

Brexit & Irish Unity

Aontú will strive for the unity of the Irish people and the development of a strong All-Ireland economy as a remedy to Brexit uncertainty

Practical Steps Towards Irish Unity

Two years ago the Tories held a referendum on Brexit without a plan and without any thought on how it would impact on Ireland north or south. Today the Irish government are facing into a post Brexit Ireland without a plan or any idea how to resolve the worst extremities of Brexit. Nothing has been learned.



Self-determination

Aontú seeks the independence of the Irish people north and south, east and west. We believe in self-determination; that decisions made as close to the people that they affect, are better decisions. Irish people can influence those decisions and they can hold the decision makers to account. When decisions are made in London, Brussels and Berlin they are not made in Ireland's interest.

London treats the northern economy like an economic backwater. At partition, over 80% of Ireland's industrial output came from three counties around Belfast. Belfast was the largest city in Ireland and the north was by far the richest part of Ireland. The north of Ireland has been impoverished by London's lack of interest in the 20th Century in the same manner the south of Ireland was in the 19th Century.

Irish Unity is an opportunity to improve the lives of the people of Ireland

Unity is the key to unlocking Ireland's potential. Economies of scale, efficiencies of delivery, increased market size, larger EU representation are all obvious outputs. There is also the question of justice.

Given that the opinions of Irish people north and south are changing significantly in support of Irish unity and given the demographic change, it is foolish and irresponsible for the governments in Dublin and London not to start to plan for the unity of the Irish people.

A "No Deal Brexit"

It is shocking that 100 years after the first Dáil, the whims and egos of the Tories in London are determining whether we in Ireland can successfully govern ourselves, develop our economy and run our agricultural sector.

A "No deal Brexit" will radically damage our ability to move people, products and services around the country. It is evident through

opinion polling that the Irish people are aware of this. North and south people are seeking unity in greater numbers.

Practical Preparation are Necessary now

Not preparing for this opportunity now is a serious mistake. The solution for a hard border is no border. The practical steps that need to be taken to ensure that the latter is achieved in a peaceful and harmonious fashion must now be taken.

The All Ireland Economy was promised under the Good Friday Agreement but it has received precious little attention from the establishment. It would provide the best way to ameliorate against the worst excesses of Brexit. It must be developed now.

This means planning together, funding together and delivering services together on an All-Ireland basis. We need to be practical in the development of convergence across the Ireland in terms of taxes, enterprise, health care and supports. Better, more effective and more efficient infrastructure and services are a threat to no one.

Stormont

Stormont as its currently constituted has run its course as a means of governance in the northern counties. That it has hit a wall in its functionality is self-evident in the existing stalemate. There is, in all but name, direct rule from London. The third Westminster budget in a row is being imposed on the north. The DUP are the only party in the north, through their Confidence and Supply arrangement with the Tories, actually in power.

This despite the DUP being completely unrepresentative of the people of the north on a whole range of issues not least Brexit. This bizarre Direct Rule situation only encourages DUP dysfunction and stalemate in Stormont.

All the while the economy of the north, enterprise, housing, health care and the ability for people to feed their families are corroding. The bread and butter issues facing every family cannot continuously be made to wait.

The Next Steps

The Good Friday Agreement was a wonderful achievement. It created a peace that many thought wasn't possible. However it was created in a different time, when there was a Unionist majority and before the threat of Brexit.

Who can honestly claim that the institutions under the Good Friday Agreement are working? They are broken and will remain so. When Stormont was up and running it was at best a carve-up between the two largest parties and at worst an exercise in parties blocking each other.

It is blatantly clear that we now need to move beyond the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement. A referendum on Irish reunification is now the only reasonable next step and is necessary to allow the north to move forward economically and socially. Aontú will support calls for this referendum and will actively campaign for a Yes to Unity vote. Joint authority is at best a temporary measure for the short term to allow practical decisions to lift people out of poverty and facilitate enterprise.

In the teeth of Brexit Leo Varadkar postponed finance for the A5 road from Dublin to Derry. He stated that there was no department in the north to make the necessary decisions. If the government implemented Joint Authority in the short term in order to allow a referendum, the inevitable unification of the country would no longer allow the current Irish government to wash their hands of the six counties.

Departments north and south need to start really working together in partnership ahead of unification in order to rebuild the fabric of the country as an all island organism, this will allow a smoother transition. The breadth and depth of the North/South Ministerial Council must be logically improved. We need to see the ongoing, planned and increasing devolution of far more powers from London to Ireland,

to allow a managed transition to unification. The North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association must be developed to provide deeper and more regular parliamentary support to the work of the North/South Ministerial Council.

Heads in the Sand

The twin governmental approach of placing their heads in the sand is no longer sustainable. In an Amarach poll for the Claire Byrne Show 87% of people in the south of Ireland stated that they sought unity in the case of a hard border. In the north the figure is now close to 50%.

Despite the significant Brexit threats, despite the obvious logic of self-determination and unity, despite significant growth in support for unity north and south, the establishment continue to exist in a bubble of denial.

Liam Mellows predicted before partition that there would arise two establishments on both sides of the border who would come to depend on the border for their power, and the power sharing parties in the north do all rely on the border for their own legitimisation, without exception. Without the border these parties would become minor regional parties or would disappear altogether or would lose the unique selling point that buys them leverage with voters. The establishment parties of power in the south would become regional parties in the case of Irish Unity. The self-interest of all these parties north and south prevents them from fulfilling the wishes of the Irish people.

The Dublin and London governments need to create a mechanism where citizens on both sides of the border can start the process of mapping out what a post-Brexit, post-unification Ireland will look like.

Aontú sectoral policy to ameliorate Brexit damage can be found on the sectoral pages of this Website.

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The Irish political system is radically broken

In Ireland the vast majority of elected representatives put a finger in the air to check which way the political wind is blowing. They have one eye on their leaders – seeking brownie points – and another eye keeping their seat safe. If elected reps shut up and do as they're told, they are promoted; if they stand up for what they believe in, they are demoted. No wonder we have the political class we have. No wonder a half a billion euro is being buried in a hole under the National Children's Hospital and that Stormont is in stalemate.

Throughout Ireland, many people are now afraid to say what they feel, many are afraid to respectfully engage on a range of different topics. Many feel there is a new censorship and a new political correctness in Ireland, that opposition to the establishment is being deleted.

Respectful opposition is not the enemy. Respectful opposition is a critical element of a functional democracy. Aontú will have the backbone to stand up, without fear, for you.



STAND UP

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