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Legen-Derry

A letter from Ireland

a Chara,

Last week, the President of Ireland, Catherine Connolly, made good on her election pledge to represent all Irish citizens when she travelled to Derry to speak at a number of events.

Derry is in the North of Ireland. A majority Irish city that, following partition, found itself on the British-controlled side of the border. For years, pro-British Unionists controlled the local council through gerrymandering and the denial of the basic democratic principle of one person, one vote.

Discrimination in employment and the allocation of housing left the Irish majority powerless in the city. It would become one of the birthplaces of the civil rights movement.

On Bloody Sunday in the city, British paratroopers shot dead thirteen civil rights protestors.

Today, it is a shared city with an Irish Nationalist majority.

At one event during the Presidential visit, Gregory Campbell, a Member of Parliament for the Democratic Unionist Party, said to President Connolly, "You're in our country. Tonight I'm going to your country." Campbell was due to travel to Dublin later that evening.

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over the commonly referred to name Derry.

What I found jarring was the use of “our country”. The North of Ireland is not a country by any definition, and it is no longer the sole preserve of unionism.

The Democratic Unionist Party is a smaller party than Sinn Féin, and it represents less than a quarter of the people. They do not speak for the majority of people, never mind all of the people.

I was born in the North of Ireland, and as an Irish Citizen I owe no allegiance to a partitioned state. Like many, I view President Connolly as president of the Irish nation. The North, like all parts of Ireland, is her home.

The phrases echoed back to an era long gone, but still alive in the minds of some. Equally, the policing of the language of others is zero sum came.

Those who read these letters will note that I never use the term “Northern Ireland” for the six counties or refer to the twenty-six counties in the South as “Ireland”. Neither would I refer to “Londonderry”.

I also would never correct anyone else's use of the terms. I respect the views, history, and identity of others and expect others to show the same respect to me.

It is an old, but typically unionist approach to demand respect for their history and identity by calling on others to deny their own identity.

Partition did what it set out to do: it divided the country and its people. To talk about “our country” and “your country”. The language of division was heard loud and plain last week.

Martin McGuinness, a son of Derry once quipped, “some call it Londonderry, I call it Derry, but we can all agree it's legenderry”

This division can be consigned to history. Our Island can and should be united.

Perhaps then we can all refer to a new Ireland as being “our country and your country” or more simply a home for all.

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Ciarán

Ciarán Quinn is the Sinn Féin Representative to North America

Kenova Report confirms collusion was British state policy

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on Operation Kenova, said, “The findings of Operation Kenova are stark – and deeply disturbing. It confirms what many families have long known – and were long denied – that collusion was not an aberration, but a defining feature of British state policy during the conflict. A senior British agent was involved in killings. The British state knew. It protected him. And it allowed violence to continue in order to preserve operational advantage. Victims were not warned. Families were left in the dark. Lives were treated as expendable. This was not an error. It was not a failure of oversight. It was a deliberate political choice.”

Ms. McDonald said, “Today, this House is asked to reflect on the findings of Operation Kenova – findings that go to the heart of how the conflict on this island has been understood, explained, and justified for decades.

“For too long, the story of that conflict was presented as one in which the British state was a neutral arbiter, acting reluctantly, forced by circumstances into extraordinary measures.

“That story shaped public understanding. It shaped political responses. And for decades, it insulated grave wrongdoing from scrutiny.
“Before addressing those findings, I want to say this clearly and directly.

“To all those who have suffered such grievous loss, I am sorry for all the lives lost during the conflict and for the hurt and loss endured – without exception.

“Those words reflect a genuine sense of sorrow and regret for everyone who was hurt and harmed during those years of violence – civilians, combatants, and families whose lives were forever changed.

READ FULL STORY HERE

Irish Unity Education Webinar February Guest: Rev. Karen Sethuraman

Our February guest for Irish Unity Education Webinar Series is Karen Sethuraman, The first female Baptist Minister on the island of Ireland, she also serves on the board

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Mary Lou McDonald raises ICE detention of Irishman Seamus Culleton with the Taoiseach

Sinn Féin Leader Mary Lou McDonald TD today raised the case of Irishman Seamus Culleton who has been detained by ICE in the United States for the past five months.

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Glenmore in Kilkenny held in an ICE detention centre in Texas for the past five months.

“People were very shocked yesterday to hear him describe the conditions he’s being held in and to hear him say he now fears for his safety.

“I understand Seamus’ family have only gone public because they feel they have been left with no other avenue.

“I asked the Taoiseach to outline what representation has been made on his behalf and whether his case had been raised with the US administration. I also asked how many Irish citizens are caught-up in this same nightmare situation.”

In response the Taoiseach said that he only heard of the case yesterday. He stated the Department of Foreign Affairs has been aware of the case since October and has engaged with the Consulate General in Austin, Texas and with the Embassy in Washington. However, the Taoiseach failed to outline how many Irish citizens are in a similar situation.

Ms McDonald said, “It’s crucial that the government establishes how many Irish citizens are detained by ICE and that it does everything possible to assist them and their families.”

Watch: Webinar with Ireland’s Future Co-founder Niall Murphy

Our latest guest on the Irish Unity Education Webinar was Niall Murphy, Secretary and Co-founder of Ireland’s Future and human right’s lawyer.

We discuss the grassroots origins of Ireland’s Future, the historic nature of this moment in history, ways to learn more about how to best prepare for a new and united Ireland, and an update on some of the legacy cases Niall is working on. It’s a packed webinar full of excellent resources and analysis, not to be missed!

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Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire TD in New York

Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire TD for Cork South Central and Sinn Féin's Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence was in New York this week for a series of meetings. On Thursday, he said, "In New York, with Friends of Sinn Féin engaging with Irish Americans about Irish Unity and the political situation in Ireland.

"A very useful meeting with The Brehon Law Society of Irish American Lawyers. Plé an fiúntach i dtaobh conas gur féidir brú a choimead ar rialtas na hÉireann ullmhú & pleanáil do reifreann ar Aontú na hÉireann.

"The momentum to Irish Unity is building and pressure is required to ensure the Irish Government begins the work of planning and preparing for Irish Unity."

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Busting United Ireland Myths

As you're making your plans for St. Patrick's Day events, why not print these out and share them with your friends, colleagues, and any dignitaries speaking at your parade and celebrations? Everyone will be excited about being seen to be green - let's make sure they know that it's time for unity!

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BUSTING THE UNITED IRELAND MYTHS

Irish Unity is the future.
A United Ireland – a new and shared Ireland – will unlock the full potential of our island people and provide the basis on which a stronger and fairer society can be built.

Ending partition and the Westminster control of part of our island is central to building a modern, inclusive, fair society, and a country, within the EU, which can play its full part in the world.

Sinn Féin

Know your rights! See Sinn Féin's privacy policy at **sinnfein.ie/privacy**
For more info on our Abú Canvass Aid visit **sinnfein.ie/privacy-abu**

However some myths about Irish Unity remain – **let's deal with them....**

MYTH: THE SOUTH CAN'T AFFORD THE NORTH

FALSE

Academic research shows how reunification could provide a major boost to the all island economy. The southern economy, while in need of reform, is consistently ranked highly on global performance indexes. However, border counties and the west of Ireland are disadvantaged by partition and Dublin government policy. Reunification would unlock the full potential of our island economy.

MYTH: I'D HAVE TO PAY FOR HEALTHCARE

FALSE

Reunification paves the way towards a universal, free at the point of delivery healthcare system for the whole island. Sinn Féin is committed to a single all-island healthcare system. This is the most sensible way to plan and deliver healthcare to the whole population of Ireland.

MYTH: MY STANDARD OF LIVING WILL DECREASE

FALSE

. Irish Unity will not threaten anyone's standard of living, it will boost the island economy meaning that more people will be working and contributing. That means more money is available for public services.

MYTH: THE NORTH HAS A BETTER EDUCATION SYSTEM

FALSE

Educational outcomes in the north compare poorly with the south and many areas of Britain. Irish unity will enable the redesign of the education system across the island so that all children fulfil their potential.

MYTH: I WON'T HAVE ACCESS TO THE SAME BENEFITS

FALSE

Social Protection and Pension payments in the south are significantly more generous than the north. The British government's policy of cuts is unfair and people in the north of Ireland should not have to live under Tory austerity.

MYTH: BRITAIN PAYS A £9BILLION SUBVENTION TO THE NORTH

FALSE

British spending on military, servicing huge debt and overseas interests should not be shouldered by anybody in Ireland. When this spending is removed, and pension obligations are met, the true subvention value could be as low as £2.5 billion. However the subvention is only necessary because the economy of the north is held back by partition. The economic dividend brought by unity would make the subvention unnecessary.

MYTH: A UNITED IRELAND WILL NOT ACCOMMODATE PROTESTANT, UNIONIST AND BRITISH IDENTITY

FALSE

The Good Friday Agreement provides protections for identity. The Good Friday Agreement will also protect identity in the new united Ireland. Furthermore, people of all traditions will be protected in law. The new Ireland provides an unparalleled opportunity to end divisions. Sinn Féin envisages a future based on equality and the unity of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter.

www.sinnfein.ie/irish-unity

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