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# Hope and Optimism in Ohio

## A Letter From Ireland

a Chara,

Have you ever noticed how contagious hope and optimism are?

On Tuesday evening Friends of Sinn Féin USA hosted an Irish Unity event in the West Side Irish American Club in Cleveland, OH. Set in gorgeous grounds that included GAA pitches and staffed by volunteers, the club is an impressive testament to the Irish in Cleveland. There was a real feeling of community in the room.

Two years ago Sinn Féin established a Commission on the Future of Ireland to explore the potential and build the vision of a new and united Ireland. Hearings have been held throughout Ireland.

The Commission is a dialogue, with speakers laying out the pathway to unity and those in attendance determining their vision and role in bringing about a new and united Ireland. The findings of the Commission inform the policies of Sinn Féin in Ireland.

This was the first one to be hosted by Friends of Sinn Féin USA. Later this week a similar event will be hosted in the Shamrock Club in Columbus.

Greg O'Loughlin from Friends of Sinn Féin and John O'Brien from Irish and the volunteers ensured an excellent, sold-out event. The hospitality of the West Side Irish

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The event was broken down into complementary sections. The MP for Newry and Armagh, Dáire Hughes gave a comprehensive opening address, laying out the opportunity for unity, and the work that lay ahead. The key message was that Irish Unity was not a far-off aspiration but a realizable objective in the coming years.

That set the tone for an engaging question-and-answer session. The discussion moved on from, “Wouldn’t a united Ireland be great?” to “How do we bring it about?” The road map is clear. The Good Friday Agreement provides for Irish Unity referendums North and South. If both vote in favour, then Ireland will be united. The democratic right to determine the constitutional future of the Island is in the hands of the people. The question now is how to vindicate that right, and secure and win unity referendums.

It was then onto smaller table top discussions with questions on how to integrate two separate economies and public services, how to ensure a peaceful transition, governance issues, and many more. All equally valid questions that need to be answered. That is why an Irish Government must use its resources to plan, prepare, and advocate for unity. This must include convening a Citizens Assembly to hear the views of our nation at home and abroad.

I came away from the meeting with my Irish Republican batteries recharged. The energy and optimism in the room was unstoppable. The calls for the US to continue to support the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement including the provision for unity referendums echoed around the room. As did calls for the Irish Government to act and seize the opportunity to build a new Ireland.

Many thanks to all we met along the road in Chicago and Cleveland. In the coming weeks, Friends of Sinn Féin will be hosting ‘People’s Assembly: Diaspora’ events in Columbus, OH, Washington, DC, and Rockland, NY. The Columbus event is sold out, and information about tickets and other upcoming events will be shared soon.

Given the success of this week, I hope the Friends of Sinn Féin will continue to roll out a programme of Commissions across the US and Canada.

Have a great weekend.

Is mise,

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Ciarán Quinn is the Sinn Féin Representative to North America

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## ‘People’s Assembly: Diaspora’ kicks off in Cleveland

### Irish America’s role in Irish Unity comes into focus

On Tuesday night in Cleveland, OH at a sold-out event, hundreds of members of the Irish-American community gathered to discuss their role in securing Irish unity. The meeting was addressed by Sinn Féin MP Dáire Hughes.

The event was designed to hear from members of the diaspora as part of the Commission on the Future of Ireland being undertaken by Friends of Sinn Féin USA and will inform the work of the party back in Ireland.

Speaking at the event in Cleveland the Newry and Armagh MP said, “Irish unity requires an Irish government to plan, prepare, and advocate for unity. That is what a Sinn Féin-led government in Dublin would do. An Taoiseach, Simon Harris, should stand up for Irish unity at home and in the White House.

“The Irish government needs to hear the voice of Irish America.

“To effectively prepare, the Irish government must establish a Citizens’ Assembly on Irish unity and use its resources to lay out a vision of a new and united Ireland.

“They also must work with the British government to set a timetable for referendums and a plan for an inclusive and respectful discussion on the future.

“The US was essential in reaching the Good Friday Agreement. It also acted to safeguard progress when the British government sought to impose a hard border across the island as part of Brexit.

“Since its signing, the US has acted as a strong guarantor of the agreement.

“The agreement provides for Irish unity referendums. If you support the Good Friday Agreement you support the democratic right of the people to have their say. It is now



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“The US should continue to act as a guarantor of the agreement, ensuring its full implementation, including unity referendums.”

In the coming weeks, Friends of Sinn Féin USA will be hosting ‘People’s Assembly: Diaspora’ events in Columbus, OH, Washington, DC, and Rockland, NY.



## Chicago Remembers 1981 Hunger Strikers



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remember the 1981 Hunger Strikes.

A procession led by a piper carried the images of each of those who died. As the images were presented to the stage the names of each were read out. The Commemoration was addressed by, the newly elected MP for Newry and Armagh, Dáire Hughes.

The MP thanked those present for their work in promoting the cause of peace, justice, and Irish Unity. He noted that his constituency housed Armagh Women's Gaol adding, "Armagh prison, now long abandoned is in my constituency. Its walls and barred windows could not contain the spirit of the women prisoner." Dáire reminded all those present that there was further to travel to build a new and united Ireland.

The Good Friday Agreement provides a peaceful and democratic pathway to Irish Unity. Quoting Martin Luther King JR, Dáire said, "Change does not roll on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle".

Together we can, and will, honor all those who came before us by building a new and united Ireland befitting their legacy. "



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## New Merch Shop Now Open!

Show your support for Irish Unity and Friends of Sinn Féin USA with one of our new T-Shirts! Get a few stickers and put them on your laptop, water bottle, car, bike, or

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**All shirts are made in America and union printed!**

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## Irish Unity: Our chance to engage is now

by Judge Michael C. Mentel

Uachtarán Shinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald announced in July of 2022 that first People's Assembly, organised by the newly established Commission on the Future of Ireland, would be held in October in Belfast. Since then 17 such events have been held across the island of Ireland.

President McDonald stated in her announcement that “this is an opportunity for citizens to have their say on the future of Ireland; our economy, our constitutional arrangements; political and democratic structures and governance; the role of the Irish government; [and] the rights and equality agenda...” in addition to other important considerations such as health care and pensions. Mary Lou McDonald added that the “Commission on the Future of Ireland is also an opportunity for alternative proposals to be presented by those with different visions of Ireland.”

Now, the Friends of Sinn Féin in the USA and Canada are planning a significant series of similar Commission style events giving the Irish diaspora in the United States and Canada the opportunity to voice their unique views and perspectives on



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diaspora to offer their perspectives on a new Ireland.

During a conversation with Greg O'Loughlin, the Executive Director of Friends of Sinn Féin in the United States, he emphasized that the Assemblies are not focused on complex Irish constitutional provisions or policy issues, nor are attendees expected to delve into such complex issues. The goal of the assemblies in the USA and Canada is to obtain their unique viewpoints and to find out how they envision a new Ireland. These viewpoints for a new Ireland are valuable and it is important that they are provided with a means to give voice to them.

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