

# INC NEWS

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COMHDHÁIL NÁISIÚNTA NA HÉIREANN  
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## TOWARDS 2016

The revolutionary assertion on behalf of the Irish people in 1916 to once again attempt to break the connection between Ireland and the British Empire, bravely and unselfishly led by the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation, took on not just national but global significance. Not alone did the Easter Rising in 1916 change the course of Irish history, but its echo of resistance, which resonated around the world, instilled in colonised peoples worldwide the hope and inspiration to follow Ireland's lead. And follow it they did. World Empires were to be subsequently challenged by succeeding generations which in time hastened the disintegration of the imperial and colonial era.

The Easter Rising of 1916 not alone dislodged the first brick out of the walls of colonialism, but was to imbue a sense of national pride in a people, many of whom were confused as to their identity. The Proclamation of 1916 was noble and generous. It claimed the allegiance of every Irish man and Irish woman and in return it guaranteed religious and civil liberty, equal rights and opportunities and a promise to cherish all the children of the nation equally. No more would we be subject to a monarchy; we would be citizens of a free nation whose values of egalitarianism and equality would eventually be enshrined in our constitution.

We in this generation are not asked to suffer the struggles, hardship or even death endured by those men, women, girls and boys of 1916; we are just tasked with paying tribute to their collective sacrifice by ensuring that their achievements on behalf of past,

present and future generations are not just remembered but proudly honoured in the proper and fitting manner they richly deserve. To this end, we feel both honoured and humbled to play our part in the upcoming centenary commemoration of 1916.

Although almost three years into the future, we believe preparations for Easter 2016 celebrations need to commence immediately. The Centenary Committee formed by our friends in the 1916-1921 Club have, in addition to a number of committee meetings, held two national meetings, one in Ionad an Phiarsaigh and one in Wynns Hotel Dublin, both of which were well attended and from which many ideas and suggestions emerged. Members of the Irish National Congress were well represented. We were not surprised but nonetheless delighted at the level of positive reaction from people throughout the country, not just to participation in suggested events, but also to active encouragement in their own local communities so as to remember and honour in their own way the sacrifice of 1916.

The 1916 Centenary Committee see the 1916 Rising commemorations being of a dual nature, both a worthy national celebration undertaken by government and as an opportunity for all citizens in our cities, towns, villages and parishes to pay their individual and collective respect and thanks to the 1916 Rising. We see our primary role, not as national or local events' organisers, but as facilitators for submitting ideas and suggestions to interested groups by means of national meetings and/or localised meetings, whereby indi-

vidual communities can debate and organise their own events in 2016. We see ourselves acting as enablers for those wishing to pay their respects to the 1916 Rising.

At national level, we hope to meet with the government-sponsored Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations, chaired by Minister for the Arts Jimmy Deenihan. We will be presenting this Group with a list of suggestions and ideas for their consideration on how best we believe the centenary commemoration of 1916 might be celebrated. Some of the ideas we submit below would not be possible without government commitment and active support. We know there will be many demands/requests for other assistance during this centenary of commemorations from other groups, but we respectfully suggest none is so deserving as the centenary of the most seminal event in Irish history, the 1916 Easter Rising.

We list below some of what we believe should receive primary consideration.

- An Post to be requested to issue a special commemorative stamp in 2016 depicting the signatories of the Proclamation and executed leaders.
- A once-off minting of a Euro coin in 2016 to commemorate those executed 1916 leaders.
- Cumann Luthchleas Gael to be approached with regard to providing a once-off senior inter-county hurling and foot-

ball tournament with special commemorative medals for participants. All-Ireland finalists in both codes to receive special commemorative medals.

- The importance of the involvement of all the teaching organisations, ASTI, INTO, TUI, and IFUT. Third Level Colleges and the teachers themselves cannot be over-emphasised for the success of this initiative. We suggest that all schools in the country be issued with a copy of the Proclamation by the Department of Education.
- The GAA, the FAI, the IRFU and indeed all sporting bodies be invited to exchange views on how best to commemorate 2016.
- The national broadcaster RTÉ and TG4 will have a major role in these commemorations.

As stated above, these are just a few samples of the initiatives we have discussed and which we believe, with goodwill, hard work and positive attitudes, are attainable. Further initiatives and ideas will, over time, emerge for consideration. Indeed, you are invited to submit your own ideas and thoughts on how you feel we can best honour those brave women and men who fought for our freedom to the Irish National Congress, PO Box 2814, Dublin 7.

*Tom Cooper*

## "Generational" War in Mali

Mr David Cameron, the Prime Minister of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, has, in a major public statement, declared that the war in Mali will be a "generational" one and has committed to sending troops to take part in this war that he believes will go on for generations. The Fine Gael-Labour government has declared that it will also take part in this war and has agreed to send eight Irish soldiers to serve under a British officer.

It is the first time since the reaffirmation of the Irish Republic in 1919 that an Irish government has agreed to take part in an im-

perialist war in Africa under the command of the British State. It is therefore an historic decision. But for those organisations, like the Peace and Neutrality Alliance founded in 1996, that have opposed the decision of the Irish political caste to destroy Irish neutrality, democracy and neutrality and to integrate the Irish Republic into the EU/US/NATO bloc in order to ensure all of Ireland takes an active part in the resource wars of the 21st century by joining in the race back into the 19th century including the new "scramble for Africa", it comes as no surprise.

The decision of the Fine Gael-Labour government to do so is in fact just another step towards its commitment to restore Ireland's involvement in the imperial tradition throughout all of Ireland. It supported NATO's conquest of Libya, it has introduced a new aviation policy to seek to ensure "additional military flights" through Shannon Airport. It supports the NATO-Saudi-EU campaign to destroy the secular state of Syria and replace it with a Sunni fundamentalist state similar to Saudi Arabia. It, in effect, supports efforts to drive all Christians and other minorities out of the entire Middle East. It supports terrible sanctions on Iran that are already killing Iranian children.

One of the most influential supporters of the current government, Brendan Halligan, in his role as Chair of the Institute for International and European Affairs (IIEA), invited the General Secretary of NATO to Ireland. The General Secretary made it clear that he would like Ireland to join NATO and that all NATO states in Europe should massively increase expenditure to ensure there is the money to fight these imperialist wars. There is little doubt whatsoever that, in agreeing to the visit by the GS of NATO, the Irish government was giving a clear signal that it intends to join NATO, a step which would complete the strategy which it has advocated for years. Its commitment to the militarisation of the EU, its participation in EU Battlegroups, its support for a Common EU foreign, security and defence policy being all key steps in that process. No wonder NATO describes the EU as a strategic partner. In short, Kenny and Gilmore are John Redmond and William Walker reborn.

So will they win? Throughout the 19th and early 20th century Ireland was a member of the British Union, an imperial state that sent its Battlegroups all over the world. In Ireland, where there was mass poverty and unemployment, thousands upon thousands felt they had no choice but to join the British Battlegroups. Will this new generation of poverty stricken Irish people also feel they have no choice but to take part in these perpetual resource wars of the British Union, sold to the people by the corporate media like The Irish

Times, the Indo and RTÉ as a war on "terrorism"? Not if PANA has anything to do with it. What Kenny and Gilmore fear is the Fenian tradition. What they fear is the power of our long history of struggle against imperialism.

This is the reason we won the referendums on the Nice & Lisbon Treaties first time round. It is why they are only sending eight soldiers to Mali. It is why they only have 7 soldiers in Afghanistan. It is the reason why the Sinn Féin vote is increasing. It is the reason why Fianna Fáil is now moving towards policies it once advocated in the 1930s. It is why both parties will probably oppose the Fine Gael-Labour efforts to join NATO. It is the reason why, as we move towards 2016, the spirit that gave rise to opposition to British Imperialism in its 1914-18 war will make it clear that that is a tradition that has not gone away. All Kenny and Gilmore offer is perpetual war abroad and perpetual austerity at home. Given that reality, those of us who belong to the Fenian tradition, those of us who oppose imperialism, will win. But we will do so if, and only if, we continue to build a broad alliance to achieve an all-island Irish Republic. That was why PANA was established. Faced by the choice of never ending war and austerity offered by the EU, as it is currently constituted, or the tradition of Tone and Connolly to inspire us so as to advocate Irish independence, democracy and neutrality, the people will back the Republic.

*Roger Cole, Chair, Peace & Neutrality Alliance  
(PANA)*

## UNCERTAIN & DANGEROUS TIMES

In their thousands, they are marching and occupying. In Dublin, in Athens, Lisbon, London, New York and many other cities.

Millions of people worldwide are making it clear to their governments, and to the global banking and corporate kleptocracies, that they will not tolerate the wilful looting and destruction of their societies to pay for the financial meltdown, ongoing since 2008.

Let nobody doubt the scale and extent of what is happening. This financial crisis could well dwarf the 1929 Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression of the 1930s. It could end up destroying large swathes of world productive investments, pension funds and personal savings. Despite several summit meetings, world leaders are at a loss as to what to do. In recent weeks senior political figures in both Germany and Poland have warned of the possibility of war in Europe if the Euro currency disintegrated and broke up. This indeed is a timely and sober reminder that it was the start of World War Two that brought about the end of the Great Depression.

The real problem in the world economy is debt: sovereign debts; corporate debts; personal, consumer and other debts. The deliberate creation of debt through 'financialisation' of the global economy was meant to stimulate growth because of the decline in profitability in the 'real' economy - production of goods and services. Leading world financial institutions encouraged consumption through lending, often irresponsibly. Much of this debt is now unrepayable, as the ongoing national catastrophe in Greece clearly demonstrates.

The other looming financial disaster is the bizarre trade in 'hedge funds' and so called 'derivatives', which have nothing to do with the real world economy, but instead are mechanisms for gambling and speculating in global commodities or currencies. The notional value of these 'assets' is now more than ten times the actual size of the entire world economy in terms of goods, services, money and gold. This is a crazy and irrational situation and if this particular bubble bursts - a real concern- the world is in severe trouble.

Since the start of the neo-liberal deregulation of the major financial systems, particularly under Regan and Thatcher, a new global plutocracy of predatory financiers, oligarchs and gangsters has arisen amassing and concentrating in themselves vast wealth and political influence, and becoming in the process, more powerful than national governments. Financier George Soros, for example, can at a whim destroy national currencies and engineer the 'revolutionary' overthrow of foreign governments that displease him. An arrogant young finance broker in London recently boasted that: "governments no longer rule the world ... Goldman Sachs does". Unfortunately he may be right!

In addition to the worsening financial turmoil, there are ongoing wars, rumours of wars, and actual planning for new wars to come. Not surprisingly, the source for nearly all this war mongering, is the same source responsible for the financial crisis: the governments, the military industrial complexes and corporate and financial interests of the United States and Britain. Lately they have been joined by a colonially resurgent France. The brutal, sustained NATO-led campaign that overthrew the sovereign regime in Libya (a war many years in preparation) is a stark warning from the imperialist powers of the fate that awaits any state that puts its own national interests before those of the US, France and Britain.

Right now, yet another new war is on the horizon; this time against Iran, or perhaps even nuclear-armed Pakistan! These maniacs will end up setting fire to the world yet, in pursuit of their evil doctrine of Full Spectrum Dominance.

*Francis Martin*

## THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME?

In 1961, Lord Basil Brookborough sat in Stormont as Prime minister of a 'Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people'. His monolithic Unionist Party had 37 seats and a mas-

sive majority over the seven strong Nationalist Party. The IRA's feeble 'Border campaign' was spluttering to an end. The census figures taken that year showed that decades of gerry-

mandering and discrimination were paying off and Northern Ireland retained a solid Protestant majority and, while the population of the Republic continued to decline, the population of the North had increased by 3.9% to 1,425,042. The future was assured.

Forty years later, the census figures of 2011, released in 2013, revealed a very differ-

ent picture. The population continued to rise by 385,821 to 1,810,863 but 240,486 of this was accounted for by the increase in the Catholic population, the Protestant population had gone into freefall and this decline was offset by the rise in the population of those who professed no religion, which rose by 276,998.

**CENSUS DATA**

1961 CENSUS			2011 CENSUS		
RELIGION	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT	CHANGE
Catholic	497,547	35%	738,033	40.76%	+240,486
Presbyterian	413,113	29%	345,101	19.1%	-68,012
Church Of Irl	344,800	24.2%	248,821	13.7%	-95,979
Methodist	71,865	5%	54,253	3%	-17,612
None	28,418	2%	305,416	16.9%	+276,998
Other	69,299	4.8%	119,239	6.58%	+49,940
TOTAL	1,425,042	N/A	1,810,863	N/A	+385,821

When the figure for no religion is broken down further it shows that 48.36% of the 2011 Northern Ireland population came from a Protestant background and 45.14% came from a Catholic background. Belfast City council area has, for the first time, a Catholic plurality with 41.9% Catholic, 34.1% Protestant and 13.2% none. When one considers that 66% of Northern Ireland university students are Catholic and 66% of pensioners are Protestant one may be forgiven for thinking that all Unionism has to look forward to is nostalgia. If we compare the 2011 census figures with those taken during the conflict in 1991 we see some remarkable changes. In only five of the 26 Local Council areas was the increase in the combined numbers of the three largest Protestant religions greater than the increase in the Catholic population. These areas are Ards, Larne, Carrickfergus, Banbridge and Ballymoney. While, in thirteen local council areas, the combined three main Protestant religions have declined, the Catholic population has risen, in some cases dramatically. From 1991 to 2011, the population of Belfast increased by 1,725, the Catholic population increased by 8,755 while the three main Protestant religions declined by 29,820, the Church of Ireland population falling by 18,207 and the Presbyterian population falling by 7,280. In Lisburn, the Catholic population

increased by 12,616 while the main Protestant religions fell by 2495. Even in staunch Protestant strongholds like Castlereagh, North Down and Newtownabbey the process has been the same (in Castlereagh Catholics increased by 7,358 while the main Protestant religions declined by 5,115.) What we may be seeing is that, after 15 years of ceasefire, Catholics in Protestant heartlands are more willing to state their religion while Protestants are engaging in 'white flight' and retreating to an orange laager and moving out of greater Belfast into more homogenous suburbs. Some Protestants may also be converting to smaller, more conservative sects, while the main Protestant Churches debate gay marriage and female clergy.

These demographic changes have been reflected politically whereby Sinn Féin, which was once illegal, today is the second biggest party in Northern Ireland with 26% of the vote and 29 MLAs. It holds many ministerial posts including that of Deputy First Minister. The Union Jack no longer flies every day above Belfast city hall while loyalist protesters gather weekly outside to stage their King Canute inspired protest

However, while times have changed to think that the tide of history is inevitably ebbing in the direction of Irish nationalism would also be a mistake. Part of the increase

in population is accounted for immigration particularly from eastern Europe. If you subtract the 17,700 or 1% of the population who are Polish Catholics and the Lithuanian Catholics the total number of Catholics in 2011 is actually lower than that in 2001. The census reveals that 40% of people see themselves as 'British only' while only 25% see themselves as 'Irish only' 21% see themselves as the indefinable 'Northern Irish only', 6% see themselves as British and Northern Irish and 1% see themselves as Irish and Northern Irish, 1% see themselves as paradoxically British and Irish and 1% see themselves as an incomprehensible 'British, Irish and Northern Irish.'

These figures seem to be backed up by a BBC spotlight opinion poll taken in February 2013 that showed only 17% supported Irish unity while 65% supported remaining part of the UK. Mysteriously, 38% of Catholics and 25% of Sinn Féin supporters supported remaining part of the UK.

While it is true that leading questions can predetermine opinion polls' outcomes, it is also clear that Irish nationalism has a mammoth task ahead of it if it is ever to win referendum on Irish unity. In every society regardless of religion, class or sex, a significant proportion of people fear the unknown or change. So, when faced with a choice between the reassuringly familiar status quo or a frighteningly unknown quantity, the status quo will always have a built in advantage. It is this fear that has created 'institutionalisation', 'poverty traps' and 'glass ceilings' around the world for centuries. Equally, Nationalists witness Unionism's overreaction to the removal of the Union Jack over Belfast city hall which led to weeks of protests, disruption and rioting and fear of kicking over the constitutional hornets' nest. The middle of the worst recession for at least 80 years also seems like a strange time to argue the merits of economic unification. However, it is also true that one could wait forever for 'the right time' to seek unification and that unification is a process not an event, and that a march of 1000 miles always begins with the first step.

Even if 38% of Catholics want to remain within the UK, they are more likely to be 'soft unionists' and persuaded by rational

economic and cultural arguments and are less likely to be willing to die in a last ditch defence of the union. If these 'Catholic Unionists' hold the balance of power in future, they would be less hostile to closer cross-border co-operation and incremental development.

Clearly the main battle lines for the next decade or two are cultural and economic.

Britain will try to blur the distinction between 'these islands' with mass entertainment-cultural imperialism, Royal visits, titles of nobility and poppy fetishism. We must reassert our separatist tradition and Irish language, sport, music, history and culture.

Gradual and evolving economic and taxation autonomy for the North would help it stand on its own two feet reduce its dependence on the £5 billion annual Westminster subvention, while clearing the way for greater cross-border co-operation and integration. The Northern economy is a freak show of the western world. At the moment 27.7 % of the Northern workforce is employed by the state sector (down from 37% in 1992) which accounted for 69.2% of GDP in 2010 the second highest in the world behind North Korea (Cuba's rate was only 60% and the South was only 36%). While the Northern unemployment rate at 7.6% was nearly half that of the South, 26.9% of the workforce in the North are economically inactive (students, pensioners, housewives etc). In 2009, more than 155,000 people were on incapacity benefit in the North while only 74,000 received it in the South. One positive outcome from the recent Southern economic crisis is that it disproves forever that 'we can't afford the North' because if we can go through hell and high water to bail out the banks, if the will exists, we can absorb the relatively minor cost of economic unification.

*Paul McGuill*

### **COMHBHRÓN**

*Doire Cholmille, Mí na Samhna, 2011*

It is with great sadness and pride that I write a few words on behalf of the Executive of the INC to remember the life of our recently departed founder member, Michael O'Connor, who passed away at his home in Kilvoultra,

Clondroichid, Macroom, Co Cork, aged 86. He will be sadly missed not only by his immediate family circle, but by the many republicans throughout Ireland and abroad who were proud to have known him. Even in the autumn of his years, Michael was a lively, engaged spirited and inspirational individual, and he lived life to the full till the end. He was a loving husband to Boyna, father of two daughters, Kathleen and Margaret, and four sons, Richard, Dermot, Stephen and Dónal. His family and his farm at Kilvoultra were the centre and focus of his life. He was a man of principle, of deep religious conviction and practice, and a true Gael.

I heard of Michael's passing in a way that, although sad, was strangely appropriate. I had phoned his home on the Saturday morning to tell him all the news about the launch of Martin McGuinness' presidential campaign in Derry on the previous evening. I knew he would have been excited and proud to have heard about the crowds, the 'big names' on the platform, the speeches, and that he would have relished hearing every juicy detail. Instead of our usual banter, Michael's son Dónal told me the sad news that his father had passed away some hours previously.

I first met Michael O'Connor in Derry in 1991. He travelled here from his native Cork to the launch of a cross-party forum established in an effort to prevent Articles 2 & 3 of Bunreacht na hÉireann being changed from what was legally acknowledged to be a "constitutional imperative" upon the 26 county state to seek national reunification, to a mere hope that such might eventually come about. These were issues dear to his heart, and I will always remember his spirited and passionate contribution to the discussion that day. I better remember his good humour, his love of the craic, his ever ready laugh and eyes twinkling with good natured mischief.

We had been in regular contact over the years since, meeting up at meetings of the INC executive, and occasionally at the Kilmichael commemoration or some other such event. Michael rang me regularly, (it seemed always when I was just ladling out the spuds for the Sunday dinner!) and his knowledge of and passionate interest in six

county politics was an inspiration and delight. His keen awareness of changing demographics, of likely vote transfers, of marginal seats and electoral boundaries would put any professional commentator to shame! He was a passionate supporter of the Peace Process, and indeed in the opinion of many, was one of those progressive thinkers who helped create the conditions where dialogue could begin, away back in the dark years of the late eighties. His participation in the inaugural meeting of the Irish National Congress, in 1989, was an event which he recalled with pride, and his contribution to our organisation throughout the years has been invaluable. Even in his eighties, he regularly made the journey from his native Cork to attend meetings, and always had his own unique slant on the current headlines! He was an unreconstructed rebel, and even in failing health and advanced years was an enthusiastic advocate of progressive republicanism.

The last time I saw Michael was at the Kilmichael Commemoration, at the end of last November. I remember it was the first weekend of the great freeze, which was to last for months, and a raw, bitter day it was. We called to the O'Connor household for the 'tae' on the way to the commemoration, and received the usual hospitality for which that house is renowned. Then Michael put on his top coat and scarf, revved up the car and away to Kilmichael. We had trouble keeping his back bumper in sight! Martin McGuinness was the main speaker that day, and I have a picture of him and Michael deep in conversation before the formal events kicked off. I hope Martin listened carefully - I wonder was Michael suggesting to him that he have a go at the Presidency? It's the sort of visionary, crazy but - it - might - work idea he was capable of!

I have a clear picture of him on that cold day in the fading light, with back straight, head erect and pride in his face as he laid a wreath on behalf of the Kilmichael Commemoration Committee, of which he was Leas-Uachtarán for many years. And at the dinner in Creedon's Hotel later, when he joined in the chorus of "The Boys of Kilmichael" with his old comrades! Such are the things for

which the late Michael O'Connor will be remembered with pride and affection by those who were privileged to know him.

His wife Boyna subsequently passed away as well. To their family circle we offer our sincere condolences. I measc laochra na nGael go raibh sé, agus go dtuga Dia suaimhneas síoraí dá anam.

*Anne McCloskey, NEC, INC*

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### INC RAFFLE 2013

With this *INC NEWS*, you will receive a booklet of raffle tickets. Tickets are €2 each or €10 per booklet. Please send completed stubs and money to the INC at the above address for receipt by 25 Sept. The draw will take place on 28 Sept. As ever, your support is invaluable and greatly appreciated.

## COMHDHÁIL NÁISIÚNTA NA hÉIREANN

*Saoirse*

*Aontacht*

*Síochán*

## INC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### Freedom

The Irish people have the democratic right to freedom, unity and peace. The INC asserts that right, which is enshrined in the 1916 Proclamation, the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil, and is the desire of the majority of the Irish people.

The INC asserts that a declaration of intent by the British to withdraw from Ireland is a prerequisite for the development and establishment of an independent, sovereign nation, itself the basis of Irish democracy. Only this can truly represent the interests of all the Irish people and guarantee their right, through national self-determination, to freedom, unity and peace.

The INC also espouses the democratic right of the people to live and work in their own country, to full equality between men and women and, most importantly, to safeguard the future of our children. We assert the right to full access to our own culture, to which the Irish language is central, and the cultures of other peoples.

### Unity

Partition has distorted the political, economic, social and cultural life of our country and has fostered sectarian divisions among our people. The diversity of tradition, culture and opinion of the Irish people should be a source of strength, but has been instead used to divide us. The INC asserts its abhorrence of sectarianism and believes such division has denied the rights of all traditions in Ireland and true democracy. Unity of the Irish people can only come about when Britain ends its interference in Ireland and allows the Irish people to determine their own future.

### Peace

We have the right as a people to live in peace individually, nationally and internationally. True peace will be secured when Justice has been achieved, our national democratic rights established and the cultural identities of our people protected.

Peace in Ireland in the international context will only be secured by maintaining a positively neutral position and promoting demilitarisation and the optimum protection of the environment.

We demand that the British government start the process by declaring their intent to leave us, to build a free, united, peaceful Ireland.