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UNITED STATES UNITED IRELAND

Not the “why” but the “how”

A Letter from Ireland

a Chara,

On Monday evening, Friends of Sinn Féin hosted another successful Commission on the Future of Ireland. The event was hosted in the offices of LiUNA in Washington DC, a labor union with a long record of supporting the cause of peace, progress, and Irish Unity.

The event had been sold out weeks in advance and drew attendance from a diverse cross-section of the Irish diaspora and others. All were united in wanting to learn about Ireland, the Good Friday Agreement, and the potential for Irish Unity.

John Finucane MP laid out the pathway to unity as per the Good Friday Agreement via the securing and winning of referendums North and South. The North Belfast MP asserted that we now had the opportunity to meet these twin objectives. Securing the referendums would take activism, and winning the referendums would take planning and dialogue.

The question was not the “why” but the “how” of building a new and united Ireland. This led to an intense and informed tabletop discussion between all present.

Meanwhile, across the pond one of the major challenges to Irish unity was emerging. Simon Harris, the Tánaiste (deputy prime minister) and leader of the third largest party, Fine Gael, declared that Irish Unity was not a priority for him and he would not be working to secure the referendums promised in the Good Friday Agreement.

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Fine Gael and Taoiseach Leo Varadkar who recently wrote,

"Rather than unification as a commitment or objective there is a reference only to "unity of the Irish people". There is no forum on reconciliation nor on what the future constitutional arrangements of a new Ireland might look like. It's likely that the impetus to work towards and plan for unification will have to come from outside Leinster House"

Simon Harris had said out loud what the Programme for Government had been silent on.

This is a Government in denial of its constitutional obligations and responsibility to Irish Citizens. It may not be a priority for Simon Harris but it is for Irish Citizens throughout Ireland and abroad. Referendums are part and parcel of the Good Friday Agreement. Yet a leader in the Irish government believes that this aspect of the agreement is not a priority.

I find myself in the odd position of agreeing with Leo Varadkar that the impetus for Irish unity will have to come from outside of the Government in Dublin. That was also the view from the room in Washington. The US and Canada were vital partners in securing, protecting, and advancing the Good Friday Agreement. They will be central in securing unity referendums.

In six weeks' time, the Irish Government will dispatch ministers across the globe and call on our diaspora to pull on a Green jersey. This Irish Government sees the diaspora as an asset to leverage. A group to be seen and not heard, a resource to be exploited and disregarded.

Irish Government ministers should be challenged to change course and begin to plan and prepare for unity.

That was the message from Washington.

Have a great weekend.

Is mise,

Ciarán

Ciarán Quinn is the Sinn Féin Representative to North America

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Finucane addresses New York City Bar Association

Sinn Féin MP John Finucane addressed the New York City Bar Association on Wednesday evening discussing legacy, including the recent announcement of a public inquiry into his father's murder.

The North Belfast MP said, "For many decades, my family has travelled the world, including many times here in America, seeking support for a public inquiry into all of the circumstances that led to my father's murder.

"Finally, after 35 years, we have listened to a British government publicly announce they will establish a public inquiry into my dad's killing.

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“Our focus is now on ensuring this process is credible, transparent and capable of gaining the trust and endorsement of all those who have recognised its need.

“This inquiry must reveal the full details as to what happened, and ensure recommendations are made to ensure a policy of murdering your own citizens, and covering up that fact, is never allowed to happen again.

“We are of course not the only family fighting a very difficult battle on behalf of loved ones killed, pursuing what can, at times, feel like a very lonely journey.

“The British government’s attempts to deal with our past has been rightly met with both domestic and international outcry, and whilst we have had a change of government, problems persist.

“Families still go without inquests, and the body established under the controversial legislation, the ICRIR, remains. This is despite it not enjoying the support and faith of families, nor of our courts who observed the legislation allows too much power to rest with the British Secretary of State.

“I would urge the Labour government to get on with fully repealing and replacing the Legacy Act as it set out to do in its manifesto. This must mean returning to the principles of the Stormont House Agreement to ensure the confidence and trust of all victims and survivors is steadfast.”

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Mallaghan addresses Bloody Sunday commemoration in London

Sinn Féin MP Cathal Mallaghan has addressed a commemoration in London remembering those killed and affected by the events of 30 January, 1972 in Derry.

The Mid Ulster MP said, "We gathered to remember the fourteen innocent people shamefully murdered by the British Parachute Regiment in January 1972.

"I paid tribute to the Bloody Sunday families who, 53 years on, remain resolute, determined and courageous in their pursuit of truth and justice for their loved ones.

"Just before Christmas, a judge in the Crown Court ruled that there is sufficient evidence for Soldier F to stand trial – on the charges of murder and attempted murder – for his actions on Bloody Sunday.

"That ruling is welcome and stands as further vindication for families who – for over five decades – have not given up in their fight.

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“It’s clear the ICRIR does not command the confidence of the vast majority of victims and survivors, and has been rejected by the Irish government and every political party on the island of Ireland.

“It’s time for the British government to listen to families’ concerns, fully ‘repeal and replace’ the Legacy Act and return to the principles of the Stormont House Agreement.”

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Remembering the 14 murdered in Derry on Bloody Sunday, 53 years ago

PATRICK DOHERTY	AGED 31 YEARS
GERALD DONAGHEY	AGED 17 YEARS
JACKIE DUDDY	AGED 17 YEARS
HUGH GILMOUR	AGED 17 YEARS
MICHAEL KELLY	AGED 17 YEARS
MICHAEL MC DAID	AGED 20 YEARS
KEVIN Mc ELHINNEY	AGED 17 YEARS
BARNIE Mc GUIGAN	AGED 41 YEARS
GERARD Mc KINNEY	AGED 35 YEARS
WILLIAM Mc KINNEY	AGED 26 YEARS
WILLIAM NASH	AGED 19 YEARS
JIM WRAY	AGED 22 YEARS
JOHN YOUNG	AGED 17 YEARS
JOHN JOHNSTON	AGED 59 YEARS

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Get ready for St. Patrick's day

We're only 45 days away from St. Patrick's Day! Get a T-shirt or sweatshirt and be ready to let everyone know - it's time for unity!



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