages of Long Kesh, created Irish language communities in prison. Because these prisoners had political status, they were permitted Irish language text books. Many benefited from the teaching of Prionsais Mac Airt, Cyril MacCurtain and others. This is where Bobby Sands became proficient in Irish. Many of these prisoners and others who had been interned continued with their work on the language when they were released. Later when the cages were replaced by the H Blocks of Long Kesh, and when the Irish language became the daily language of most of the protesting prisoners at that time, this had a huge impact on the consciousness, particularly of young working-class nationalists. During the hunger strike of 1981 in which ten prisoners died, Bobby Sands’ leadership on the language issue and his

death had a huge effect.

When prisoners were released from the Blocks, many of them brought the language skills and teaching methods they had learned back into their communities conducting classes in pubs, clubs, community centres and homes. Throughout the North, stalwart language activists had campaigned and pioneered for decades for language rights, including the right to education through Irish. Their efforts were greatly enhanced by the popularisation of the language among the urban working class in the 1980s.

This growth in the use of the language and of its status will be of enormous significance in the developing of a bilingual society. The way forward is through ensuring that the Irish language is retained and strengthened as the spoken language of the Gaeltacht areas, while promoting Irish language programmes and developing Irish language cultural centres in all parts of the country. The government has the responsibility to put in place the architecture to promote and sustain the language. However, it is up to communities to take ownership of the language and to make it living and vibrant.

In the North the repeal of the last of the penal laws - the Administration of Justice (Language) Act (Ireland) 1737 – is evidence of the strength of the language today. The campaign by An Dream Dearg was a very public manifestation of this. In March of this year First Minister Michelle O’Neill and Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly announced the launch of the appointments process for the Irish Language Commissioner and Ulster Scots Commissioner. This too is an historic, though long overdue, step forward and is an integral part of establishing the new identity and language bodies.

Finally, over the years I have had the great fortune to attend Fleadhs in towns and cities across the island. They are exuberant, hugely enjoyable sessions, with tens of thousands thronging pubs, hotels, community centres and streets to listen to wonderful music.

In August the biggest celebration of traditional Irish music and culture in the world – An Fleadh Cheoil – is coming to Belfast between 2 August and 9 August 2026.

Well done to all of those who have played a part in this and in particular to the thousands of young people who through An Dream Dearg successfully put the issue of language rights on the public agenda.

The growth of the Irish language in recent years has been amazing.

I am confident that that growth will continue. For me there is a great joy in being able to speak Irish. The key is to use what Irish we have – even a little will go a long way. For example, if readers of Am Clogán resolve never again to say ‘cheerio’ and always to say ‘slán’ that could become contagious. Remember it used to be illegal. So be defiant. Slán. They failed. Slán we are winning.

COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF IRELAND

AN COIMISIÚN UM THODHCHAÍ NA hÉIREANN

**CATCH UP ON EVENTS THAT HAVE
TAKEN PLACE SINCE THE LAST EDITION
OF ÉIRE NUA WAS PUBLISHED.**

**MARCH
2026**



**Grace
McDermott**
Ul Committee

In July 2022, Sinn Féin established the Commission on the Future of Ireland to undertake a broad and deep consultation with people all across the island and beyond on our shared future. Chaired by Declan Kearney MLA, with Lynn Boylan MEP as vice chair, the Commission has hosted discussions on our future, across Ireland and internationally.

DELIVERING RURAL HEALTH & CARE IN A NEW IRELAND

Sinn Féin's Commission on the Future of Ireland hosted a discussion on 'Delivering Rural Health and Care in a New Ireland' on Wednesday 26th November 2025 in the Westville Hotel, Enniskillen.

The discussion was opened by Philip McGuigan MLA, Sinn Féin Health spokesperson in the North and chair of the Assembly Committee on Health and the main speaker was Uachtarán Mary Lou McDonald TD. Pat Cullen MP chaired the meeting and the expert panel included Fr. Brian D'Arcy – writer and broadcaster, Paula Leonard, CEO of Alcohol Ireland and Denzil McDaniel, author and former editor of The Impartial Reporter.

The panel and audience discussed the challenges faced by the people of Fermanagh and border regions in accessing health and care. It was a fantastic discussion which spanned many health-related issues, from all-Ireland cardiac services to the provision of autism services, cancer provision and suicide services and support.

Health and care services in rural Fermanagh and across the border region are under enormous pressure. On this small island, we have two health systems – and both are facing deep structural challenges. It makes no sense that, on an island of just over seven million people, we run two entirely separate health systems trying to solve the same problems.

You can watch the full event here: [Delivering Rural Health & Care in a New Ireland - Full Conference](#)



COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF IRELAND ANNUAL REPORT

The 2025 Annual Report of the Commission on the Future of Ireland was launched in December.

The report gave an overview of all the events that took place throughout 2025. The report also featured the work of Friends of Sinn Féin and their events in North America and Canada.

You can read the full report here: [2025 Report of the Commission on the Future of Ireland - Sinn Féin](#)



CORK PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

The Cork People's Assembly was hosted in the Rochestown Park Hotel on Thursday 19th of February 2026.

Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire TD opened the event and the main address was delivered by Pearse Doherty TD. The panel was chaired by former Independent Senator Collette Kelleher and also included Cónal Creedon (Author and Playwright), Bernadette Connolly (Coordinator of the Environmental Forum) & David Lane (General Manager for Social Inclusion- HSE).

There was a high level of engagement from the audience. Issues raised included the costs associated with unity, risks vs the rewards, the role of the Irish language, engagement with unionists, lack of engagement from the Irish government, the economy, the role of young people, identity & culture, concerns around the referendum being controlled by the British government and the practical challenges that lay ahead.

Speaking in response to some of the concerns and suggestions from the audience, Pearse Doherty said, "I think this is why it is crucial that this discussion on our future is democratised and that it is not left to the powers that be to shape the New Ireland. There's very few countries in the world that get a chance to redefine itself, to reimagine itself, and that's what we are on the cusp of. And the question here is, who gets to shape the New Ireland? It has to be us. It has to be the people. Let's make sure that this Ireland is inclusive, that this Ireland is equal, that this Ireland has prosperity for all of the people."

Footage of the event can be watched here: [Hugely successful Cork People's Assembly on the Future of Ireland - full discussion](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS

STUDENTS IN A NEW IRELAND

The Commission will be joining with Ógra Shinn Féin to host a discussion on 'Student's in a New Ireland' at Queen's University Belfast next month.

Join the discussion on a new Ireland, how it could be achieved and what it might look like for students. The panel for the event will be announced soon.

ARTS IN A NEW IRELAND

Many art forms (traditional music, theatre networks, literature, visual arts etc.) already operate on an all-island basis by default. However, due to partition, there are many disadvantages felt by the Arts Community including differences in funding opportunities/ regional imbalance etc. Brexit has also made cross-border arts work more complex when it comes to touring, insurance, VAT, customs and mobility etc.

A new and United Ireland could bring about many advantages and opportunities for the Arts community such as:

- ▶ Equal funding opportunities across the island
- ▶ Reducing barriers for artists and organisations working cross-border
- ▶ Developing a coherent all-island strategy
- ▶ Presenting a stronger, more unified cultural brand for the whole island
- ▶ More opportunities for international partnerships and EU-level funding

The Commission on the Future of Ireland plans to discuss all of this and much more at an event themed 'Arts in a New Ireland' in June. Date, venue and panel to be announced soon.

Keep up to date with future events and read reports from the past events at www.sinnfein.ie/futureofireland and the Commission social media pages.



Growing support for Irish Unity across North America

Ciarán Quinn & Greg O'Loughlin

To mark St. Patrick's Day, seven Irish American groups signed on to adverts calling on the Irish and British Governments to plan, prepare and set a date for the Irish Unity Referendums that are provided for in the Good Friday Agreement.

It was a diverse group with the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians representing the largest Irish American groups, alongside the Brehon Law Society, an umbrella group for Irish American lawyers across New York and the James Connolly Labour Coalition.

The adverts were carried across Irish American Media and, on St. Patrick's Day, in *The New York Times*. On the same day, New York Governor Kathy Hochul restated her support for Irish Unity, and Mayor Mamdani recognised the resistance and solidarity of the Irish and their right to self-determination.

In Washington, speaking at a lunch in Congress attended by Congressional members and the Taoiseach and the DUP's deputy First Minister, President Trump floated the idea of a merger between the North and South. That must have been uncomfortable listening for a Taoiseach who refuses to plan, prepare or advocate for Irish Unity.

Across the USA and Canada, the Irish Unity message was heard at parades and functions. The campaign to end partition is one that unites an increasingly fractured Irish America. The discussion on unity has taken place in state houses, Irish Centres, Congressional Offices, across dinner tables, and in conference centres.

Friends of Sinn Féin USA has an online activist group that meets monthly and has produced a series of online video interviews, is producing study guides, and is issuing calls to action. The group includes members from all across the United States and brings together activists who have been involved for decades and young professionals for whom direct activism is a new way to get involved with the movement for Irish Unity. They have organised their effort into committees that are focused on creating resources for teaching and learning, advocating directly at local, state, and national levels, and bringing more activists into the work through outreach and engagement.

It is the classic approach of 'educate, activate and organise' for the online generation. This month, the Cleveland Mayor issued a proclamation, and the City Council recognised both the right to self-determination enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement and the motion agreed by the Dáil on the need to plan and prepare for unity.

Over the past 18 months, Friends of Sinn Féin in the USA and Canada have hosted 16 Irish Unity Commission hearings. Reports from those meetings are incorporated into the Sinn Féin Commission in Ireland.

This process allows our diaspora to shape the discussion on a new Ireland directly. In contrast, the Irish Government travels across North America, handing out grants and calling on the Irish diaspora to pull on the "Green Jersey". It is a one-way dialogue, as this government has refused to support voting rights for Irish citizens living abroad in Presidential elections—very much a 'be-seen but not-heard' approach. However, the Irish abroad will not be silent in their call for unity.

The Irish in North America were crucial to the peace process. It was in New York that then presidential candidate Bill Clinton agreed to support a visa for Gerry Adams and to appoint a special envoy to the North of Ireland. Commitments that he made good on when he became President, despite the opposition of his own State Department and the British Government.

Since 1998, the US has acted as a guarantor of the Agreement. President George W. Bush pushed for the transfer of policing and justice from London to the North. It was Canada that provided General John de Chastelain to deal with the issue of decommissioning and demilitarisation. The Inquiry into the killing of Pat Finucane was a recommendation of Canadian Judge Corry.

During Brexit, despite trade being a congressional power, President Trump promised the Brexiteers the fastest and best trade deal. The US Congress acted: Representatives Neal, Kelly, and Boyle, alongside Speaker Pelosi, stated that there would be no trade deal if a hard border was reimposed across Ireland or the Good Friday Agreement was undermined.

This policy was supported unanimously by Congressional resolutions. The position of Congress then became the policy of the incoming Biden Administration. The same position was adopted in the Canadian Federal parliament.

Throughout the peace process, we have focused on the points of agreement and, together, delivered progress. Acting as critical friends, we have agreed to disagree on other issues, but regarding the Good Friday Agreement, we are in lockstep.

It is always a challenge to manage a very diverse coalition, as in the case of Sinn Féin, Irish America, and the US political system. But our relationship goes back centuries. It is enduring and outlives the politics of today. There would be no Agreement without North America. There

would likely have been a hard border across Ireland if the Brexiteers had their way.

North America has acted to facilitate and guarantee the commitments of the Good Friday Agreement. The next step in its implementation and in realising the transformational potential of the Agreement is the holding of Unity Referendums.

The US and Canada will be central to setting dates for Unity Referendums by the two governments.

An Taoiseach Martin recently said the calls for unity were “not much substance” and “premature”. It would appear that he is not listening to Irish America, the New York Mayor and Governor, or getting reports from various St. Patrick’s Day parades, such as Toronto, where Irish Unity was front and centre. While President Trump spoke of unity, the Taoiseach, who had earlier defended Winston Churchill and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, remained silent. The work across the US and Canada continues to build a coalition for unity and the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. At present, the only group opposing this is the Irish Government of Micheál Martin.

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

LET THE IRISH HAVE THEIR SAY.

In 1916 the leaders of the Easter Rising, with the support of their **“EXILED CHILDREN IN AMERICA,”** declared a free, sovereign and United Ireland.

In 1998, the Good Friday Agreement was signed, with the support of Irish-America. It provides a peaceful and democratic pathway to Irish Unity.

In 2025 the Irish Parliament unanimously called on the Irish Government to plan and secure a date for the Unity Referendums provided for in the Good Friday Agreement.

This Saint Patrick’s Day, we call on the Irish government to **establish Citizens’ Assemblies** to encourage the conversation on the shape of the New and United Ireland.

We urge the Irish and British governments to honor the commitment in the Good Friday Agreement and **set a date for Unity Referendums.**

IT’S TIME FOR THE PEOPLE TO HAVE THEIR SAY.



What price an Irish Soul

Frank Fitzpatrick



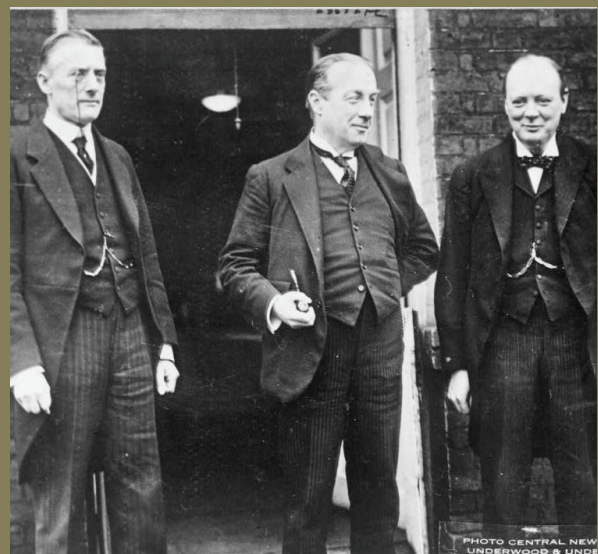
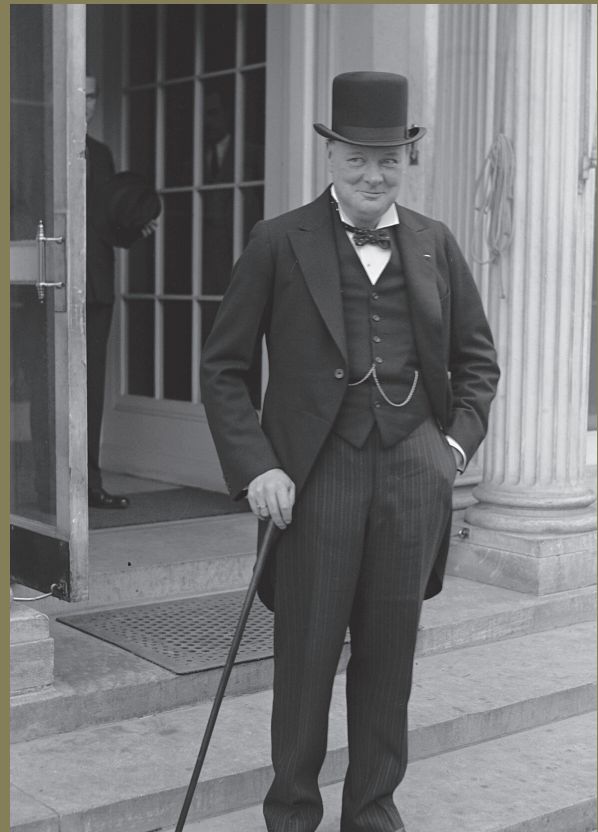
Partition, Abandonment, and the 1925–26 Settlement Collins and the Unfinished Revolution

Michael Collins argued that the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 gave Irish nationalists the “freedom to achieve freedom”¹ and that the division of Ireland would only be resolved through a Boundary Commission, which he fully expected would transfer large swathes of the new six-county Northern Ireland state to the new twenty-six-county Irish Free State.² Following the Treaty and the subsequent Civil War, he continued to support the IRA in Northern Ireland with weapons and finance.³ According to Lloyd George, Collins was “obsessed” with the Northern situation and, when discussing anti-Catholic pogroms, was like a “wild animal—a mustang.”⁴ The North mattered profoundly to Collins. Indeed, in early August 1922, when it appeared that the Civil War was nearing its end and that his pro-Treaty side would emerge victorious, he wrote to W. T. Cosgrave: “I am forced to the conclusion that we have yet to fight the British in the North-East... We must, by forceful action, make them understand that we will not tolerate this carelessness with the lives of our people.”⁵ At the same time, he told Northern IRA officers, “I will use the political arm against Craig so long as it is of use. If that fails, the treaty can go to hell and we will all start again.”⁶ For Collins, the Treaty was a stepping stone, not an end.⁷ His military position had changed considerably since before the Treaty, he now commanded 55,000 soldiers, new rifles, machine guns, field guns, armoured cars and armoured tenders. All supplied by the British.^{8 9}

A Change of Men, A Change of Purpose

Collins was killed in an ambush later the same month, and the future of Ireland passed into the hands of more conservative, less visionary men such as W. T. Cosgrave, who did not attach the same importance to Northern nationalists. Even before Collins’s death, his government colleagues had proposed that “all military operations [in] or against the North-East,” should cease in order to “acknowledge” the “authority” of the Northern Irish state.¹⁰

Meehan suggests that Cosgrave, who became President of the Free State Executive after Collins’s death, epitomised a form of middle-management conservatism. “He was a cautious, disciplined, and deeply religious politician whose personal sobriety and respect for authority shaped his style of leadership. More administrator than ideologue, he prized order,



1 Michael Collins, Dáil Éireann Debates, 19 December 1921.

2 Dáire Corcoran, “Public Policy in an Emerging State: The Irish Free State, 1922–25,” *Irish Journal of Public Policy* 1, no. 1 (2008): 45–67.

3 Marie Coleman, *The Irish Revolution, 1916–1923* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 110–11.

4 Conleth McCloskey, “Sowing the Fourth Green Field: Michael Collins’ Northern Policy, January–August 1922,” *Creative Centenaries*, 21 March 2022.

5 Michael Collins to W. T. Cosgrave, letter, 3 August 1922, Department of the Taoiseach Records, S 1628, National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

6 Martin Mansergh, *The Legacy of History: For Making Peace in Ireland – Lectures and Commemorative Addresses* (Dufour Editions, 2003), 274.

7 F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600–1972* (London: Penguin, 1989), 524.

8 Niall C. Harrington, *Kerry Landing, August 1922: An Episode of the Civil War* (Tralee: Anvil Books, 1992), 36.

9 Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), 136.

10 Conleth McCloskey, “Sowing the Fourth Green Field: Michael Collins’ Northern Policy, January–August 1922,” *Creative Centenaries*, 21 March 2022.

stability, and moral restraint.”¹¹ The contrast with Collins was stark. O’Higgins, one of Cosgrave’s more dynamic ministers, described the cabinet as “the most conservative revolutionaries.”¹² The Irish Times said of Cosgrave: “He is neither a wild-eyed revolutionary nor a lank-haired poet. He dresses generally in sombre hues, wears a bowler hat, and looks rather like the general manager of a railway company.”¹³ Bartlett commented on the change of leadership from Collins to Cosgrave: “The propertied classes could relax – revolution would not now take place.”¹⁴

Yet revolution had taken place. The genie of change was out of the bottle and could not be put back until the Treaty was fully realised, particularly with regard to the border question. Collins’s bold imagination and personal authority were gone, replaced by the steady discipline, caution, and administrative resolve of Cosgrave. He had had enough change. It was time to steady the ship, draw a line, and secure the twenty-six-county Free State. As Corcoran put it, Cosgrave’s “prime objective was to restore order and quickly create a new independent state.”¹⁵ This outlook necessitated the establishment of the Boundary Commission, a central plank of the 1921 Treaty, and one in which nationalists invested great hope.

The Boundary Commission: Design and Failure

The absence of revolutionary zeal in the Cosgrave government was confirmed by its ill-fated appointment of Eoin MacNeill to the three-man Boundary Commission. The resulting report, Moore argues, “not only secured Northern Ireland’s borders but abandoned the Council of Ireland,” an outcome he attributes largely to “MacNeill’s inertia, incapacity, and appalling ineptitude... an absent-minded professor, seemingly disinterested in what was happening around him.”¹⁶ More significant still was Cosgrave’s acceptance of the British appointment of the chairman, Richard Feetham. This proved decisive: Feetham held the casting vote. After decades—centuries—of struggle, an English imperialist judge from South Africa¹⁷ became the sole arbiter of Ireland’s division. From the outset, the Commission was stacked against Collins’s ambition of “freedom to achieve freedom.”

When the Commission produced its Report, the implications were so disastrous for the nationalist goal of a thirty-two-county republic that Cosgrave asked the British for it to be “burned or buried.”¹⁸ It was buried and, ironically, did not resurface until 1969, by which time its consequences for the abandoned nationalists of Northern Ireland had erupted into three decades of

armed conflict.

London, 1925: Accommodation Not Negotiation

Following the Report, Cosgrave travelled to London for negotiations with the British and Northern Ireland governments. During the discussions, he adopted a consistently conciliatory posture. He “most gladly welcomed the action of the British Cabinet,” praised its role in cementing “the friendship of the two peoples,” and commended the “active cooperation of Sir James Craig,” while expressing appreciation for the terms proposed and for the Chancellor’s “courage and resource.”¹⁹ The talks proceeded on a basis of accommodation rather than contestation. As Diarmaid Ferriter notes, “Cosgrave and his companions enjoyed the trappings of office and prized their new-found friendship with Britain.”²⁰

Cosgrave’s conduct during the talks reinforced this impression. Wilfrid Spender recalled that Cosgrave “burst into tears and begged and entreated Craig not to make things more difficult for him.”²¹ Ferriter similarly observed that “all Cosgrave could do was complain like a child to Baldwin.”²²

On the final day of negotiations, as the wording of the agreement was being settled, Kevin O’Higgins proposed the inclusion of a clause envisaging the possibility of future Irish unity. Churchill dismissed the suggestion as unwise, and Cosgrave agreed with the British that it should not be pursued.²³ He likewise concurred that there was no need to raise the issue of political prisoners. When O’Higgins further suggested restoring proportional representation in Northern Ireland for the benefit of stranded nationalists, Cosgrave sided with Craig in opposing its reintroduction.²⁴ At one point, Craig guided Cosgrave’s public response, asking him to state that “the Boundary Commissioners had conducted their proceedings on the basis of strict justice.” Cosgrave replied that he would “devote a paragraph to the subject” in his forthcoming speech and expressed the hope that it “would be conceived as giving satisfaction.”²⁵

This was not a man who went to London to defend Ulster nationalists, the republican ideal, or the legacy of Pearse, Connolly, and Collins. He arrived having already chosen acquiescence. The struggle was over. His priority was to secure what he held, even at the cost of endorsing partition and abandoning Irish nationalists in the North.

Partition Confirmed

On 3 December 1925 the three governments

11 Ciara Meehan, *The Cosgrave Party: A History of Cumann na nGaedheal, 1923–33* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2010), 41–43.

12 Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 420.

13 Mr. W. T. Cosgrave, *Irish Times*, 9 September 1922.

14 Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 422.

15 Donal Corcoran, “Public Policy in an Emerging State: The Irish Free State, 1922–25,” *Irish Journal of Public Policy* 1, no. 1 (2009), <https://doi.org/10.33178/ijpp.1.1.5>.

16 Cormac Moore, “The Boundary Commission – The Fallout,” *History Ireland* 33, no. 6 (November–December 2025): 42.

17 David McCullagh, *From Crown to Harp* (Dublin: Gill Books, 2025), 155, 163.

18 Notes of a Conference with the Irish Boundary Commission, Stanley Baldwin’s Room, House of Commons, CP 503(25) (Secret), London, 3 December 1925, 5:15 p.m.

19 Draft Minutes of a Conference Held in the Board Room, Treasury Chambers, Whitehall, London (Secret), C.A./H./48 (7th Minutes), 2 December 1925, 7:45 p.m., HM Treasury.

20 Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900–2000* (London: Profile Books, 2005), 304.

21 Cormac Moore, “The Boundary Commission – The Fallout,” *History Ireland* 33, no. 6 (November–December 2025): 41.

22 Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900–2000* (London: Profile Books, 2005), 294.

23 Draft Minutes of a Conference Held in the Board Room, Treasury Chambers, Whitehall, London (Secret), C.A./H./48 (7th Minutes), 3 December 1925, 10:45 p.m., HM Treasury.

24 Cormac Moore, “The Boundary Commission – The Fallout,” *History Ireland* 33, no. 6 (November–December 2025): 41.

25 Notes of a Conference with the Irish Boundary Commission, Stanley Baldwin’s Room, House of Commons, CP 503(25) (Secret), London, 3 December 1925, 5:15 p.m.

concluded the Boundary Agreement and the British Parliament subsequently passed the Ireland (Confirmation of Agreement) Act 1925, giving it legal effect.²⁶

The human consequences were profound. Gerry Adams later recalled that “the level of discrimination and injustice inflicted on the abandoned Catholic and nationalist community is difficult to understand... It was intolerable, a grave injustice. We were treated shamefully.”²⁷

The Price of Acceptance

Yet abandonment was not the end of the matter. Cosgrave also sought financial recompense. Ferriter records Kevin O’Higgins’s admission that the charge that the Irish government had “sold” Northern nationalists was “half true.”²⁸ The idea of a financial resolution was first floated by O’Higgins to James Craig, who regarded it as tantamount to “buying the Irish Nation.”²⁹

Cosgrave formalised the proposal in a private meeting with Winston Churchill. Churchill later stated that Cosgrave advanced two alternatives under which the Free State would accept the legal permanence of Northern Ireland without safeguards for its Catholic population: either the Free State’s debt would be fixed at £6 million, payable over time, or Article 5 of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty would be waived.³⁰

Consistent with Cosgrave’s negotiating stance, the contestable nature of the debt was never pursued as a counterclaim, despite widespread Irish belief—shared by Collins—that Article 5 should have left Britain owing money to Ireland for historic over-taxation.³¹ In 1932, Eamon de Valera attempted unsuccessfully to revive the issue, advancing a £400 million counterclaim during the land annuities negotiations with Neville Chamberlain.³² But that door had been shut and bolted, just three months after the December 1925 Agreement, Cosgrave signed a further supplementary agreement that stipulated the Free State could not in future proceed with a counterclaim.³³

Ultimately, the British chose the second option. The three governments agreed to revoke Article 12 of the Treaty, thereby accepting James Craig’s division of Ireland as permanent in law, and to waive Article 5, releasing the Free State from British public debt and imperial war pension obligations. Cosgrave responded enthusiastically, praising the British Cabinet, the Chancellor, and Craig for what he described as an



26 Ireland (Confirmation of Agreement) Act, 1925, 15 & 16 Geo. 5 c. 77 (UK); Notes of a Conference with the Irish Boundary Commission, CP 503(25) (Secret), House of Commons, London, 3 December 1925.

27 Frank Fitzpatrick, “A Partisan Ramble with Gerry Adams,” *Village Magazine*, no. 87 (February–March 2026) 14.

28 Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900–2000* (London: Profile Books, 2005), 294.

29 David McCullagh, *From Crown to Harp* (Dublin: Gill Books, 2025), 166.

30 Draft Notes of a Conference Held in the Board Room, Treasury Chambers, Whitehall, London (Secret), C.A./H./48 (6th Minutes), 2 December 1925, 3:50 p.m., HM Treasury.

31 Frank Pakenham, *Peace by Ordeal: An Account from First-Hand Sources of the Negotiation and Signature of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), 346.

32 Documents on Irish Foreign Policy, vol. III: 1932–1934 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1998), Anglo-Irish Financial Negotiations, May 1932.

33 Irish Department of Finance, cited in John Fitzgerald and Seán Kenny, “Till Debt Do Us Part: Financial Implications of the Divorce of the Irish Free State from the United Kingdom, 1922–1926,” *European Review of Economic History* 24, no. 4 (2020): 818–42, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ereh/hea004>.

unprecedented spirit of “neighbourly comradeship.”³⁴ As economists John Fitzgerald and Seán Kenny later wrote, the revocation of Article 5 functioned as payment for two concessions: the failure of Irish negotiators to defend adequately the wishes of Northern nationalists, and their acceptance of Northern Ireland’s refusal to guarantee equal status for Catholics.³⁵

It could be argued that the Free State accepted liability for a questionable portion of British national debt in order to facilitate its later waiver and to present the settlement domestically as a fiscal gain, despite the associated acceptance of partition and the abandonment of Northern nationalists. After the ideals and “blood sacrifice” of 1916; the democratic mandate of 1918; the military stalemate of 1919; Britain’s first government-to-government negotiations with a national Irish government; the Treaty of 1921; and the devastation of Civil War in 1922—after all this—the Cosgrave government accepted financial compensation in exchange for partition and the entrapment of 420,000 Catholic Irish people³⁶ within a hostile and openly sectarian state.

“Our Friends”: Memory, Justification, and Aftermath Writing just weeks after the 1925 Agreement, Cosgrave acknowledged that it might not satisfy “the people of the North” but nevertheless insisted, “it is the best possible arrangement for our Northern friends.”³⁷ The contrast is revealing: where Collins spoke of Northern nationalists as “our people,”³⁸ Cosgrave referred to them as, “our friends,” and “the people of the North.” One can only imagine the reaction of Collins, Griffith, Pearse, and Connolly, with W. B. Yeats’s words echoing bitterly: “Was it for this that all that blood was shed?” (September 1913)

“Sir James [Craig] won easily so far as territory goes,” Cosgrave wrote, before adding that he was “better satisfied” with the outcome than Craig. The financial settlement, he declared, was “eminently more satisfactory” and “a great tribute to British statesmanship.”³⁹ Baldwin surmised that the advantages of the Agreement would “provide a reliable market for British factories” and stem the flow of “immigration of a poor class of people.”⁴⁰ Cosgrave’s satisfaction was such that he wrote personally to Winston Churchill,⁴¹ not previously known for his conciliatoriness on Irish matters,

thanking him for his “very valuable contribution” to resolving the problems of the recent conferences and expressing the hope that the outcome would “redound to the mutual advantage of Great Britain and Ireland alike.”⁴²

It was widely reported at the time that a pressing financial weight had been lifted from the shoulders of the fledgling Free State.⁴³ The financial markets however, as reflected in bond yields and financial equity prices, had not seen the Free States contingent liability as a huge risk factor.⁴⁴ Nor was the Free State’s fiscal position unusual in the European context following World War I. Prior to the 1925 Agreement, and before accepting the questionable share of Britain’s national debt which Churchill estimated at £157.75 million, Ireland’s debt stood at a modest 10 per cent of GNP, compared with 163 per cent in the United Kingdom.⁴⁵

Many European states faced far more severe debt and fiscal crises, often requiring external assistance and supervision.⁴⁶ In Italy and Greece, debt levels exceeded 150 per cent of GNP; Belgium and the Netherlands recorded ratios between 100 and 145 per cent.⁴⁷ Even accepting the bona fides of the Free State’s share of Britain’s contestable debt at £157.75 million, the resulting “pressing financial weight” would have amounted to roughly 80–100 per cent of GNP.⁴⁸ It is against this fiscal background that the counterfactual cost of assuming the questionable debt—and the terms on which that cost was avoided—can be assessed.

The counterfactual scenario—had the Free State assumed the £157.75 million debt—would have resulted in an annual repayment of £6.25 million over sixty years. To contextualise this “pressing financial burden,” the population of the Free State stood at three million.⁴⁹ The 1925 Agreement, so prized by Cosgrave’s government, therefore equated to an annual fiscal relief of just £2 per head—a mere 9d. (nine pence) per week⁵⁰, the equivalent to the price of a loaf of bread.”⁵¹

What price did the Cosgrave Government place on an Irish soul in 1925 – the price of a loaf of bread. Frank Fitzpatrick is a Dublin-based writer, a history graduate of Trinity College Dublin and a former business lecturer at Dublin City University.

34 Draft Notes of a Conference Held in the Board Room, Treasury Chambers, Whitehall, London (Secret), C.A./H./48 (7th Minutes), 2 December 1925, 7:45 p.m., HM Treasury.

35 John Fitzgerald and Seán Kenny, “Till Debt Do Us Part: Financial Implications of the Divorce of the Irish Free State from the United Kingdom, 1922–1926,” TEP Working Paper 2117 (Dublin: Trinity Economics Papers, Department of Economics, Trinity College Dublin, 2017), 29.

36 Northern Ireland Census Office, 1926 Census: Northern Ireland Religion Tables (Belfast: HMSO, 1926).

37 William T. Cosgrave to Edward J. Phelan, letter, undated, DT S5985, National Archives of Ireland.

38 Michael Collins to W. T. Cosgrave, letter, 3 August 1922, Department of the Taoiseach Records, S 1628, National Archives of Ireland, Dublin.

39 William T. Cosgrave to Edward J. Phelan, letter, undated, DT S5985, National Archives of Ireland.

40 T. K. Daniel, “Griffith on His Noble Head, 1922–32,” *Irish Economic and Social History* 3 (1976): 55–65.

41 David McCullagh, *From Crown to Harp* (Dublin: Gill Books, 2025), 90, 101, 106.

42 William T. Cosgrave to Winston Churchill, letter, 21 December 1925, DT S4730A, National Archives of Ireland.

43 David McCullagh, *From Crown to Harp* (Dublin: Gill Books, 2025), 155, 166–67.

44 John Fitzgerald and Seán Kenny, “Till Debt Do Us Part,” TEP Working Paper 2117 (2017), 18.

45 John Fitzgerald and Seán Kenny, “Till Debt Do Us Part,” TEP Working Paper 2117 (2017), 2.

46 UK Parliament, House of Commons, “Austria (Financial Re-Organisation),” *Hansard* (HC Deb), 12 June 1922, vol. 150, cols. 40–41.

47 B. R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics: Europe, 1750–1993*, 4th ed. (London: Macmillan Reference, 1998), 702–24.

48 John Fitzgerald and Seán Kenny, “Till Debt Do Us Part,” TEP Working Paper 2117 (2017), 1.

49 CSO, 1926 Census, Irish Free State population 2,971,992.

50 Author’s calculation based on census and fiscal data cited above.

51 Ireland, Department of Industry and Commerce, *Statistical Abstract, 1931* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1931), 167.

A close-up portrait of Louise Ferguson, an older woman with long, wavy, grey hair. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a thoughtful expression. She is wearing a blue patterned top. The background is a warm, orange-brown color.

Thinking *Louise Ferguson* about Utopia

Oscar Wilde once said that any map without a route to Utopia is not worth our attention. He also suggested the human quest for betterment was insatiable. According to Wilde, we enthusiastically set sail for a distant shore but, on arrival, gain a view of another far horizon and immediately chart a further course.

Dutch writer Rutger Bregman has been thinking about Utopia too. But unlike Wilde, Bregman offers what he sees as a practical roadmap. In his book, 'Utopia for realists' together with a series of recent lectures, Bregman draws from history to discover engines of progressive change.

Bregman looks at the methods of Abolitionists who opposed slavery, Suffragettes who championed women's right to vote and Civil Rights movements who challenged racial or religious discrimination. Key to the success of those movements, Bregman concludes, isn't the righteousness of the cause but the commitment to building collective action in the real

world. In short, being right is never enough, a better outcome and a brighter future requires engagement with others, networking, seeking coalition and building solidarity.

Bregman doesn't focus on the direct rebellions and uprisings that already hold their place in history but rather 'moral revolutions' amongst bourgeois businessmen, religious groups and other citizens, surprisingly often motivated by nothing more than 'good neighbourliness'. He draws inspiration from the story of one night in Denmark. It was October 1st, 1942.

The night had been planned by the Nazis for the mass detention and expulsion of Jewish people. But, when the deportation squads arrived, no one on their lists could be found. Local communities had worked together to hide and rescue their neighbours and as a result over 90% of those targeted that day survived the Holocaust.

Some eighty years later, the people of Minnesota took similar action to thwart the

detention and deportation of their neighbours by Donald Trump's ICE squads. A recent act of solidarity by neighbours in the Lower Falls area of West Belfast safeguarded a local Asian business from attack by racist thugs. Other neighbourhoods across Ireland, did the same.

In an earlier book 'Humankind; A hopeful history' Bregman disputes the traditional notion that humans are best understood as individuals with competing interests. By studying human responses to real situations, Bregman argues people often show cooperation, empathy and kindness. We don't live in a society where 'every man for himself' prevails.

Bregman's research provides further impetus to the current process of all-island engagement and discussion on the potential of a New Ireland. In developing a vision for the future, hopefully there will be a little room for Utopia.

Louise Ferguson is a former staff writer for An Phoblacht and Policy Advisor at Stormont

THE TRAVELLER'S TALE



*Castle Buildings, Belfast, on the morning of Good Friday 1998,
a private word with the Sinn Féin leadership, the question was,
would the Unionists accept the deal?*

Ray Bassett

The Travellers Tale - Ray Bassett

Ray Bassett was a highly skilled, senior Irish government diplomat for thirty years. He is a united Irishman, and this outlook shaped his approach to all his diplomatic tasks.

Ray has written a book, 'The Traveller's Tale' which documents in detail these tasks. He was part of the Irish government's delegation that negotiated the Good Friday Agreement.

Book review by Jim Gibney



He joined the Anglo-Irish Division in November 1985 as a First Secretary following the Anglo-Irish Agreement and was a member of the Maryfield Secretariat, a joint Irish British civil service office set up under the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement

Ray was Joint Secretary to the British Irish Intergovernmental Conference and was the Irish government's representative in Belfast from 2001-05. He was also part of a small team of senior civil servants in the Department of Foreign Affairs, internally known as the 'Travellers', who for years before the Good Friday Agreement negotiations, quietly and diplomatically took the pulse of the people of the North during the war years.

The Traveller's section of the book is a new element to the Irish peace process story. I never heard mention of it until I read the book. It provides an important insight into a hidden yet essential part of the preparatory work that led to the peace process. It tells the story of those wandering years when the 'Travellers' set forth, pioneering style, to speak and above all to listen and report back, with accuracy to Taoisigh, Albert Reynolds, John Bruton and Bertie Ahern.

Bassett stresses the need for and the importance of accurate feedback from the Traveller's conversations.

The Travellers' mission is akin to a 'grassroots' endeavour to connect the Irish government to the people being met, especially nationalists, who were 'abandoned' by the Irish government following partition, which the author says, "is a serious stain on the history of the Irish state".

The abandonment created among many other problems: the reality that the Irish government as the sovereign power in Ireland had practically no intelligence about what was happening in the North at the height of the armed conflict.

This was particularly stark with regards to the Derry-based 'Back Channel' which played a significant role in the early days of the peace process, and the Irish government did not know about it. Hitherto I associated the 'Back Channel' with only two people, Brendan Duddy and Denis Bradley but in this book a third Derry person, Noel Gallagher, is commended for his part in making peace.

Noel Gallagher, had a relationship with Taoiseach Albert Reynolds through business interests. It was a helpful contact, and it carried through to Taoisigh Brian Cowen and Bertie Ahern.

The Travellers' provided a much-needed source of information for the Irish government. In fact, they were a second strand in a two strand Irish government operation – the first strand being the Maryfield Secretariat. Initially the Traveller's mission deliberately excluded talking directly to republicans, in keeping with Irish government policy, but this changed after the IRA's ceasefire. The Travellers gleaned invaluable information from local councillors, clergy, doctors, community activists, solicitors and academics.

Their findings were compiled into a weekly briefing, popularly known as the 'Box'. Taoisigh Bertie Ahern and Brian Cowen, government ministers and senior civil servants studied the reports.

For Bassett the 'Box' was positive proof that "the bad old days of abandonment were well and truly gone." He attributes the political shift to a number of developments: the arrival of Albert Reynolds as Taoiseach, who quickly invited Gerry Adams to government buildings, after the IRA ceasefire, the peace process and the growth of

Sinn Féin.

The author is also concerned to put on the historical record the part played by the Irish government and its civil service during the Good Friday Agreement negotiations, particularly Dermot Gallagher, who led the Irish team of negotiators, which included, Ray Bassett, Wally Kirwan, Gerry Staunton, David Cooney, Eamon McKee, Rory Montgomery and Tim O'Connor.

He also acknowledges the "immense contribution" of the British negotiators under the administration of the British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

According to the author the book is a "birds-eye view" from someone who was present and participated in the peace process throughout the period. However, the book is not a "comprehensive compilation" of the peace process, he said.

He wrote it for "my grandchildren" so they would know "what their grandfather did during the crucial years".

From his days in Trinity College as a student Ray Bassett was interested in the North and international affairs. With thousands of protestors, he personally witnessed the burning of the British Embassy in Dublin in February 1972 after the Bloody Sunday massacre of 14 people in Derry by the British Paras. And was caught up in the loyalist bombing of Dublin in May 1974, where he witnessed the "carnage" on the streets of Dublin, a scene he will never forget.

His time spent as a Traveller and at Maryfield provided him with a first-hand experience of people's lives during the conflict. He met nationalists, republicans, unionists and loyalists, urban and rural in their homes, places of work and bars.

The staff who worked at the Maryfield Secretariat mainly came from loyalist East Belfast. They were drivers, cleaners, cooks and security people, whose lives were in danger from loyalists, for working at Maryfield. They were culturally British and Irish.

This experience helped him connect easier with loyalist leaders like David Ervine and Davey Adams during the negotiations.

Whether as a Traveller or at Maryfield Ray Bassett and the other Irish civil servants lived in fear of attack from loyalists. Their working lives was governed by security considerations.

Yet the securocrats at the 'Northern Ireland Office' NIO and the RUC tried to block them for 'security reasons' going to meetings in nationalist areas particularly West Belfast, where they were safe. But they were free to wander around East Belfast where they were not safe.

One senior NIO official told Bassett that nationalist areas, in particular West Belfast were "best viewed from a British Army helicopter and not on the ground".

There was a particular venom in their attitude to West Belfast and the huge support that Sinn Féin enjoyed there. The author had a special interest in electoral matters, human rights, equality, cultural and Irish language broadcasting, which are reflected in the GFA.

Dermot Gallagher asked him to work directly and discreetly with Sinn Féin and the loyalists and to meet the families of IRA members imprisoned in Britain.

Siobhan O'Hanlon was Ray Bassett's 'link person' with Sinn Féin and his 'Travels' brought him on visits to the Felons or the Roddy McCorley

clubs in West Belfast where he spoke to former political prisoners, like Dickey Glenholmes and where he received an honorary membership card of the Felons.

With the loyalist leader, David Ervine he visited the loyalist club the Raven to speak with loyalists. He considered David Ervine a good friend.

Tensions inside the Department of Foreign Affairs had led its Secretary General, Paddy McKiernan, to describe it as the Department of 'Fenian Affairs' an outlook which Bassett attributes to his Conor Cruise O'Brien and Eoghan Harris stream of historical revisionism. This revisionism and the politics of abandonment ran deep in Irish government circles.

It was the talks between John Hume and Gerry Adams, known as the Hume-Adams dialogue that provided a potentially new context to resolve the conflict through an inclusive process which addressed all the issues at the heart of the conflict.

But the opposition to change wasn't just in Irish government and nationalist establishment circles: unionists were opposed to change as well.

Bassett reminds us of the opposition to the IRA ceasefire from the leaders of unionism – James Molyneux said, "The ceasefire was the worst thing that has ever happened to us", with Paisley saying it was "the worst crisis in Ulster's history since the setting up of the state."

The task in hand – a peace agreement that offered a new beginning to the people of Ireland and Britain – wasn't going to be easily achieved with the political landscape littered with eight failed attempts in twenty years.

Ray Bassett provides the reader with a 'ring-side seat' view of the 'comings and goings' throughout the period leading up to and during the GFA negotiations with his personal assessments of each of the leaders of the Irish and British governments and the nationalist and unionist parties and tactics used during the negotiations.

The sections in the book dealing with the significance of the GFA and the importance of the Irish American diaspora and President Clinton in the peace process are not only noteworthy but have been shaping the current popular movement for a new Ireland.

The core of Ray Bassett's book is about how the Irish government marshalled its national and international power; its political and diplomatic acumen and its leadership of nationalist Ireland which included the SDLP and Sinn Féin with a vision of securing an agreement which was wholly different from all previous partitionist agreements including the 1920 Government of Ireland Act and the 1921 Treaty.

The book demonstrates that the GFA owes its existence to an opportune period; an Irish government with the will to lead and a clear vision of what it wanted to achieve and the ambition to achieve it.

We are at another opportune period where the vision has progressed from the GFA to the achievement of a new and independent Ireland.

It requires an Irish government to once again marshal its formidable array of resources; harness nationalist Ireland behind the vision and engage with the British government and the unionist and Protestant people to bring about a new Ireland.

The 'Traveller's Tale' demonstrates it can be done.

dúirt síad

Comments on Irish Unity

By Aoife Ferguson

“People are burying their heads in the sand about a border poll, it is coming and eventually the vote will carry so it’s either prepare for it or have it launched upon you” – **William McKee former Long Kesh prison governor- 15th March 2026**

“A united Ireland is inevitable. Unionism must prepare for unity instead of denying it” – **John Taylor Baron Kilclooney - Former member of the UUP - 10th March 2026**

“Crucially, this is not a conversation that can be deferred to some future constitutional moment. The steps required to build a more resilient, productive and inclusive island economy are needed now.” – **Claire Hanna- SDLP Leader - 5th March 2026**

“I think before we go to the people, North and south, we need to have flesh on those bones. Citizens’ Assemblies have been very effective in exploring complicated issues. There is a particular responsibility for the government. Fish don’t know if they are in Donegal or Derry. It is important that we are not afraid of having these conversations. We are now at this stage because we have had peace for many years. I think about the environmental issue and cleaning up our river. Those issues don’t understand or respect borders. There are good things happening. I would love to see more contact between people North and south.” – **Collette Kelleher- Former Independent Senator- Cork - 1st March 2026**

“We need to be included in the conversation on a United Ireland” - **Dr Raied Al-Wazzan- Belfast-based academic and community leader - 11th February 2026 - Ireland’s Future Podcast**

“In this report, we suggest that public broadcasters play a vital role within democracies, and so they should not be overlooked in wider debates. A blank slate approach would be a good idea in terms of public service broadcasting in the event of a United Ireland” - **Dr Dawn Wheatley from DCU- Public Media Ireland Report- 14th January 2026**

“The reunification of Ireland is a once in a lifetime opportunity to change our island for the better. We have significant challenges in housing, healthcare and in addressing the climate crisis. For each of these issues, we can provide solutions more effectively and more efficiently by taking an integrated all-Ireland approach” - **Ben Collins Author and commentator - 8th January 2026**

“For me, the Irish language is my heritage as much as anyone else’s and should be cherished” - **Linzi McClaren- Ex UUP Councillor 3rd November 2025**

“The solution is they need to bring in increased funding and, if all else fails, an all-island service for healthcare, because if we don’t have an all-island service, I don’t think we can compete with Sláinte care down south” - **Dr Tom Black- Former Chair of the British Medical Association NI - August 2025**



Dúirt
Síod



Wear an Easter Lily | Gaith Lile na Cásca

HONOUR IRELAND'S PATRIOT DEAD

TABHAIR ONÓIR DO THÍRGHRÁTHÓIRÍ NA hÉIREANN

The Easter Lily is worn to honour all those who have given their lives in the cause of Irish freedom in 1916 and in the years since then. The first Easter Lily badges were designed in 1926 by the republican women's organisation, Cumann na mBan. The purpose of the badge was both to raise money for the Republican Prisoners' Dependents Fund and to honour the sacrifice made by the men and women of the 1916 Rising. On Easter Monday 1916 Pádraig Pearse read the Proclamation outside the GPO and copies were distributed and posted throughout the city as the battle of Easter Week began. The 1916 Proclamation declared the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and "standing on that fundamental right" proclaimed the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State. It guaranteed religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities and resolved to "pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation



equally". It stated that it was "oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past". This was recognition of the alienation of unionists from the nationalist majority and a guarantee of their rights in a free Ireland.

Today, as the vision of the Proclamation is still to be realised, republicans continue to honour the heroic sacrifice made in 1916, when republican revolutionaries, outnumbered and ill-equipped, took on the might of the British empire and asserted in arms Ireland's right to freedom.

We would encourage everyone, young and old to wear the Lily at Easter as a national emblem that promotes the ideals of those patriots who died in Easter 1916 and since.

Tá lilithe na Cásca ar fáil ó d'oifig áitiúil Shinn Féin agus ó ionadaithe áitiúla Shinn Féin.



POBLACHT NA hÉIREANN.

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

OF THE

IRISH REPUBLIC

TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

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

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisation, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish affairs, to every part of which the long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty; six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right, and again asserting it in arms to the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Republic of Ireland.



• LILE NA CÁSCA •



TABHAIR ÓMÓS DO LAOCHRA NA hÉIREANN

WEAR YOUR LILY WITH PRIDE