

Republican SINN FÉIN Poblachtach

Aitheasc an Uachtarán

104ú Ard-Fheis 2008

Presidential Address from Ruairí Ó Brádaigh

Sunday November 9, 12 noon

A Chathaoirligh, a Theachtaí is a cháirde ar fad.

Fearaim Céad Míle Fáilte romhaibh go léir ag an Árd-Fheis seo, an ceathrú ceann is céad de chuid Shinn Féin. You are all very welcome to this, the 104th Árd-Fheis of Sinn Féin.

One of the most notable events of the past year has been the emergence of the so-called PSNI before the people, as the RUC and before that the RIC. Their function today is what it always was – to maintain, with as much force as necessary, British rule in Ireland.

The catalogue of raids on homes and arrests in recent years ranging from Belfast and Derry to Tyrone and Fermanagh, Craigavon, Armagh city and Newry has been extensive. The Western Allies in the 1940's boasted of fighting for "freedom from fear of the policeman's knock", but in our Six Occupied Counties the policeman's knock on the door, whether polite or impolite, has often been replaced by the battering ram, a stern reminder of English rule in the past.

In keeping with their desire for modernisation and "normalisation", so-called, these paramilitary police dislike being called "the RUC". But we know them for what they are – the direct agents and enforcers of British rule here.

Then when the acts of resistance – inevitable in Irish history – occur the Provo leaders publicly urge people to become informers and pass information to the enemy. They have also urged people to go into British courts and give evidence against those accused of resistance.

Persons who themselves participated in resistance in the past, and who encouraged others to do so, have now gone so far as to turn their coats completely inside out. Irish history contains many examples of such renegades and today's turncoats will in the future be remembered with Carey and the others who paid the price for their despicable actions.

In the 26 Counties we have witnessed the growing Anglicisation of Irish life. Where once it was forbidden to wear British military uniform in public we now see its re-appearance on the streets for the first time since 1922. A young man killed fighting

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with the British Army in Iraq in recent years was given a British military funeral through Dublin.

However, an even more brazen display took place in the county town of Mayo, Castlebar, on October 6&7 last. The band of the Irish Guards Regiment of the British Army took part in a concert. Next day they paraded the main streets while the 26-County police cordoned off the town centre and barred entry to it. No protest was going to be allowed there.

"Security was tight" the Irish Times of October 8 noted in its report on the official opening of an incongruously named "Mayo Peace Park". A memorial had been erected bearing the names of "more than a1000 men and women from Co Mayo who died in all wars and conflicts of the past century while serving with Allied and Commonwealth forces", mainly those who took part in the 1914-18 war.

That such a memorial should be named for peace while honouring the victims of an imperialist war is a contradiction in itself. The President of the 26-County State officiated and a bugler from the British Army's Irish Guards Regiment sounded the Last Post and Reveille.

Today in a refurbished British military barracks at Boyle in the neighbouring Co Roscommon, a Poppy Day ceremony is being held. In recent years a plaque was placed there in the presence of the OC Western Command of the 26-County State Army and the GOC British troops in the Six Occupied Counties both in full uniform.

Back the years ceremonies of this nature were held at memorials in local towns by veterans of WW I and II. Now it is different. The veterans have largely passed on but the 26-County State is officially represented on every occasion. All of this is a build up to an official visit to Dublin by the Queen of England who also claims to be Queen of Six Irish Counties. Not since 1911 – almost a century ago – has the like been seen here in our capital city.

Republican Sinn Féin contests the claim of the British Crown to rule in any part of Ireland. We have given notice that we will oppose any such visit for political reasons. We do not accept that the national question of Irish Independence has been settled.

We will not engage in a game of "let us pretend". We require our members and supporters to be present in Dublin in large numbers to protest at such a violation of Ireland's national rights. Let us show the world that there are still in this indomitable little country – ár dtírín féin, Eire – those who reject the usurping claim of England to rule here. Let us be seen and heard!

The present situation in Ireland is essentially the same as that forced on us by the Treaty of Surrender in 1922 and 23: a country divided and weak and under

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England's influence. We will not accept that Treaty and its Boundary Agreement of 1925 which ceded or handed over the Six Counties to the British Government. Neither will we accept the Stormont Agreement of 1998, which copper-fastened Partition and English rule here, nor the St Andrews Agreement of two years ago.

Republican Sinn Féin, standing in direct lineal succession to the United Irishmen of 1798, the Young Irelanders of 1848, the Fenians of 1867, the 1916 Rising and the First (All Ireland) Dáil, will not "just put up with" English rule here.

The 1916 Proclamation states: "In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty". This generation will not be an exception to that rule... We will not "put up with it". On the contrary we will assert that right.

During the year Ian Paisley retired with his mission accomplished. He had strengthened British rule in Ireland. Interviewed on the BBC Radio One "Andrew Marr Show" on March 9, he said; "I did smash them (the Provos) because I took away their main plank. Their main

plank was that they would not recognise the British government (in Ireland). Now they are part of the British government. They can't be true Republicans when they now accept the right of Britain to govern this country and take part in that government".

Mr Ahern also quit the scene in the past year. For his part he put the position quite blatantly on RTE Radio One on Sunday, April 6, when he said that Stormont was in place for the foreseeable future; that English rule would remain so long as the unionists desired it... He said that this would be for a very long time and if in the end it did not change, then we must put up with it. His words were: "people will just have to be tolerant of that". Some legacy to leave to the Irish people...

The journalist Vincent Browne surely spoke for the Establishment the following week when he said in his Nightly News on TV3 that in effect the nationalist view had been rejected and the unionist position had been accepted. The nationalist standpoint was that the people of Ireland as a whole should determine the future of Ireland. He continued: "The Unionist position was that the majority in the Six Counties should decide the future. We have all become unionists", he added.

But not all, Mr Browne. The IRB were a very small minority a hundred years ago but they were a nucleus which eight years later delivered the 1916 Rising. They did so in spite of being but a fragment of the huge Volunteer movement in 1914 when Redmond opted to have the great majority fight for England in WW1.

Shortly after our last Ard-Fheis, on December 1 Republican Sinn Féin placed a picket on the RTE radio and television stations at Donnybrook, Dublin. We were protesting against the total news blackout on the organisation during 2007,

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especially the lack of any coverage of our annual Ard-Fheis and of our participation with six candidates in the Stormont election earlier in the year. We also delivered a letter of protest to the Director-General.

Our letter was acknowledged and we followed up by asking for a meeting with responsible representatives. The request was acceded to and our President, one of our Vice-Presidents and the Director of Publicity met with the Editor of Radio News, the Head of Public Affairs Policy and the Editor of Current Affairs. Our criticisms were heard and a guarantee was given of our inclusion in any listing of the organisations seeking a "No" vote in the upcoming Lisbon referendum while the possibility of some coverage of our campaign was mentioned.

A note of the dates and location of our 2008 Ard-Fheis was made. In the outcome there was no presence by RTE at our press conference for the referendum nor any coverage of our campaign. Another letter was also sent to RTE in the middle of the campaign. This time there was no reply. Whether or not there will be any mention of this weekend's Ard-Fheis by RTE remains to be seen.

The anti-Lisbon campaign took the usual course of postering, leafletting and canvassing. Our appeal for a "No" vote was based on four main points: (1) the creation of an undemocratic superstate – a United States of Europe (the 26 Counties to be like Virginia in the USA or Bavaria in Germany); (2) increased militarization; (3) erosion of neutrality; and (4) the privatisation of public services and unfettered capitalism. We wanted a more democratic, not a less democratic Europe, a Europe of peoples.

The result was a resounding victory for anti-imperialist and democratic forces: the Irish Times/TSN morning polls carried out in the week before the vote showed safeguarding neutrality (22 to 25 percent) and keeping power and identity in Ireland (18 to 24 per cent) were the main reasons for the result.

This showed that our case for independence, democracy and neutrality was central to this great victory. The people of the 26 Counties turned down the proposal of yet more power to the EU and less power here at home. It had all gone far enough – that was the kernel of the matter.

Ever since from Nicolas Sarkozy in Paris to Dick Roche in Dublin, there has been a sustained campaign to misrepresent the result. Elements of the "Yes" campaign have said that it was time to get "down and dirty" to try and turn the vote around in another referendum.

There is no mention of the Referendum Commission's failure to inform people about certain basic facts, as was its statutory duty to do and for which it was given 5 million Euro of public money. A nonsensical claim that fear of conscription into an

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EU army was pushed by the “No” side is now invented and promoted. Such untruths are presumably examples of getting “down and dirty”.

The Administration in Dublin is under pressure from Germany, France and Brussels to work towards another Lisbon referendum probably in a year’s time. A change of government in London could prevent that since the Tories are committed to a referendum which the “No” side is likely to win. The 26-County State would no longer stand alone in saying “No” to Lisbon.

Meanwhile we must push to bring home to politicians, especially Fianna Fáil, Labour and the Greens that a repeat referendum to reverse the “No” vote of last June, when a majority of 26-County voters voted “No”, would be an absolute insult – to “Yes” side people as well as to the “No” side – and a subversion of democracy.

In any event, we must be ready to go out again and campaign for “No” to a new EU in which our status would be that of a mere province in an imperialistic superpower, a United States of Europe.

That is the issue, the main issue, which is to be disguised, and to which all the lesser issues are to be subordinated – just props.

Le linn na bliana seo caite rinneadh caibidil eile a chur leis an “bpróiseas géillte” sa tír seo nuair a vótáil Conradh na Gaeilge ag Ard-Fheis Speisialta ar an Satharn, an 12ú Aibreán san Óstán seo, Wynn’s, glacadh le bunreacht nua don eagraíocht. Leis and mbunreacht nua seo h-athraíodh aidhmeanna na h-eagraíochta, aidhmeanna ar glacadh leo le breis agus 90 bliain.

An Píarsach féin agus a lucht leanúna a chuir isteach sa mbunreacht iad i mbliain 1915. Ní raibh fáth ar bith leis na h-aidhmeanna seo a bhaint amach nó éinne ag gearáin fútha. Mar a dúirt tráchttaire amháin: “Ní raibh sé mar chuid d’aon mhargadh, ar nós Cumann Lúthchleas Gael a fuair na milliúin in airgead chun fáil réidh le Riail 21”, (sé sin le saighdiúirí agus póilíní Shasana a ligint isteach san eagraíocht aca siúd).

Siad seo na h-altanna go bhfuair said réidh leo: “Bunreacht 1 – Ginearálta: 2. Is é cuspóir na h-eagraíochta pobal náisiúnta saor Gaelach a chothú; 3. Is é mian mhuintir na h-Éireann chun fuascailte agus saoirse bunfhoinsé Chonradh na Gaeilge agus ní shásófar an mian sin go dtí go mbainfear amach saoirse pholaitiúil, eacnamúid, shóisialta agus chultúir sa chaoi go mbeith cothrom na Féinne ag cách”.

Nach ionmholta na h-aidhmeanna seo a chuir an Píarsach agus a chomrádaithe chun cinn. Agus sa mbliain seo Ár dTiarna 2008 caitheadh ar lár iad le 50 vóta in-aghaidh a 18. Poblachtach ar bith a bhí i lathair, léirigh sé/sí a mí-shásamh tré vótáil in-aghaidh na

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dréacht-bhuneachta.

Scaipeadh bileóga ar an lá ag léiriú na fáthanna ar chóir altanna 2 agus 4 a choinneáil. I measc na pointí a luadh bhíodar seo: “Impiríulachas an príomh-fáth le creimeadh teangan agus cultúir sa domhan faoi láthair; Níl saoirse pholaitiúil, eacnamúil, shóisialta ná chultúir ag an tír seo; Trí bheith ag obair ar son na Gaeilge, tá muid ag obair ar son saoirse an náisiúin – nílimid ach á léiriú sin sa mbunreacht; Tá 5000 saighdiúir Shasana sna Sé Chondae, éileamh ag Sasana ar chuid d’ Éirinn, de bhárr seo an Stát ansin náimhdeach don

Ghaeilge (cás Mháire Nic a’ Bháird agus diúltú Stormont Acht Teanga a thabhairt isteach)”.

“Ní h-amháin saor ach Gaelach comh maith, Ní h-amháin Gaelach ach saor comh maith”, a dúirt Pádraic Mac Piarais. “Is í ath-ghabháil na Gaeilge athghabháil na h-Éireann. Is í athghabháil na h-Éireann slánú na Gaeilge”, adúirt Máirtín Ó Cadhain.

“Not free merely but Gaelic as well, not Gaelic merely but free as well” , said Pádraic Pearse at O’Donovan Rossa’s grave. “The reconquest of Irish is the recovery of Ireland. The reconquest of Ireland is the recovery of Irish,” was the view of Máirtín O Cadhain.

In 1915 Pearse and his comrades inserted into the constitution of Conradh na Gaeilge that its objective was to promote a free and Gaelic community and that the wish of the people of Ireland for emancipation and freedom was the mainspring of the Conradh. At a special Ard-Fheis last April a new constitution was adopted which omitted these objectives.

This move was another chapter in the “normalisation” which began formally with the perversion of a majority of the Republican Movement to constitutionalism in 1986. One commentator said it was not sought for and that unlike the GAA no millions in money were received as a bargain to drop its Rule 21. The undoing of Pádraic Pearse’s work got scant coverage in the media. The Irish language paper Lá Nua seems to have been the only news outlet which noted it.

These Gaeilgeóirí chose 2008, the centenary of the founding of Scoil Éanna, the most important educational development of the time, by Pearse himself to attempt to undo his work. Located at Cullenswood House, Ranelagh in Dublin – now the site of Lios na n-Óg, a

progressive Gaelscoil – it was later moved to Rathfarnham. Its objective was bilingual education which put the development of the pupil in first place.

Bhunaigh an Píarsach Scoil Éanna le h-oideachas dátheangach a chur ar fáil. Ba é a shocraigh ar mhana agus ar mhisean na scoile le scolaíocht a chur ar fáil a chuir

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béim ar fhorbairt an duine. Ó tá an Ghaelscolaíocht faoi bhláth, tá an t-am oiriúnach chun scrúdú a dhéanamh ar bhunú na scoile arís agus áird a dhíriú ar an obair agus iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar an scéal.

Is cinnte go mbéadh a leithéid níos feiliúnaí in ionad gearradh siar ar chuspóirí an Phiarsaigh agus bheith ag cabhrú leis and gcur i gcéill go bhfuil ceist na saoirse pholaitiúla socraithe anois. Surely revisiting the foundation of Scoil Éanna in its centenary year is more appropriate than assisting in the pretence that the national liberation of Ireland has been achieved.

Two months ago, the head of the 26-County government told us in a public statement that “the fundamentals of the economy are sound”. This was in spite of the fact that indebtedness in the State at personal and at business level was never as high. This was particularly so in the case of the building industry which is cyclical in nature and unsustainable.

What was developing in this case was a gigantic bubble which was sure to burst. The development of housing and office blocks was accelerated by the profligate availability of credit and aggravated by the oil-led inflation over the summer.

On the international scene the reckless sub-prime mortgage lending in the United States burst the bubble and the exporting of the resulting bad debt spread the crisis globally. The 26-County State had to bail out the banks overnight as confidence in the whole system fell away.

The Irish Times of October 7 quoted Fr Godfrey O'Donnell at the Church of Ireland service for the new law term. He said: “We seem to be living through the death throes of raw capitalism (please God) with its appalling greed, recklessness, lack of accountability and complete disregard for any ethical behaviour”.

Remarking that the greedy suffer less during a recession, he said there was “an obvious need “to prioritise spending on health and education, for tighter regulation of the banks and for fair and just immigration procedures.

But what did we get, one week later, from the 26-County State: a budget which targeted those who profited least from the so-called Celtic Tiger of the past number of years, while those who profited most went largely unscathed.

Apart from depriving older people of medical cards, how can it be justified to fire more than 1000 teachers from the primary system and another 1000 from secondary level? The injury this will cause to the life chances of thousands of Irish children is incalculable. The one per cent levy on income will hit hardest those on the average industrial wage or lower and will wipe out the minimal pay increases contained within the proposed 26-County pay deal.

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The social welfare provisions exceed the generally projected inflation rate, but for poorer people, the inflation rate is higher as prices of essentials rise at a faster rate. The actual changes made since the budget have been due to the anger of people on the streets rather than to any speeches in Leinster House, it should be noted. The pay-freeze is effectively an actual cut in wages as the cost of living and inflation go on to the detriment of workers.

The State has been running tribunals of inquiry for years now and at great cost but nobody has been sent to prison. Yet all this has happened with over reliance on the construction sector and a cosy relationship between developers, builders, Fianna Fáil and the banks'

Why should not the public service pay 10% of salary into the pension fund? After all they have security of employment and guarantee of pensions. The half of one per cent made available to the lower paid was wiped out on the double by the one per cent levy. Why not a levy of up to 4% on those receiving more than 200,000 Euro per annum. Is fíor an sean-fhocal "Ní thuigeann an sáthach an seang"! (The well-off do not understand the poor).

Rather than helping out the developers and builders the administration should encourage the phasing in of retro-fitting of houses to become more energy efficient. Wind, wave and sun

developments should be supported. As the price of houses falls – and it should be allowed to fall – an opportunity is created for local councils to step in and buy up modest dwellings in order to provide affordable housing.

In his recent to a Church of Ireland service Fr O'Donnell concluded: "If the capitalist system survives, it will need to show a strong appreciation of equality, responsibility, ethics and more open accessibility and accountability to redress its previous greed and lack of thrust".

Republican Sinn Féin would go farther. Its Social and Economic Programme, SAOL, NUA, A New Way of Life, states: "Finance, Banking and all key industries must be brought under

public, democratic or social control, and the scope and extent of local community banking, like the Credit Unions, should be extended, so as to serve the needs of local people".

It goes on: "Social control of capital is essential, to ensure that capital serves people, rather than people being the slaves of capital; to achieve wider capital ownership; to promote balanced development and an equitable distribution of wealth. Money must be regarded, not as a commodity, but as an accounting system in which all participate".

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In other words it is not enough to say “nationalise the banks”. There must be participation at all levels; federal, provincial and local. In the 26-County State there has been a licensing system for banks by the Central Bank, yet we have witnessed their appalling behaviour.

The sovereignty of the people must be supreme; no financiers, no people of wealth or of property must be allowed to dictate terms to the people.

Likewise, the multi-national oil companies Shell and Statoil, with the collaboration of the Dublin Government, have been attempting to dictate to the people of Mayo and of Ireland generally. Having secured a give away deal they seek to implement it without regard to the safety, security and welfare of the local people in the Ros Dumhach Gaeltacht.

Of course, the local people have fought back, defending their interests and the rights of the Irish people to their own natural resources. Our members have taken part in the campaign on the ground and their spokespersons, including Máire Harrington herself, have addressed successive Ard-Fheiseanna of this organisation.

Most recently, in September, Máire Harrington showed what she was made of when she began a hunger strike in protest against the presence in Broadhaven Bay of the giant pipe-laying ship Solitaire.

On the 11th day of her fast the Solitaire withdrew from Irish territorial waters and Máire announced the end of her hunger strike.

At this Ard-Fheis today, Republican Sinn Féin salutes her brave and principled stand. We pledge our continued support for the “Shell to Sea” campaign — “Shell chun Sáile”.

Not alone are our resources, our fish and our natural gas being filched from us and our cultural organisations the GAA and Conradh na Gaeilge, being undermined but community bodies are under attack. The worthy Credit Union movement, which all of us have supported since the early 1960s and with which many of us gave service has been targeted.

Moves are now afoot to convert this commendable movement into yet another bank. God knows we have enough of those and have seen their worth in recent times. But if the credit unions are lost to us it will be the end of the local voluntary service and the “common bond”, with the loan-sharks and the moneylenders free to ply their nefarious trade again. The disadvantaged in our society will suffer as mutual support ends. We ask people to resist any and all attempts to turn the credit unions into a bank.

In particular, the Gaelic Athletic Association – arguably the strongest community organisation in Ireland – has been subjected to attempts to make it a vehicle for

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the normalisation of English rule here. A representative of the British Crown – Anne Windsor – was present at a GAA match in Croke Park on February 23 but Republican Sinn Féin actively protested outside. She was not there as a private individual but as a symbol of the British claim to rule Six Irish Counties.

Earlier in February an armed member of the British colonial police was escorted into Healy Park, Omagh by a GAA official before the Kildare/Tyrone National Football game. He was in the press box for the duration of the match. It is relevant to ask if it is now official GAA policy to escort the armed forces of the Crown into GAA grounds? Was this person there to spy on members of the nationalist community; and is the GAA now collaborating with British Crown forces in such spying and surveillance?

On February 1, our Vice-President, Des Dalton wrote an open letter – as a member of Cumann Lúthcleas Gael – to the GAA President, Nicky Brennan, protesting at the presence and behaviour of a Stormont Unionist Minister in Páirc Esler, Newry, on January 16 at

the Donegal v Down Dr McKenna football match. Edwin Poots used the occasion to make a public protest at the playing of Amhrán na bhFiann, the Irish National Anthem, and also to object to the naming of GAA grounds in honour of Irish patriots, such as Casement Park in Belfast.

While Nicky Brennan was willing to welcome the Stormont Minister to Páirc Esler, he refused to meet the President of Republican Sinn Féin at Páirc an Chrócaigh the previous year when a letter protesting at the presence of an England rugby team and the playing of the English National Anthem in Páirc an Chrócaigh was handed in.

When the GAA dropped Rule 21, which prohibited British forces from membership, in 2001 we warned that further demands would be made on the Association – and so it has come to pass with the national fabric being stripped away before our very eyes and British occupation normalised.

We opposed the 226-County State's funding of the Orange Order to the amount of a quarter of a million Euro during 2008 in order to maintain and refurbish Orange halls in Border areas. We said in a press statement that we were “philosophically opposed to any religious group or organisation being subsidised from public moneys.

Republican Sinn Féin believes in the complete separation of church and state and views the financing of an institutionally sectarian organisation like the Orange Order as an abuse of public funds.

“Both the Orange Order and Maynooth College were founded in 1795 with British government support to oppose the radical and progressive Republican ideas of

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the Enlightenment within the Protestant and Catholic communities respectively". This was stated by our spokesperson on Newstalk 106 Radio on February 5 last. The British design was for the Orange Order to maintain the Ascendancy and the Catholic clergy to act as moral policemen – both acting in support of English rule.

We also came out publicly on the streets in Galway to lead a demonstration against a misguided plan by an anti-war body to drape the statue of Liam Mellows in an orange suit. With members of the Liam Mellows Hurling Club and Galway citizens we formed a cordon around the statue and physically prevented what we considered an insult to Mellows' memory.

At the same time our local spokesperson Tomás Ó Curraoin, made it clear that our members taken part in anti-war demos, that we had opposed the war in Iraq from the start and that we deplored the treatment of the prisoners in Guantanamo. Meanwhile the so-called Independent Monitoring Commission in its latest report on September 3 said that the "Provos' military departments have ceased to function and have been disbanded".

In section 2.8 of the IMC report to its British masters it made this reference to faithful Republicans: "In so far as gathering information or intelligence (by the Provisionals) may continue in any limited way – not in itself improper if it does not involve illegal methods or intent – we (the IMC) believe that it is mainly for the purpose of ascertaining the nature of any threat from dissident republicans". In plain language the Provos now operate as the eyes and ears of the British occupation forces.

In the artificial or contrived area of the Six North-Eastern Counties carved out of Ireland by British law the artificial means cobbled together for Stormont to work is at a stand still for five months now.

We went on record as stating that when Ian Paisley had completed his ceremonial year as Stormont First Minister, his successors would impose much more humiliating terms on the Provos. And so it has come to pass. The Stormont regime, which operates without an Opposition, stands halted in its tracks for almost half a year now.

South of the Border we are faced with local council elections next June and a possible re-run of the failed Lisbon referendum. We must stand up to both whether they come together or separately.

A one-day Election Seminar was held in Dublin last January to prepare our organisation for next year's 26-County local elections as well as possible participation in the Six-County local elections scheduled for 2011. Information packs were distributed and it was made clear that whether an area had a candidate or not it was the duty of all Cumainn to play an active role in support of Republican Sinn Féin candidates.

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During the year conventions were held and candidates selected in Limerick (two in city and one in county), Kildare, Galway and Clare, with the possibility of contests in Longford, Cork and Kerry. At their annual general meetings due immediately after this Ard-Fheis, Cumainn, Comhairlí Ceantair and Comhairlí Chúige must discuss local elections and prisoners' dependants fund-raising. Decisions must be taken and implemented.

Yesterday morning a seminar was held to assess our preparedness to mount a credible and effective campaign. In the wake of the Lisbon Treaty, the worsening economic situation and the ongoing normalisation of British rule in Ireland, it is critical that a Republican, radical and progressive alternative is put before the people.

At a time like this our thoughts are with the Republican prisoners in Maghaberry Prison, Co Antrim and in Portlaoise Jail. We send them our warmest greetings and assure them of our unstinted support.

The Maghaberry prisoners continue with their demand for full political status: they are still denied free association and are subjected to petty rules and restrictions; numbers of non-political prisoners are being put on to the landings which is a cause for worry as to where this leads. The fund-raising activities for the prisoners dependants needs to be intensified at this time.

English rule here, which aims to keep Ireland divided and weak, has not been fully bedded down as was intended with the Stormont and St Andrews agreement. Raids on homes by British forces, arrests and interrogations continue. In the 26 Counties English influence is

being spread daily and Ireland is now called "the island", with the southern fragment to be known as "Ireland" and the northern remnant as "Northern Ireland" – a separate country.

The last few weeks have seen cutbacks in services for ordinary people while the wealthy, and those who profited immensely from the boom period in particular, escape almost unscathed from increased taxes or levies. United States involvement in imperialist wars has seen neutrality violated, with Shannon Airport used as a staging post and our airspace transgressed.

We must deliver a clear and coherent message to the Irish people, to our exiles and to the world. The people's struggle here in our time was never so close to ending British rule as it was in 1921. The English regime in Ireland never had as close a call as it had in the 1970s and '80's. As in 1921 the resistance collapsed due to a failure of leadership.

Accordingly the rebuilding of our movement must continue on the firm and sure basis of the principles of Irish Republicanism. There is no short cut, only the hard

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road of people's struggle. These alleged short cuts lead only to division in the ranks and to disaster, as we have seen to our cost. Let us renew our pledges, then, and bend ourselves to our hard task in the sure and certain knowledge that this is the only road to success. In the words of our first President, Pádraic Pearse: "History records no other reason and experience suggests no other".

Victory to the Irish people!

An Phoblacht Abú!