

Republican SÍNN FÉIN Poblachtach

112Ú Ard Fheis

Aitheasc an Leas-Uachtarán, Daire Mac Cionnaith



A chairde

In this the one hundredth anniversary of the 1916 revolution we in Sinn Féin have commemorated with dignity that seminal event. Despite massive repression and hostility in both jurisdictions, in Dublin at Easter the Free state police tried their best to orchestrate confrontation outside the Ard Oifig, the restraint and discipline shown by the colour party is an example to all. In the Six County State our commemorations were designated "illegal" by those who administer in Stormont, but again we held our commemorations with dignity. Our refusal to capitulate to regressive unjust laws have seen many of our activists arrested, we could yet see one of the biggest show-trials in 2017 stemming from two separate commemorations in Lurgan. This form of repression has not worked in the past, it will not work now and it will not work with future Republicans.

Within Maghaberry we have seen attempts to treat the POWs as criminals, this too will not work, I commend all POWs who have resisted the continuing onslaught from the sectarian screws who work at the behest of MI5. The

POWs, rightly take heart from former POWs, many of whom gave the ultimate sacrifice in the cages of the H-Blocks. The agreement of 2010 is still seen as the path towards a settlement to the ongoing mistreatment within the jail. In Portlaoise, the 26-County State has let the political wing fall into disrepair, leading to health issues for the POWs. We must guard against attempts to criminalize our POWs by way of saying the political wing is "not fit for purpose" also we must guard against the attempts to bring criminals onto political wings, there is no place in Republicanism for criminality, we cannot play into the hands of either state by accepting the criminal acts of former Republicans and allowing them onto POW landings.

These past few years have been difficult for Sinn Féin, internal strife has caused severe damage to our organisation, we have seen egos overtake the sense of duty to the cause of a United, Socialist, Democratic Ireland. From here today we must redouble our efforts to rebuild Sinn Féin. ALL members must put their shoulder to the wheel, all must be willing to do what they can to make Sinn Féin relevant to the people of Ireland; whether it is speaking at a commemoration or issuing statements on local, national or international issues. Our paper, SAOIRSE, is your paper, the editor will always do the best to include local articles. Also, each member needs to promote and sell SAOIRSE, we are unique in the political sphere in the fact we have a monthly paper. It is one of our strengths.

Since the split of 1986 we have seen the emergence of many groups, there is now an "alphabet soup" of groups out there. We need to be mindful of who we are and what we stand for. There are those within these groups who propose broad fronts and amalgamations etc. In the past we have seen the damage that broad fronts can cause. Some within these groups have agreed with the very policies that caused the split in '86; ie, recognition of Leinster House, Stormont and Westminster's involvement in Irish affairs. Let me state it clearly here, we in Sinn Féin will never ask permission for a United Ireland, we are fundamentally opposed to border polls under any guise. Many of these new groups have made great promises to new way forward, they call on our members to join them as they are the new progressive movement, Comrades, look closely at these groups and some of their leaders, they are the men and women who left the existing groups because of egos. Some stayed with the Provisionals up until this past few months, it is clear then that behind the rhetoric they will join Stormont and Leinster House as and when they decide it is prudent. They seem to have no ideological difference from existing groups, it is more a case wanting to be seen as leaders. The security services in both states encourage this

fragmentation of Republicanism as it weakens Republicanism. It is well known that MI5/MI6 actively encourage criminals and paid agents into all groups in an effort to destabilise them.

This past few months we have seen an attempt by the people of England to drag the Occupied Six Counties further from the 26 Counties with their Brexit vote. This may well lead to border posts, customs checks etc along the British imposed border. Now is the time for Republicans to highlight the obvious unnatural nature of this border. Ireland is a unit, from the center to the see, we have a right to determine our own future in the absence of interference from Westminster. We demand an end to the occupation of any part of our land. We in Sinn Féin need to bring to the people of Ireland our long-standing documents of Éire Nua and Saol Nua, both documents are a sound basis for the establishment of a free and fair Ireland.

Today Comrades, our Ard-Fheis ends, let us leave here united in the tasks that lie ahead, we cannot and must not be the generation that drops the mantle of Republicanism and Unity that was handed to us by past patriots such as Ó Brádaigh, Ó Conaill, Keating, Sands, Drumm, Pearse and Tone. We will not be the generation that capitulates to the oppressor.

I will finish with a quote Máire Drumm:

"We must take no steps backward, our steps must be onward, for if we don't, the martyrs that died for you, for me, for this country will haunt us forever."