

Republican SINN FÉIN Poblachtach

Theobald Wolfe Tone Commemoration
Bodenstown, County Kildare



2013

Oration at the grave of Theobald Wolfe Tone, Bodenstown Cemetery, Sunday, June 16 by President, Republican Sinn Féin, Des Dalton

“We have come to the holiest place in Ireland; holier to us even than the place where Patrick sleeps in Down. Patrick brought us life, but this man died for us. And though many before him and some since have died in testimony of the truth of Ireland's claim to nationhood, Wolfe Tone was the greatest of all that have made that testimony, the greatest of all that have died for Ireland whether in old time or in new. He was the greatest of Irish Nationalists; I believe he was the greatest of Irishmen. And if I am right in this I am right in saying that we stand in the holiest place in Ireland, for it must be that holiest sod of a nation's soil is the sod where the greatest of her dead lies buried.” Thus spoke Pearse in 1913, one hundred years later those words still hold true. As Irish Republicans we come here each year to reaffirm our

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commitment to the ideals passed down to us by Tone and the Society of United Irishmen.

Standing here on this sacred soil we come into communion with the spirit of Tone and renew our Republican vow first taken by Tone and his comrades on Belfast's Cavehill in 1795: "Never to desist in our efforts until we have subverted the authority of England over our country and asserted her independence." This was the programme of Tone and it remains the programme of the Republican Movement today. We are proud of our continuity of ideology and organisation with the United Irishmen, just as veterans of the United Irishmen endorsed and supported the Young Irelanders in the 1840s, today's movement represents a meeting of the generations in common struggle.

The historian C. Desmond Greaves described the reorganisation of the United Irishmen in 1795, transforming itself into a fully revolutionary movement as a: "...turning point in Irish history. For the first time the Irish nation was exclusively identified with Irish democracy".

Today the Republican Movement continues to champion and lead the fight for true All-Ireland democracy in defiance of the forces of reaction led by Westminster, Stormont and Leinster House. The political and economic conditions experienced by the Irish people today are a gross betrayal of the high ideals and vision for a new Ireland articulated by Republicanism from Tone and Emmet right up to today.

Last week we laid to rest our Patron and former President Ruairí Ó Brádaigh. Throughout his life he was a gifted and tireless worker for such an Ireland, an Ireland worthy of the sacrifice given to achieve it and one that lived up the high idealism of the historic Republican Movement. The actions of the 26-County police evoked memories of the funeral of Frank Stagg and if anything were a testament to power of a revolutionary idea over the seeming might of a corrupt and failed state. In life they feared Ó Brádaigh and the cause which he served and articulated with great skill, conviction and courage and in death they showed that the power of the ideals and ideas he espoused lived on with the same potency as before.

Ruairí Ó Brádaigh was one who lived fully according to the template of Republicanism set out by the United Irishmen. For him sectarianism was a weapon in the arsenal of the British State and one that must be countered as forcefully as any political or military threat posed by that same state. Along with his friend and comrade Dáithí Ó Conaill and other Republicans, he devised ÉIRE NUA as a means of making a reality of Tone's dream of substituting the common name of Irish man and Irish woman for the denominations of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter. The central thrust of ÉIRE NUA is the maximum devolution of power from national to provincial, regional, right down to local or community level. The Provincial Parliaments

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will be elected by the people of each province according to a system of proportional representation.

Unionists and Nationalists within a nine-county Ulster would have a real and meaningful input and control over the political, social, economic and cultural life of their province, regions and communities. Unlike the institutions set up under the Stormont and St Andrew's Agreements, the governmental structures set out in ÉIRE NUA, would be accountable only to the people who elected them. Under ÉIRE NUA the sovereignty of the Irish people is paramount.

As an alternative ÉIRE NUA offers a framework within which all sections of the Irish people are the decision-makers on the vital issues for their communities, their regions and their nation.

The people of Ulster within a free and Federal Ireland will make decisions affecting the people of a nine-county Ulster – they will not be dependent on the whim of a foreign parliament or government.

Speaking in University College Cork in January 2008, Ruairí Ó Brádaigh said: “We do not want to back the Unionists on to a cliff-edge politically where they will oppose us all the more. Neither do we seek to have them as a permanent and disgruntled political minority in one corner of Ireland.

“During the 1970s, soundings were taken with every shade of unionism to obtain reactions. The result in all cases was similar; first choice was an independent Six Counties. We did not think that would be viable. All said, in that case they would opt for our ‘four provinces idea’ as the ‘most generous on offer’.

“Apart from providing a solution to the Ulster situation, these proposals would bring power nearer to the people and help to correct east-west economic imbalance nationally. Republicans submit that such structures will be necessary to ensure justice for all, including the 18% of the national population who have supported the unionist position.”

Tone had realised from the beginning that an effective union of the all the people of Ireland would be necessary to affect a revolution. As James Connolly pointed out in Labour in Irish History what was required to bring about such a union of hearts and minds was: “The activity of a revolutionist with statesmanship enough to find a common point upon which the two elements could unite, and some great event, dramatic enough in its character, to arrest the attention of all and fire them with a common feeling.” The figure with the qualities set out by Connolly was Tone and the event capable of firing the people with a revolutionary fervour was the French Revolution.

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ÉIRE NUA also proposes a new All-Ireland constitution which would be put to the people of Ireland for adoption and which would include a Charter of Rights. A draft Charter of Rights contained within ÉIRE NUA enshrines such fundamental rights as freedom of conscience, religion, ethical or political beliefs; freedom of expression and communication, the right to education, to join a trade union, the right to access adequate housing, food and medical care. It is also proposed that the European Convention on Human Rights be made part of the internal domestic law of the New Ireland. In fighting back against the new imperialism of the finance capitalists of the EU superstate we carry an alternative social and economic programme SAOL NUA. Our social and economic programme SAOL NUA – A New Way of Life – represents a vision of Ireland based on Republican, Socialist, and Self-reliance and Ecological principles; it identifies the obstacles to be overcome and the goals to be reached if we are to build an All-Ireland Federal Democratic Socialist Republic

SAOL NUA is based on the principle that "...every person is entitled to have his or her inherent human dignity respected and every citizen should be able to enjoy freedom from poverty or insecurity and to have access to a fair and adequate share of the nation's wealth. All citizens should be equal before the law and all have the duty and the right to contribute by work to their own welfare and the welfare of society."

It identifies the essential elements of Democratic Socialism which are required in building the New Ireland; banking and all key industries must be brought under democratic or social control and the further development of community banking such as Credit Unions.

Social control of capital is essential to ensure capital serves people rather than people being the slaves of capital. By doing so you ensure balanced development and equitable distribution of wealth. Money must be regarded, not as a commodity, but as an accounting system in which all participate.