

# Republican SÍNN FÉIN Poblachtach

## Aitheasc an Uachtarán



### 98Ú Sinn Féin Ard Fheis 2002

#### Presidential Address to Ard-Fheis from Ruairí Ó Brádaigh

A Chathaoirligh, a Theachtaí, is a chairde ar fad,

Fáilte! Fearaim fíor-chaoin fáilte romhaibh go leor ag an Ard-Fheis seo, an 98ú cheann de chuid Shinn Féin.

The year since last we gathered i dtionól náisiúnta has indeed been an eventful one. We made our mark on the closing day of last year's Ard-Fheis by holding a counter-demonstration to the 26-County State's reburial of the remains of Kevin Barry and his nine comrades. I speak of our march from the Ard-Fheis venue to Earlsfort Terrace and the holding of a brief and dignified ceremony at the stained glass memorial window there to the Republican boy-soldier and martyr executed by the British in 1920.

To underline our public statement at the time that Ireland was not yet free and that relations with the English government and establishment would never be normal until

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the Irish people were supreme in all of the island of Ireland, we held our own commemoration for all 10 Volunteers some weeks later.

A march took place from the location of their execution — Mountjoy Jail — to the Republican Plot in Glasnevin Cemetery where a final resting place had been allocated for them by the National Graves Association. The 26-County State had reburied them elsewhere, of course, but our tribute was a sincere and successful one, in line with the ideals for which the 10 Volunteers made the supreme sacrifice.

As if to punish us for once more daring to adhere publicly to the principles of Irish Republicanism, the 26-County State aimed a blow at Republican Sinn Féin. A meeting of Ard-Comhairle members, Comhairle na Mumhan officers and key local members in the mid-west region was raided in Limerick by the political police and all eight in attendance were held.

In an action which is the equivalent of internment without trial they were brought before the Special Non-jury Court on charges of IRA membership based on the unsupported “opinion” of a police chief superintendent. Substantial bail was demanded for all but in six cases it was on condition that they “do not take part in Republican Sinn Féin activity” and report to the police every day. These conditions seek to criminalise the work of a long-established political organisation.

The first two were dealt with immediately by the Special Court and are here today. The remaining six were detained for four weeks before having these outrageous conditions imposed on them. They were prohibited from selling our monthly newspaper SAOIRSE, fundraising, engaging in publicity, organisational activity and agitations on local and national issues.

Further, they were debarred from taking part in the re-run of the Nice Treaty campaign and the whole array of political activity including long-range preparations for the next local elections in the 26 Counties — due in 18 months time — and the promotion of our ÉIRE NUA proposals for a new four-province federal Ireland.

## DISRUPTION

The State has demanded and obtained the partial disruption of Republican Sinn Féin through the bringing of political charges to a non-jury court. Ten months later the trial has not taken place and these key members have been specifically prevented from normal political activity. They are, of course, not present here today, at this Ard-Fheis, where they would normally be.

The youngest of them, Christy Dunne of Limerick was arrested again at his home during August by two identified members of a special police unit from Dublin. Driven off the main Limerick-Dublin road to a remote place he was threatened with death and was lucky to manage to escape from them by jumping into the River Shannon.

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A formal complaint lodged by himself and his solicitor at a local police barracks has brought no results. In view of all of this political police and Special Court action against normal political activity, we are entitled to ask what price now freedom of expression and the right to communicate and receive political ideas (ref Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights)?

Of course, media coverage and comment was scarce to non-existent as in the case of the arrests and detention for two days of half of the newly-elected Ard-Chomhairle when leaving the Ard-Fheis of 1998 in Drogheda.

The fact that the raid on the Limerick meeting was preceded by the firing of five or six shots — presumably in the air — outside the meeting-place and that the front door was immediately bulldozed in, off its hinges, knocking to the ground two of those who were leaving was mentioned nowhere. Neither was Christy Dunne's ordeal during August

Constant harassment of our young members in Dublin and other places is the order of the day, with body searches on the street, allegations that raffle-tickets and even our newspaper SAOIRSE, are illegal and threats that any protest against such public humiliation and provocation will be dealt with under the Public Order Act.

People are often arrested and taken to the barracks under the Misuse of Drugs Act because this allows the Gardaí to strip-search the person. Young Republicans are particularly made the target of this type of harassment.

## **SUBSIDISED**

On January 21 last, the anniversary of the foundation of the First (All-Ireland) Dáil in 1919, the Provos reversed the root principle of Sinn Féin. They occupied offices at Westminster on that date in 2002, thereby standing the basic principle of Sinn Féin on its head. The British government will subsidise them for doing so to the amount of £100,000 sterling per annum for each representative.

Sinn Féin was founded almost a century ago to withdraw the Irish representation from Westminster and set up an All-Ireland parliament here at home. This they did when they formed the 32-County Dáil following the action of the Irish people, voting as a unit, when they self-determined themselves in the 1918 general election.

Last January 21 they accepted the British parliament as the centre of gravity in Irish affairs, rather than "denying the right and opposing the will of the British Parliament and British Crown or any other foreign government to legislate for Ireland" (Preamble to Constitution of Sinn Féin 1917).

They should give up all claim to the name "Sinn Féin" as Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, Clann na Poblachta and the Workers' Party had the honesty and decency to do when

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they departed from the basic principles of Sinn Féin. The Provos should leave that historic title to those who still uphold these essential propositions.

The promotion of British royal visits to the 26 Counties in the attempt to normalise division and foreign occupation continued during the year. We opposed Charles Windsor's visit to Dublin on February 14 with a protest picket on O'Connell Bridge.

These manifestations by British royalty are a build up to an official visit to the 26-County State by the reigning monarch of England who claims to be the sovereign of "Great Britain AND Northern Ireland". As such it would intend to demonstrate to the world that British rule in Ireland is finally accepted and is regarded as 'normal'. For our part we must meet any such display by showing our rejection of English imperial and colonial rule here and registering our eternal opposition and hostility to it. We can do no less.

In early April with the annual Easter commemoration ceremonies over, another act of abject treachery was performed by the Provisional leadership — something for which they have carried out the death penalty on their own members in recent years. These arms were given for the freedom of Ireland and not as a bargaining counter for securing, maintaining and expanding office in Stormont, Westminster and Leinster House, thus copper-fastening English rule in Ireland.

To date no arms held by British-backed loyalists have been destroyed — although these are continually in use against nationalists — nor have arms in the possession of the British forces themselves been verifiably 'decommissioned'. Never before in Irish history has such treachery to the All-Ireland Republic at the behest of the British government been engaged in, and now for the second time.

In time to come those who so collaborate with the British forces of occupation will be reviled by their own people as are the quislings and traitors of World War II. The Provisionals claim it was 'voluntary', calling it a 'leadership initiative'. In fact it is a leadership conspiracy against Irish Republicanism as they work in collusion with their supposed enemies, the British government.

The Provisionals' military machine should disband now before they engage in further humiliations and treacheries. There is no Republican function for them now; if they remain they will sink to the level of a party militia "controlling" sections of the nationalist people in the interests of British rule. It would be better to disband now than to advance in shame.

They have gone on logically to do public homage to British soldiers who died in two world wars and in colonial campaigns across the globe from Africa and Asia to the Falkland Islands and Ireland. A private graveside ceremony by family and/or friends is understandable, but to do formal and public honour at a British Cenotaph is to send a definite political message to the world.

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While British occupation forces remain in Ireland such a move can only indicate that British soldiers who died here in the service of the Crown were in the right and that Irish Republican soldiers who gave their lives opposing them down the years were in the wrong. This we do not and cannot acknowledge; and we speak with all due respect.

## IMPERIALIST ADVENTURE

Meanwhile the drums of war are being sounded for yet another imperialist adventure. The US President and the British Prime Minister have combined to insist on war on Iraq. They say that such a war may be "unavoidable" if the United Nations Organisation continues to deny them sanction for such an enterprise. In plain language they are prepared to defy the UN.

They charge that the Saddam regime has flouted United Nations resolutions in recent years. But they ignore conveniently the fact that for 35 years — ever since the occupation in 1967 — their friends in the Israeli government have shown contempt for successive UN resolutions requiring them to withdraw from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The reality is that what EU Commission President Jacques Delors called the "resource wars of the 21st century" have started and the resource in question is the Black Gold of oil. Having installed a pliant regime in Afghanistan the way is open for an oil pipeline through that country from what were the southern republics of the old Soviet Union to Pakistan and the Indian Ocean.

They hope to do the same thing in Iraq — which supplies 10% of the world's oil — connecting up with the rich oil-fields in the Caspian Sea area. The United States imports more than 50% of the oil it uses. In the next 10 to 15 years that figure is expected to rise to over 70%. Its national interests require free access to cheap oil.

Without any reference to the people of the 26 Counties the present Leinster House administration permits US warplanes to refuel at Shannon Airport with rest and recreation for American servicemen. We applaud the action in recent weeks of young Irish people in painting anti-war slogans on these warplanes thereby drawing the people's attention to what is happening at Shannon. For our part, we repeat the slogan of ten years ago — "No blood for oil"!

Coupled with such US action has been the increasing use of the sea around Cobh in Cork Harbour by British Navy warships for crew training exercises, both of which represent encroachments on Irish neutrality. The latest British warship to dock at Cobh during July was the Argus from 702 Lynx Training Squadron. It was accorded a Mayoral Reception at the port which was also attended by officials from the British Embassy in Dublin.

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The increasing use of Irish waters and airspace by foreign military and naval forces — and that includes British warplanes' participation in the annual Air Display at Salthill, Galway —must be a matter of public discussion and debate, especially in view of the fight to protect Irish neutrality.

What we were seeing over the summer was a gradual softening up process in advance of the re-run of the Nice Treaty referendum in the autumn. Republican Sinn Féin calls for a ban on all foreign military, naval and air force exercises in Irish waters and airspace.

For the past number of weeks our members have been campaigning vigorously to resist the undemocratic attempt to foist the Nice Treaty a second time within sixteen months on the people of the 26 Counties. The "Minister for Europe", Dick Roche, charged with coordinating the pro-Nice campaign made a remarkable turn-around in that time.

Speaking in Leinster House on June 21 last year — before he was made a Minister — Mr Roche said: "It is foolhardy to talk about another referendum at this stage unless something fundamental changes. To attempt to rerun a referendum as a means of reversing the democratic decision taken by the people would be rightly regarded as an affront. Something fundamental will have to change in the Nice Treaty before we can even contemplate putting it before the people again."

Nothing fundamental did change, of course, yet the self-same Treaty was forced on the people once more. Denmark, when it rejected Maastricht, secured a Protocol releasing it from EU military commitments. Britain was absolved from the Social Chapter of Maastricht and with Denmark and Sweden does not form part of the Euro common currency.

Observer status at the Western European Union, a pillar of the NATO alliance; membership of the NATO-led Partnership for Peace without the guaranteed referendum, the Rapid Reaction Force, warplanes at Shannon Airport, the British Navy in Cork Harbour all indicate clearly that neutrality is being sliced away. In passing it may be pointed out that the Fianna Fáil Director of Elections for the Nice Treaty, Mr PJ Mara was dismissed during the campaign because he was adjudged not to have been cooperating with the Flood Tribunal. It seems he had an offshore account in the Isle of Man.

Republican Sinn Féin opposed Nice for the second time because it undermines neutrality and militarises the EU, because it centralises power through the abolition of the Veto in 30 more areas and because it involves domination by Germany, France, Britain and Italy who will have their voting power increased at the expense of the smaller states. Above all else we do not want to be participants through the Rapid Reaction Force or otherwise in the war of the rich on the poor, which is what these "Resource Wars" really are.

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## VISION

The Republican Movement's vision of the Europe of the future has always been a "Europe of peoples and not of existing states", many of which are multi-national in character. James Connolly advocated a "free federation of free peoples" for Europe and it was in keeping with this concept that the Movement has approached the European ideal down the decades.

In ainneoin Chomhaontú Stormont 1998 thaisbeán Rialtas Shasana a neamh-shuim i gceist na Gaeilge nuair a d'fhoillsigh siad a mBille um Chumarsáid, mí Lúnasa seo caite. Níor luadh an Ghaeilge ann ná ní dearnadh aon tagairt dí, beag nó mór.

Tugadh aghaidh ar an mBreatnais agus ar Ghaidhlig na h-Alban agus a riachtanaisí siúd ceart go leór. Ach b'é an comhartha a tugadh sa mBille seo ná narbh ann don Ghaeilge maidir leis na Sé Chontae de agus nach bhfuil aon pháirt le glacadh aici i saol na coda sin d'Eirinn.

Ní h-aon íonadh mar sin go ndéanann bairdéirí agus lucht cisnsireachta sna príosúin ó Thuaidh an leagan Ghaeilge d'ainmneacha agus sloinnte a scrios amach i litreacha na bpríosúnach maraon le focal ar bith eile Ghaeilge. Ní ann don teanga ón uasléibhéal i Westminster go dtí an leibhéal is ísle sna príosúin. Níl meas madra ag lucht ceannais Shasana ar theanga na Gaeilge, sin bun agus bárr an scéil; níl aon ghradam aici i súile Bhunaíocht Shasana.

The recent Communications Bill published by the British government gives no recognition whatever to the Irish language. This Bill is designed to determine the future of broadcasting for the Celtic languages under the rule of Westminster. The needs of Scottish Gaelic and Welsh — linguistic cousins of Irish — are addressed in the legislation but Irish is not even mentioned.

The signal from the British government is clear. Irish has no part to play in society in the Six Counties, as far as they are concerned, in spite of the number of Gaelscoileanna and other language organisations which show the vibrancy of its development in that part of Ireland. The cultural fabric of our country, and even of England, Scotland and Wales, not to mention Europe in general would be the better for the restoration of Irish.

A lower level expression of the colonial attitude to the language is indicated by the practice of the censors in the Six-County prisons of blocking out names and other words in Irish from the prisoners' letters. Can the denial of recognition to the language go much lower? Where is the equality promised by the Stormont Agreement of 1998?

Another indication of the colonial attitude of the British government towards the Irish people is shown by its continuing refusal to release crucial information to the Barron Inquiry into the Dublin-Monaghan bombings of 1974. Thirty-three people died on

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May 17 that year in the greatest single loss of innocent lives in the past 33 years of conflict.

Originally claimed as loyalist attacks, the inquiry was set up by the Dublin administration following pressure from the bereaved families, to investigate allegations of British forces collusion with the bombers. Despite contact at the highest level between Bertie Ahern and Tony Blair the British have released only extracts from crucial documents.

Tribunals of inquiry have become commonplace in the 26-County State, with the latest Flood Tribunal announcing a web of corruption on planning at the heart of the Dublin Establishment. It is relevant to ask why is it that the Inquiry into Dublin-Monaghan is the only one to be held in private with no publicity emanating from it? Is this not another example of the subservient behaviour of the state when dealing with what it would regard as its former colonial masters in London?

North of the Border, leaks from the Stevens Inquiry report during June indicated that there was "institutionalized collusion" between British Crown Forces and loyalist death squads, creating a climate in which nationalists could be "murdered with near impunity". Republicans have been saying this for years.

Stevens also concluded that loyalists were "incapable of carrying out targeted assassinations without significant help" from British forces. BBC Panorama investigations have directly implicated the British military establishment and, by implication, their political masters in the British government in the assassination of nationalists. It was not just the RUC Special Branch which was involved, according to the BBC programme.

In the 26 Counties the Central Statistics Office published on October 4 the results of a survey which showed that during the so-called Celtic Tiger boom years the gap between rich and poor widened significantly. It reported that where the "average disposable income of a household" grossed more than 1,339 Euro per week, it increased 61% over the five-year period 1994-95 to 1999-2000.

On the other hand in the case of families with less than 214 Euro per week the increase was just 37%. Some 29% of spending in low-income households went on food, compared to only 16% in high-income families. And now unemployment is increasing steadily again. Corruption in high places, for which the ordinary people have to pay in the end of the day — as in the price of houses — has been exposed, with more to come.

The lesser advantaged areas such as the West of Ireland, with one or two exceptions, appear to have been by-passed by the so-called boom. It was agreed on all sides that what the West needed was infrastructure: broadband lines, roads, a North-South rail corridor and other transport facilities. This time last year the cost of re-opening

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the Sligo–Limerick rail link leading on to Rosslare Europort had been estimated at 100 million pounds or 127 million Euro. Commuter links to Galway from Athlone, Tuam and Athenry as well as from Ennis and Gort to Athenry would relieve pressure.

## BOOM SQUANDERED

One year later none of this has even started up. On the contrary, the question has been raised of actually closing the branch line from Manulla junction in Mayo to Ballina, as well as the line from Gorey south to Rosslare Europort and the Clonmel–Rosslare connection. Cut-backs in health and education services have taken place and the prospect of renewed borrowing increasing the so-called National Debt is raised again. Was the boom squandered and were the people conned in the recent general election? We would say “Yes” in both cases.

In the matter of waste disposal the campaign by the 26-County government to site and build cancer causing incinerators has also gathered pace in the last year.

Despite international incidents of such facilities being closed due to heavy contamination of local farmland and uncontrollable, high emissions of toxic materials, communities right across Ireland are facing planning applications from wealthy multinational incineration companies, in Ringsend, Balbriggan, Cork, Tipperary, Meath and Monaghan.

The new Minister for the Environment, Martin Cullen, has announced plans to fast-track these applications directly to An Bórd Pleanála, because he knows that there is no support among elected councillors for these industrial monstrosities, and very little among local government officials even.

Republicans will stand along with communities fighting the twin evil of large waste incinerators and resulting toxic-ash superdumps. We call for responsibility for waste production and disposal to be allocated in proportion to who is producing it — in our case, over 85% of waste generated comes directly from industry.

We propose a reduction, recycling, reuse and composting of waste — aiming towards a zero-waste solution by 2020 — and we call for Irish local authorities to follow the example set by Galway Corporation, who have already reduced the amount of waste sent to landfill by over 60%

With regard to our own natural resources, the Corrib North gas field off the Mayo coast includes the possibility of an oil discovery as well. The Shell company has bought out Enterprise Oil which had been developing the gas field. They seek to build a gigantic terminal at Bellanaboy in the Erris area, one of the most scenic locations in Ireland.

Local people have appealed to An Bórd Pleanála the decision of Mayo Co Council to grant planning permission. An Bórd asked for three alternatives and these were

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supplied, one offshore, a shallow-water processing platform as in Kinsale, and two on-shore.

It is interesting to compare the terms arranged with the oil company by the Dublin administration with those negotiated by Norway. Dublin agreed to a 15 to 20 year licence, no royalties, 25% corporation tax (much of which can be written off against expenses) and no stake whatever in ownership. Norway, to their credit gave a licence for a much shorter time, charged 7 to 8% royalties and 78% corporation tax and insisted on a 50% stake in any find of gas or oil.

## OIL SCANDAL

In addition Norway secured an Oil Fund to cushion living standards when the oil and gas eventually run out. The companies have already subscribed \$100 billion to this fund so far. Norwegian workers goods and services must be used. A point that needs investigation is the circumstances of Ray Burke's cutting of the corporation tax from 50% to 25% and making other concessions to the oil companies. Well may an article on the Dublin government's deal with these companies have been headed "The Biggest Scandal of All". How appropriate! It were better the resources were left as at present if such deals cannot be renegotiated.

During the year an attempt was made to disguise the strong arm of British rule in Ireland by giving it another name. This was done principally in the hope of recruiting more young people from a nationalist background as the eyes and ears of the English government here.

The armed and semi-military (Lord Brookeborough's description) British police in this country were amalgamated as the Irish Constabulary in 1836. For their role in suppressing the Fenian Rising in 1867 they were given the title "Royal", becoming the RIC. Following their defeat in 1919-21 and partial disbandment in 1922 they were called the RUC and now they have been re-named the PSNI.

Whether IC, RIC, RUC or PSNI they are the same force and their function is unchanged – to enforce and maintain British rule in this country. We call on young Irish people of whatever persuasion not to enlist in the modern Black and Tans to do England's dirty work in Ireland. The role of such colonial police forces is always the same – to keep the natives in their place.

All year we have seen the RUC/PSNI perform as heretofore. As the nationalists nightmare continues and intensifies, as nationalist homes are burned and blown up, as the assassinations continue and people are driven from their homes, the RUC/PSNI have lined up with British troops and attacked those who are simply defending their districts.

Even with the Stevens Report into Crown Forces collusion with loyalist death-squads due to be published, the 26-County police – at the direction of the politicians – have

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agreed to accept RUC/PSNI members into their Garda College at Templemore for training. When Gerry Adams accepts them he will be putting in place the last piece of the jigsaw of a restructured British rule in Ireland.

## CANNOT WAIT

Martin Mc Guinness said on RTE Radio One on October 4: "We need to be on the Police Board . . . we need to control our own policing . . . " They cannot wait to get into British uniform – or even more dangerously to serve the Crown in plain clothes. And what of the B-Specials, renamed UDR, renamed RIR? Will they enroll there — and in the British Army itself? Of course history has taught us that the prime targets of such "poachers turned game-keepers" will be their former comrades in the Republican Movement — to be harassed, hunted down and even worse . . .

Meanwhile in Maghaberry Prison, Co. Antrim Tommy Crossan has continued to organise prisoners in support of political status and separation from loyalist and ordinary prisoners. The success he has achieved in this regard can be measured from the fact that immediately Stephen Daly of Tyrone was sentenced to 12 years in September and moved from the remand wing to join Crossan and others, Tommy Crossan was removed to Magilligan Prison, Co Derry.

The object is to isolate Republican prisoners from each other, to break their morale and enforce criminalisation. Provisional spokespersons have not spoken out against this policy and such of their representatives as have visited the prisoners have been reprimanded for their action.

Republican POWs find themselves in a very volatile situation. They are the victims of a hidden agenda of the Stormont Agreement of 1998. This was to remove political status for anyone sentenced for a political offence after the date of the Agreement. The most dangerous aspect of this is the enforced integration of Republicans, loyalists and ordinary prisoners. Republican prisoners are forced to share cells and landings with loyalists who outnumber them, and also with drug dealers and sex offenders.

A number of Republican POWs have been attacked by loyalists and some have been hospitalised as a result. If the issue of enforced integration continues to be pushed, it may be only a matter of time until a Republican loses his life. Therefore the demands are (1) Segregation; (2) Recognition as a group; (3) the right to a spokesperson and (4) a separate wing or landing for Republican prisoners.

Strip searches are constant. Prisoners are locked up 22 hours per day. Cells are raided and wrecked by warders in riot gear. The weekly parcel is no longer allowed in and newspapers have to go by recorded post to ensure prisoners receive them. This puts additional cost on the families. Political papers such as SAORSE are not permitted at all. Visiting families have to submit to the indignity of the attentions of a sniffer dog whose handler decides whether the visit is allowed or not.

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Republican POWs live under constant threat from prison staff who do not conceal their loyalism. Besides many of the prisoners and some of their families have received visits from the colonial police to inform them that their lives are in danger from a group calling itself the Loyalist Prisoners Reaction Force.

To highlight the plight of the Republican prisoners a white line picket has been held every Saturday outside our office on Belfast's Falls Road from 12.00 to 1 p.m.

Our Belfast comrades and Comhairle Chúige Uladh wish to have this picket extended to public places throughout the country for an hour on one Saturday per month.

The Republicans in the prisons in Cos. Antrim and Derry need our support as do the prisoners in Portlaoise Jail. To all of them we send from this Ard-Fheis our greetings and our warmest support — but we must get out in public and stand by them.

## **SELECT CANDIDATES**

In the 26 Counties we are faced with the prospect of local council elections in 18 months time, that is in 2004, agus toghachán d'Udarás na Gaeltachta an bhliain dár gcionn. Immediately following on this Ard-Fheis arrangements must be set in train to consider areas for contest, to select candidates and announce publicly our intentions as well as to raise funds for the campaign.

This matter will be pursued and re-visited and progress reports called for. We are conscious of the high standards set by our councillors in the past and we must endeavour to live up to their record of service to the Cause of Ireland's freedom and the welfare of her people.

In view of the present state of melt down of the new Stormont, it is right to review the national position. Neither the unionist nor the nationalist communities can feel their interests are safeguarded under the Stormont Agreement. That arrangement is dishonest because it was sold to the nationalists on the basis that it would lead to a united and free Ireland while the unionists were told it would strengthen British rule. It has raised contradictory and conflicting expectations.

The result has been constant uncertainty, unrest and violence on the streets. Sectarianism is now much worse than at any time since 1968. It has touched new low levels with people going to Mass at Harryville, Ballymena being physically set upon, little children on their way to school at Holy Cross, Ardoyne being assailed both physically and mentally, the residents of the Garvaghy Road and other local areas being put under siege and terror and this summer the people of the Short Strand in East Belfast being denied access to the local doctor, chemist and other public services.

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The unionist community lives in apprehension and insecurity as the certainties of the past appear to decline and wither away, leaving them in confusion and bewilderment. No wonder unionist support for the 1998 Agreement is dwindling. As uncertainty worries everybody, continued conflict seems likely.

The Provisionals have a fundamental problem. While acting constitutionally — ie accepting and working the partition institutions, north and south, set up here by England in 1921 — they have not been honest with their followers. They still pretend to be revolutionary. They cannot be both. Republican Sinn Féin have said so since 1986. The unionists are right not to trust them until they decide what they are.

Republican Sinn Féin seeks a nine-county Ulster in a new four-province federation which would safeguard the interests of all. Meanwhile Comhairle Uladh is promoting ÉIRE NUA to a new, broader and more diverse readership. More will be heard of this move in the near future.

While it is admitted, even by a senior RUC source that the great majority of street violence is coming from the loyalists, and some nationalist observers put it at 90%,

David Trimble is attempting yet again to play the Orange Card. He seeks another “Border Poll”, the outcome of which is already well known.

The Six-County statelet was carved out of Ireland more than 80 years ago by the British government to secure a local majority in favour of British rule at a time when the overwhelming preponderance in all of Ireland had voted for separation from England. Thus was Irish democracy subverted. Mr. Trimble wants to demonstrate a foregone conclusion once more in a pointless referendum.

No such exercise can take place, of course, without the authorisation of the British government which set up the Six-County statelet in the first place in order to continue English rule here. The Irish nation with its essential right to national independence has existed for more than 2,000 years. It cannot so easily be set aside by such machinations. Irish Republicans and thinking people generally will not be deceived.

For the coming year our priority must be to make maximum use of ÉIRE NUA, Towards a Peaceful Ireland, SAOL NUA – A New Way of Life and, of course, our monthly newspaper SAOIRSE – Irish Freedom. With these we have a coherent, relevant programme – and a field waiting to be worked.

Here, the political education of our own members must take precedence and will naturally result in an improvement in our organisation. Resultant publicity will draw in new members who if they are not grounded by us in the principles of Irish Republicanism will soon be lost to Republican Sinn Féin.

Immediate activity including that listed in SAOL NUA is essential. New members will not simply sit around and education must be followed by activity. Members and

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supporters need motivation and morale. These can start with education but can only be built with a feeling of progress and achievement.

We do not simply continue our activities for their own sake. We have a message to bear to the Irish people at home and in exile – and to all of humankind. That message is that the Irish nation still exists, that it is still struggling for national liberation and that there are people here who have never surrendered to British imperialism and colonialism – and never will. That is our solemn trust, towards which we must work to make it a living reality.

Next year, 2003, we commemorate and celebrate the bicentenary of Robert Emmet's gallant Rising. When all seemed lost after 1798 and the Act of Union, this young man of 25 years stepped into the breach once more and his noble endeavour made him the most beloved of Irish patriots. The ballad-makers sang of him and his picture adorned many a humble cottage in even the most remote parts of Ireland down the years. Even the poet Shelley, when he came to Ireland, wrote a poem: *On Robert Emmet's Tomb* (that is, where he was supposed to have been buried).

As an Irish Republican Emmet cannot be misrepresented for he penned a Proclamation "The Provisional Government to the People of Ireland" as well as setting out 30 Decrees as the new law of the land until a government could be elected by the people. These documents were radical in nature and showed his maturity of thought and how fitted he was to lead the people out of bondage.

These documents were used in evidence against him and 21 of his comrades executed at that time in Dublin and in Cos Down and Antrim. But it is for his Speech from the Dock that Emmet is best remembered. "Ná scríobhtar m'fheartlaoi . . . An tráth a bheidh a h-ionad ceart ag mo thír i measc tíortha na cruinne, ansin scríobhtar m'fheartlaoi, agus ní go dtí sin".

His trial and protestation of Irish patriotism took place in Green Street Courthouse in this city where Young Irelanders and Fenians were later condemned, and where Irish Republicans are still being condemned, for the crime of wanting to see Ireland free. However, there are those who say that Emmet's epitaph should now be written. What other interpretation can be put on the words of Mr. Bertie Ahern as reported in the Irish Times of September 21 last?

"He said that our position in the EU and UN today are visible demonstrations of our place 'among the nations of the world', as alluded to by Emmet in his speech from the dock".

Robert Emmet said in words quoted ever since by Irish people around the globe: "Let no man write my epitaph . . . When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, AND NOT TILL THEN, let my epitaph be written".

## Republican SÍNN FÉIN Poblachtach

Next year in September, let us remember Emmet and all his comrades, Michael Dwyer of Wicklow, Miles Byrne of Wexford, Jimmy Hope of Antrim and Anne Devlin who never spoke under torture and let us honour them on the streets of Dublin. And in October let us do similar honour in Downpatrick, Co. Down to "The Man from God Knows Where", Thomas Russell who died there for Ireland at the end of an English rope.

In the meantime, and afterwards, let us work to ensure that Emmet's epitaph can indeed be written!