

15?

CÚIG BLIANA DÉAG Ó

CHOMHAONTÚ AOINE AN CHÉASTA:

AN BHFUIL NA GEALLTANAS I LEITH NA GAELGE Á

gcomhlíonadh?

Tuairimí pearsanta ó phobal na Gaeilge

Fifteen years from the Good Friday Agreement: are the promises made in respect of the Irish language being kept?

Personal views from the Irish speaking community



15?

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Janet Muller

Príomhfheidhmeannach,
POBAL
Réamhrá



Bunaíodh POBAL i mí Eanáir 1998, le linn do chur is cúiteamh leanúnach na n-athruithe polaitiúla, sóisialta agus eacnamaíochta. Bhí sé mar aidhm againn treoir straitéiseach a sholáthar; abhcóideacht agus tacaíocht fhorbartha a chur ar fáil do réimse grúpaí beaga éagsúla Gaeilge a bhí ag obair ón bhun aníos sa Tuaisceart. Sa chéad dá bhliain, d'oibrigh an eagraíocht ar bhonn deonach amháin, sula bhfuair muid, i mí na Nollaig 1999, maoiniú le hoifig a oscailt agus le beirt a fhostú. Ag an phointe sin, is as an Eoraip agus as rialtas an Deiscirt a tháinig an maoiniú. Bhí airgead don Ghaeilge ó fhoinsí níos gaire dúinn sách gann.

Céim stairiúil don Ghaeilge a bhí i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta. Don chéad uair riamh, tugadh gealltanais ar leith scríofa i leith na teanga. Foilsíodh iad i rannóg an doiciméid dar teideal, Cearta, Coimircí agus Comhionannas Deiseanna agus faoi fho-rannóg, Saincheisteanna Eacnamaíochta, Sóisialta agus Cultúir. Rinneadh na gealltanais seo a leanas:

- '4. I gcomhthéacs an bhreithnithe ghníomhaigh atá á dhéanamh faoi láthair maidir leis an Ríocht Aontaithe do shíniú Chairt Chomhairle na hEorpa do Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh, déanfaidh Rialtas na Breataine go háirithe i ndáil leis an nGaeilge, más cuí agus más mian le daoine amhlaidh:
- gníomh diongbháilte chun an teanga a chur chun cinn;
 - úsáid na teanga a éascú agus a spreagadh sa chaint agus i scríbhneoireacht sa saol príobháideach agus sa saol poiblí mar a mbeidh éileamh cuí ann;
 - iarracht chun deireadh a chur, más féidir é, le srianta a chuirfeadh nó a d'oibreodh in aghaidh chothú nó fhorbairt na teanga;
 - foráil maidir le hidirchaidreamh le pobal na Gaeilge, agus a gcuid tuairimí a léiriú d'údaráis phoiblí agus gearáin a imscrúdú;
 - dualgas reachtúil a chur ar an Roinn Oideachais chun oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge a spreagadh

Chief Executive,
POBAL

Introduction

POBAL was established in January 1998 during that continuous push-pull of political, social and economic change. The organisation, with its aims of providing strategic direction, advocacy and developmental support for the range of small, disparate Irish language groups on the ground in the North, worked for two years on a purely voluntary basis before receiving funding to open an office and employ two workers in December 1999. The funding at this stage came through Europe and the government of the South. Funding for the Irish language from sources closer to hand was rather scarce.

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement represented an historic departure for the Irish language. For the first time in the North, certain written commitments were made in respect of Irish. These appeared in the section of the document called, Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity, under Economic, Social and Cultural Issues. The GFA commitments are as follows:

- '4. In the context of active consideration currently being given to the UK signing the Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the British Government will in particular in relation to the Irish language, where appropriate and where people so desire it:
- take resolute action to promote the language;
 - facilitate and encourage the use of the language in speech and writing in public and private life where there is appropriate demand;
 - seek to remove, where possible, restrictions which would discourage or work against the maintenance or development of the language;
 - make provision for liaising with the Irish language community, representing their views to public authorities and investigating complaints;
 - place a statutory duty on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate Irish medium education in line with current provision for integrated education;

- agus a éascú de réir na socruithe láithreacha don oideachas comhtháite;
- an scóip atá ann chun Teilifís na Gaeilge a chur ar fáil ar bhonn níos forleithne i dTuaisceart Éireann a scrúdú, mar ábhar práinne, in éineacht le húdaráis iomchuí na Breataine agus i gcomhar le húdaráis chraolacháin na hÉireann;
 - bealaí níos éifeachtaí a lorg chun spreagadh agus tacú airgeadais a thabhairt do léiriú scannán agus clár teilifíse trí Ghaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann; agus
 - na páirtithe a spreagadh chun teacht ar chomhaontú go leanfaidh Tionól nua den tiomantas sin ar shlí a chuirfidh san áireamh mianta agus íogaireachtaí an phobail.'

I leagan oifigiúil Béarla an doiciméid, litríodh go contráilte dhá fhocal as an t-aon trí fhocal Gaeilge sa téacs, ainm na teanga Ghaeilge san áireamh.

Sna cúig bliana déag ó tháinig muid ar an saol, thug POBAL guth straitéiseach do phobal na Gaeilge ó thuaidh, chomh maith le háis aonair eolais agus stocaireachta, ar leibhéalacha náisiúnta agus idirnáisiúnta, maidir le cúinsí ar leith na teanga abhus. Ní raibh riamh ach foireann bheag againn, ach ón chéad lá riamh, bhí muid báite le ceistanna agus le gearáin ó chainteoirí Gaeilge, agus iad ag mothú frustrachais faoin dóigh a raibh an stát ag caitheamh leo. Is maith liom go raibh muid go minic in ann na fadhbanna seo a réiteach. Chuir muid traenáil ardchaighdeánach ar fáil do ghrúpaí Gaeilge, do pholaiteoirí, do chomhlachtaí poiblí, agus d'oibrigh muid le hOifigigh Gaeilge, nuair a bhí ann dóibh, i gComhairlí áitiúil agus i Ranna rialtais. Tá POBAL aitheanta fud fad na hEorpa mar eagraíocht ceannródaíoch i dtaca le monatóireacht na reachtaíochta idirnáisiúnta, leithéidí Cairt na hEorpa do Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh agus an Creatchoinbhinsiún Um Chosaint na Mionlaigh Náisiúnta. Rinne muid taighde agus co-ordú ar bhonn uile-oileáin, mar shampla ar cheist shainriachtanais an pháiste le Gaeilge. D'athraigh muid áit agus íomhá na Gaeilge mar chuid lárnach de chlár chearta daonna an Tuaiscirt, i gcomhthéacs an phróiseas leasú agus claohlú coimhlinte.

Ó 2004, stiúir muid an feachtas ar son Acht na Gaeilge, reachtaíocht a gheall rialtas na Breataine a thabhairt isteach i gComhaontú Chill Rimhinn i 2006. Agus muid i mbun na hoibre seo, d'ardaigh muid

- explore urgently with the relevant British authorities, and in co-operation with the Irish broadcasting authorities, the scope for achieving more widespread availability of Teilifís na Gaeilge in Northern Ireland;
- seek more effective ways to encourage and provide financial support for Irish language film and television production in Northern Ireland; and
- encourage the parties to secure agreement that this commitment will be sustained by a new Assembly in a way which takes account of the desires and sensitivities of the community.'

This is the text as it appears in the official English language versions of the Agreement. Two of the three words in Irish in the text have been misspelled, including the word 'Gaeilge', the name of the language itself.

In the fifteen years since our inception, POBAL has been the strategic voice of the Irish speaking community in the North and a unique information and lobbying resource about the circumstances of the language here, on a national and international level. With only ever a small team of workers, since day one, we have received thousands of queries and complaints from Irish speakers frustrated because of their treatment by the state, and happily, we have been able to resolve very many of these difficulties. We have provided high quality training for local groups, for politicians and for public bodies, and worked with Irish language Officers where they exist in local Councils and in government Departments. We are recognised on a Europe-wide basis as setting the bar for monitoring of international legislation such as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities; we have carried out all-Ireland research and co-ordination around the needs of Irish speaking children with special needs; and we have changed the positioning and the perception of the Irish language as part of a broader human rights agenda within the North's conflict resolution and transformation context.

Since 2004, we have led the campaign for the Irish Language Act, to which the British government committed itself in the St Andrews' Agreement of 2006. During the course of this work, we have raised

próifíl na Gaeilge go náisiúnta agus go hidirnáisiúnta, agus d'éirigh linn tacaíocht as cuimse a mhealladh chuig éilimh ar son chur i gcríoch na ngealltanais rialtasach seo ó Chomhairle na Náisiún Aontaithe ar Chearta Sibhialta, Eacnamaíoch, Sóisialta agus Cultúrtha; ó Choiste na Saineolaithe ar Chairt na hEorpa do Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh agus ón Choiste Comhairleach ar an Chreatchoinbhinsiún un Chosaint na Mionlaigh Náisiúnta.

Agus Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta agus Comhaontú Chill Rímhinn ag imirt tionchair lárnach ar fhorbairtí san obair s'againn ar son na teanga, ní aon iontas é gur shocraigh POBAL an cúig bliana déag ó síníodh Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta a shonrú. Bheartaigh muid an foilseachán seo a chur le chéile mar léarscáil am na huaire, ag bailiú tuairimí pearsanta líon bheag d'eochair imreoirí i réimsí éagsúla oibre ar son na teanga. D'iarr muid ar gach duine acu a c(h)uid smaointe a scríobh ar an cheist seo a leanas, 'Cúig bliana déag ó Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta: an bhfuil na gealltanais i leith na Gaeilge á gcomhlíonadh?' Mar sin, na tuairimí a léirítear ar na leathanaigh seo, is tuairimí an údair amháin iad, nach ionann i gcónaí iad agus tuairimí POBAL. Os rud é go raibh muid ar lorg tuairimí pearsanta cainteoirí Gaeilge, in áit dearcadh na bpáirtithe polaitiúla, dhírigh muid ar phobal na Gaeilge féin, ag cur cuireadh roimh ghníomhaithe teanga, acadúlaigh, thuairisceoirí, mhúinteoirí, thuismitheoirí agus daoine nach iad, agus d'iarr muid orthu ailt dhátheangacha a scríobh. Is fiú a shonrú, b'fhéidir, go raibh leis ce ar leith ar na mná a gcuid tuairimí a nochtadh ar pháipéar. Seans go raibh roinnt acu ag iompar ualaigh níos troime – obair, teaghlaigh, páistí – nó b'fhéidir go raibh ciall cheannaithe acu, agus iad den tuairim gurbh fhearr leis an tsochaí seo mná a bheith ina dtost, agus go háirithe má tá Gaeilge acu chomh maith! Fair play do na mná a scríobh alt dúinn le foilsíú taobh lena gcomhghleacaithe fear. Obair bhreise a bhí ann do gach rannpháirtí acu, agus iad uilig gnóthach go leor cheana féin. Chomh maith, chuardaigh muid tuairimí pearsanta bheirt Ghael atá ina n-ionadaithe polaitiúla, Rosaleen Mac Corlaigh, BTR de chuid Shinn Féin agus Doimínic Ó Brolcháin, BTR de chuid an Pháirtí Daonlathaigh Sóisialta agus Lucht Oibre. Níor lorg muid go córasach ionchur ó na páirtithe polaitiúla eile, ar dhá phríomh chúis. Ar an chéad dul síos, is ar lorg tuairimí lucht labhartha na Gaeilge a bhí muid, agus mar sin, d'iarr muid ailt i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla orthu. Ní raibh sé soiléir

the profile of the Irish language nationally and internationally, gaining unprecedented support for the implementation of these governmental commitments from the United Nations Council on Civil, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, from the Committee of Experts on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and from the Advisory Committee for the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Not surprisingly, given the centrality of the Good Friday and St Andrews' Agreements to developments in our work for the Irish language, POBAL decided to mark the fifteen years since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. We decided to compile this publication as a snapshot of opinions, collecting together the personal views of a small number of key players engaged in Irish language activity of various kinds. We asked each of them to give their own thoughts on the following question, 'Fifteen years after the Good Friday Agreement: are the promises made in relation to the Irish language being fulfilled?' The views you see reproduced in the publication are those of each individual author, and not necessarily those of POBAL. Since we wanted the publication to reflect the personal views of Irish speakers themselves, rather than the views of political parties, we focussed on the community, inviting activists, academics, journalists, teachers, parents and others to contribute bilingual articles. It is worth noting that women in particular seem to have a reluctance to commit opinions to paper. Perhaps some were carrying a heavier burden – work, family, children – or perhaps experience warns them that society still prefers women to be seen and not heard, and Irish speaking women, doubly so! Far play then to the women who contributed articles alongside their male colleagues. Contributing to this publication was an additional task for people who are already busy. We also sought the personal views of two Irish speakers who are also political representatives, Rosie Mc Corley MLA from Sinn Féin and Dominic Ó Brolcháin, a Social Democratic and Labour Party MLA. We did not systematically approach other political parties for two main reasons. Firstly, we wanted the views of Irish speakers, and we asked for articles to be submitted in both Irish and English. It is not obvious to us that many members of the Unionist parties and Alliance would have wished to nominate someone to rise to this challenge, even if

dúinn go mbeadh páirtithe na n-Aontachtach agus Páirtí na Comhghuaillíochta ar bís le hurlabhraithe a ainmniú le tabhairt faoin dhúshlán seo, fiú dá mbeadh siad in ann duine a aimsiú. Ar an dara dul síos, bhí sé leagtha amach againn gan tús áit a thabhairt do dhearcadh na bpáirtithe polaitiúla iontu féin, ós rud é go bhfuil go leor bealaí eile acu siúd lena dtuairimí a léiriú.

Chomh maith leis na hailt, chuir muid suirbhé gairid le chéile le cur roimh mhúinteoirí agus mhic léinn, á fhiafraí díobh faoin mhéid atá na gealltanais i leith na Gaeilge san dá chomhaontú, Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta agus Comhaontú Chill Rimhinn, á gcomhlíonadh, dar leo. San iomlán, bhailigh muid 140 suirbhé le linn chomhdháil aon-lae de chuid Chomhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (15 Márta 2013) agus ó mhic léinn sa chúrsa PGCSE Gaeilge ag Coláiste na hOllscoile Naomh Muire. Tá torthaí an tsuirbhé le feiceáil i gcaibidil sa doiciméad seo. Gabhann muid buíochas leo uilig a líon isteach an suirbhé, agus le rannpháirtithe an fhoilseacháin seo. Tá muid buíoch daoibh uilig as deis a thapaigh le hamharc siar thar cúig bliana déag agus bhur gcuid smaointe a roinnt linn. Mar a luaitear i roinnt do na hailt, bhí dóchas ann faoi bhearta Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, go soláthraíodh tuilleadh mhaoinithe d'eagraíochtaí Gaeilge. Casadh íorónta é go bhfuil POBAL anois ar eagrais do na heagrais Ghaeilge atá faoi bhagairt a ndúnta mar gheall ar mholtaí Foras na Gaeilge, deireadh a chur le bunmhaoiniú. Dar ndóigh, tá an Foras faoi stiúir na Roinne Cultúir ó thuaidh agus na Roinne Gaeltachta ó dheas, na ranna féin atá ina gcaomhnóirí de chuid an dá rialtas ar ghealltanais na gComhaontaithe. Ní fhaca na heagrais Gaeilge moltaí an Fhorais, ach deirtear go bhfuil toadhcháil maoinithe i bhfad níos fabhraí i ndán do na heagrais atá lonnaithe i mBaile Átha Cliath. Más amhlaidh atá sé, beidh sé tubaisteach d'infreastruchtúr neamhfhorbartha na teanga sa Tuaisceart. Dar leis na 19 n-eagrais bunmhaoinithe ar fad, dhéanfadh cur chuige an Fhorais dochar buan do-leasaithe don Ghaeilge fud fad na tíre as seo amach.

Cúig bliana déag i ndiaidh Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, an bhfuil áit ann d'eagrais neamhspleácha, cheannródaíochta Gaeilge a bhfuil eolas áitiúil agus saintaithí thar na bearta acu? Ag léamh na n-alt san fhoilseachán seo, is cinnte go bhfuil na riachtanais a bhí ann i 1998 go fóill ann inniu, agus go mbeidh ról ann do 'laochra' na teanga ar fad as seo amach má tá an teanga le forbairt agus le bogadh chun cinn.

they had been able to. Secondly, we did not want to focus on the stance of political parties as such, since political parties have many other means to make their views heard.

In addition to the articles, we put together a short survey to collate the views of teachers and students as to the extent to which the commitments to the Irish language and to Irish Medium Education made in the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement have been met. In total, 140 completed surveys were gathered during Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta's one-day conference (16 March 2013) and from Irish speaking PGCSE students at St Mary's University College. The findings of the survey are contained in a separate chapter. We should like to thank all those who filled in surveys and all of our contributors for their efforts in looking back over the past fifteen years and sharing their personal thoughts with us. As a number of articles mention, funding for Irish language organisations has been one of the things that was to be addressed by the GFA. Ironically, POBAL is now one of a number of Irish language organisations facing closure under Foras na Gaeilge proposals to end core funding. Of course, Foras itself is under the direction of the North's Department of Culture and the South's Gaeltacht Department; these two bodies being the guardians of the promises made by the two governments in the Agreements. It is rumoured that the proposals, which the Irish Language organisations themselves have not seen, will favour Dublin-based organisations, with disastrous consequences for the much less developed infrastructure in the North. All nineteen organisations currently receiving core-funding have said that Foras's approach will damage the Irish language throughout the country into the foreseeable future.

Fifteen years on from the Good Friday Agreement, is there a place for independent, ground-breaking Irish language organisations with local knowledge and unparalleled expertise? Judging from the contributions to this publication, the need that existed in 1998 is still there today and the Irish language will need all its champions to help it move forward.

Dónall P. Ó Baoill



Is fear Gaeltachta as Dún na nGall é Dónall P. Ó Baoill. Bhain sé céim B.A. onóracha amach sa Ghaeilge agus sa Mhatamaitic agus Ardteastas san Oideachas in Ollscol na Gaillimhe. Bronnadh na céimeanna M.A. agus Ph.D sa teangeolaíocht air in Ollscoil Mhichigan sna Stáit Aontaithe. Bhí sé mar thaighdeoir in Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann ó 1974 -1999. Ceapadh mar Ollamh le Gaeilge agus mar Cheann ar Roinn an Léinn Cheiltigh in Ollscoil na Banríona, Béal Feirste é ó 1999-2011.

Tá mórán leabhar agus alt scríofa aige ar ghnéithe den teangeolaíocht, de theanga na Gaeilge, den bhéaloideas, de Bhéarla na hÉireann, den stair shóisialta, de mhúineadh na teanga, den dátheangachas agus ar Theanga Comharthaíochta na mBodhar in Éirinn. Tá ailt scríofa aige ar fhorbairt agus ar phleanáil teanga, ar shochtheangeolaíocht na Gaeilge agus tá eagarthóireacht déanta aige ar na foilseachain *Teanga, The Journal of Celtic Linguistics, Scáthlán agus Language and Politics (1-25)*.

Dónall P. Ó Baoill is a native speaker of Irish from Donegal. He graduated from University College Galway with a B.A. Honours degree in Irish and Mathematics and a Higher Diploma in Education. He studied linguistics at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor where he was awarded an M.A. and a Ph.D. He was a researcher in the Linguistics Institute of Ireland 1974-1999 and was appointed Professor of Irish and Head of Irish and Celtic Studies at Queen's University Belfast 1999-2011.

He has published widely in different fields covering such areas as the teaching and learning of Irish, descriptions of Modern Irish dialects, phonology and syntax, language planning and standardisation, bilingualism, language contact, Irish-English, Irish Sign Language, Travellers' Cant, linguistic typology in the languages of Europe, Irish folklore and on various topics within the field of theoretical and applied linguistics. He has edited various publications, *Teanga, The Journal of Celtic Linguistics, Scáthlán and Language and Politics (1-25)*.

Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta cúig bliana déag ar aghaidh – roinnt smaointe

Is mithid breithiúnas éigin a thabhairt ar an éifeacht a bhí ag gealltanais éagsúla i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta (1998) agus i gComhaontú Chill Rìmhinn (2006) ar theanga na Gaeilge agus a bhfuil i ndán di as seo amach i dTuaisceart Éireann.

Is é an chéad rud a rithfeadh le duine agus é ag iarraidh breithiúnas éigin a thabhairt ar a bhfuil tarlaite go dtí seo go bhfuil éagothramaíocht mhór idir an dul chun cinn atá déanta i réimsí éagsúla thar a chéile agus seans go bhfuil cúiseanna ar leith leis sin. Tá cuma air gurb é an bealach is lú dua a chleachtann an Rialtas agus ranna stáit agus iad i ngleic leis an Ghaeilge mar a léiríonn na breithiúnais a tugadh ar chur i bhfeidhm mholtaí Chairt na hEorpa. Cuimhnimis gur daoine as taobh amuigh d'Éirinn a bhfuil sainchleachtadh acu ar obair dá leithéid a bhí taobh thiar de na breithiúnais sin.

The Good Friday Agreement fifteen years on – some reflections

It is indeed timely 15 years on to review the outcomes arising from the promises contained in the Good Friday Agreement (1998) and in the St. Andrews Agreement (2006) and their effects on the future of the Irish language in Northern Ireland (NI).

In reviewing the success or otherwise of these agreements, one is immediately struck by the uneven rate of progress made across a variety of language domains and one suspects that there are good reasons for the uneven rate of progress. It appears that Government and Government Departments follow the path of least resistance in coming to terms with Irish language usage as enunciated clearly in the reports prepared by independent assessors in evaluating the application of the recommendations within the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. We

Seanchleachtadh ag Rialtais i mórán mór tíortha ina bhfuil mionteanga(cha) an méid is lú is gá agus is riachtanach a dhéanamh. Tá rud eile a rithfeadh le duine fosta, is é sin nach dtuigeann Rialtais agus lucht pleanála an cúram ar fad a bhaineann le cur chun cinn an dátheangachais i réimsí úra agus i measc aicmí sóisialta uile an phobail. Tá léiriú maith ar an méid sin sna foilseacháin seo a leanas ó Chló Ollscoil na Banríona, BSLCP 1, 3, 6 and 10.¹ Tá diminsiún eile go fóill a bhaineann go mór le Tuaisceart Éireann agus a chuireann bac ar dhíospóireacht oscailte faoin Ghaeilge mar theanga bheo agus a cur chun cinn, mar atá, an scoilt pholaitiúil atá sa phobal agus an dearcadh diúltach a nochtar de shíor faoi aon iarracht an teanga a chur chun cinn ar bhonn forbartha agus cultúrtha.

Cé gur cuireadh bacanna go leor roimh an oideachas lánGhaelach ó thús, is mór atá dearcadh níos folláine agus níos tuisceanaí ag teacht chun cinn le tamall de bhlianta anuas. Tá a bhuíochas sin ag gabháil do go leor dreamanna – an pobal a bhunaigh agus a thacaigh leis an oideachas lánGhaelach roimh agus i ndiaidh Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, bunú Chomhairle na Gaelscolaíochta a chuir bonn marthana faoi réamhphleanáil atá riachtanach i gcás bunú scoileanna, na cúrsaí traenála do mhúinteoirí i gColáiste Mhuire ar mian leo dul le múinteoireacht trí Ghaeilge agus an t-airgead a bronnadh ar lontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta ón bhliain 2000 ar aghaidh le tacú le scoileanna lánGhaeilge a bhí i gcrua-chás – rud a thug slán iad agus a d'fhág inmhathanach iad. Ba as lámha a chéile a rinneadh cuid mhaith den obair sin.

Mheasfadh duine ón méid sin go mbeadh an earnáil seo slán ach is eagal liom go bhfuil sí le láidriú go mór go fóill go háirithe ag an dara leibhéal. Tá tuairiscí againn ó shaineolaithe agus ón Roinn Oideachais féin a leagann amach treoirlínthe do bhunú scoileanna dara leibhéal ach tá an pholaitíocht le ' p ' beag agus 'P' mór ag stánadh sna

should bear in mind that these assessments were carried out by experts from outside of Ireland who have wide expertise and experience in carrying out such evaluations. It is common practice among Governments in countries having one or more minority language to engage with the minimum effort necessary or required. One also gets the impression that Governments and language planners do not fully grasp the full intent and effort needed in promoting and extending bilingualism into new domains and across all the social classes within the minority and majority language communities. This is amply illustrated within a range of domains in the following publications from Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, BSLCP 1, 3, 6 and 10.¹ There is an extra dimension which applies to a large extent to NI and which prohibits open discussion and debate about the promotion of Irish as a living language, namely, the political divide within the community and the negative attitudes which constantly emerge when any effort is undertaken to promote the language on developmental and cultural grounds.

Although Irish-Medium Education (IME) had to overcome much opposition from the educational establishment in the beginning, healthier and more considerate attitudes have emerged in recent years. This state of affairs has arisen because of the pioneering and continuous work undertaken by various groups in the community – those parents and teachers who supported IME before and after the Good Friday Agreement, the setting up of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta who saw the importance and necessity for detailed preplanning in establishing new schools, the training courses established in St. Mary's College of Education for teachers entering the IME sector and the finance granted by the Department of Education (DE) to the Irish Medium Trust from 2000 onwards to assist new schools that found themselves struggling – which succeeded in sustaining them as viable educational institutions. Much of this was achieved through concerted effort by many people.

One would expect from what has been said so far that the IME sector would be on a save footing by this stage, but I'm afraid it needs further strengthening and resourcing particularly at secondary level. Several reports have been made available by educational experts and by DE where

súile arís orainn sna tuairiscí sin. Caithfidh gach scoil anois bheith mór agus amanna an-mhór le rath a bheith uirthi dar leis na saineolaithe – is gné smaointeoireachta é seo a chothaítear go hidirnáisiúnta agus tá sí i ndiaidh a theacht i dtír in Éirinn fosta. Tá contúirt mhór dar liom ag baint leis an róbhéim seo ar fhigiúirí móra nuair is pobal mionlaigh oideachais atá i gceist agus scaipeadh tíreolaíoch orthu nach furasta a cheansú.

Tá rud amháin a chuidigh go mór le teacht chun cinn bunscoileanna lánGhaeilge – is é sin na coinníollacha sin a bhaineann le líon na bpáistí atá riachtanach le scoil lánGhaelach a bhunú agus a choinneáil ar siúl. Cé gur cinneadh tacúil riachtanach é seo, ar ndóigh is cinneadh polaitiúil é ó tharla ionadaithe de chuid Shinn Féin bheith ina nAirí Oideachais ag tréimhsí ar leith. Ach tá contúirt ann mura mbunaítear cinntí mar seo ar bhonn inchosanta go bhféadfadh Airí eile nach mbeadh bá acu le hoideachas lán-Ghaeilge amach anseo na coinníollacha atá ann faoi láthair a chur ar ceal, rud a chuirfeadh moill mhór ar bhunú bunscoileanna úra.

Tá rud amháin a chuideodh go mór le cás na scolaíochta lánGhaeilge – is é sin maoiniú airgid d’earnáil na hOllscolaíochta agus an 3ú leibhéal i gcoitinne le taighde riachtanach leanúnach a dhéanamh ar an iliomad gnéithe a bhaineann leis an sórt seo scolaíochta. Tá mórán le foghlaim againn féin agus ag lucht taighde go hidirnáisiúnta ar a bhfuil bainte amach againn i dTuaisceart Éireann. Ba cheart go mbeadh an Roinn Oideachais gníomhach san obair seo ag cur brú ar lucht an 3ú leibhéal cur go mór lena gcuid taighde i réimsí cuí.

Tá ráchairt leanúnach ar chúrsaí aistriúcháin de gach cineál agus obair ann do dhaoine a bhfuil caighdeán ard Gaeilge acu. Tá feidhm mar sin féin le tuilleadh comhordaithe agus pleanála ar bhonn leathan Rialtais leis an obair a bhaineann le cláracha teilifíse a dhaingniú agus le hobair comhlachtaí a

detailed guidelines have been drawn up for establishing new schools at secondary level. These same reports contend with stark political issues and contentious decisions that need to be made in the second level sector. In order to be successful according to the experts, every school at this level must be capable of dealing with large numbers of students. This is the modern line of thinking which is being cultivated internationally and it has reached our shores as well. There is a great danger in my opinion attached to this overemphasis on large numbers when we are dealing with educational issues for a minority community which has a large geographical distribution and not easy to control and manage.

There is one pivotal decision that enhanced the progress of All-Irish education, namely, the conditions laid down by DE pertaining to the number of children required to establish and maintain a new school. Although this has been a necessary and supportive decision, it is also seen as politically motivated since it has coincided with the periods in which Sinn Féin MLA members held the education portfolio as Ministers of Education. However, there is a danger that if such decisions are not credible and capable of being defended, that other Ministers not as sympathetic to IME at some time in the future could rescind these conditions, a move that would seriously delay the setting up of new primary schools.

There is one other change that would give a much needed boost to IME and that is making sufficient funding available to Universities and other 3rd level institutions to engage in research on a continuous basis on the many aspects of this type of education that needs to be urgently addressed. We ourselves have much to learn about what has been achieved through IME in NI and there is an international research audience out there waiting to hear about our achievements. DE should be much more proactive in promoting such initiatives and should bring some pressure to bear on 3rd level institutions to generate more research in appropriate areas.

There is a high demand for translation services across a wide spectrum of domains and work is available for those with a high level of competence in the Irish language. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need for further coordination and planning by Government in order to place television

dhéanann an obair sin a chaighdeánú. B'fhiú don Rialtas athsmaoineamh a dhéanamh ar an phlean a bhí acu Rannóg Aistriúcháin a bhunú taobh istigh den Státseirbhís. Bhí cuid mhaith oibre déanta ar bhunú na rannóige seo agus tras-chomhaontú ann ó Rannóga uile na Státseirbhíse deich mbliana nó níos mó ó shin. D'fhéadfadh a leithéid de Rannóg a bheith mar chuid lárnach den Straitéis don Ghaeilge atá á hullmhú do Thuaisceart Éireann ag an Aire Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta, Carál Ní Chuilín, faoi láthair.

Tá mórán oibre le déanamh le feacht an phobail a fheabhsú, a mhéadú agus a mhúnlú ionas go mbeidh siad níos tuisceanaí faoi phleanáil teanga, faoin dátheangachas, faoi thaighde agus faoin Ghaeoloideachas féin. Ba cheart go mbeadh straitéis ag lucht na meán cumarsáide faoi threoir ón rialtas leis an obair seo a bhrostú. Tá bearna mhór idir tuairimí an phobail agus pleananna rialtais agus is den riachtanas é meicníocht éigin a bhunú leis an bhearna seo a laghdú.

Tá sé de dhualgas ar na meáin an t-aitheantas poblí is dual di a thabhairt don teanga. Nil an t-aitheantas sin á chothú i gceart faoi láthair agus dá thoradh sin tá oidhreacht na teanga agus an cultúr a leanann di faoi cheilt ar an phobal iomlán. Tá riachtanas le plean cuimsitheach agus le straitéis chinnte don obair seo agus ba mhaith liom a leithéid a fheiceáil i dtreis. D'fhéadfadh na meáin cur go mór le cothú na teanga i measc óg agus aosta trí shraith thaitneamhach cláracha a chraoladh go leanúnach. Lena chois sin, tá práinn le bealaí níos éifeachtaí a chothú idir údarais chraolácháin na Breataine agus Dheisceart na hÉireann sa dóigh go gcuirfear léiriú scannán agus éagsúlacht leathan clár teilifíse ar fáil i dTuaisceart Éireann. Is maith a d'éirigh leis an Chiste Craoltóireachta go dtí seo scileanna a thabhairt do chéimithe óga le tabhairt faoi obair theilifíse agus déanamh cláracha. Ba mhaith liom méadú a fheiceáil ag teacht ar obair agus ar airgeadú an Chiste mar is mór a bheireann sé greim ar aigne agus ar shamhlaíocht daoine óga. Is uathu sin a thiocfas an smaointeoireacht úr agus an spreagadh.

programming on a secure basis and to standardise work done by different companies. The Government should also reconsider their plan to establish a Translation Section within the Civil Service. Many of the necessary arrangements were already agreed across all Civil Service departments more than 10 years ago. Such a Section could be established as an integral part of the proposals for the Strategy for Irish for NI now being prepared by the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Carál Ní Chuilín.

There is an urgent need to improve, increase and cultivate awareness among the public in order that they be better informed about language planning, bilingualism, research matters and IME. A Government strategy agreed and implemented through the media should be put in place to stimulate such awareness. There is a great gap between public opinion and Government plans and it is essential that a mechanism be put in place to reduce that gap.

The media should ensure that Irish gets due public recognition. That recognition is not being fulfilled in a proper fashion at this time and as a result speakers are not being enabled to access their cultural and linguistic heritage. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive plan and a definite well defined strategy to be put in place to remedy this situation and I would very much like to see this being prioritised. The media have a particular role to play in cultivating and promoting Irish among all ages through the continuous presentation of a series of interesting and well thought out programmes. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to instigate and develop more efficient ways of cooperation between the broadcasting authorities in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. This would result in enhancing film making and in making available a wide range of television programmes in NI. The Irish Language Broadcasting Fund has thus far proven very successful in imparting necessary production and television skills and training to young graduates. I would like to see the work and financial assistance for this Fund being expanded and increased because it has captured the minds and imagination of young people in a big way. They will bring new thinking and inspirational ideas to the sector.

Dá thairbhe seo uilig, tá leathdhearmad déanta ar na healaíona agus is fuar an tacaíocht a fhaigheann siad. Tá easpa tuisceana ar a dtábhacht agus ar a ról i gcothú an dátheangachais agus i gcruthú measa amuigh ansin sa phobal ar an luach is ceart dúinn a chur orthu. Tá an oiread sin gnéithe de shaol Thuaisceart Éireann ar fiú go mór iad a chur os comhair a muintire féin gan trácht ar an domhan mhór. Tá luach ar an obair seo agus suim nach beag ag muintir na háite agus ag cuairteoirí araon ann. Thig seo a chothú ar na meáin, sna scoileanna, sa drámaíocht, san fhilíocht agus sa cheol gan ach beagán réimsí a lua. Arís eile ní fheicim an Roinn Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta ná an Roinn Oideachais ag cur dlús ceart leis an chineál seo gníomhaíochta agus oibre ar na leibhéil chuí. Ba cheart go dtiocfadh fostaíocht dá bharr seo uilig agus is mithid slógú a dhéanamh ar an eolas agus ar na scileanna atá lonnaithe sa phobal.

Is cuma cén tír ina mbíonn an dátheangachas le cur i bhfeidhm, bíonn sé gan rath mura mbíonn reachtaíocht cheart i bhfeidhm le treisiú leis na hiarrachtaí a dhéanann an pobal gníomhú trí bhíthin na mionteanga. Tá a shliocht ar an Ghaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann, is doiligh aon cheart a bhaint amach di. Níl de leigheas air seo ach reachtaíocht agus fágann sin tábhacht mhór le hAcht na Gaeilge. Tá racán leanúnach faoi chomharthaíocht agus tá sí ina cnag polaitíochta gach uair a ardaítear an cheist. Tá gach seans gur reachtaíocht ar leith is fearr a réiteodh báire na comharthaíochta. Caithefeasacht an phobail a ardú ionas go dtuigfidh siad gur cuid intreach de phobail dhátheangacha/ilteangacha an chomharthaíocht dhátheangach/ilteangach. Tá sé thar am anois an cheist seo a shocrú go buan ionas go bhfeicfidh daoine teangacha an phobail ar chomharthaí, ar fhoirgnítí agus i láithreacha oibre. Ní fheicim go ndéanann ranna stáit mórán d'athbhreithniú ar a gcuid polasaithe agus ar a n-éifeacht nó a mhalairt le fáil amach an bac nó cuidiú iad d'úsáideoirí na teanga. Tá sé in am aithris a dhéanamh ar eiseamláir an chórais dlí i bPoblacht na hÉireann agus cead a thabhairt Gaeilge a labhairt agus a úsáid sna cúirteanna i dTuaisceart Éireann. I dtaca leis an chraoltóireacht de, tá sí faoi smacht Westminster go fóill beag ach is beag tagairt don Ghaeilge a bhíonn i reachtaíocht craoltóireachta na Ríochta Aontaithe.

The end result of all this is that Irish language Arts have been neglected and are only poorly supported. There is a great lack of understanding about their importance and the role they play in enriching and promoting bilingualism, in nurturing respect and in promoting recognition of the value we should attach to artistic activities. There are many aspects of life in NI that need public recognition through exposure in the media in NI and the outside world. There is a price attached to such work and local populations as well as visitors take a particular interest in the outcomes. The promotion and development of the Arts can be achieved through participation in the media, in our schools, through drama, poetry and music to mention but a few pivotal areas. Once again, I don't see the expedition of such activities by either the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) or the Department of Education (DE) at the relevant levels. Such activities would promote employment and it's time to garner the information, expertise and skills prevailing in the community.

Promotion of bilingualism in whatever setting is greatly hampered and unsuccessful if the efforts of the community to engage through the minority language is not fully supported and strengthened by appropriate legislation. This is borne out with regard to the use of Irish in NI; it is difficult to achieve any rights for the language. The remedy is to have proper legislation in place and the Irish Language Act takes precedence. Signage of all sorts is a continuous bone of contention and becomes a political football whenever the subject is broached. I am of the impression that we need separate legislation to deal adequately and impartially with this subject. Public awareness must be enhanced so that it understands that bi-/multi-lingual signage is an integral part of the life of bi-/multi-lingual communities. The question of signage should now be permanently resolved exposing the community to their community languages on signage, on buildings and in places of work. State Bodies do not review policies and their effectiveness in order to ascertain whether they are a help or hindrance to language users. The right to speak and use Irish in legal cases as exemplified by the Courts in the Republic of Ireland should be emulated by the legal system and Courts in NI. Broadcasting is at present controlled from Westminster and hence broadcasting legislation in the United Kingdom has very few references to the Irish language. This

Ba cheart smaoineamh air sin agus a rá leis na húdaráis go bhfuil sé in am smaoineamh ar chuid de na cumhachtaí craolacháin a tharmligean trí reachtaíocht chraoltóireachta a lorg ó Westminster agus dá thoradh sin tuilleadh mór tacaíochta a thabhairt do chraoladh na teanga ar aerthonnta Thuaisceart Éireann. Bíonn caomhnú agus cothú mionteangacha mar chomhartha fiúntais agus feabhais ar oibriú an daonlathais agus caithfear iomaíochtaí a sheachaint mar nach chun tairbhe mionteangacha coimhlint dá leithéid.

Bíonn ról ar leith ag eagrais dheonacha i gcur chun cinn mionteangacha agus i mórán cásanna ní bheadh rath ar obair Rialtas nó ar obair ghníomhairí teanga gan an cúltaca a thugann eagrais dheonacha bheith ag réiteach an bhealaigh dóibh. Bhí agus tá dlúthbhaint ag an phobal i dTuaisceart Éireann agus ag eagrais dheonacha na Gaeilge le cur chun cinn bearta agus feachtais ar son na teanga. Gríosaíonn obair na n-eagras deonach an pobal agus tugann treoir agus misneach dóibh ionas gur éifeachtaí a gcuid iarrachtaí ar áiseanna agus ar sheirbhísí níos fearr a bhaint amach don teanga. Is beag maoiniú a bhí le fáil go dtí le gairid sa Tuaisceart agus níl deacrachtaí maoinithe Foras na Gaeilge don earnáil dheonach réitithe mar is ceart go fóill. Is guth ionadaíoch neamhspleách guth deonach an phobail agus ba cheart tacaíocht i bhfad níos cuimsithí a thabhairt do na heagrais sin a labhraíonn ar son an phobail trí mhaoiniú stáit agus trí thacaíocht trasteorann.

ⁱ Kirk, J. M. and Ó Baoill, D.P. eds (2000) *Language and Politics – Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland. Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics.* (BSLCP) 1. Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, Béal Feirste.

Kirk, J. M. and Ó Baoill, D.P. eds (2001) *Linguistic Politics: Language Policies for Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Scotland.* BSLCP 3. Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, Béal Feirste.

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Kirk, J.M. and Ó Baoill, D.P. eds (2003) *Towards our Goals in Broadcasting, the Press, the Performing Arts and the Economy: Minority Languages in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland.* BSLCP 10. Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, Béal Feirste.

ought to be discussed and authorities should be approached and asked to consider delegating some of these powers by requesting broadcasting legislation from Westminster and as a result to increase the support for Irish language broadcasting on NI's airwaves. The preservation and cultivation of minority languages is the hallmark of any well run democracy and above all we must avoid confrontational competition because such behaviour is detrimental to the well being of each minority language.

The voluntary sector plays a significant role in promoting minority languages and in many cases the work of governments and language activists does not prosper without the backup and preparation supplied by voluntary groups. The NI community and voluntary sector have always played a significant role in campaigning and planning on behalf of the Irish language. The work of the voluntary sector stimulates the community and encourages and directs their activities so that their efforts are more efficient in securing better services and facilities for the Irish language. Until recently, very little financial assistance was available to the Irish language voluntary sector in NI and the difficulties encountered by Foras na Gaeilge in providing financial assistance to the different voluntary bodies has not been resolved satisfactorily. The voice of the voluntary sector is an independent one and more comprehensive assistance should be provided for those organisations which represent the community through the provision of state grants and cross-border support.

ⁱ Kirk, J. M. and Ó Baoill, D.P. eds (2000) *Language and Politics – Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Scotland. Belfast Studies in Language, Culture and Politics.* (BSLCP) 1. Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, Béal Feirste.

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Doiminic Ó Brolcháin



Ball tofa de Thionól Thuaisceart do Pháirtí Daonlathach Sóisialta an Lucht Oibre don Iúr agus Ard Mhacha is ea Doiminic Ó Brolcháin, agus Urlabhraí an Pháirtí ar an Ghaeilge leis. Tá sé aitheanta mar ghníomhaí teanga.

Múinteoir Gaeilge ba ea é ar feadh 25 bliana go dtí go ndeachaigh sé leis an pholaitíocht nuair a toghadh é mar Bhall Tionóil sa bhliain 2003. Céimí de chuid Ollscoil na Ríona i mBéal Feirste é áit ar ghnóthaigh sé céim BE agus Teastas larchéimí san Oideachas, tá céim ME sa Ghaeilge aige ó Ollscoil Uladh.

Dominic Ó Brolcháin is the Social, Democratic and Labour Party Assembly Member for Newry and Armagh, and the party's spokesperson on the Irish language. He is a well know language activist. He taught Irish for 25 years until he became a political representative in 2003. He holds a BA from Queen's University in Belfast, and a Post graduate Certificate In Education as well as a MA in Irish from the University of Ulster.

An Comhaontú – An bhfíorófar an Fhís?

Tá sé cúig bliana déag i mbliana ó síníodh Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta ar an 10ú Aibreán 1998. Tháinig leagan Gaeilge den Chomhaontú i nGaeilge tríd an bhosca litreach mar a bheadh chomhartha dóchais na ré úire ann. Cuireadh gnóithe cultúrtha agus ceart i gcroílár an Chomhaontaithe. Conradh idirnáisiúnta is ea é idir Rialtas na hÉireann agus Rialtas na Ríochta Aontaithe agus dualgas orthu araon féachaint chuige go gcuirfear i bhfeidhm é. Leagadh an Comhaontú dualgas ar an dá rialtas. Nuair a smaoiníonn muid mar Ghaeilgeoirí, siar ar an am sin, cuimhníonn muid ar an dóchas a bhí ionainn go dtiocfadh leas na teanga as an Chonradh nua.

Cuireadh feidhmeannas nua ar bun, mar chuid de chóras nua rialtais, bunaithe ar roinnt na cumhachta idir na páirtithe uilig a raibh ionadaithe tofa acu de réir foirmle de Hondt agus a raibh forais trasteorann, ina measc, Foras na Gaeilge a bhí dírithe ar an teanga a chur chun cinn ar fud na hÉireann. Tugann comóradh seo cúig bliana déag an Chomhaontaithe deis dúinn an dul chun cinn atá déanta ó thaobh na Gaeilge de a mheas.

In Sraith a Trí den Chomhaontú (Saincheisteanna Eacnamaíochta, Sóisialta agus Cultúir) atá an Ghaeilge luaite ach go háirithe:

'4. I gcomhthéacs an bhreithnithe ghníomhaigh atá á dhéanamh faoi láthair maidir leis an Ríocht Aontaithe do shíniú Chairt Chomhairle na hEorpa do Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh, déanfaidh Rialtas na Breataine go háirithe i ndáil leis an nGaeilge, más cuí agus más mian le daoine amhlaidh:

The Agreement – Will the Vision be Achieved?

This year, it will be fifteen years since the Good Friday Agreement was signed on 19th April 1998. An Irish language version of the Agreement fell through the letter box like a sign of hope for the new era. Cultural rights and cultural affairs were placed at the heart of the Agreement. It is an international treaty between the Irish government and the UK government and they both had responsibility for its implementation. The Agreement placed duty on the two governments. When we, as Irish speakers, think back to this time, we remember the hope we felt that the new Agreement would bring benefit for the language.

A new Executive was established, as part of the new governmental system, based on power sharing between all the parties that had elected representatives according to the D'Hondt formula, and which had cross-border bodies, including Foras na Gaeilge, which was intended to promote the language throughout Ireland. This fifteen year anniversary of the Agreement gives us a chance to measure the progress that has been made for the Irish language.

It is in Strand Three of the Agreement (Economic, Social and Cultural Issues) that the Irish language gets particular mention:

'4. In the context of active consideration currently being given to the UK signing the Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the British Government will in particular in relation to the Irish language, where appropriate and where people so desire it:

- gníomh diongbháilte chun an teanga a chur chun cinn;
- úsáid na teanga a éascú agus a spreagadh sa chaint agus i scríbhneoireacht sa saol príobháideach agus sa saol poiblí mar a mbeidh éileamh cuí ann:
- iarracht chun deireadh a chur, más féidir é, le srianta a chuirfeadh nó a d'oibreodh in aghaidh chothú nó fhorbairt na teanga;
- foráil maidir le hidirchaidreamh le pobal na Gaeilge, agus a gcuid tuairimí a léiriú d'údaráis phoiblí agus gearáin a imscrúdú;
- dualgas reachtúil a chur ar an Roinn Oideachais chun oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge a spreagadh agus a éascú de réir na socruithe láithreacha don oideachas comhtháite;
- an scóip atá ann chun Teilifís na Gaeilge a chur ar fáil ar bhonn níos forleithne i dTuaisceart Éireann a scrúdú, mar ábhar práinne, in éineacht le húdaráis iomchuí na Breataine agus i gcomhar le húdaráis chraolacháin na hÉireann;
- bealaí níos éifeachtaí a lorg chun spreagadh agus tacú airgeadais a thabhairt do léiriú scannán agus clár teilifíse trí Ghaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann; agus
- na páirtithe a spreagadh chun teacht ar chomhaontú go leanfaidh Tionól nua den tiomantas sin ar shlí a chuirfidh san áireamh mianta agus íogaireachtaí an phobail.'
- take resolute action to promote the language;
- facilitate and encourage the use of the language in speech and writing in public and private life where there is appropriate demand;
- seek to remove, where possible, restrictions which would discourage or work against the maintenance or development of the language;
- make provision for liaising with the Irish language community, representing their views to public authorities and investigating complaints;
- place a statutory duty on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate Irish medium education in line with current provision for integrated education;
- explore urgently with the relevant British authorities, and in co-operation with the Irish broadcasting authorities, the scope for achieving more widespread availability of Teilifís na Gaeilge in Northern Ireland;
- seek more effective ways to encourage and provide financial support for Irish language film and television production in Northern Ireland; and
- encourage the parties to secure agreement that this commitment will be sustained by a new Assembly in a way which takes account of the desires and sensitivities of the community.'

As an liosta seo is doiligh aon mhórghníomh amháin a áireamh atá déanta ag Rialtas na Breataine lena dhualgais i léith na teanga a chomhlíonadh faoin Chomhaontú, seachas b'fhéidir, an t-airgead a chuir siad ar fáil don Chiste Scannánaíochta agus an Chiste Infheistíochta.

Maidir leis an Chairt Eorpach um Theangacha Réigiúnacha no Mionlaigh, nuair a shínigh Rialtas na Breataine é sa bhliain 2001 tar éis moille de naoi mbliana, thiomnaigh sé in éineacht le Rialtas Thuaisceart Éireann gníomhaíocht dearfach a dhéanamh chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn - tríd an oideachas, na húdaráis riaracháin, na forais dlí agus ceart, na meáin, imeachtaí cultúrtha, an saol sóisialta agus eacnamaíochta, mar aon le malairtí tras teorann.

From this list, it is difficult to find any one significant action taken by the British government to fulfil its obligations under the Agreement, except, perhaps, for the funding it made available for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Irish Language Investment Fund.

As to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, when the British government signed it in 2001 after a delay of nine years, it pledged, along with the government of Northern Ireland to take positive action to promote the Irish language – through education, administrative authorities, the legal and court institutions, the media, cultural activities, social and economic life as well as cross border exchanges.

Is í an Cháirt agus na tuairiscí a dhéanann an Coiste Saineolaithe (COMEX) uirthi an príomhbhealach atá againn leis an dul chun cinn atá déanta maidir le cúrsaí teanga i gcomhthéacs Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta de a mheas go hoibiachtúil. De réir na tuairisce is déanaí uathu in Aibreán 2012 (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/report/EvaluationReports/UKECRML3_en.pdf) tá nithe áirithe ann a bhfuil dul chun cinn sásúil déanta iontu agus nithe eile nach bhfuil. Tá beagán déanta, ach tá cuid mhór le déanamh go fóill, agus d'aithin pobal na Gaeilge nárbh fhéidir dul chun tosaigh a dhéanamh gan reachtaíocht chuí a bheith ann a chuirfeadh ar na forais phoiblí éagsúla soláthar ceart a dhéanamh don teanga – Acht na Gaeilge.

Tugadh aitheantas don mhian sin nuair a gealladh faoi Chomhaontú Chill Rìmhinn a síníodh i Mí Dheireadh Fómhair na bliana 2006 go mbeadh Acht Gaeilge, le cois Straitéis i léith na Gaeilge ann.

“The Government will introduce an Irish Language Act reflecting on the experience of Wales and Ireland and work with the incoming Executive to enhance and protect the development of the Irish Language.”

Seo muid anois seacht mbliana tar éis Chill Rìmhinn agus gan muid a bheith a dhath ar bith níos fearr as ná mar a bhí ag an am. Is fíor gur cuireadh moltaí amach i measc an phobail le haghaidh comhairliúcháin ar Straitéis Gaeilge agus deirtear go mbeidh eolas againn ar na torthaí faoi mhí an Mheithimh. Táthair ann a cheapann nach bhfuil sa Straitéis féin ach sop in áit na scuaibe ceal Acht Gaeilge a bheith ann agus, ar an lámh eile de, ceapann daoine eile gur céim eile chun tosaigh í.

Níl amhras ar bith ann ach go bhfuil dearcadh na nAontachtach ag cur baic ar chúrsaí – nach bhfuil siad réidh fós glacadh le hAcht Gaeilge – aontaíonn COMEX nár cheart go ligfí dóibh a leithéid a dhéanamh. Níl ceachtar den dá rialtas sásta a ladhar a chur isteach sa scéal toisc go mbaineann cúrsaí teangan le nithe cineachta.

Ní raibh aon tagairt ach go háirithe d’Acht na Gaeilge taobh amuigh den chaibidil deiridh a bhain le gnóithe ó Chomhaontú Chill Rìmhinn nach raibh comhlíonta ag an am. Níor tháinig a dhath óna cainteanna áirithe sin a threisigh cás d’Acht na

The Charter and the reports which the Committee of Experts (COMEX) prepare on it is the main pathway we have to measure objectively the progress that has been made in language matters in the context of the Agreement. According to their latest report in April 2012, (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/report/EvaluationReports/UKECRML3_en.pdf) there are particular things where satisfactory progress has been made and others where it has not. A little has been done but there is a great deal still to be done, and the Irish speaking community recognised that it is not possible to go forward without appropriate legislation which would oblige the various public bodies to provide properly for the language – the Irish language Act.

Recognition was given to this wish when it was promised in the St Andrews Agreement, signed in October 2006, that there would be an Irish Language Act.

“The Government will introduce an Irish Language Act reflecting on the experience of Wales and Ireland and work with the incoming Executive to enhance and protect the development of the Irish Language.”

And here we are now seven years after St Andrews and not one pick the better for it than we were at the time. It’s true that proposals were put out to public consultation on an Irish Language Strategy, and it is said that we will have the results by June. There are those that think the Strategy itself is nothing but a sop in the absence of the Irish Language Act, and on the other hand, other people think it is a step forward.

There is no doubt that the attitude of Unionists is placing obstacles in the path – they are not yet ready to accept the Irish Language Act – COMEX agrees that they should not be allowed to do such a thing. Neither of the two governments is willing to intervene because language issues are connected with devolved matters.

Nor was there any reference to the Irish Language Act outside of the final chapter relating to the still outstanding issues from St Andrews. Nothing came out of those talks that strengthened the case for the Irish Language Act but the British government

Gaeilge ach d'aontaigh rialtas na Breataine ar £20m a chur ar fáil d'fhorbairt na Gaeilge, £8m le haghaidh tógáil cultúrlanna ar fud an Tuaiscirt, agus £12m le tionscail scannánaíochta na Gaeilge a fhorbair a thuilleadh. D'fhéadfaí a rá gur eascair an infheistíocht seo ó na dualgais a leagadh ar Rialtas na Breataine i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta.

Cá bhfágann sin uilig muid maidir leis an fhís atá i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta don Ghaeilge? Ar chuidigh an Comhaontú le forbairt agus dul chun cinn na Gaeilge nó ar fhocail le gaoth an méid atá ann ó thaobh na teanga de?

Is maith ann an fhís atá sa Chomhaontú, níor fíoradh achan cuid de go fóill ach mar sin féin is maith ann don fhís. Tá cuid mhaith déanta; tá níos mó le déanamh, ach de réir a chéile a thógtar na caisleáin.

Tá gá le creat praiticiúil a fhíoróidh fíis an Chomhaontaithe. Is cuidiú í an Chairt Eorpach um Theangacha Réigiúnacha no Mionlaigh ach níl na codanna atá sínithe ag Rialtas na Breataine ó thaobh na Gaeilge de sách láidir; tá gá lena dtreisiú.

Lena chois sin, tá gá le creat reachtach, Acht Gaeilge, a leagfaí amach go soiléir praiticiúil na dualgais dlíthiúla i léith na Gaeilge a bheas ar na rannóga rialtais, ar na forais phoiblí, ar na húdaráis riaracháin, ar an córas dlí agus ceart, agus orthu siúd nach iad. Tá samhail reachtaíochta curtha ar fáil ag POBAL a chuimsíonn na gnéithe uilig d'fhís an Chomhaontaithe agus tuilleadh. Tá POBAL anois deich mbliana i mbun na hoibrithe seo ach níl an bun scríbe sroichte againn go fóill.

B'fhéidir gur céim i dtreo an Achta a bheas sa Straitéis nó sop in áit na scuaibe; beidh le feiceáil. Tá mise den dearcadh dearfach go gcuideoidh an Straitéis leis an leac oighir a leá beagáinín eile. Ach i ndiaidh sin is uile, caithfidh muid pilleadh ar an dá rialtas a shínigh an Comhaontú le go gcomhlíonfaidh siad na dualgais a leagadh orthu ann ó thaobh na Gaeilge de. Fíorófar an fhís!

agreed to provide £20 m for the development of the Irish Language, £8 m for the building of cultural centres throughout the North, and £12m for further development of the Irish Language film. You could say that this investment arose from the duties placed upon the British government in the Good Friday Agreement.

Where does this leave us in relation to the vision for the Irish language in the Good Friday Agreement? Did the Agreement help with the development and promotion of Irish or is what the Agreement says in relation to Irish just so much hot air?

It is good that there is this vision in the Agreement, as yet it has not all been implemented, but nevertheless, it is good that the vision exists. A good deal has been done: there is more to do, but castles are not built overnight.

We need a practical framework which would make the vision in the Agreement real. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is a help but the clauses the British government selected for Irish are very weak; they need to be strengthened.

As well as this, we need a legislative framework, the Irish Language Act, which would lay out clearly and in a practical manner the duties in relation to Irish which will be placed on government departments, public bodies, administrative authorities, the courts system, and all the other various bodies. POBAL has put forward a legislative model which includes all the aspects of the Agreement's vision and more. POBAL has now been working on this for ten years, but we have not yet reached our destination.

Perhaps the Strategy will be a step towards the Act, perhaps it will be a sop; we shall see. I am of the clear opinion that the Strategy will help to melt the iceberg a little more. But when all is said and done, we will have to return to the two governments that signed the Agreement so that they fulfil the duties towards Irish which have been placed on them. The vision will be achieved!

Niall Ó Cathain



Tá baint ag Niall Ó Cathain ar bhonn deonach le breis agus 20 bliain le forbairt pobail agus le hath-insealbhú na Gaeilge i gceantar tuaithe Charn Tóchair/Shleacht Néill ar imeall Mhachaire Rátha. Bhain sé seo le dhá Náiscoil agus Gaelscoil a chur ar bun chomh maith le réimse leathan de thionscadail eacnamaíocha, sóisialta, timpeallachta agus cultúrtha a chur ar fáil chun tacaíocht a thabhairt do phobal dhátheangach Charn Tóchair, pobal atá faoi bhláth. Tá Niall ina chomhalta boird fosta ar Chomhairle na Gaelscolaíochta agus ina Chisteoir ar An Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge.

Niall Ó Catháin has been involved in a voluntary capacity in community development and the reinstatement of the Irish-language within the Rural Carn Tóchair / Sleacht Néill area outside Maghera for over 20 years. This included the setting up of two Náiscoilleana, a Gaelscoil and delivering a wide range of economic, social, environmental and cultural projects to support the growing bilingual community of Carn Tóchair. Niall is also a board member of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and Treasurer of An Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge.

Ní bheidh cearta againn gan neart

Ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil le POBAL as leithscéal a thabhairt dom gan freastal ar mo chruinniú seachtainiúil le mo theiripeoir láimhseála feirge agus ina áit sin mo chuid feirge agus frustrachais a nochtadh san alt seo!

Agus muid ag caint ar láimhseáil feirge, le roinnt míonna anuas chonaic muid fearg na nDílseoirí agus iad i mbun agóide agus círéibeacha as siocair go bhfuil a bhféiniúlacht chultúrtha Bhriotanach á creimeadh, dar leo. Bunaithe ar chlúdach na meán, mhaithfí don té neodrach dá sílfthead sé go bhfuil athnuachan cultúrtha na nGael ag cur isteach ar bhealach éigin ar fhéiniúlacht na ndaoine sin a amharcann orthu féin mar Bhriotanaigh.

I bhfad ón fhírinne atá sé seo. Cúig bliana déag i ndiaidh Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, níl bealach ar bith chun cinn comhaontaithe ag an Rialtas le dul i mbun “gníomhaíochta diongbháilte” chun an teanga a chur chun cinn - a mhalairt ar fad atá fíor, tá an naimhdeas atá ag roinnt Aontachtaithe don teanga ag dul in olcas. Corradh agus sé bliana i ndiaidh Chomhaontú Chill Rimhinn níl Acht Gaeilge ann agus tá neamhaird á déanamh fiú ar an bhua shuntasach sa ‘Bhreithiúnas Treacy’ sa chás McKee v. An Roinn Oideachais (inar soiléiríodh tiomantas an Rialtais chun “forbairt na Gaeilge a mhéadú agus a chosaint”).

We'll have no rights without strength

I would like to thank Pobal for giving me a good excuse to skip my anger management therapist this week and instead commit my anger and frustration to paper through this article.

Sticking with the theme of anger management, over the past few months we have experienced the anger of Loyalism protesting and rioting about the erosion of their British cultural identity. Based on the media coverage, the neutral bystander could be forgiven for believing that the Irish cultural resurgence is starting to impinge in some way on the cultural identity of those who consider themselves British.

This couldn't be further from the truth. Fifteen years on from the Good Friday Agreement, there is no agreed way forward for the Government to take “resolute action” to promote the language - on the contrary, there is a deepening opposition towards the language from a significant section of Unionists. More than six years since the St Andrews Agreement there is no Irish language Act and even the hard-won victory of the ‘Treacy Judgement’ in McKee v. Dept. of Education (that clarified the commitment of Government to “enhance and protect the development of the Irish Language”) is being ignored.

Le roinnt blianta anuas is cosúil go bhfuil béim nua pholaitiúil á cur ag Aontachtóirí ar a naimhdeas i leith na Gaeilge. Lámh ar lámh leis an naimhdeas seo tá glacadh leis an dearcadh neamhréasúnach, agus de dhéanta na fírinne, biogóideach seo gurb ionann an Ghaeilge a bheith ann agus malsa bunúsach - i.e., toisc go gcreideann Aontachtaithe nó Dílseoirí gurb ionann an Ghaeilge a bheith ann agus masla go gcaithfidh sí a bheith, de facto, maslach. Is léir go bhfuil sé seo gan chiall - dá mba mhaslach liom é, mar shampla, daoine rua a bheith i mo chuideachta, bheadh sé de cheart ag daoine mé a cháineadh mar gheall ar an dearcadh claonta sin - ach is é seo an ciuneál dearcadh claonta agus neamhréasúnta atá ag cuid mhór polaiteoirí Aontachtacha maidir leis an Ghaeilge agus ní thugtar a ndúshláin sna meáin.

Déanann an bhacóireacht seo ag Aontachtaithe éadulaingt a bhuanú, déanann sé cearta Gaeilgeoirí a shéanadh agus déanann sé an próiseas síochána neamhiomlán. Tá sé in éadan na moltaí a chuir an Coimisiún um Chearta an Duine in iúl in aighneacht chuig an Choimisiún Eorpach le déanaí (NIHRC 2010) *“Should objections to the use of Irish or other minority languages be based on intolerance or prejudice against the language there a positive duty on the state party to take measures to address this”*.¹ Ar an drochuair tá cás casta agus doláimhsithe againn anseo ina bhfuil an páirtí is mó sa stat ar na príomhchiontóirí maidir le claontacht agus éadulaingt a léiriú i leith na teanga. Ní féidir dul chun cinn a dhéanamh, mar sin, gan idirghníomhaíocht ó chumhacht níos airde.

Do bhunús na bpolaiteoirí, idir Aontachtaithe agus Náisiúnaithe, tuigim nach mbaineann an Ghaeilge mórán le saol s’acu ó lá go lá agus gur ábhar teoriciúil den díospóireacht pholaitiúil atá sa teanga. Creidim gur gá leis a bheith de shíor ag cur i gcuimhne do na polaiteoirí céanna go bhfuil líon na ndaoine a úsáideann an Ghaeilge ó lá go lá ag fás agus go mothaíonn siad faoi chinseal toisc nach ndearnadh beart de réir briathair maidir leis na gealltanais pholaitiúla sa Phróiseas Síochána i leith na Gaeilge.

Tá trí bliana déag caite agam féin agus ag mo bhean chéile ag tógáil ár gclainne trí mheán na Gaeilge agus mar gheall air seo tá dáimh againn lenár bhféiniúlacht agus oidhreacht chultúrtha. Chuir an t-eispéireas seo cor i mo chinniúint féin agus i

Over the past few years there appears to be a renewed political focus of opposition to the Irish language from Unionism. Alongside this opposition has developed an acceptance in many quarters of the irrational, and frankly bigoted, view that the very presence of the Irish language is fundamentally offensive – i.e., because Unionists or Loyalists perceive the presence of the Irish language as being offensive it is, de facto, offensive. This is clearly ridiculous – if, for example, I found it offensive for people with red hair to be in my presence, people would rightly criticise me for my prejudiced views - yet it is this kind of prejudiced and irrational view that is held by many Unionist politicians in relation to the Irish language and it goes largely unchallenged by the media.

This obstructionism by Unionists effectively perpetuates intolerance, denies Irish-speakers their rights and renders the Peace Process incomplete. It is also contrary to the recommendations of the Human Rights Commission stated in a recent submission to the European Commission (NIHRC 2010) *“Should objections to the use of Irish or other minority languages be based on intolerance or prejudice against the language there a positive duty on the state party to take measures to address this”*.¹ Unfortunately we are presented with an impossible situation in that the largest *“state party”* is one of the main offenders in relation to holding prejudice and intolerance against the language. This makes progress virtually impossible without the interaction of some higher power.

I accept that for most politicians, be they Unionist or Nationalist, Irish is not particularly relevant to their everyday life and is largely a hypothetical subject of political debate. I believe that politicians need to be continuously reminded that there are a growing number of people who are using the language in their everyday life and who are feeling increasingly disenfranchised at the lack of delivery on political promises of the Peace Process in relation to the Irish language.

My wife and I have spent the last thirteen years raising our children through the medium of Irish and this has given our family as a whole a real sense of appreciation for our own cultural identity and heritage. This experience has been life changing for

gcinniúint mo mhná céile agus thug sé cúla saibhir dár bpáistí, lena dteanga agus cultúr féin acu agus spéis mhór acu a bheith foghlaim faoi theangacha agus faoi chultúir eile (gan trácht ar na buntáistí oideachasúla a bhaineann leis an Ghaelscolaíocht agus an dátheangachas). Ní amháin go raibh tionchar dearfach aici ar an teaghlach s’againn ach tá súil agam go spreagfaidh sé ár gcuid páistí agus na glúnta atá le teacht leis an rud céanna a dhéanamh.

Is ionann mo chuid páistí agus an chéad ghlúin atá tumtha arís sa teanga agus san oidhreacht agus tá an Ghaeilge mar chuid lárnach de gach rud atá thart orthu. Ní amháin gurb í teanga an bhaile agus teanga an phobail áitiúil í an Ghaeilge, ach tugann sí míniú ar na bailte agus ar na haibhneacha, ar na sléibhte agus ar na bailte fearainn agus is foinse iontach atá sa bhéaloideas saibhir áitiúil dár n-oidhreacht chultúrtha agus den timpeallacht nádúrtha atá thart orainn.. Tá cónaí orainn i gceantar beag taobh amuigh de Mhachaire Rátha i nDeisceart Chontae Dhoire. Tá pobal beag Gaeilge ann ach tá sé ag fás de réir a chéile agus cuid mhór den mhuintir óg ag dul i dtreo na Gaeilge agus cuid mhór tuismitheoirí ag tógáil a gcuid páistí le Gaeilge. Gnáthrud atá ann do pháistí agus do mhuintir óg an phobail seo an Ghaeilge a úsáid ó lá go lá agus cuimsítear an Béarla ar bhealach iontach dearfach chun an t-eispéireas foghlama agus cultúrtha s’acu a shaibhriú.

Cé gur eispéireas iontach a bhí ann dúinn ár gcuid páistí a thógáil trí mheán na Gaeilge, is cúis bhróin dom a bhí ann riamh a bheith ag amharc ar mo pháistí de réir a chéile ag teacht ar an tuiscint gur teanga ísealchéime atá sa Ghaeilge nach bhfuil áit ann di taobh amuigh den bhaile agus denár bpobal beag féin. Cuireann sé idir dhíomá agus fhearg orm go gcaithfidh mé mo chuid páistí a thabhairt chuig áiteanna ar nós Eamhain Macha nó Chlochán an Aifir, agus in ainneoin na margáíochta a bheith déanta ar an ateangaireacht ilteangach atá ar fáil iontu, nach bhfuil ateangaireacht ann sa teanga a bhí mar fhoinsé an bhéaloidis agus an chultúir atá taobh thiar de na tarraingtí seo. Scéal náireach atá ann mar thoradh dochreidte ar an chlaontacht a mhaireann in éadan na Gaeilge agus atá mar mhasla dár n-oidhreacht chultúrtha Ghaelach.

Tá pobal beag Gaeilge s’againn ar nós na bpobal eile den chinéal chéanna atá ag teacht chun cinn ar fud

my wife and me and has given our children a rich background, with their own language and culture and a strong interest in learning about other languages and cultures (not to mention the educational benefits of Irish-medium Education and bilingualism). It has not only had a positive influence on our family unit but will hopefully inspire our children to do likewise and indeed the generations yet to come.

My children represent the first generation that has been re-immersed in our Gaelic language and heritage and to them Irish is an integral part of everything that surrounds them. It is not only the language of the home and the local community, but it gives meaning to the names of our towns, rivers, mountains, our townlands, and the rich folklore provides them with a real source of appreciation of our rich cultural heritage and our natural environment. We live within a small but growing Irish-speaking community outside Maghera in South County Derry with increasing numbers of young people who speak the language and with more and more parents choosing to raise their children through the medium of Irish. For the children and young people in our community the use of Irish in their everyday lives is normality and the English language is embraced to further enrich their learning and cultural experience in a very positive way.

Whilst raising our children through the medium of Irish has been a very rewarding experience for us, I have had to watch with some sadness as each of our children slowly grow to realise that Irish is effectively a second-class language with little place beyond the home and our own small community. I feel a mixture of disappointment and anger that I have to take my children to attractions such as Navan Fort or the Giants’ Causeway where, despite the marketing blurb advertising of multi-lingual interpretation, you can’t even get interpretation in the language that was the source of the folklore and culture that underpins these attractions. This situation is a shameful and ludicrous consequence of the prejudice against the Irish language and an insult to our Gaelic cultural heritage.

Our small local Irish-language community is only one of many other similar communities throughout

na sé contae agus sna pobail seo ar fad tá an mhuintir óg ag fás aníos agus an dearcadh acu go bhfuil leatrom á dhéanamh ar an teanga. Níl sé seo sláintiúil do phobail na Gaeilge ná don tsochaí ina hiomláine agus caithfear rud éigin a dhéanamh chun an *status quo* a athrú.

Cad é a thig linn a dhéanamh, mar sin, chun na gealltanais a rinneadh i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta agus Chill Rìmhinn a chomhlíonadh? Cibé seans beag a bhí ann sé mhí ó shin go n-aontódh polaiteoirí Aontachtacha ar an teanga a chur chun cinn ná ar Acht na Gaeilge a chur i bhfeidhm, seans níos lú arís go dtarlóidh aon rud anois, agus an dearcadh nua dolúbtha s'acu ar chúrsaí cultúrtha!

Ba chóir dúinn a bheith ag cuimhneamh gurbh é Rialtas na Breataine i gComhaontú Chill Rìmhinn a thug tiomantas Acht na Gaeilge a chur i bhfeidhm. Bhí deis acu an gealltanais seo a chomhlíonadh agus is cúis náire é gur 'nigh siad a lámha' gur thug an fhreagracht seo don Tionól, áit a raibh siad cinnte de nach n-aontódh Aontachtaithe faoi. Dá laghad dóchais a bhí ann go gcomhlíonadh Rialtas an Lucht Oibre an gealltanais a rinne sé, is lú seans go ndéanadh Rialtas Coimeádach/Daonlathach Liobrálach nó fiú amháin Rialtas an Lucht Oibre a thiocfadh ina dhiaidh an gealltanais a chomhlíonadh i láthair na huaire. Is féidir, áfach, gurbh é Rialtas Westminster an bealach is fearr atá againn chun Acht na Gaeilge a fháil de bhrí an ghealltanais neamhchomhlíonta seo faoi Chomhaontú Chill Rìmhinn. Le go dtarlóidh sé seo, áfach, is dócha go mbeidh Rialtas an Lucht Oibre de dhíth agus feachtas comhaontaithe ó pholaiteoirí áitiúla, náisiúnta agus idirnáisiúnta, agus feachtas cruthaithe feasachta ón taobh istigh d'earnáil na Gaeilge.

I gcluiche fichille na polaitíochta, is léir go bhfuil an Ghaeilge ag cailleadh agus is gá athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an straitéis atá ann i láthair na huaire agus bealach nua chun tosaigh a chruthú chun na gealltanais atá i gComhaontaithe Aoine an Chéasta agus Chill Rìmhinn a chomhlíonadh. Creidim nár chóir dúinn glacadh leis gur briseadh orainn agus tá gníomhaíochtaí ann a thig le pobal na Gaeilge a dhéanamh chun na cuspóirí s'againn a bhaint amach agus torthaí a aimsiú.

Creidim gurbh é an ní is tábhachtaí atá ann ná an teanga a pholaitiú agus í a chur go hard ar chlár

the North and within all of these communities there are young people growing up with a sense of grievance that their language is being oppressed. This is not healthy for either the Irish-speaking communities or society as a whole and clearly something has to be done to change the status quo.

So what can we do to deliver the promises made under the Good Friday and St Andrews Agreements? However little chance there was six months ago of getting Unionist politicians to agree to promote the language or to agree to an Irish-language Act, their new hard-line stance on cultural matters means that the prospects of this in the current climate are now infinitely less!

We should remember that under the St Andrews Agreement it was in fact the British Government that gave a commitment to implement an Irish Language Act. They had the chance to honour this commitment and shamefully 'washed their hands' of this by passing the responsibility to the Assembly, where they certainly knew this would not be agreed to by Unionists. Again, whatever little hope there was that the Labour government that made this promise would honour it, the chances that any subsequent Conservative / Liberal Democrat or even Labour government will honour this commitment under the current climate are small. The Westminster Government may, however, represent our best hope for delivery of an Irish Language Act due to this unfulfilled commitment made under St Andrews. However, for this to happen, it will probably need a Labour government to be in power and a concerted campaign from local, national and international politicians, accompanied by a strong groundswell of campaigning from within the Irish-language sector.

In the political game of chess, the Irish language is clearly losing and there is a need to reconsider the current strategy and provide a way forward that will work towards delivering the Good Friday and St. Andrews commitments. I believe that we should certainly not accept defeat and believe that there are actions that the Irish-speaking community can take to move us closer to our objective and hopefully deliver results.

I believe that the single most important thing that needs to be done is to politicise the language and

pholaitiúil. Cluinim arís agus arís eile gairmeacha ó pholaitoirí agus eile chun an teanga a “dhí-pholaitiú”. Ní thuigim an méid atá i gceist acu le dí-pholaitiú. Ní aontaím, áfach, nach ceist pholaitiúil é cearta teanga a shéanadh ar chuid shuntasch den phobal ag polaitoirí a bhfuil dearcadh éagsúil polaitiúil acu. Má dhéantar iarracht an teanga a dhí-pholaitiú is ionann sin agus bac a chur ar dheis ar bith atá ann leis an teanga a chur chun cinn agus cearta a fháil don Ghaeilge.

Níor chóir go mbainfeadh polaitiú na teanga le páirtithe polaitiúla faoi leith as siocair go gcreideann Aontachtaithe (agus Náisiúnaithe áirithe fiú amháin) gur cuspóir é cur chun cinn na Gaeilge a bhaineann le Sinn Féin amháin. Níl ach bealach amháin le seo an réiteach ó thaobh an Náisiúnachais de agus is é sin má éiríonn an SDLP níos glórmhaire maidir le cearta na teanga a fháil agus má dhéanann siad tosaíocht den teanga ar an chlár pholaitiúil s’acu. In ainneoin go bhfuil daoine áirithe san SDLP a bhfuil tiomantas acu don teanga, is bocht í próifíl an pháirtí ar cheisteanna na teanga - níl de ghealltanais ina fhorógra ó 2011 ach dhá alt bheaga ar leathanach 42, ní bhíonn an teanga le feiceáil in áit ar bith sna craoltaí páirtí polaitíochta agus tá próifíl an pháirtí sna meáin maidir le ceist na teanga an-lag go deo. Is í próifíl íseal an SDLP ar cheisteanna na teanga go díreach an rud a thugann deis d’Aontachtaithe agus eile an teanga a lipéadú mar cheist pholaitiúil a bhaineann le Sinn Féin.

Cé go bhfuil an tiomantas don teanga i bhforógra Shinn Féin i bhfad níos láidre agus go dtugtar próifíl pholaitiúil don teanga ann, tá obair le déanamh go fóill chun a gcuid polaitoirí ar fad a chur ar an eolas maidir leis na ceisteanna a bhaineann le cur chun cinn agus cearta teanga ionas gur féidir leo a bheith ag áitiú ar son na gcearta seo. Is tábhachtach go dtabharfar faoi deara gur sheas Sinn Féin an fód in aghaidh dhígeantacht Aontachtaithe i gceist na Póilíneachta agus gurbh é an seasamh sin a chuir deireadh leis an ghaibhniú. Mar cheann de na comhpháirtithe sinsearacha sa rialtas, sílim go bhfuil sé thar am anois ag Sinn Féin an seasamh a láidriú maidir le bacóireacht na nAontachtaithe ar na hiarrachtaí chun dul chun cinn a dhéanamh ar cheisteanna na teanga. Níl aon amhras ann go gcuirfí i leith an pháirtí go bhfuil an teanga á polaitiú arís, agus creidim gur chóir do phobal na

bring it high onto the political agenda. Increasingly I hear calls from politicians and others for the “de-politicisation” of the language. I am not totally sure what they mean by de-politicisation. However, I fail to see why the denial of language rights of a significant group of the population by politicians of a different political ideology is anything other than a political issue. Those who fall into the trap of seeking to de-politicise the language are effectively seeking to neuter any chance of real progress to promote the language and deliver Irish-language rights.

There is clearly a need to ‘de-party-politicise’ the language since it is seen by Unionists (and even some Nationalists) as primarily a Sinn Féin objective. The only way to de-party-politicise the language from a Nationalist point of view is for the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) to become much more vocal in securing language rights and to make the language a high priority on their political agenda. Whilst there are some within the SDLP who have a clear commitment to the language, the profile of the party on language issues is poor – it’s manifesto commitment amounts to two short paragraphs on page 42 of their 2011 Assembly manifesto, it fails to feature in any shape or form on their party political broadcasts and their media profile on language issues is very weak. It is precisely the SDLP’s low profile on Irish-language issues that provides Unionists and others the opportunity to label the language a Sinn Féin, party-political issue.

Whilst Sinn Féin, have a stronger manifesto commitment and give the language a much higher political profile, there is still work to be done in educating all of their politicians in relation to the issues around language promotion and language rights so that they are well equipped to argue for these rights. It is important to note that in the face of Unionist intransigence on the way forward on Policing; Sinn Féin took a decisive stance that eventually broke this deadlock. As one of the senior partners in government, I think that it is now time that Sinn Féin considered strengthening the stance in relation to the Unionists obstructionism to try and bring about progress on language issues. This would no doubt be met with the normal howls of accusation that the language being politicised, which I believe should be met with a reasoned argument by all within the Irish-language

Gaeilge argóint réasúnta a dhéanamh ina éadan seo agus, más gá, neamhaird a dhéanamh air.

Is cosúil gurb ionann an dearcadh atá ag Páirtí an Chomhaontais agus an gnáthmheascán a mhaireann ann den soineantas agus den dea-chroí - tá cuma ar an scéal go bhfuil siad toilteanach tacú le hAcht Gaeilge nach bhfuil bunaithe ar chearta a fhad is go n-aontaíonn gach duine leis agus nach gcosnaíonn sé airgead ar bith. Dealraíonn sé go bhfuil siad ag seachaint cheist na gcearta do Ghaeilgeoirí agus bíonn siad ag moladh go mbeidh dí-pholaitiú (i.e., neodrú) déanta ar na háitimh a bhaineann leis an teanga. Is doiligh liom gan a bheith ag smaointiú gur mhian le Páirtí an Chomhaontais nárbh ann don Ghaeilge ar an ábhar nach bhfuil sí oiriúnach don fhís shoineanta atá acu do *"Thuaisceart Éireann"* ina gcuireann gach duine a gcuid páistí chuig scoileanna measctha (i.e., Scoileanna Béarla), ina gcuireann siad lámha le chéile agus ina gceolann siad Kumbayah. Ina ainneoin seo creidim, dá gcuirfí áiteamh réasúnta os a gcomhair, go gcaithfidh go bhfuil céatadán den pháirtí ann a bheadh oscailte glacadh leis go gcaithfear dul i ngleic le ceist chearta na teanga.

Agus an eagla ann go gcuirfí ár gcuid ama amú is gá iarrachtaí a dhéanamh le polaiteoirí Aontachtacha ionas go n-aithneoidh siad riachtanais phobal na teanga, pobal atá ag fás. Creidim go bhfuil polaiteoirí Aontachtacha áirithe ann a bheadh toilteanach glacadh leis an teanga fiú muna dtacaíonn siad léi. Is gá na haibhleoga beaga seo a fhorbairt má tá seans ar bith a dhul a bheith againn áit a bhaint ina nglacfaidh Aontachtaithe le cearta teanga sa todhchaí.

Caithfidh earnáil na Gaeilge ina hiomláine iarracht ollmhór a dhéanamh stocaireacht a dhéanamh ar pholaiteoirí agus ba chóir dúinn gach seans a ghlacadh chun é seo a dhéanamh, mar dhaoine aonair agus mar ionadaithe ar eagraíochtaí Gaeilge. Ní mór dúinn insint shimplí a bhfuil muid uile ar aon intinn fúithi a fhorbairt chun é seo a dhéanamh.

Creidim féin go bhfuil "Meitheal Machnaimh" ("Think Tank" mar a bheirtear air i mBéarla) na Gaeilge de dhíth chun an insint seo a fhorbairt, meitheal trína gcuirfí taighde chun cinn, trína ndéanfadh straitéisí a chumadh agus trína ndéanfadh stocaireacht ar pholaiteoirí áitiúla, náisiúnta agus idirnáisiúnta chun tionchar a imirt ar

community and, if necessary, ignored.

The Alliance position appears to be their traditional mix of naivety and well meaningness - they appear to support a non-rights-based Irish language Act as long as everyone agrees to it and as long as it doesn't cost any money! They seem to be avoiding the question of language rights for Irish speakers and they urge for the de-politicisation (i.e., neutering) of the arguments in relation to the language. I can't help thinking that from the Alliance party's point of view, the Irish language is something that they wish would just go away in the sense that it doesn't fit well with their happy clappy vision for *"Northern Ireland"* where everyone sends their children to integrated (i.e., English Speaking) schools, joins hands and sings Kumbayah. In spite of this I do believe that, in the face of a reasoned argument, there must be a proportion of the party that would be open to accept that the principle that the delivery of language rights need to be addressed.

At the risk of wasting our time it is also essential to make some inroads with Unionist politicians in relation to their acknowledgement of the needs of the growing language community. I think that there are some Unionist politicians who are open to the notion of tolerating if not supporting the language in some way. These small embers need to be developed if we are to have any hope of reaching a position where Unionists are to be encouraged to tolerate language rights at some stage in the future.

There is a need for the Irish-language sector as a whole to undertake a concerted effort to lobby politicians and we should all take every possible opportunity to do this, both as individuals and as representatives of Irish-language organisations. This needs to be done on the basis of a simple narrative that we all share and buy in to.

I believe that the best way of developing this narrative is to set up an Irish-language "Think Tank" that would promote research, formulate strategy and lobby local, national and international politicians to help influence and inform politicians so that we can make progress towards delivering the promises of the Good Friday and St Andrews

pholaiteoirí agus chun iad a chur ar an eolas ionas gur féidir linn dul chun cinn a dhéanamh chun gealltanais Chomhaontaithe Aoine an Chéasta agus Chill Rìmhinn a chomhlíonadh. Cuid an-tábhachtach den saol pholaitiúil i SAM le breis agus 100 bliain atá i Meithleacha Machnaimh, meithleachacha déanta de dhaoine ó dhisciplíní áirithe a bhfuil tionchar acu agus a bhfuil meas orthu ach a bhfuil an cuspóir céanna acu, agus anois tá siad ar fáil fud fad an domhain. Cibé áit ina mbíonn siad, bíonn tionchar mór acu ar pholasaí páirtí polaitíochta agus ar pholasaí an rialtais araon ar réimse leathan ceisteanna – idir polasaíthe eacnamaíochta, sóisialta timpeallachta agus cearta earacha. Dá ndéanfaí comhghuaillíochtaí le daoine sa saol polaitiúil sna Stáit agus dá ndéanfaí stocaireacht orthu, is amhlaidh go bhféadfadh sé sin tionchar a imirt ar Westminster bogadh ar aghaidh leis na gealltanais a thug siad faoi Chomhaontaithe Aoine an Chéasta agus Chill Rìmhinn.

Chomh maith leis an ghá le cur chuige níos gairmiúla agus comhordaithe maidir leis an stocaireacht pholaitiúil, is gá don chosmhuintir 'meon' níos fearr a fhorbairt agus iad ag éileamh cearta teanga. In aghaidh bharúil choitianta an phobail, creidim nach furasta le Gaeil an lae inniu é seo agus sílim gur chóir dúinn amharc i dtreo na Breataine Bige - áit ina bhfuil cultúr láidir na feachtasaíochta ag dul siar 50 bliain. Níor chóir go bhfágfaí é seo faoi chuifealán an-bheag daoine ná eagraíochtaí ach caithfidh muid uile freagracht a ghlacadh orainn féin.

Le roinnt blianta anuas, tá roinnt ócáidí eagraithe ag Pobal chun an gá le hAcht na Gaeilge a léiriú, ócáidí a reáchtáladh le dínit agus a raibh freastal maith orthu. Sílim, áfach, gur léir anois nach bhfuil an cineál seo agóide éifeachtach mar gheall ar dhígeantacht na nAontachtaithe agus gur furasta neamhaird a dhéanamh air. Chomh maith leis sin, mura bhfuil dóchas ann go mbainfear an príomhchuspóir amach, seans go dtréigfidh ár lucht tacaíochta de réir a chéile. Is gá an dinimic a athrú agus creidimse go bhfuil gá le hiarracht níos dírithe agus níos comhaontaithe (iarracht ar chóir di a bheith síochánta agus dlíthiúil) chun cearta a bhaint amach sa rialtas áitiúil agus sna hearnálacha deonacha agus príobháideacha. Má tá muid ag dul a fháil tacaíocht chosmhuintir na hearnála, caithfidh muid a thaispeáint go bhfuil dul chun cinn indéanta – céim ar chéim – bua beag amháin in dhiaidh bua

agreements. Think Tanks, made up of respected and influential people drawn from a range of disciplines with a common objective, have been an important part of the US political landscape for almost 100 years and are now a global phenomenon. Wherever they operate they have proven very influential in shaping party political and government policy alike on a wide range of issues including economic policy, social policy, the environment and gay rights. Strong alliances with and concerted lobbying of political figures in the States in particular could significantly increase the possibility of Westminster pushing ahead with their commitments under the Good Friday and St Andrews Agreements.

Coupled with the need for a professional and co-ordinated approach to political lobbying, there is a need for the grass roots to get more of an 'attitude' in demanding their language rights. Contrary to public perception I think that this does not come that easily to the modern-day Gael and I think that it is worth looking to Wales for inspiration - where there is a strong culture of campaigning for language rights going back over 50 years. This should not be left up to one or two individuals or organisations but we should all take on the responsibility of playing our part.

Over the past few years Pobal has organised a number of dignified and well attended events to highlight the need for an Irish Language Act. However, I believe that the effectiveness of this type of protest in the face of Unionist intransigence is questionable and is easily ignored. Without hope that the main aim will be seen to be delivered, support may dwindle and people may slowly start to drift away. It is necessary to change the dynamics and I believe that it is probably necessary for a more focussed and concerted effort (that should also be both peaceful and legal) to start to 'chip away' at delivering the rights within local government as well as the voluntary and private sectors. If we are to secure the support of the grass roots within the sector they need to see that progress is possible – step by step. I believe that a number of smaller victories in the short term will

beag eile. Agus dul chun cinn ag tarlú, bheadh sé níos fusa féinmhuinín, spiorad agus nós corraitheoireachta na hearnála a thógáil agus an earnáil a fhorbairt mar a bheadh cloch sneachta ann.

Tig linn cuid mhór a fhoghlaim ón taithí atá ag ár gcomhbhádóirí sa Bhreatain Bheag ar fheachtais dhírithé chun cuidiú le cultúr na feachtasaíochta agus na feachtasaíochta cruthaithe feasachta a chruthú. Dá ndéanfaí sin, in éineacht le stocaireacht ar bhonn áitiúil, náisiúnta agus idirnáisiúnta, ní bheadh an dara suí sa bhuaile ag rialtas Westminster ach reachtaíocht a dhéanamh ar son cearta teanga agus bheadh ar an tionól áitiúil glacadh leis.

Is é mo thuairim féin gur áit mhaith le tosú a bheadh ann feachtas a chur ar bun le go mbeadh ateangaireacht na Gaeilge ar fáil san Ionad Cuairteoirí ag Clochán an Aifir agus in Eamhain Mhacha agus bogadh ar aghaidh ina dhiaidh sin - de réir a chéile a thógtar na caisleáin. Ní bheadh a fhios agat, ach dá mbeadh dul chun cinn déanta ar an ábhar seo, gach seans go dtig liom mo sheisiún seachtainiúil lamhseála feirge a chuir ar ceal fiú!

¹(NIHCR 2010) – Coimisiún T. Éireann um Chearta an Duine Meitheamh 2010
Cearta Mionteangacha - An Ghaeilge agus Ultais Bileog threorach ar impleachtaí na Cairte Eorpaí um Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh, an Choinbhinsiúin Eorpaí um Chearta an Duine agus ionstraimí eile (Leathanach 28).

build the culture of campaigning and this has a real chance of snowballing and build the overall strength of the sector.

There is much that we could learn from our Welsh cousins' experience on focussed campaigns to help build a culture of campaigning and a groundswell that, together with local, national and international political lobbying, will eventually leave the Westminster government no choice but to legislate for language rights and the local Assembly no choice but to accept these.

For my part I think that a good starting point would be a campaign to secure Irish-language interpretation at the Giants' Causeway Visitors' Centre and the Navan Centre and to move on from there one step at a time – de réir a chéile a tógtar na caisleáin. Who knows, if we start to make some progress, I may even be able to cancel my weekly anger management session!!

¹(NIHCR 2010) – N. Ireland Human Rights Commission June 2010
Minority Language Rights – The Irish Language and Ulster Scots. Briefing paper on the implications of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, European Convention on Human Rights and other instruments (Page 28).

Pilib Mac Cathmhaoil



Chaith Pilib breis is deich mbliana ag forbairt tionscadal éagsúl san earnáil deonach agus ag stocaireacht ar son na Gaeilge, agus bhí sé páirteach san fheachtas le Ciste Teilifís Gaeilge a chruthú. Le linn an ama sin bhí sé ina láithreoir raidió agus aisteoir ar bhun

páirtaimseartha, agus ar deireadh ghlac sé an cinneadh chun ceann dá chuid uailmhian a bhaint amach agus bhunaigh sé a ghnó féin nuair a bhunaigh sé Tobar Productions 10 bliain ó shin. Ó shin i leith tá breis agus 30 clár teilifíse léirithe ag an chomhlacht agus fuair sé ainmniúcháin do roinnt duaiseanna. Tá Pilib anois ina chónaí sa Ghearmáin lena bhean chéile agus beirt pháiste, áit a bhfuil sé ag forbairt chlár nua do Tobar.

Philip Mac Cathmhaoil has spent over a decade developing various Irish Language community projects, and campaigning for recognition of the Irish Language, including the creation of an Irish Language Broadcast Fund. During this time he was a part-time radio presenter and actor, and he finally took the big plunge to realise one of his ambitions and created his own business when he formed Tobar Productions 10 years ago. To date the company has produced over thirty hours of television programmes and been nominated for various awards. Philip now lives in Germany with his wife and two children from where he continues to develop new Irish language television programmes for Tobar.

Cá bhfuil an ré nua teilifíse?

Chuir mé fáilte roimh shíniú Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta cúig bliana déag ó shin le díograis cé go raibh díomá orm nach raibh na tagairtí do ghníomhaíocht ar an Ghaeilge níos láidre. Mar sin féin, bhí mé i gcónaí dóchasach.

Spreg an dóchas sin mé le comhlacht léirithe teilifís Gaeilge a chruthú deich mbliana ó shin, an cinneadh ceart dar liom agus a cruthaíodh nuair a d'fhógair rialtas na Breataine go raibh Ciste Craoltóireacht Gaeilge (CCG) le bunú. Shíl mé gur tháinig in ann dom agus go raibh slí bheatha don saol aimsithe agam. Ó shin i leith, tá Tobar Productions i ndiaidh breis agus 35 uair an chloig de chlár teilifíse Gaeilge a léiriú do TG4, BBC agus RTÉ agus tá clú bainte amach againn as caighdeán na gclár agus iad léirithe le buiséad íseal.

Mar sin féin, tar éis deich mbliana d'obair chrua leanúnach, níl mé níos gaire do bheith slán i mo bheatha. Tá sé ag éirí an-dian chun maireachtáil. Tá na buiséid a laghdú i rith an ama, tá fás ar líon na dtáirgeoirí nua agus tá cumas níos fearr ag comhlachtaí fad-bhunaithe agus tá sin uilig ag cur an-bhrú ar chomhlachtaí beaga, leithéidí Tobar Productions.

Glactar leis go forleathan gur éirigh thar barr leis an Chiste Craoltóireachta Gaeilge. Tá an fhianaise le sonrú i measc meastóireachtaí neamhspleácha, an

Where is the new era for Irish language television?

I welcomed the signing of the Good Friday Agreement fifteen years ago with a strong degree of excitement even though I was disappointed that the references to action on the Irish Language were not more emphatic. However, I lived in hope.

That hope encouraged me to create an Irish Language television production company ten years ago, a move which was reinforced as the right one when the British Government announced the creation of an Irish Language Production Fund. I thought I had found a career for life. Since then Tobar Productions has produced over 35 hours of Irish Language television programmes for TG4, the BBC and RTÉ and we have established a reputation for producing programmes with very high production values on relatively small budgets.

However, after ten years of continued hard work, I don't feel any closer to being secure in my career. It is becoming extremely tough to survive. Decreasing budgets, the growing number of new producers and the better capacity of established companies places small Irish language production companies like Tobar Productions in an impossible situation.

It is widely accepted that the Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF) has been a resounding success. Independent evaluations, the response

ais-chothú ón lucht féachana, na luachanna léirithe ard, agus an sásamh i measc an dá chraoltóir agus bhronntóirí is mó go dtí seo, TG4 agus BBC. Tá Tobar an-bhródúil as a nasc leis an Chiste agus tá sé ag brath air, ach níl modh maireachtála bainte amach ag Tobar go fóill. Níl mé cinnte má tá aon cheann de na comhlachtaí léiriúcháin Gaeilge a thosaigh ansin nó thart ar an am a cruthaíodh an Ciste slán inniu. B'fhéidir go dtiocfadh a rá i mo chás nach bhfuil sé ar mo chumas a bheith i mo bhainisteoir gnó rathúil ach is dóigh liom go ndearna mé gach iarracht ina threo. Bhí mé ag iarraidh a bheith mar chuid den oidhreacht iontach sin den phobal ceannródaíoch seo, agus an méid atá bainte amach lena gcuid tionscnamh uailmhianach, mar shampla an Ard Scoil; Cumann Chluain Ard, An Chultúrlann, Preas an Phobail, Lá, An Ceathrú Poilí, Raidió Fáilte, srl.

Mar sin féin áfach, 15 bliana tar éis síníú Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, is dóigh liom gur chaill muid cuid den spiorad fiontraíochta sin i measc phobal na Gaeilge, agus is dóigh liom go bhféadfaí níos mó a bheith bainte amach trí chur chun cinn agus tacú le gnólachtaí Gaeilge. Níor chuir an spiorad fiontraíochta go leor daoine sa Ghaeilge i mbun gnó chun dul i ngleic leis na deiseanna a chruthaigh an Chiste Craoltóireachta Gaeilge mar shampla. Ar ndóigh, tá go leor daoine nua ag dhéanamh chlár i nGaeilge mar thoradh díreach ar an Chiste, ach cá bhfuil na comhlachtaí Gaeilge? Ba chóir go raibh clár forbartha gnó chun cabhrú le comhlachtaí ar nós Tobar atá ag iarraidh fás. Ina háit sin, táimid ag súil le bheith chomh láidir agus chomh forbartha leis na comhlachtaí Béarla. Chun dul san iomaíocht b'éigean smaointe níos fearr a bheith againn, iad a fhorbairt níos déine, briseadh isteach ar an mhargadh, iad a tháirgeadh de réir na gcaighdeán is airde agus a bheith in ár mbainisteoirí gnó den scoth. Sílim go bhfuil méid bainte amach ag Tobar atá suntasach maidir leis seo, ach ós rud é go bhfuil fócas an CCG ar an líon is mo cláracha Gaeilge agus is féidir á chur amach ó cibé ráithe, tá na brúnna ar chomhlachtaí ar nós Tobar do-chreidte, agus deich mbliana níos moille, tá an streachailt chun maireachtáil chomh crua is a bhí riamh.

Níl na craoltóirí ag glacadh leis an dúshlán ar bhun cothrom ach an oiread. Creidim go láidir go fóill gur chóir go ndíolfadh gach craoltóir a oiread agus a fhaigheann siad mar fhóirdheontas ón Chiste Craoltóireachta pingin ar phingin. Tá ranníocaíocht airgid de 15% ón chraoltóir i dtreo gach clár atá maoinithe ag an CCG do-ghlactha. Níor chóir don CCG bheith ag maoiniú costais lárnacha na

from viewers, the high production values, and the satisfaction amongst the two main broadcasters and benefactors to date, TG4 and BBCNI bear this out. Tobar is very proud of its association with the Fund and has become very dependent on it, but has not yet established a proper business model. I am not sure if any of the Irish language production companies which started then or around the time the Fund was created have survived. It could be argued that in my case I simply don't have what it takes to be a successful business manager but I feel that I have thrown everything at trying to grow a successful company. I wanted to be part of the amazing legacy of this pioneering community, and its far reaching ambitious initiatives such as the Ard Scoil; Cumann Chluain Ard, An Chultúrlann, Preas an Phobail, Lá, An Ceathrú Poilí, Raidió Fáilte etc.

However, 15 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, I feel we have lost some of that pioneering spirit in the Irish language community, and I feel that more could have been achieved by promoting and supporting Irish language businesses. The entrepreneurial spirit of many individuals in the Irish language has not been matched with the opportunities presented by the Irish Language Broadcast Fund for example. Of course there are many new individuals making programmes in Irish as a direct result of the Fund but where are the Irish language companies? There should have been a business development programme to help companies like Tobar to grow. Instead we are expected to be as strong and as developed as our long founded English language television production competitors. To compete we had to have better ideas, develop them more rigorously, break into the market, produce them to the highest standards and be excellent business managers. I think the achievements of Tobar are remarkable in this regard but since the focus of the ILBF is to produce as many Irish language programmes as possible from whatever quarter, the pressures on companies like Tobar are never ending and ten years later, the struggle to survive is as hard as ever.

The broadcasters haven't exactly risen to the challenge with a fair response. I continue to believe that all broadcasters should match penny for penny the subsidy they receive from the Irish Language Broadcast Fund by way of programming. A cash contribution of 15% from the broadcaster towards every programme funded by the ILBF is unacceptable. The ILBF should not be funding the

gcaoltóirí. Cháin muid an BBC go géar thar na blianta as a laghad a rinne an craoltóir chun freastal mar is ceart ar a riachtannais i leith seirbhíse craoltóireachta poiblí maidir leis an Ghaeilge i gcodarsnacht leis an tacaíocht a thugtar dár gcol ceathracha dúchasacha in Albain agus sa Bhreatain Bheag, agus tá an argóint gan réiteach go fóill.

Le linn 1995, bliain sular tháinig Teilifís na Gaeilge ar an aer, d'éascaigh Cultúrlann Mac Adam Ó Fiach cruinniú poiblí ar iarratas ó TnaG, (Teilifís na Gaeilge - anois TG4). I láthair ag an chruinniú bhí thart ar tríocha duine ó phobal na Gaeilge labhartha. Ar an phainéal cainteoirí bhí Feidhmeannaigh sinsearachas TnaG, Cathal Goan, Mícheál Ó Meallaigh agus Pádhraic Ó Ciardha. Bhí an teachtaireacht ó TnaG an-simplí. Rinne na trí chainteoir cur síos ar an plean gníomhaíochta don bhliain a bhí rompu, agus d'iarr siad ar an lucht éisteachta a insint dóibh cad a bhí uathu as an chainéal nua ó thaobh ábhair, fotheidealú, ionchur ó thuaidh etc. Bhí rún daingean acu go mbeadh an tseirbhís ag freastal ar phobal na Gaeilge ar fud fad na tíre, agus áit lárnach ag Béal Feirste ann.

Chloígh TnaG agus níos déanaí, TG4 leis an chuspóir sin. Thug siad tacaíocht domsa mar dhuine aonair a bhí ag iarraidh fáil isteach sa ghno, ar dtús mar scríbhneoir scrípte i 1995, mar Oifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge le haghaidh an líuir agus Mhúrn agus níos déanaí mar Bhainisteoir Fhorbairt Feirste, bhí TG4 an-sofhreagrach do thionscnaimh chun cuidiú le cainteoirí Gaeilge sa Tuaisceart bheith bainte le TG4. Gan mórán taithí, agus le tacaíocht ón lontaobhas Ultach, agus ó Aodán Mac Poilín, go háirithe, ghlac TG4 seans liom agus le smaoinreamh mire a bhí agam agus rinne mé mo chéad chlár.

Rinne TnaG ansin agus TG4 ó shin infheistíocht i ndaoine cosúil liomsa agus le comhlachtaí beaga cosúil le Tobar Productions toisc go dtuigeann siad níos mó ná aon eagraíocht eile bainteach le teilifíse Gaeilge na luachanna lárnacha i saol na Gaeilge, agus cad go bunúsach is scéal Gaeilge ann, cad is lucht féachana Gaeilge ann, agus tá a fhios acu cad go díreach a bhfuil a lucht féachana a iarraidh. Tuigeann siad na castachtaí ar mheon lucht féachana Gaeilge, go háirithe iad siúd ón Ghaeltacht traidisiúnta. Tuigeann siad go bhfuil i bhfad níos mó i gceist ná cláracha teilifíse a dhéanamh do lucht féachana na Gaeilge ná cheist na teanga, tá sé ilghnéitheach. Tá sé cultúrtha, tá sé stairiúil, tá sé

core commitments of broadcasters. We in the Irish language lobby have strongly criticised the BBC over the years for the drip feed approach to meeting its public service commitments to the indigenous language, which is in contrast to the parity afforded to our indigenous cousins in Scotland and Wales, and that argument is as unresolved today as ever.

During 1995, a year before Teilifís na Gaeilge came on air, Cultúrlann Mac Adam Ó Fiach facilitated a public meeting at the request of TnaG, (Teilifís na Gaeilge – now TG4). The meeting was attended by about thirty people from the Irish language speaking community. It was a refreshing, thought provoking and memorable meeting. On the panel of speakers were TnaG senior Executives, Cathal Goan, Mícheál Ó Meallaigh and Pádhraic Ó Ciardha. The message from TnaG was simple. The three speakers outlined the plan of action for the forthcoming year, and asked the audience to tell them what they wanted from the new channel in terms of content, subtitling policy, northern input etc. The service would serve the entire Irish language community throughout the country of which, Belfast was an integral part.

TnaG and later TG4 has lived up to that commitment. Firstly to me as an individual wannabe! script writer in 1995, as Irish Language Development Officer for Newry and Mourne District Council and later as Manager of Forbairt Feirste, TG4 were very responsive to initiatives to help secure an inroad for Irish language speakers in the North to TG4, both to me as an individual and to broader proposals. Without any real experience but with the initial key support of the Ultach Trust, and Aodán Mac Poilín in particular, I was given a break, and subsequently TnaG took a risk with a crazy idea which paid off.

TnaG then and TG4 today invest in people like me and take risks with small companies like Tobar Productions because they understand more than any other organisation involved in Irish language television production the deep-rootedness of core Irish language values, and what in essence makes an Irish language story, what constitutes an Irish language audience, and they know what exactly it is their viewers want. They understand the complexities of the mindset of Irish speaking viewers, particularly those of the traditional Gaeltacht. They understand that making television programmes for an Irish language audience is not just a language issue, it is multi-faceted. It is

comhaimseartha, tá sé paróistiúil, tá sé náisiúnta, agus tá sé pearsanta.

Ar na cúiseanna sin, chuir TG4 in iúl dom ag an am go gcaithfidh na cainteoirí Gaeilge na scéalta a thiomáint, agus dá bhrí sin an pobal léiriúcháin teilifís Gaeilge. Ní leor é tionscadal nó smaoinadh i mBéarla a ghlacadh, agus cainteoirí Gaeilge a aimsiú chun cuidiú é a sholáthar mar a dhéanann go leor eile nach bhfuil an Ghaeilge mar chúlra acu. Ní oibríonn sé ach uaireanta.

Tá scéal láidir i gcónaí ina scéal láidir i dteanga ar bith, ach tá gnéithe breise a thagann i spraoi nuair a fhreastalaítear ar lucht féachana TG4. Ba mhaith liom a mhaíomh leis na canúintí éagsúla Gaeilge sa tír agus na n-inniúlachtaí agus éagsúlachtaí laistigh de gach ceann de na canúintí agus laistigh de na déimeagrafacha éagsúla go bhfuil sé thar a bheith deacair ag TG4 freastal go cothrom ar riachtanais a lucht éisteachta ar fud na tíre, agus ó mo thaithí féin, níl an lucht féachana sa Tuaisceart ach ag tosú lena áit a ghlacadh i saol na teilifís Gaeilge ó tháinig an Ciste Craoltóireachta Gaeilge chun tosaigh.

Nuair a chuidigh mé an ghrúpa stocaireachta *Teilifís Pobail* a bhunú sa bhliain 1999, bhuaigh muid d'aon ghuth an argóint nach raibh cainéal nua teilifíse Gaeilge don Tuaisceart de dhíth ar an ábhar go mbeadh sé ró-chostach agus nach mbeadh sé le leas ceart phobal na Gaeilge ó thuaidh. Bhí muid an-bhródúil as a raibh bainte amach ag TnaG agus mhothaigh muid go láidir gur cainéal s'againne a bhí i TG4. Ba é an aidhm a bhí againn ná cabhrú cláracha bhreise a thabhairt chuig an chainéal agus guth agus ról do Ghaeilgeoirí an Tuaiscirt a dhaingniú, agus leis an BBC a bhrú chun freastal ar an phobal Gaeilge. Sin dílseacht, tiomantas agus athléimneacht ó phobal Bhéal Feirste trí thacú agus cur le TG4 ach oibríonn sé an dá bhealach. Ní mór do TG4 bealach a fháil chun níos mó maoinithe a chur ar fáil don CCG, in ainneoin na timpeallachta eacnamaíochta reatha, chun go mbeidh na táirgeoirí sa Tuaisceart ag insint níos mó dá gcuid scéalta, iad á n-insint le buiséid chuí chun cabhrú leo earnáil láidir Ghaeilge atá neamhspleách a fhás.

Tagann gach rud ar ais chuig pobal na Gaeilge. Gan é ní bheadh aon Chiste Craoltóireachta sa chéad áit, gan é ní bheadh aon chlár Ghaeilge faoi láthair agus gan é ní bheidh aon Chiste Craoltóireachta sa toadhchá. Mar sin féin, tá míthuiscint ar ról phobal na Gaeilge sa Chiste i measc roinnt daoine agus ní thuigtear cad is earnáil teilifís Gaeilge ann. I gcás go leor atá ag déanamh stocaireacht ar cheist na Gaeilge, ba chóir don earnáil teilifís Gaeilge bheith

cultural, it is historical, it is contemporary, it is parochial, it is national, and it is individual. For these reasons, TG4 have conveyed to me in the past the need for Irish language speakers to drive the story telling, and hence the Irish language television production sector. It isn't sufficient to take an English language project or idea, and find Irish speakers to help deliver it as is often the first approach by many, whose background is not in the Irish language. It only works sometimes.

A compelling story is always a compelling story in any language, but there are extra dimensions and factors which come into play when serving a TG4 audience. I would argue that given the various Irish language dialects in the country and the competences and variations within each of those dialects and within the differing demographics that it is extremely difficult for TG4 to equally serve the needs of its audience throughout the country, and that in my experience the Northern audience has only begun to take its full place with the arrival of the ILBF.

When I helped form the lobby group *Teilifís Pobail* in 1999, we deliberately won and then abandoned an argument by some members to campaign for a new Irish language television channel for the North on the grounds that it would cost too much money and would not be in the best long-term interests of the North's Irish language community. We were very proud of the achievements of TnaG and felt strongly that it was our channel. Our aim was to help bring additional programming to the channel and secure a voice and a role on it for the North's Irish speakers, and to push the BBC to meet its obligations. That loyalty, commitment and resilience from the Belfast's Irish language community by supporting and contributing to TG4 works both ways. TG4 must find a way to provide more leverage of finance to the ILBF, despite the current economic climate, to allow the producers in the North to tell more of their stories, to tell them with proper budgets and to help build a robust Irish language production sector.

Everything comes back to the Irish language community. Without it there would be no Irish Language Broadcasting Fund in the first place, without it there would be no Irish language programming currently and without it there will be no Irish Language Broadcasting Fund in the future. However in many circles there is a misunderstanding of the role of the Irish language community in the Fund and what actually

lán de dhaoine a bhfuil scileanna scéalaíochta agus teicneolaíochta acu agus iad siúd ar chóir an tionscadal a thiomáint do lucht féachanna Gaeilge. Is trí chomhlachtaí neamhspleácha Gaeilge a dhéantar seo.

Tá tras-toirchiú láidir de scileanna idir na daoine sin ag teacht níos mó ó chúlra Gaeilge agus iad siúd a thagann ó chúlra teilifíse láidir a tháirgeadh. Oibríonn an cur chuige seo agus oibríonn sé go maith. Bhí súil i gcónaí ann go mbeadh deachrachaí ag Ciste nua a bhí ag iarraidh rud éigin an-nua a bhaint amach gan na scileanna bheith forbartha i measc déantóirí scannán na Gaeilge, ach sílim go bhfuil caighdeán na gclár arna dtáirgeadh ag an gCiste go dtí seo an-ard. Tá an fath leis seo an-simplí. Mheall an Ciste Craoltóireachta comhlachtaí a bhí bunaithe le fada, an chuid is mó acu nár léirigh clár Gaeilge roimhe, agus chun an fhadhb a sháru d'fhostaigh siad daoine a raibh Gaeilge acu agus taithí éigin sa ghnó. Do go leor i ngluaiseacht na Gaeilge ní raibh i gceist anseo ach dul sa seans nó "opportunism", ach ní aontaím. Go díreach mar ba chóir dó chomhlachtaí Gaeilge airgead a fháil ó fhoinsí eile chun cláracha a léiriú, ba chóir do chomhlachtaí Béarla bheith ábalta teacht i dtír ar an Chiste Craoltóireachta. Mar sin féin, tá claonadh ann do chomhlachtaí léiriúcháin Ghaeilge a bheith "pigeon holed" agus cuirtear chuig an CCG iad, mar an t-aon fhoinse ioncaim dóibh, agus tá i bhfad an iomarca d'acmhainní an Chiste ag dul do chomhlachtaí nach bhfuil a gcuid fréamhaithe i bhforbairt na Gaeilge.

Ní leor don CCG cláracha teilifíse Gaeilge a mhaoiniú. Ba chóir cuidiú le cumas na gcomhlachtaí beaga Gaeilge a gcuid fiontar a fhás le go mbeidh siad in ann maireachtáil mar aon leis na comhlachtaí Béarla atá ag déanamh go maith as an Chiste Craoltóireachta.

Tá an éagothroime i dtéarmaí méid na scileanna agus taithí idir phobal na Gaeilge agus an earnáil léiriúcháin teilifíse atá fadbhunaithe meadaithe go mór go dtí an pointe nach bhfuil mórán de na comhlachtaí Gaeilge a bunaíodh seacht mbliana ó shin ann a thuilleadh. Ina n-áit, tá níos mó

constitutes an Irish language television production sector. For many in the Irish language lobby, an Irish language television production sector should consist of Irish language speakers with a wide range of necessary skills, telling stories through the media to an Irish language audience. This dynamic comes from supporting Irish language production companies.

There has been a very successful cross-fertilisation of skills between those coming more from an Irish language background and those coming from a strong television production background. This approach works and works well. It was always expected that a new Fund trying to do something very new in a language where the skills were lacking, might struggle to produce quality programmes, but I think it is fair to say that the standard of the programmes produced by the Fund to date has been very high. The reason for this is simple. The Fund has attracted well established companies, most of which had never produced a programme in the Irish language prior to the establishment of the Fund, and to overcome this weakness they sought personnel, from the Irish language community with some level of skills. Many in the Irish language community see this as opportunism, and "jumping on the band wagon", but I disagree. Just as it should be perfectly ok for Irish language production companies to apply for mainstream production funding, companies working primarily through the English language should have access to the ILBF.

However Irish language production companies tend to be pigeon holed and directed to the ILBF as the sole source of income for them, and too much of the Fund's resources are going to companies whose raison d'être is not rooted in the development of the Irish language. It's not enough for the ILBF to fund Irish language television programmes. Care should be taken to support the capacity of small Irish speaking enterprises who are struggling to survive and who are committed to developing a full team of Irish speaking programme makers.

The imbalance in terms of the share of skills and experience between the Irish language community and the established television production sector has shifted significantly to the point where the emerging core Irish language production sector of seven years ago has shrunk and been replaced by

comhlachtaí léiriúcháin Béarla tágtha ar bord. Is cúis mhór imní an t-athrú seo, athrú a chuireann todhchaí an Chiste i mbaol, níos mó ná an easpa maoinithe. Ní aon iontas é nach bhfuil mórán comhlachtaí Gaeilge ann níos mó, agus toisc chomh beag is atá an earnáil Gaeilge, tá cur chuige leanúnach de dhíth do na cinn ar nós Tobar a mhaireann go dtí seo ach atá faoi bhagairt.

Ba chóir do chraoltóirí a bhain tairbhe thar na blianta ó chlár Ghaeilge ar phraghas an-íseal níos mó íobairtí a dhéanamh. Ba chóir do gach craoltóirí ar mian leo leas a bhaint as cláracha ón Chiste a suimeanna airgid a mhéadú ar leibhéal na ranníocaíochta ó 15% go dtí figiúr atá le comhaontú ag Bord an Chiste Craoltóireachta, i bhfianaise an chleachtais chomparáidigh le cistí den chineál céanna in áiteanna eile, agus tar éis dul i gcomhairle leis na craoltóirí faoin chleachtas fhadtéarmach is fearr don Chiste agus do chraoltóirí ar aon.

Ar theacht ré úr na teilifís Gaeilge mar a rinneadh tagairt dó i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, chonacthas mar thoradh air, scéalta maithe Gaeilge á n-inse thar na blianta ar na cainéil teilifíse ach ní hionann líon ard de chlár Ghaeilge ar an teilifís agus rath ar an tionscadal. Ba chóir do chomhlachtaí teilifíse atá fréamhaithe go soiléir sa Ghaeilge agus a fheidhmíonn trí mheán na Gaeilge a bheith ag baint buntáiste as agus ní ag streachailt chun maireachtáil. Más rud é nach bhfuil na comhlachtaí óga ar nós Tobar in ann tacaíocht ar leith a fháil chun ligean dóibh dul san iomaíocht, beidh todhchaí tháirgeadh na teilifíse Gaeilge fós i lámha na gcomhlachtaí Béarla. Leanfaimid ar aghaidh ag féachaint ar chlár den scoth ar ár scáileáin ach ba chóir do ghníomhaíocht teilifíse Gaeilge a bheith ag baint níos mó amach ná sin. Ba chóir dó chomhlachtaí atá tiomanta don Ghaeilge a choinneáil beo. Ba chóir cuid den infheistíocht atá ar fáil maidir le déanamh clár a dhíriú ar fhiontair bheaga teanga Gaeilge atá ag iarraidh daoine a fhostú go h-iomlán trí mheán na Gaeilge agus a n-áit cheart sa ré úr teilifíse a ghlacadh.

Sílim gur oibrigh mé go han-chrua ar feadh cúig bliana déag ó síníodh Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta chun m'áit a ghlacadh sa tionscadal nua teilifís Gaeilge, áit atá tuilte agam ach atá tamall eile ar shíúil, má tá sé i ndán dom ar chor ar bith.

more and more established non-Irish language based companies. This is a very worrying trend and one which places the future of the Fund at risk, more so than the lack of secure permanent funding. It is no surprise that few Irish language companies have survived, but because there are so few, a continued dedicated approach to the surviving ones like Tobar which are still very new and vulnerable is necessary.

The broadcasters who have benefited for years from cheap Irish Language programming should make greater sacrifices. All broadcasters wishing to avail of programming from the Fund should increase their level of contribution per project from 15% to a figure to be agreed by the Board, in light of comparative practice with similar funds elsewhere, and after consultation with the broadcasters on the best long term practice for both the Fund and broadcasters.

The heralding of the new Irish language television age in the North as cited in the Good Friday Agreement led to the telling of many Irish language stories on the various television channels over the years, but a high volume of Irish language output does not in itself indicate a resounding success. Television companies which are clearly rooted in the Irish language and which function through the medium of Irish should be at an advantage and not struggling to survive. If fledgling companies like Tobar don't receive the support specific to their situation to allow them to compete, the future of Irish language television production will remain in the hands of English language companies. We will continue to watch excellent programmes on our screens but Irish language television activity should be much more than that. It should be sustaining companies committed to the Irish language. Some of the investment available to programme making should be channelled into business support to allow small Irish language enterprises to reach their potential and take their rightful place in the television age.

I feel I have worked tirelessly for fifteen years since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, to take my rightful place in the new Irish language television industry, a place and a security which remains aspirational.

Réamonn Ó Ciaráin



Tá Réamonn Ó Ciaráin ag obair le Gael Linn mar Bhainisteoir Réigiúnach i gCúige Uladh le níos mó na fiche bliain agus tá sé mar chuid den fhoireann bhainistíochta sinsearaí ag Gael Linn ó 2003 Bhí Réamonn ar

dhuine de na tosaitheoirí den scéim oidhreachta, *'An Enrichment Programme in Gaelic Studies'*, a bhí dírithe ar dhéagóirí óga Protastúnacha a chur ar an eolas faoin léann Ghaelach. Tá Réamonn ina chathaoirleach ar an Iris is sine sa Ghaeilge 'An tUltach', ina a chathaoirleach ar Chairde Teo, Fiontraíocht Shóisialta in Ard Mhacha agus ina chathaoirleach ar Aonach Mhacha, lár-ionad Gaeilge atá beartaithe do chathair Ard Mhacha. Tá Réamonn ina Oifigeach Caidrimh Phoiblí do Bhord Chondae Ard Mhacha den Chumann Lúthchleas Gael agus síonn sé ar an choiste Gaeilge & Cultúir den Chumann Lúthchleas Gael in Ard Mhacha fosta. Tá Réamonn ina leaschathaoirleach ar Bhord Ghobhóirí Choláiste Chaitríona in Ard Mhacha agus tá ina stiúrthóir ar an Iontaobhas Ultach, agus ar Leabharlann agus Chartlann An Chairdinéil Uí Fhiaich in Ard Mhacha.

Réamonn Ó Ciaráin has been employed by Gael Linn in Northern Ireland for 21 years and is based in Armagh. In 2009 Réamonn was promoted to National Director of Gael Linn's Summer Colleges. He was one of the founding members of Gael Linn's Enrichment Programme in Gaelic Studies which brought the Irish language and culture to Protestant secondary school students. He is Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Governors of Saint Catherine's College in Armagh which has a thriving Irish Medium Stream. He sits on the board of the Ultach Trust and on the G.A.A. Armagh County Board Cultural Committee and is Chairperson of 'An tUltach', Ireland's oldest Irish language magazine. He is chairperson of Aonach Mhacha, the Irish language cultural hub project for Armagh city. Réamonn is also chair of Cairde Teo, an Irish language social enterprise based in Armagh City.

Chonaic mé cartún uair amháin in a raibh Dia ag caint le hÍosa agus a rá, 'Téimis thairis uair amháin eile; Cad é go díreach a d'inis tú do na daoine thíos ansin?' Agus sin díreach an cheist a bheadh ag coiste saineolaithe de chuid an Aontais Eorpaigh ar oifigigh rialtais agus iad ag freagairt ceisteanna ar na gealltanais a tugadh sa chomhaontú idirnáisiúnta, Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta/Bhéal Feirste in Aibreán 1998 agus níos moille i gComhaontú Chill Rímhinn i Mí Dheireadh an Fhómhair 2006. Cad chuige ar gheall siad gníomh diongbháilte? Ag an am bhí an dá Rialtas sásta aon ghealltanais a thabhairt leis an duais mhór a bhaint amach..... síocháin.

Is cuimhin liom an sonas a bhí le feiceáil fríd na fuinneoga ag Caisleán Stormont agus sean-namhaid ag croitheadh láimhe agus ag tabhairt croí isteach dá chéile. Bhí George Mitchell ag caint ar a ghuthán leis na fiacla geala bána ina chloigeann le Bill Clinton, bhí John Taylor ag caint ar a chuaille báirse, bhí Bríd Mhic Ruairí ag caoineadh le háthas, bhí Séamus Ó Mealláin ag caitheamh toitín shlítheánta,

I once saw a cartoon depicting God standing over Jesus with the caption reading, 'Let's go over this one more time. Just exactly what did you tell those people down there?' And that is precisely the question a committee of experts from the EU might have for representatives of the British Government regarding their commitments to the Irish language enshrined in the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement of April 1998 and later in the Saint Andrew's Agreement of October 2006. Why did they promise 'resolute action' on the Irish language? At that time both Governments were happy to offer any promise necessary, to secure the big prize.....peace.

I remember the exhilaration on show through the windows of Stormont Castle, with avowed enemies shaking hands and embracing. George Mitchell, with his ultrabrite teeth, spoke with Bill Clinton on his flip-mobile, John Taylor was brandishing an imaginary 40ft bargepole, Bríd Rogers was crying with happiness, Seamus Mallon puffed a sneaky cigarette, Gerry Adams took comfort from his peace

bhí Gerry Adams ag deargú a phíopa síochána agus bhí Liz O'Donnell ag mionghaire mar a bheadh nóinín i measc na neantóg. Bhris Jeffery Donaldson an geata amach le héalú ón chóisir. Bhí Ian Paisley ag máirseáil a chuid fear suas anuas an cnoc go Stormont mar a bheadh Diúc Mór Eabhraic.

Thosaigh cúrsaí eile ag athrú go gasta agus taobh istigh de mhíonna bhí na príosúnaithe á scaoileadh amach ar an dá thaobh den scoilt, bhí cumhacht á roinnt sa tionól, bhí obair ar siúl leis na gunnaí agus leis an ordanás a dhíchoimisiúnú agus cuireadh roinnt Foras Trasteorann ar bun, Foras na Gaeilge ina measc. Bhí ábhar dóchais ag pobal na Gaeilge faoi na gealltanais a tugadh dóibh, gníomh diongbháilte ar son ár dteanga dhúchais. Agus cad chuige nach mbeadh? Nach raibh sé scríofa sa chomhaontú idirnáisiúnta agus nár tháinig cóip isteach bosca litreach in achan teach sa tír, Thuaidh agus Theas? Nach raibh na hiontais dhochreidte eile ag titim amach? Ar na scáileáin theilifíse, bhí póstaí faire á mbaint as a chéile ó shléibhte Dheisceart Ard Mhacha go fiú agus á dtógáil ar shiúl sna héileacaptair Chinook. Cén fáth faoi Dhia nach bhfeicfeadh siad Acht na Gaeilge achtaithe, Coimisinéir Stuama Gaeilge coimisiúnaithe, pleanálaithe teanga ag pleanáil?

De réir mar a d'imigh an t-am agus mar a rolláil míonna isteach i mblianta d'fhoghlaim muid ceacht amháin ar a laghad. D'fhoghlaim muid nach bhfoghlaimíonn muid in am ar bith maidir leis an Ghaeilge. Ní fhaigheann an Ghaeilge ach na grabhróga a thiteann den tábla.

Cén fáth a raibh teanga ársa agus reatha na nGael mar ábhar pléite ag cainteanna Aoine an Chéasta sa chéad dul síos? Bhí an Ghaeilge ina cnámh spairne sa phróiseas seo mar bhí sí tábhachtach i sícé na Náisiúnaithe agus ag roinnt Protastúnach fosta. Bhí a fhios acu go ndearnadh beag is fiú den ghné eilimintiúil seo de chultúr na nGael i dTuaisceart Éireann ó dheighilt na tíre i 1922. Dá thairbhe seo bhí an Ghaeilge ina chomhartha sóirt do dhínt na nGael, ina teist aigéid. Má bhí an Comhaontú seo ag dul a léiriú paireacht ghradaim do theanga ársa ach leochaileach na nGael ba ionann é sin agus siombail den roinnt cumhachta. Agus ar phár an chonartha, bhí glacadh le tábhacht na Gaeilge mar ghné ab fhiú a chosaint, croitheadh cinn sa treo cheart do na Náisiúnaithe agus don bhreis agus deich míle nárbh náisiúnaithe iad a léirigh spéis sa Ghaeilge sa daonáireamh roimhe sin.

pipe and Liz O'Donnell glinted like a lone daisy in the nettles. Jeffery Donaldson gate-crashed out of the party and Big Ian marched his men up to the top of Stormont Hill like the Grand Old Duke of York. Other issues progressed quickly and inside months prisoners on both sides of the political divide were being released, guns and ordnance were being decommissioned by both sides, power sharing was being explored, cross-border bodies were established, Foras na Gaeilge amongst them. The Irish language speaking community could be forgiven for being optimistic with regard to commitments relating to their native tongue and in particular the promise of 'resolute action'. Why wouldn't they feel hopeful? Wasn't it clearly expressed in an international agreement? Hadn't a copy come through every letterbox in the country both North and South? Weren't all of the other remarkable events unfolding? On our TV screens, lookout posts were shown, being dismantled from the hillsides in South Armagh and being cradled away under Chinook helicopters. Why wouldn't they see an Irish language Act enshrined in law, an Irish language commissioner commissioned and even Irish language planners planning?

As the months rolled into years we learned one lesson at least. We discovered that we do not learn when it comes to governmental policy regarding Irish. Irish will only ever get the crumbs that fall from the table.

Why was this ancient yet surviving language of the Gael a bargaining chip at the Good Friday Agreement in the first place? Irish was a bone of contention because it was important in the psyche of Nationalists and some Protestants/Unionists also. The Irish language, which was an elemental aspect of Irish culture, had endured legislative negligence in Northern Ireland since partition in 1922. The language became a motif for nationalist dignity and an acid test for consent. Was this Agreement going to afford parity of esteem to this resilient but vulnerable language of the Gael? Irish became in a small way symbolic of power sharing. In the text at least, of the Good Friday Agreement, there was acceptance of the importance of Irish as an aspect worth protecting, which was a nod in the direction of those Nationalists and ten thousand non-Nationalists who registered an inclination towards the language in the previous census.

Níl amhras ach go ndearnadh dul chun cinn i saol na Gaeilge le cúig bliana déag anuas. Tháinig Foras na Gaeilge faoi bhláth ag an tús agus bhí gealladh faoi, d'fhás líon na ngaelscoileanna, d'éirigh an teacht ar chomhartha TG4 ní ba fhearr ó Thuaidh, cuireadh le cultúrlanna nó tógadh lár-ionaí nua Ghaeilge, cuireadh airgead isteach sna meáin Ghaeilge &rl.

Le trí bliana anuas tá Foras na Gaeilge ag iarraidh cuíchóiriú a chur i bhfeidhm ar earnáil dheonach na Gaeilge agus tá eagla fhorleathan ar naoi n-eagraíocht déag atá bunmhaoinithe, faoi thodhchaí na hearnála sin. Is cosúil gur tháinig duine éigin sa Chomh-Aireacht Thuaidh/Theas aníos leis an choincheap go raibh an córas maoinithe briste agus le deisiú. D'éirigh na spéartha dorcha thar earnáil dheonach na Gaeilge. Tá an próiseas cuíchóirithe seo agus an eagla agus an éiginnteacht a bhaineann leis ag baint as faoin obair mhaith atá ar siúl ag na eagraíochtaí deonacha le blianta. Tá cuid de na scéimeanna ag Foras na Gaeilge, áfach, ag obair go hiontach ag cur na Gaeilge chun cinn ar nós Scéim Phobal na Gaeilge a bhfuil na hoifigigh fhorbartha fostaithe fúithi. Mar a fheicimse tá an Foras ag iarraidh feithicil iompartha na Gaeilge a bhogadh le cos amháin ar an luasaire agus an chos eile ar na coscáin ag an am chéanna.

Ar cheann de na príomhchúraimí a leagadh ar Fhoras na Gaeilge tá comhairle a chur ar an dá rialtas faoin Ghaeilge. Tá an chosúlacht ar an scéal go bhfuil an dá rialtas ag cur na comhairle go léir ar an Fhoras agus titeann sé ar earnáil dheonach na Gaeilge comhairle a chur ar an Fhoras agus ar an dá rialtas.

An phríomhfhadhb a bhain le 'gníomhú go diongbháilte' ar son na Gaeilge, bhain sé leis na pearsana a bhí sa diallait thábhachtach ó thaobh cultúir agus teanga. Níorbh í an Ghaeilge an chloch ba mhó a bhí ar a bpaidríní ag Michael McGimpsey (faoi dhó), Edwin Poots, Nelson Mc Causland..... go dtí gur tháinig Carál Ní Chuilín. Le dhá bhliain anuas tá fuaimeanna dearfacha ag teacht amach ó Stormont agus Carál Ní Chuilín ina haire. Athróir cluiche a bhí inti ó thaobh na Gaeilge. Tá obair ar siúl ag an Roinn fúithi le Straitéis don teanga a fhorbairt agus, a lochtaí atá an dréacht, agus an chuma ar an scéal go ndéanfaidh muid na meancóga céanna agus a rinneadh ó Dheas (foghlaimíonn muid nach bhfoghlaimíonn muid), tá

Undoubtedly progress has been made on Irish language matters in the intervening fifteen years. Foras na Gaeilge began with promise, Irish medium schools flourished. TG4 became more readily available in this jurisdiction, Irish language centres have been built and others renovated and money has been invested in Irish language media etc.

For the past three years, however, Foras na Gaeilge has been attempting to implement a process of rationalization of the voluntary sector of the Irish language which has engendered widespread fear for the future of those nineteen core funded organizations. It appears that somebody in the North/South Ministerial Council came up with the idea that the current system was broken and in need of repair. Dark clouds gathered over the Irish language voluntary sector. This fear and uncertainty is undermining the tremendous work of the experienced voluntary organizations. Some of Foras na Gaeilge's schemes, on the other hand, are effective in promoting Irish, not least the Irish Language Community Scheme under which development officers are employed. As I see it, Foras is attempting to manoeuvre the vehicle which carries the Irish language with one foot on the accelerator and the other on the brake at the same time.

One of the primary functions imposed upon Foras was to provide council to both governments, North and South, on the promotion of Irish. It appears that all the advice is coming from both Governments in the direction of Foras na Gaeilge and it has been left to the voluntary sector to advise Foras and both governments.

The main problem with delivering 'resolute action' to promote Irish on the part of the Assembly was with the ministers in the hotseat for language and culture. Irish was not a priority for them..... .Michael McGimpsey twice, Edwin Poots, Nelson Mc Causland..... until the arrival of Carál Ní Chuilín. Over the past two years the sounds emanating from Stormont regarding the Irish language have been more positive. Carál Ní Chuilín has been a game-changer. Her department has begun work on a strategy for Irish and, despite the failings in the draft strategy released, and the fear that we could make many of the mistakes that were made down South with their twenty year strategy (we learn that we don't learn), this draft strategy is better

an dréachtstraitéis seo níos fearr ná straitéis ar bith a chuir na hairí roimpi os ár gcomhar. Tá an scéim Líofa 2015 curtha ar bun agus í féin sínithe suas le bheith Líofa roimh 2015 mar Charál agus tá tús curtha le sparánachtaí Gaeltachta le cuidiú le lucht foghlamtha na Gaeilge ó chúlra faoi mhíbhuntáiste freastal ar chúrsaí Gaeltachta. Cuideoidh an scéim seo le tobar na Gaeilge fosta, An Ghaeltacht.

Tá tábhacht ar leith ag baint leis na scoileanna príomhshrutha ó thaobh na Gaeilge agus thioctadh leis an rialtas níos mó a dhéanamh leis an Ghaeilge a spreagadh mar a gealladh sa Chomhaontú. Bhí an t-am ann nuair a bhí an Ghaeilge ar an dara teanga is coitianta a roghnaigh daltaí don ArdLeibhéal i dTuaisceart Éireann i ndiaidh na Fraincise. Anois tá na teangacha uilig buailte ag an athrú sa Ríocht Aontaithe nach gá teanga a roghnú do GCSE. De thairbhe íslíú ghradaim na dteangacha agus íslíú seasaimh don Ghaeilge dá bharr, tá níos lú daltaí ag roghnú na Gaeilge mar ábhar scrúdúcháin agus níos lú daltaí ag dul chun na Gaeltachta ar chúrsaí. Tá sé seo ar cheann de na bagairtí is mó atá ann do thodhchaí na Gaeilge faoi láthair. Arís tá an earnáil dheonach ag tabhairt faoin obair seo agus tá scéimeanna ag Gael Linn, mar shampla, maoinithe ag Foras na Gaeilge, leis an Ghaeilge a dhéanamh tarraingteach do dhéagóirí; comórtais, imeachtaí agus cúrsaí Gaeltachta. Dá mbeadh ord oideachais go mbeadh ar dhaltaí teanga a roghnú do GCSE, dara teanga ar bith, thioctadh leas ar scéal na Gaeilge thar oíche.

Tréimhse réasúnta gairid í cúig bliana déag i bhforbairt teanga. Ar an taobh eile den scála, áfach, is tréimhse chriticiúil í seo i meath Teanga. Tá an dul chun cinn malltriallach agus tharla an chuid is mó den dul chun cinn maidir leis an Rialtas le dhá bhliain anuas gidh go bhfuil muid ag dul fríd an achar is measa den chúlú eacnamaíochta sa tréimhse chéanna. Páistí ar bith a bhí i Rang 1 sa bhunscoil sa bhliain 1998, thioctadh leo a bheith sa chéad bhliain ar ollscoil anois. Cad é an gníomh diongbháilte a mhothaigh siadsan faoin Ghaeilge ón Rialtas? Nuair a gheallann, ní rialtas amháin ach dhá rialtas gníomh diongbháilte, ní huair amháin ach faoi dhó, bheadh cúis agat a bheith ag dúil le toradh ní ba fhéarr agus ní ba ghaiste.

Cinntíodh £20m don Ghaeilge mar chuid den Chomhaontú i gCill Rìmhinn; £12m don chraoltóireacht agus £8m do thionscnaimh chaipitil.

than zero strategy from the previous ministers. The Líofa 2015 campaign has been promoted and the minister herself has signed up to it. A bursary scheme to help adults and teenagers less well off to attend Gaeltacht courses is to be welcomed. This will also help the wellspring of Irish, the Gaeltacht.

The mainstream secondary schools are crucial in the promotion of Irish and the Government could certainly do more to incentivize its uptake as a GCSE/AS/A2 subject. Irish was once the second most frequently chosen 'A' Level language in Northern Ireland after French. Currently all languages are suffering as there is no longer a requirement to take any language to GCSE. This has resulted in fewer students choosing Irish and also to a reduction in the numbers attending Gaeltacht courses in the summer. This is one of the most pressing issues for the future of Irish. The voluntary sector is helping to redress this slide and Gael Linn, funded by Foras na Gaeilge have a range of events, Gaeltacht courses and competitions to make Irish more attractive to students. If there were to be an education order to make at least one language compulsory, any second language, up to GCSE level, this problem would be resolved over night, as many students would naturally choose Irish.

Fifteen years is a reasonably short period in the promotion of a language, but at the other end of the scale it is a critical period in language decline. Progress has been slow and most has happened in the last two years despite the worst of the economic downturn. A child in primary 1 in 1998 could now be in first year at university. What resolute action did they witness in the promotion of Irish? When, not one but two Governments promise resolute action, not once but twice, one could be forgiven for expecting better progress.

£20m was allocated to the Irish language at the St. Andrew's Agreement, £12m for broadcasting and £8m for capital projects. While this was welcome it

Tá sé seo tábhachtach agus tá fáilte mhór roimhe ach is beag an tsuim í i gcomparáid leis an airgead a chaitear agus a caitheadh ar bhréagáin eile ag Rialtas Shasana. Gheobhfá héileacaptar thuasluaite Chinook amháin ar an phraghas sin, £20m, agus é sin ar shladmhargadh. Lena chur ar bhealach eile, tá i bhfad níos mó airgid de dhíth mar chúiteamh ar na blianta fada nuair nach bhfuair an Ghaeilge ach pingíní, grabhróga ón tábla. Tá díbhinn cheart síochána de dhíth ar lucht na Gaeilge mar a aontaíodh sna Comhaontuithe.

Tá cuid mhaith de na polasaithe ar mhaith linne i dTuaisceart Éireann, agus a gealladh dúinn, i bhfeidhm cheana i bPoblacht na hÉireann; Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla, Coimisinéir Teanga, Straitéis 20 bliana tosaithe, coiste faoi chathaoirleacht an Taoisigh é féin, le cinntiú go bhfuil forbairt na Gaeilge ag croílár na cumhachta ach ní hionann é seo agus a rá go bhfuil achan scéal mar a d'iarrfadh do bhéal é a bheith ó Dheas. Ní athraíonn rialtais teanga aon phobail. Tá an teanga a úsáideann daoine le roghnú ag an phobal ina maireann na daoine. Ní féidir leis an rialtas ach an bealach a éascú.

Ag an staid seo cúig bliana déag ó síníodh Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, agus seacht mbliana ó síníodh an Comhaontú Chill Rímhinn, shílfeá go mbeadh gníomh ní ba dhiongbháilte feicthe ag Gaeil, ach níl. Shílfeá go mbeadh comharthaíocht dhátheangach go forleathan, ach níl, shílfeá go mbeadh ceachtanna na Breataine Bige uilig foghlamtha againn, ach níl. Shílfeá nach mbeadh olagón achan uair a labharann duine Gaeilge sa Tionól, ach bíonn. Shílfeá go mbeadh deireadh leis an chosc ar úsáid na Gaeilge sna cúirteanna, ach níl. Shílfeá go dtiocfadh dul chun cinn a dhéanamh leis an Ghaeilge neamhspleách ar theanga eile ar nós Albainis Uladh, ach ní féidir gan rí rá agus ruaille buaille. Tá an ghluaiseacht mall agus casta. D'eagraigh POBAL mórshiúlta, roinnt mórcheiliúrtha, roinnt ceardlann eolais, roinnt feachtas feasachta le cur i gcuimhne don rialtas gur gheall siad gníomh diongbháilte ar son na Gaeilge. Sheas an earnáil dheonach en bloc i gcoinne na Samhaile Nua Maoinithe a chuir Foras na Gaeilge chun cinn gan aon bhunús loighciúil a mhíniú agus go dtí seo d'éist An Chomh-Aireacht Thuaidh/Theas leis na heagraíochtaí deonacha agus diúltaíodh do mholtaí an Fhorais faoi dhó. Ach tá claiómh

was a relatively modest concession when compared to money that has been, and is being spent on less worthy toys by the British Government. One could purchase one of the aforementioned Chinook helicopters for c. £20m at a bargain offer. To make the point another way, much more is needed to compensate for the long years during which Irish only received pennies, crumbs from the table. The Irish language deserves a reasonable share of the peace dividend that was outlined in the two main agreements under discussion.

Many of the language policies keenly sought by some in the North of Ireland and which were promised by the Government are already in place in the Republic of Ireland. Official Languages' Act, Language Commissioner, a twenty year strategy for Irish initiated and a committee for Irish under the chairmanship of the Taoiseach himself to ensure, theoretically, that Irish is at the very centre of decision making power. But not all is wonderful regarding Irish down South. Governments do not change languages. Communities choose which language they use. Governments can, nevertheless, make the way easier.

At this stage fifteen years on since that memorable Good Friday Agreement and seven years from St. Andrew's one might indeed have expected more resolute action. One might have expected bi-lingual signs to be the order of the day but they are not. One might have expected the Northern Ireland Assembly to have taken on board best practice from the Welsh experience, but they have not. One might expect that the hue and cry over the use of Irish in the Assembly was banished to the pages of history but this is not the case either. One might have expected that the 1737 legislation prohibiting the use of Irish in the courts would be revoked but bizarrely, it remains. One might expect that progress in Irish need not be tied to progress with Ulster Scots without point scoring ructions, but not so. Progress is certainly slow and seemingly tortuous. The voluntary organization POBAL has organized marches, seminars, some awareness raising campaigns and showcase events to remind the Government of their commitments to take resolute action. The voluntary organizations have resisted en bloc, Foras na Gaeilge's rationalization in the absence of any logical rationale and have thus far been heeded by the North/South Ministerial

Damocles an chuíchóirithe thar na heagraíochta go fóill.

Tá obair mhaith ar siúil ag pobail éagsúla i bpócaí láidre Gaeilge a bhfuil an Ghaelscolaíocht mar chroí lárnaigh iontu ar fud Thuaisceart Éireann. Oibríonn na pobail seo ar nós na laoch teanga a d'oibrigh de lá is d'oíche leis an chéad bhunscoil lán- Ghaelach a oscailt ar Bhóthar Seoighe go luath sna 70í faoin slua ghairm, 'Ná habair é déan é', agus is chuig na díograiseoirí seo agus a leithéidí a d'amharcfainn féin ar mhaithe le dóchas faoi thodhchaí na Gaeilge seachas chuig ranna rialtais. I mo cheantar féin, Cathair Ard Mhacha, mar shampla, tá an Ghaelscolaíocht á forbairt go nádúrtha ag achan leibhéal, tá an-tóir ar ranganna oíche, bíonn neart imeachtaí trí mheán na Gaeilge, tá duine cumasach fostaithe, le maoiniú ó Fhoras na Gaeilge, leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn sa phobal, tá tacaíocht na Comhairle logánta cinntithe do roinnt scéimeanna ar nós campaí samhraidh, tá siopa Gaelach oscailte agus tá mórfheallán lárionad Gaeilge a thógáil do lucht na teanga a chuirfidh go mór le dlús san fhorbairt. Tá tacaíocht faighte don tionscnamh seo dar teideal Aonach Mhacha in 2013 nach mbeadh ar fáil sa bhliain 1998 a éascaíonn an bealach go mór agus is comhartha é a leithéid seo, gur féidir dul chun cinn a dhéanamh.

Beidh orainn fanacht tamall eile go bhfeice muid cé chomh diongbháilte agus is féidir le gníomh Rialtais a bheith ó thaobh na Gaeilge, nó an mbeidh siad ábalta na gealltanais eile a thug siad a thabhairt i dtír agus cén uair?

Níl aon ghealltanais a tugadh an-deacair le cur i gcrích ach an toil a bheith ann. An rud atá de dhíth ná na spriocanna a dhéanamh rud beag níos cliste agus dáta tosaithe agus dáta críochnaithe a chur leo ar an phatrún chéanna a bhí ag an Gael-Mheiriceánach mór le rá J.F. Kennedy – 'fear a chur ar an Ghealach agus é a thabhairt ar ais beo roimh dheireadh deich mbliana.' Níl muid ag iarraidh ar an rialtas fear a chur ar an Ghealach ach roinnt ceart bunúsach a bhaineann le teanga ársa álainn neamhurchóideach atá á labhairt le bród go fóill a thabhairt isteach mar a gealladh i gConradh idirnáisiúnta agus ar vótáil móramh mór ar a shon. Scaipeadh an Conradh seo níos forleithne ná mar scaipeadh aon fhoilseachán eile riamh roimhe ar an oileán seo, níos forleithne fiú ná an Bíobla Naofa

Council. But the sword of Damocles hangs over the core funded organizations still.

Progress, however, is being made in various locations, in strong pockets of Irish language communities across the North with Gaelscoileanna at their heart. These communities work in a similar way to those Irish language heroes who set up the first Irish medium school on the Shaw's Road in the early seventies with their motto, 'Don't just say it, do it'. It is to these dedicated leaders that I would look for hope regarding the future of Irish rather than to governmental departments. In my own area, Armagh City, for example, Irish medium education is thriving at all levels, night classes are well attended, there are plenty of Irish medium events organized, there is a development officer funded by Foras na Gaeilge to promote the language in the community, and support has been garnered for a number of schemes from the local council e.g. Irish language summer camps. There is an Irish language shop trading successfully and there is a grand plan to build an Irish language hub in the centre of Armagh City which will act as a focus for all this good work. Support for this grand scheme called, Aonach Mhacha, has been secured in 2013, which would not have been there in 1998 and which greatly eases the pathway forward. This is a sign that progress can be made.

We will have to wait a little longer to find out exactly how resolute the Governments' actions can be with regard to Irish or if they will be able to deliver on the commitments given.

None of the commitments given are very difficult to deliver. What is required is to smarten up the objectives and agree a starting and completion date along the same line's as J.F. Kennedy's famous – 'Send a man to the moon and bring him back safely before the end of the decade'. The Government is not being asked to send a man to the moon and bring him back alive. It is being asked to implement some basic rights on behalf of an ancient language which still survives, in accordance with what was agreed in two international agreements and one of which secured a huge majority support in a referendum carried out on both sides of the border. The Good Friday Agreement was distributed more widely than any other publication ever before, even more so than the Holy Bible itself. What did they

féin. Cad é go díreach a gheall siad dúinn sna Conartha seo? Ní gá dúinn dul thairis arís.

Tá sé thar am na gealltanais seo a chur i gcrích nó á séanadh go poiblí os comhair an Domhain mhóir.

Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta

- ✓ Úsáid na teanga a éascú agus a spreagadh sa chaint agus sa scríobh.
- ✓ Iarracht deireadh a chur le srianta i gcothú agus i bhforbairt na Gaeilge.
- ✓ Foráil maidir le hidirchaidreamh le pobal na Gaeilge
- ✓ TG4 a bheith ar fáil go forleathan i dTuaisceart Éireann (measaim go bhfuil dul chun cinn déanta ag an Rialtas leis an ghealltanas seo)
- ✓ Spreagadh agus tacú le léiriú scannán agus clár teilifíse i nGaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann (méid áirithe dul chun cinn déanta).

Agus ag Chill Rìmhinn

- ✓ Acht na Gaeilge a thabhairt isteach

promise in these agreements? We don't have to go over all of it again.

It is high time that the key commitments below were delivered or retracted in full view of the international community.

Good Friday Agreement

- ✓ Facilitate and promote use of Irish both written and spoken
- ✓ Attempt to remove barriers to the promotion and development of Irish
- ✓ Provide for interfacing with the Irish language speaking community
- ✓ Ensure that TG4 is widely available in the North of Ireland (progress has been made in this area)
- ✓ Provide support and incentives for TV and film production in Irish (some progress has been made in this area)

St. Andrew's Agreement

- ✓ Adopt an Irish Language Act.

Seán Ó Coinn



Is as an Mhullach Bán, i gContae Ard Mhacha Seán Ó Coinn. D'oibr sé mar láithreoir ar chlár laethúil Gaeilge BBC Raidió Uladh, mar mhúinteoir Gaeilge, mar thaighdeoir ar Ollscoil na Banríona i mBéal Feirste ar Thionsacadal Logainmneacha

Thuaisceart Éireann, ina bhainisteoir tionscadail ar Ionad Cultúrtha Thí Chulainn agus ina aistritheoir le Comhairle Churaclaim Scrúduithe agus Mheasúnaithe Thuaisceart Éireann, sular ceapadh é in 2001 ina phríomhfheidhmeannach ar Chomhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, post ar chaith sé 10 mbliana ann. Ceapadh ina Leas-Phríomhfheidhmeannach/Stiúrthóir Seirbhísí Oideachais é le Foras na Gaeilge in 2011.

Seán Ó Coinn is from Mullaghbawn in County Armagh. He worked as a presenter on the BBC Radio Ulster daily Irish language show, as an teacher of Irish, as a researcher at Queen's University Belfast for the Northern Ireland Place-Names Project, as a Project Manager with Ionad Cultúrtha Thí Chulainn and as a translator with the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, until he was appointed as Chief Executive Officer for Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta in 2001, where he spent 10 years. He was appointed as Deputy CEO/Director of Education Services of Foras na Gaeilge in 2011.

Nuair a smaoiním ar na rudaí a tháinig chun cinn i dtaca leis an Ghaeilge de le 15 bliana anuas, is deacair idirdhealú a dhéanamh idir rudaí a tháinig chun cinn de bharr Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta agus rudaí a thiocthadh chun cinn cibé. In 1998 bhí an Ghaeilge á forbairt ar mhórán dóigheanna: bhí roinnt clár ar an raidió, bhí nuachtán Gaeilge ann, bhí gaelscoileanna agus naíonraí á mbunú, bhí comharthaí Gaeilge le feiceáil i roinnt ceantar, agus bhí glacadh leis an Ghaeilge sa phobal de réir a chéile ag feabhsú. Thig an argóint a dhéanamh, dá réir sin, go leanfadh an fás agus an fhorbairt ar aghaidh gan tacaíocht Chomhaontú an Chéasta, de bharr éileamh a bheith sa phobal. Mar sin féin, is cuma cé acu a leanfadh an Ghaeilge uirthi ag dul ó neart go neart nó nach leanfadh, scéal cinnte gur éascaigh Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta an turas ar mhórán dóigheanna.

I gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta gealladh dúinn *comhionannas, comhpháirtíocht agus comhurrain* i dtéarmaí ginearálta *dár bhféiniúlacht agus dár n-oidhreacht chultúrtha*. I dtaca leis an Ghaeilge de gealladh dúinn *tábhacht na hurraime, na tuisceana agus na caoinfhulaingthe i ndáil le héagsúlacht teanga*, gealladh dúinn *gníomh diombháilte leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn*; éascú agus spreagadh *úsáid na teanga sa chaint agus i scríbhneoireacht sa saol príobháideach agus sa saol poiblí*; go ndéanfaí iarracht *deireadh a chur le srianta a chuirfeadh nó a d'oibreodh in aghaidh chothú nó fhorbairt na teanga*; go gcuirfí *dualgas reachtúil ar an Roinn*

When I think of the developments surrounding the Irish language that have come about over the last 15 years, it's hard to distinguish between those developments that arose from the Good Friday Agreement and those that were destined to happen regardless of the agreement. In 1998 the Irish language was developing in many ways: there were several Irish-language radio programmes being broadcast, Irish-medium schools and nurseries were being established, Irish-language signs were appearing in several areas, and community acceptance of the Irish language was gradually improving. The argument, therefore, can be made that this growth and development would have continued without the support of the Good Friday Agreement, due to community demand for the language. Irrespective of whether the Irish language would have continued to grow, it cannot be denied that the Good Friday Agreement made the journey a much more straightforward one in many ways.

In the Good Friday Agreement we were promised, *equality, partnership and mutual respect* in general terms for our *identity and for our cultural heritage*. In relation to the Irish language, we were promised recognition for *the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity*, we were promised *resolute action to promote the language*; the facilitation and encouragement of *the use of the language in speech and writing in public and private life*; that efforts would be made to *seek to remove, where possible, restrictions which would discourage or work against the maintenance or development of the language*;

Oideachais leis an oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge a spreagadh agus a éascú; Teilifís na Gaeilge a bheith á chur ar fáil ar bhonn níos forleithne mar ábhar práinne; agus gealladh bealaí le spreagadh agus tacú airgeadais a thabhairt do léiriú scannán agus clár teilifíse trí Ghaeilge.

Ba liosta suntasach é liosta suntasach é gan amhras, liosta a d'fhág lucht na Gaeilge lán de dhóchas agus muid ag súil le hathruithe móra i leith na Gaeilge sna blianta a leanfadh Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta. Is annamh a shíltear mar a bhítear. Ní thig a shéanadh go bhfuil cuid de na gealltanais sin comhlíonta nó á gcomhlíonadh. De bharr an Chomhaontaithe, bunaíodh Foras na Gaeilge leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn - ní raibh riamh roimhe foras le cúram na Gaeilge a thabhairt air féin ó thuaidh. Gealladh maoiniú Rialtais dó, agus bunaíodh oifig ó thuaidh, rud a thug stádas agus áit don Ghaeilge ó thuaidh nach raibh aici roimhe sin. Thug sin deiseanna fostaíochta do Ghaeilgeoirí nach raibh riamh roimhe ar fáil. Bunaíodh Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta agus lontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta fosta, rud a thug stádas, a háit féin agus a guth féin don Ghaelscolaíocht ar bhealach nach raibh aici roimhe sin, agus arís thug sin deiseanna fostaíochta do lucht na Gaeilge.

D'fhág bunú an dá fhoras sin, agus bunú lontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta, an bealach faoi réir le maoiniú a chur ar fáil don Ghaeilge, maoiniú a bhi sí i dteideal a fháil ach nach raibh bealach ann roimhe sin lena thabhairt. Rinne an maoiniú sin difear as cuimse d'fhorbairt na teanga le 15 bliana anuas. Oifigigh forbartha Gaeilge atá lonnaithe anois ar fud an tuaiscirt agus airgead poblí á maoiniú, Cultúrlanna breátha i mBéal Feirste, i nDoire, ar an lúr, in Áth na Long agus na cinn atá á mbeartú d'áiteanna eile. Tá tithe breátha scoile anois ag mórán dár ngaelscoileanna; suas le 500 duine fostaithe inár ngaelscoileanna idir mhúinteoirí, oibríthe réamhscoile agus chúntóirí ranga; áiseanna foghlama den scoth á n-úsáid sna gaelscoileanna agus straitéis ag an Roinn Oideachais d'fhorbairt na Gaelscolaíochta a chinnteoidh caighdeán arda oideachais, áiseanna, oiliúna agus cóiríochta san am atá le teacht. Tá toradh na n-athruithe le feiceáil ar bhealaí eile sa phobal fosta: busanna *Translink* in

that a statutory duty [would be placed] on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate Irish medium education; that Teilifís na Gaeilge would be made more widely available as a matter of urgency; and we were promised the seeking of more effective ways to encourage and provide financial support for Irish language film and television production.

It was undoubtedly an impressive list, and a list that left the Irish-language community full of expectation, with many of us expecting significant changes with regards to the Irish language in the years that followed the publication of the Good Friday Agreement. But things seldom work out as expected. It cannot be denied that some of these commitments were fulfilled, or are currently in the process of being fulfilled. As a result of the Agreement, Foras na Gaeilge was established to promote the Irish language. There had never before been an institution responsible for the promotion of the Irish language in the North. It was awarded government funding, and a northern office was established, which gave the Irish language a place in society and a status that was unprecedented in the north. This opened up employment opportunities for Irish speakers in the north that had never before been available. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and lontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta were also established. These organisations gave a presence, status and a voice to Irish-medium education in northern society in a way that it had never previously enjoyed. These also opened up employment opportunities for Irish speakers.

The establishment of these two institutions, and the establishment of lontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta, made it possible for funding to be provided for the Irish language. Although the language was always entitled to the funding, there had never before been a means by which it could be distributed. That funding made a significant difference to the development of the language over the last 15 years. There are now Irish-language development officers based throughout the north, who are publically funded, as well as thriving Irish-Language centres in Belfast, Derry, Newry and Annalong, with others being planned elsewhere. The majority of our Irish-medium schools are housed in fantastic buildings, with as many as 500 teachers, nursery workers and classroom assistants employed in these schools; high quality learning resources are in use in Irish-medium schools, and the Department of Education has created a strategy for the development of Irish-medium education, which will ensure a high quality

Iarthar Bhéal Feirste ag tarraingt go *Sruthán an Bhantiarna* agus go dtí *An Poll Glas* chomh maith céanna le *Ladybrook* agus *Poleglass*.

Ar ndóigh, níl i gceist sna liostaí thuas ach samplaí de na hathruithe a cuireadh i gcrích de thairbhe bhunú na struchtúr agus na n-eagraíochtaí a tháinig de bharr Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta. Ach ar bhealach, ba é an toradh ba shuntasáí atá againn de bharr an Chomhaontaithe sin, dar liom, ná forbairt na struchtúr sin, struchtúir ar féidir tógáil orthu san am atá le teacht agus a thugann bealach dúinn leis an teanga a fhorbairt agus le forbairt na teanga a mhaoiniú. Agus tá aitheantas agus glacadh sa Rialtas, sa státseirbhís agus sa tseirbhís phoiblí anois don Ghaeilge nach raibh ann sna laethanta úd nuair nach nglacfaí le sloinne i nGaeilge nó le síneadh fada ar ainm.

Murar *mar ábhar práinne* féin a rinneadh é, faoi dheireadh thiar thall tá TG4 ar fáil anois ag bunús an phobail ó thuaidh le teacht na míorúlte digití. Agus tá a gcuid míorúiltí beaga féin déanta ag an Chiste Craoltóireachta le blianta beaga anuas i dtaca le soláthar ábhar craolta i nGaeilge de.

Thug Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta rud eile dúinn, nár gealladh sa scríbhinn, ach atá chomh tábhachtach céanna leis na gealltanais a scríobhadh sa Chomhaontú, mar atá polaiteoirí dár gcuid féin ag rialú ár ngnóthaí féin. I dtaca leis an Ghaeilge de tá dhá fhaobhar ar an chlaíomh áirithe sin; tá cuid de na polaiteoirí sin a rinne tosaíocht den Ghaeilge nuair a bhí an chumhacht acu sin a dhéanamh agus cuid acu a rinne a mhalairt. Chuidigh sin go mór an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn i réimsí áirithe mar atá luaithe thuas. D'fhág sin go bhfuil straitéis againn anois d'fhorbairt na Gaelscolaíochta agus ceann eile á bheartú don Ghaeilge, nuair a bhí dhá Aire Rialtais a rinne tosaíocht den Ghaeilge i gcumhacht i ranna Rialtais. D'fhág sin ainmneacha Gaeilge ar ár mbusanna, fógraí Gaeilge sna nuachtáin agus fáiltiú taifeadta i nGaeilge i gcuid de na hoifigí poiblí. Ach má d'fhág féin, níor fhág sé polasaithe dátheangachais againn sna ranna sin nó sna hoifigí sin, nuair a d'fhéadfadh sé. Níor fhág sé go dtig linn ár ngnó a dhéanamh i nGaeilge le *Translink* nó go mbíonn na fógraí ar an *Enterprise* go Baile Átha Cliath le cluinstit i nGaeilge, nuair a d'fhéadfadh sé. Níor fhág sé go dtig linn ár ngnó a dhéanamh i nGaeilge le Roinn an Oideachais, leis na Boird Oideachais, nuair a d'fhéadfadh sé. Níor fhág sé

of education, resources, training and accommodation in the future. The result of the changes can also be seen in other ways in the community: Translink buses in West Belfast can be seen with signs for *Sruthán an Bhantiarna* and *An Poll Glas* as well as *Ladybrook* and *Poleglass*.

Granted, the lists above are merely examples of the changes that came about as a result of the structures and institutions that were established by the Good Friday Agreement. But in a way, the most significant outcome of that Agreement, in my opinion, was the development of those structures, structures that can be built upon in the future and that give us a means to develop the language and a means to fund that development. There is now an acceptance and recognition in Government, in the civil service and in the public sector for Irish that did not exist in the past when surnames in Irish were unacceptable as were first names with a *fada*.

Even if it wasn't done *as a matter of urgency*, TG4 has finally been made available to the majority of the public in the north with the coming of the digital miracle. And the Irish language Broadcast Fund has performed its own mini-miracles in recent years in Irish-language broadcasting.

The Good Friday Agreement gave us something else that was not promised in the document, but that is just as important as the promises that were written in the Agreement, namely our own politicians now governing our own affairs. From the prospective of the Irish language this is something of a doubled-edged sword; some of those politicians have made the Irish language a priority when they had the power to do so, while others did the contrary. This helped to promote the Irish language in certain areas, as mentioned above. As a result, we now have a strategy in place for the development of Irish-medium education, and another strategy for the development of the Irish language being planned, when two Government Ministers a priority of the Irish language while in power in Government departments. Also as a result we have Irish place-names on buses, Irish advertisements in newspapers, and recorded greetings in Irish in some public offices. Despite these developments, however, it didn't result in a bilingual policy in these departments or offices, when it might have. It didn't result in our being able to carry out our business with *Translink* through the medium of Irish, or in announcements heard in Irish on the *Enterprise* train to Dublin, when it might have. It didn't result

daoine le Gaeilge fostaithe le bheith ag plé le lucht na Gaeilge ná le lucht na Gaelscolaíochta, nuair a d'fhéadfadh sé. Níor fhág sé go mbeadh saorthaisteal ag tuismitheoirí dá bpáistí chuig a ngaelscoil is cóngaraí. Níor fhág sé gaelscoileanna dara leibhéal againn taobh amuigh de Bhéal Feirste, ná áiseanna do theagasc na Gaeilge sna scoileanna Béarla. Níor fhág sé ach oiread an Ghaeilge ar an churaclam i mbunscoileanna Béarla. Rudaí iad sin a bhféadfaimis bheith ag súil leo dá mba sa Bhreatain Bheag a bheimis agus muid ag plé leis an Bhreatnais. Seans gur ag súil le barraíocht a bhí muid má shíl muid go dtiocfadh na rudaí sin i bhfíor de bharr Chomhaontaithe pholaitiúil. Níl a fhios agam ar gheall Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta na rudaí sin dúinn, ach is cinnte gur fhág sé an Ghaeilge i lár aonach na díospóireachta ó thuaidh ar bhealach nár samhlaíodh roimh 1998.

Tá gealltanais eile nár comhlíonadh agus nach bhfuil á gcomhlíonadh. Baineann cuid de sin le faobhar eile an claímh sin, polaiteoirí nár mhaith leo go dtabharfaí aitheantas don Ghaeilge, agus baineann cuid de le dearcadh an phobail. Má b'ionann *gníomh diongbháilte* an Chomhaontaithe agus Acht Gaeilge, nó cosaint sa dlí don Ghaeilge, tá gealltanais mór nár comhlíonadh. Má b'ionann iarracht an Chomhaontaithe le *deireadh a chur le srianta a chuirfeadh nó a d'oibreodh in aghaidh chothú nó fhorbairt na teanga*, má b'ionann sin agus an cosc ar úsáid na Gaeilge sna cúirteanna a chur ar ceal, tá gealltanais eile ceilte orainn. Agus, cé go bhfuil mar dhualgas reachtúil ar Fhoras na Gaeilge *úsáid na teanga a éascú agus a spreagadh sa chaint agus i scríbhneoireacht sa saol príobháideach agus sa saol poiblí*, is beag toradh a bhí air sin sa saol poiblí le 15 bliana.

Ach dar liom, ba é an fhaillí ba mhó a rinneadh i leith ghealltanais Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta i leith na Gaeilge ná an t-aitheantas sin a bhí geallta ó *na rannpháirtithe uile do tábhacht na hurraime, na tuisceana agus na caoinfhulaingthe i ndáil le héagsúlacht teanga*. Aitheantas nár tháinig nó nach bhfuil trácht féin air go fóill, ach a mhalairt ar fad. Is le 15 bliana anuas ba bhíob, ba nimhne agus ab fhíochmhaire a bhí an easurraim agus an easpa caoinfhulaingthe á léiriú don Ghaeilge, chóir a bheith ó bhunú an stáit. Má d'athraigh Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta cinniúint phobal an tuaiscirt, agus

in our being able to carry out our business with the Department of Education or with the Education Boards through Irish, when it might have. It didn't result in Irish speakers being employed to deal with the Irish-speaking community or with the Irish-medium education community when it might have. It didn't result in parents receiving free transport for their children to their nearest Irish-medium school when it might have. It didn't result in second level Irish-medium education being made available outside of Belfast, or in resources for the teaching of Irish in English-speaking schools. Nor did it result in Irish being made a part of the curriculum in English-speaking primary schools. These are things we might have expected, were we in Wales and dealing with the Welsh language. Maybe we were expecting too much, if we thought we could accomplish these developments as a result of a political agreement. I don't know if the Good Friday Agreement promised us these things, but it certainly made the Irish language a current topic for debate in a way that could never have been imagined prior to 1998.

There are other promises that were not realised, and that are not being realised. Some of these relate to the other edge of that sword, there are politicians who don't want to see the Irish language receive recognition, and public perception plays a part in some of it. If the *resolute action* of the Agreement was equivalent to an Irish-language Act, or to legal protection for the Irish language, this represents a major commitment that has been left unrealised. If the Agreement's *seeking to remove, where possible, restrictions which would discourage or work against the maintenance or development of the language* is the equivalent of ending the ban on the use of Irish in the courts, another promise has been kept. And while Foras na Gaeilge has a statutory duty to *facilitate and encourage the use of the language in speech and writing in public and private life*, this has borne little fruit in public life in the last 15 years.

However, in my opinion, the most significant neglect of the promises made in the Good Friday Agreement in respect of the Irish language was that recognition that was promised *from all the participants for the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity*. That recognition never materialised, and has yet even to be placed on the agenda. For the past 15 years the disrespect and lack of tolerance for the Irish language has been at its most venomous, most spiteful, and most ferocious, almost since the establishment of the state. If the

ba deacair a shéanadh gur athraigh, níor tháinig an t-athrú sin a shíl muid a thiocfadh ar chroíthe an phobail, sa pholaitíocht ná i leith na Gaeilge. Má gheall Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta athrú meoin i leith na Gaeilge, agus níl a fhios agam cé acu a gheall, níor fóraíodh sin ach sa bheag. Tá cinnirí sa phobal agus, dá réir sin, daoine sa phobal a leanann iad, nach dtig leo go fóill dearcadh ar an Ghaeilge mar a dhearctar ar a col ceathracha teangeolaíochta in Albain nó sa Bhreatain Bheag; mar sheoid luachmhar oidhreachta atá i dteideal na hurraime ceanann céanna atá dlite dár n-oidhreacht stairiúil agus seandálaíochta. In ainneoin a bhfuil geallta i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, níor éirigh leis na polaiteoirí atá in ainm a bheith ag caomhnú an Chomhaontaithe agus á chur i bhfeidhm, níor éirigh leo aghaidh a thabhairt ar cheist na Gaeilge ar bhealach aibí, comhghéillte, ar bhealach a thabharfadh éisteacht d'argóintí agus ar bhealach a dtiocfaí ar chomhthuiscint, mar a rinneadh i leith na póilíneachta, i leith dhíchur na n-arm agus i leith cheist na mórshiúlta. Ar ndóigh, ní chuirfear beatha daoine i mbaol le ceist na Gaeilge, agus b'fhéidir gur sin an fáth a bhfuil sí íseal ar choigeala ár bpolaiteoirí uilig, bíodh siad fabhrach, neodrach nó naimhdeach ina leith.

Tuar dóchais, ar ndóigh, an dréacht-straitéis don Ghaeilge don tuaisceart, murar Acht Gaeilge féin í, agus tuar dóchais a laghad atá cluinte go fóill ag cur ina héadan. B'fhéidir gurbh í an straitéis sin an gléas a spreagfadh an díospóireacht aibí chomhthuisceanach sin atá de dhíth i measc ár gcinnirí polaitiúla ar an Ghaeilge. B'fhéidir, de bharr plé ar an straitéis, go dtiocfadh an pobal ó thuaidh ar thuiscint ar thábhacht na Gaeilge, agus ar a háit sa tsochaí. B'fhéidir, dá bharr sin, go dtabharfaí aghaidh ar an chuid sin den Chomhaontú agus ar spiorad an Chomhaontaithe atá fágtha go fóill gan comhlíonadh.

Good Friday Agreement has altered the fate of the people in the north, and it would be difficult to argue that it hasn't, the public has not had the change of heart we had expected, either politically or with regard to the Irish language. If the Good Friday Agreement promised a change of attitude towards the Irish language, and I'm not sure that it did, this was only achieved to a very minor extent. There are leaders in the community and, as a consequence of that, there are people in the community who follow them, who cannot view the Irish language in the same way that its linguistic cousins in Scotland and Wales are viewed; as a valuable jewel of our heritage which is entitled to the exact same respect that is afforded to our historical and archaeological heritage. Despite what has been promised by the Good Friday Agreement, the politicians who are supposed to be protecting and promoting the Agreement have not succeeded in addressing the Irish-language question in a mature, considerate manner. They have failed to approach it in a manner that would involve listening to arguments and reaching compromises in the same way they have regarding policing, arms' decommissioning and the question of parades. Of course, the Irish-language question doesn't endanger anybody's life, and maybe that's why it is low on the agenda of our politicians, regardless of whether they are in favour of it, opposed to it, or neutrally disposed to it.

The Draft-strategy for Irish for the north offers some hope, even if it is not quite the Irish language Act, as does the lack of opposition voiced regarding it to date. Maybe this strategy is the mechanism that will initiate that mature considered debate we need between our political leaders on the Irish language. Maybe, as a result of discussing the strategy, the public in the north will come to an understanding regarding the importance of the Irish language, and its place in society. Maybe, as a result of that, those promises made in the Agreement that yet remain unfulfilled, and likewise the spirit of the agreement may be realised.

Rosie Mc Corley



Is Ball Tionóil de chuid Sinn Féin í Rosie Mc Corley a suíonn ar an Choiste Ealaíon, Cultúir agus Fóillíochta agus ar an Choiste Córa. Bhain sí céim amach leis an Ollscoil Oscailte agus Ollscoil na Banríona Béal Feirste. Tá sí ina rúnaí ar an Chiste Infheistíochta Gaeilge agus ina ball Boird ar an Community Relations Council. Tá ról lárnach ag Rosie i gcur chun cinn na Gaeilge taobh istigh de Shinn Féin agus i mBéal Feirste Thiar. Bhí baint aici fosta le bunadh Naíscoil an Traonaigh agus Bhunscoil an Traonaigh i Lios na Scéithe Co Fhearmanach roinnt blianta ó shin.

Rosie McCorley is a Sinn Féin MLA who sits on the Justice and Culture, Arts and Leisure Committees at the Assembly. She is a graduate of the Open University and Queen's University Belfast. She is the secretary of Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge and also a board member of the Community Relations Council. Rosie plays a central role in promoting the Irish language within Sinn Féin and in west Belfast and has previously been involved for a number of years in setting up and supporting Naíscoil an Traonaigh and Bunscoil an Traonaigh in Lisnaskea Co Fermanagh.

Nuair a d'iarr POBAL orm an cheist seo a phlé thosaigh mé ag smaoineamh ar staid na Gaeilge san am sin i bhfad siar sa bhliain 1998, ó thaobh achan gné de. Agus in a dhiaidh sin rinne mé machnamh gearr ar an dóigh a bhfuil cúrsaí anois agus rith sé liom go bhfuil bóthar measartha fada taobh thiar dinn cheana. Ach cé go bhfuil an dul chun cinn ina ábhar iontais i gcomparáid le tréimhse ar bith eile i bhforbairt na teanga sa tuaisceart, tá bealach measartha fada amach romhainn go fóill.

Agus mise i mo ghníomhaí agus Ball den Tionól Reachtúla (BTR) de chuid Sinn Féin tá mé an-bhródúil as an mhéid atá déanta ag an pháirtí chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn agus a fhorbairt ó 1998 anonn agus ar ndóigh roimhe sin fosta. Ar ndóigh aithníonn muid gur cuid de phobal leathan na Gaeilge muid agus aithníonn muid fosta gur fríd a bheith ag obair le chéile is éifeachtaí sinn, agus muid ag féachaint go cruá lenár gcuid cuspóirí a bhaint amach.

Éilíonn Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, Comhaontú Chill Rìmhinn maraon leis an Chairt Eorpach ar rialtais na Breataine agus na hÉireann gníomhartha áirithe a dhéanamh i leith na Gaeilge, agus déanta na fírinne tá fíorbheagán réamhghníomhaíochta le feiceáil ó cheachtar acu. Tá oibleagáidí ar an Tionól sa tuaisceart fosta ach cuireadh bac ar an fhóram sin a chuid gealltanais a chomhlíonadh mar gheall ar dhiúltachas, naimhdeas agus cur in éadan críochnaithe na n-aontachtaíthe polaitiúla.

When I was asked by POBAL to address this question, I began thinking about where the Irish language was at that time in 1998, in all of its aspects. And then I had a quick think about where things currently stand and I realised we have come a very long way. But while progress has been amazing when compared to any other period in the development of the language in the north, we still have a considerable journey to travel.

As a Sinn Féin activist and MLA I am very proud of the contribution that the party has made to the promotion and development of Irish since 1998, and also prior to that. We are ever conscious of course of our place within the wider Irish language community and we recognise that it is through our combined collective efforts that we can be the most effective in striving towards our objectives.

The Good Friday and St Andrews Agreements as well as the European Charter require the British and Irish governments to take specific actions in relation to the Irish language and, in all honesty, there has been very little pro-activity from either of them. The Assembly in the north has obligations also but that forum has been prevented from fulfilling its commitments due to the negativity, hostility and downright opposition from political unionism.

Ar scor ar bith tá dianiarracht déanta ag Sinn Féin úsáid a bhaint as cibé fuinneamh agus cumhacht atá ar fáil dó le dul chun cinn a dhéanamh ar cheist na teanga. Leagfaidh mé amach thíos gníomhartha an pháirtí chun a thaispeáint go bhfuil dul chun cinn suntasach déanta le cúig bliana déag anuas in inneoin an chomhthéacs naimhdigh ina raibh muid ag obair ar amanna.

AN GHAELGE LAISTIGH DE NA H-INSTITIÚIDÍ POLAITIÚLA

Ar láithreacha foirmiúla na polaitíochta tá Sinn Féin tiomanta do chur chun cinn agus normalú na Gaeilge, sé sin í a labhairt, í a chluinstin agus í a fheiceáil. Na gníomhartha seo a leanas san áireamh -

- Ár mbaill uilig a spreagadh chun an oiread Gaeilge agus is féidir leo a úsáid i gCnoc an Anfa, i nDáil Éireann, sa tSeanad, sna Comhairlí Áitiúla agus i bParlaimint na hEorpa
- Ranganna Gaeilge a eagrú do bhaill an pháirtí agus don fhoireann
- Brú a chur ar Choimisiún an Tionóil le beartas láidir don Ghaeilge a thabhairt isteach
- Na h-eagraíochtaí Gaeilge agus na gaelscoileanna a spreagadh chun cuairt a thabhairt ar an Tionól
- Imeachtaí a óstáil a chuireann an Ghaeilge chun cinn ach go háirithe le linn seachtain na Gaeilge

Laistigh de na ranna rialtais le hAirí Shinn Féin i gceannas orthu tá an Ghaeilge curtha chun cinn againn mar a leanas -

- Doiciméid, tuarascálacha agus óráidí dátheangacha
- Fógraíocht dátheangach
- Comharthaíocht dátheangach ag ceannoifig na roinne
- An Ghaeilge ar na suímh idirlín
- Ranganna Gaeilge ar fáil d'fhoireann na roinne
- Áiseanna don phobal chun comhfhreagras a scríobh agus a fháil ar ais i nGaeilge agus glaonna gutháin trí mheán na Gaeilge fosta

Anuas ar sin nuair a bhí Conor Murphy ina Aire Forbartha Réigiúnaí thug sé isteach a lán beart leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn, na rudaí seo a leanas san áireamh -

- Eolas sábháilteachta agus amchláir Translink ar fáil i nGaeilge

Sinn Féin however has endeavoured to use whatever power and energy it can muster to make progress on the language and I will lay out the actions taken by the party to show that, despite having to operate within a sometimes hostile environment, there has been significant progress over the last 15 years.

IRISH WITHIN THE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

In the formal political arenas, Sinn Féin has undertaken to promote and normalise the Irish language by ensuring it is spoken, heard and visible. Actions include –

- Encouraging all our members to use as much Irish as possible in Stormont, in Dáil Éireann, the Senate, in local Councils and in the European Parliament
- Holding Irish classes for party members and staff
- Pressing the Assembly Commission to introduce a strong Irish language policy
- Encouraging Irish schools and organisations to visit the Assembly
- Hosting events which promote the Irish language, particularly during Seachtain na Gaeilge

Within government departments where Sinn Féin holds the ministry, we have promoted Irish by initiating the following-

- Bilingualism within departmental documents, reports and speeches
- Bilingual advertisements
- Bilingual signage at departmental headquarters
- Irish included on websites
- Irish classes available for departmental staff
- Facility for public to write and receive correspondence, and phonecalls, in Irish

In addition, when Conor Murphy was Minister for Regional Development, he introduced many measures to promote the Irish language including –

- Translink timetables and safety information in Irish

- Comharthíocht dátheangach ag na stadanna bus in Iarthar Bhéal Feirste
- Comharthaíocht cheann scríbe dátheangach ar bhusanna ag taisteal tríd an Cheathrú Gaeltachta
- Comharthíocht dátheangach sa stáisiún traenach nua ar an lúr.
- Bileoga eolais agus foirmeacha iarratais ar fáil i nGaeilge
- Aithint baill fhóirne le cumas Gaeilge le haghaidh breis oiliúna
- Cur isteach fógraíochta sna nuachtáin Ghaeilge
- Fostú éascaitheoirí le Gaeilge chun oiliúint sábháilteacht bhus a sholáthar do scoileanna trí mheán na Gaeilge

Nuair a chuaigh Sinn Féin i gceannas ar an aireacht Roinn Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta (RCEF) rinneadh bearta chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn-

- Tús le beart chun Straitéis Ghaeilge a thabhairt ar aghaidh
- Tús le beart chun Acht na Gaeilge a thabhairt ar aghaidh
- Tabhairt ar aghaidh an tionscnaimh Líofa
- Tús leis an phróiseas le haghaidh staidéar indéantachta ar thionscnamh Acadamh na Gaeilge

LÍOFA 2015

Sheol an tAire Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta (CEF) Carál Ní Chuilín an tionscnamh Líofa 2015 i Meán Fómhair 2011 agus thug sí gealltanas go poiblí ag an am sin bheith Líofa roimh dheireadh a téarma oifige i 2015. Gheall sí fosta 1000 duine eile a chlárú chun an rud céanna a dhéanamh. Sroicheadh agus sáraíodh an targaid sin laistigh de thrí mhí agus de réir an chuntais deireanaigh tá 3600 duine tiomanta le Líofa ina measc thart ar 200 ball den PSNI, an craoltóir William Crawley, agus comhairleoir de chuid an Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). Socraíodh ar thargaid úr, 5000. Tá Oifigeach Líofa fostaithe ag RCEF a oibríonn leis na comhairlí, Cumann Luathchleas Gael (CLG), na leabharlanna, an Seirbhís Póilíneachta TÉ (PSNI) agus le soláthraithe seirbhísí Gaeilge chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun tosaigh ar bhealach chomh cuimsitheach agus is féidir. Chuir an tAire maoiniúchán deontais ar fáil fosta do pháistí faoi dhíothacht sóisialta, le go bhféadfadh siad dul chun na Gaeltachta. Mar gheall ar Líofa agus dícheall an Aire, tá an Ghaeilge comhtháite anois in obair

- Bilingual bus stop signage in west Belfast
- Bilingual destination signage on buses going through the Gaeltacht Quarter
- Bilingual signage in new train station in Newry
- Information leaflets and application forms in Irish
- Identification of staff with Irish language competency to receive further training
- Placing of adverts in Irish language newspapers
- Employment of facilitators with Irish to deliver bus safety training to IME schools

When Sinn Féin took over the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) ministry, action was taken to promote Irish by –

- Initiating action to bring forward an Irish language strategy
- Initiating action to bring forward an Irish language Act
- Bringing forward the Líofa initiative
- Starting the process into the feasibility of an Irish language academy

LÍOFA 2015

Líofa 2015 is an initiative launched by Carál Ní Chuilín, Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) Minister, in September 2011 when she publicly pledged to become Líofa by the end of her term in 2015. She also undertook to enlist 1,000 others to do likewise. This target figure was achieved and surpassed within 3 months and at the last count almost 3,600 had signed up to Líofa including around 200 members of the PSNI, the broadcaster William Crawley and a DUP Councillor. A new target of 5,000 has been set. There is a Líofa officer employed in DCAL who works with Councils, the GAA, Libraries, PSNI and Irish language providers to advance and promote the language in as inclusive a way as possible. Grant funding for socially deprived children to attend the Gaeltacht has also been provided by the Minister. Through Líofa and the efforts of the Minister, the Irish language has become embedded in the day-to-day workings of DCAL in much the same way as IME is in the Department of Education. The Minister will continue to grow and develop the

laethúil an RCEF díreach mar atá an gaelscolaíocht sa Roinn Oideachais (RO). Leanfaidh an tAire ar aghaidh ag cur leis an tionscamh Líofa agus á fhorbairt. Tá pleananna aici le haghaidh imeachtaí chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn, suíomh gréasáin do Líofa agus seirbhísí tacaíochta do fhoghlaimoirí agus do mhúinteoirí.

OBAIR LE POBAL NA GAEILGE

Déanann Sinn Féin iarracht caidreamh maith a chaomhnú le pobal na Gaeilge trí chruinnithe tréimhsiúla a eagrú le h-ionadaithe ó eagraíochtaí áitiúla na Gaeilge chun eolas a roinnt, chun comhairliúchán a dhéanamh leo ar an tSamhail Nua Mhaoinithe de chuid Foras na Gaeilge, chun tuairimí a mhalartú, chun ceisteanna ábhartha a phlé agus chun caidreamh neamhiata a chaomhnú go ginearálta.

Sna caibidlí le rialtais na Breataine agus na hÉireann ar feadh na mblianta agus ar ndóigh leis na hAíre cuí sa tuaisceart, d'áirithigh Sinn Féin i dtólamh go raibh an Ghaeilge ag croílár na gcainteanna sin.

AN GHAELIGE SA PHOBAL AONTACHTACH

Tá sé rí-spreagúil a fheiceáil go bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha le maoiniú ó Foras na Gaeilge chun an Ghaeilge a fhorbairt in Oirthear Bhéal Feirste. Cé go raibh roinnt aontachtaithe ann i gcónaí a bhí agus atá go fóill páiseanta faoin teanga, bogann Misean Oirthear Bhéal Feirste cúrsaí i dtreo nua. Faoi mhaoracht Linda Irvine, anois tá níos mó ná daichead aontachtaí ar an talamh ag freastal ar ranganna Gaeilge ina bpobal féin.

Thug Sinn Féin cuireadh do Linda Irvine aitheasc a thabhairt ag a Shlóghadh i Márta 2013 chun ár mbaill a chur ar an eolas faoi ghníomhaíocht Ghaeilge in Oirthear Bhéal Feirste agus an bealach chun cuidiú lena chéile a phlé.

COMHAIRLE CHATHAIR BHÉAL FEIRSTE

I gComhairle Chathair Bhéal Feirste, bhunaigh Sinn Féin grúpa oibríthe Gaeilge as measc ár gcomhairleoirí féin. Tá treoirleabhar inmhéanach déanta acu dár gcomhairleoirí ar na bealaí is fearr leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn. I measc na ngníomhartha go dtí seo tá-

- Níos mó comhairleoirí le Gaeilge in ár ngrúpa ar an chomhairle

Líofa initiative and has plans for promotional events, a Líofa website and support services for learners and teachers.

WORK WITH THE IRISH LANGUAGE COMMUNITY

As a party Sinn Féin has endeavoured to maintain good relationships with the Irish language community by holding periodic meetings with representatives of local Irish language organisations to share information, consult on Foras na Gaeilge's new funding model, exchange views, discuss relevant issues and generally maintain an open ended relationship.

In all negotiations over the years with the British and Irish governments, as well as with relevant ministers in the north, Sinn Féin has always ensured that the Irish language is at the heart of those discussions.

IRISH IN THE UNIONIST COMMUNITY

It is most encouraging to see that an Irish language officer has been appointed with funding from Foras na Gaeilge to develop the Irish language in the East Belfast area. While there has always been a number of unionists who are passionate about the language, the East Belfast Mission takes things in a new direction. Under the stewardship of Linda Irvine, there are now more than 40 grassroots unionists attending Irish classes in their own community.

Sinn Féin invited Linda Irvine to address the Slóghadh in March 2013 to inform our members of the Irish language activity in East Belfast and discuss how we can assist one another.

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

In Belfast City Council, Sinn Féin established an Irish language party working group which produced a small internal guide book for all councillors on how best to promote the Irish language. Action to date includes –

- Increased number of Irish speakers within council group

- Spreagadh tacaíochta le haghaidh beartas Gaeilge úr
- Tionscnamh cruinnithe le grúpaí Gaeilge áitiúla sa phobal
- Spreagadh grúpaí chun stocaireacht a dhéanamh ar sheirbhísí Gaeilge le páirtithe polaitíochta eile
- Spreagadh grúpaí agus daoine le Gaeilge chun seirbhísí Gaeilge a éileamh ón chomhairle
- Comhartha 'Nollaig Shona' ar Halla na Cathrach le dhá bhliain anuas
- Turais treoraithe ar Halla na Cathrach i nGaeilge
- Imeachtaí Sheachtain na Gaeilge i Halla na Cathrach
- Tacú le soláthar áiseanna sa Cheathrú Gaeltachta
- Maoiniú do ghrúpaí Gaeilge le haghaidh na n-ealaíon

Tá ár gcomhairleoirí i mBéal Feirste ina gcuraidh ar son infheistíochta i dtionscadail Ghaeilge. Den chéad uair beidh Comhairle Chathair Bhéal Feirste ag maoiniú tionscadail chaipitil tríd an Local Investment Fund- is é sin le rá, ionad pobail Ghlór na Móna agus An Cumann Chluain Ard. Roghnaíodh na tionscadail áirithe sin mar go raibh cistiú meaitseála cinntithe acu leis an Chiste Infheistíochta Gaeilge. Ar ndóigh tá comhairleoirí ar fud an tuaiscirt ag obair ar thionscadail Ghaeilge fosta.

COMHARTHAÍ AINMNEACHA SRÁIDE DÁTHEANGACHA

In éindí lenár ngníomhaithe áitiúla sa pháirtí ar fud na cathrach tá ár gcomhairleoirí ag obair go dlúth leis na cónaitheoirí sna bardaí cathrach ag cur isteach achainíochta go gcuirfí suas ainmneacha sráide dátheangacha. Is iad ngníomhaithe Shinn Féin a chomhordaigh agus a chuir i gcrích an feachtas ar na h-ainmneacha sráide i gceartlár na Ceathrún Gaeltachta. Is obair ollmhór ar fad í a d'athraigh go mór cuid mhaith ceantar náisiúnach agus is obair idir lámha atá inti go fóill.

Chun cur leis an obair atá idir lámha ag Forbairt Feirste ar chomharthaíocht dátheangach do shiopaí áitiúla, nuair a bhí Sainsbury's ag pleanáil ollmhargadh a oscailt in Iarthar Bhéal Feirste bhuaill Uachtarán Shinn Féin Gearóid Mac Ádhaimh leo, fad a bhí sé ina FP áitiúil. D'éirigh leis gealltanais a fháil uathu comharthaíocht dátheangach a chur suas ar fud an tsiopa, rud rathúil a chuir áthas ar a lán daoine. Tá sé suntasach go bhfuil roinnt Gaeilge curtha anois lena chuid comharthaíochta ag ASDA.

- Encouraging support for a new Irish language policy
- Initiating meetings with local Irish language community groups
- Encouraging groups to lobby other political parties on language services
- Encouraging Irish speakers and groups to demand Council services in Irish
- A Nollaig Shona sign at City Hall for past two years
- Provision of Irish language tours of City Hall
- Seachtain na Gaeilge events in City Hall
- Support for provision of facilities in the Gaeltacht Quarter
- Arts funding for Irish language groups

Councillors in Belfast have been champions for investment in Irish language projects. For the first time Belfast City Council will be funding capital projects through the Local Investment Fund - namely Glór na Móna Community Facility and An Cumann Chluain Ard. These projects were specifically selected as they had secured their match funding through Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge.

BILINGUAL STREETNAME SIGNS

Our Councillors and local party activists across the city have been working closely with residents in their local electoral wards, feeding requests into the council to have bilingual street names erected. The streetname campaign in the core Gaeltacht Quarter has been coordinated and completed by Sinn Féin activists. This is a massive piece of work which has transformed many nationalist areas and it remains a work in progress.

To build upon the work of Forbairt Feirste in bilingualising local shop signage, when the Sainsbury's supermarket was planning to locate in west Belfast, Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams, who was the local MP at the time, met with Sainsbury's and convinced them to erect bilingual signage throughout the shop, which has been hugely popular and successful. It is noteworthy to see that Asda has now introduced some Irish in their signage also.

CISTE INFHEISTÍOCHTA GAEILGE

Bhunaigh Sinn Féin an Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge chun cuidiú le tógáil an infreastruchtúir fhisiciúil atá de dhíth le freastal ar riachtanais phobal na Gaeilge i dtuaisceart na hÉireann, pobal atá faoi bhláth le tamall. Cinntíodh an ciste £8m seo le Gearóid Mac Ádhaimh ag na cainteanna polaitiúla ardleibhéil Cromghlinne i bhFeabhra 2010.

Mar chomhalta gníomhach de bhord an Chiste Infheistíochta Gaeilge is cúis bróid domh é, a thuirisciú dhá bhliain i ndiaidh a sheolta oifigiúil go bhfuil riar maith tionscadal measta agus comhaontaithe againn ar fud an tuaiscirt. Toisc go bhfuil teorainn uachtair 50% lenár maoiniú d’achan tionscadal bhí na h-iarrthóirí in ann £5.56m sa bhreis a mhealladh ó réimse cistí poiblí, foinsí Eorpacha ina measc. Tá £2.75m ó £8m an chiste infheistíochta geallta do 15 tionscnamh rud a chiallaíonn go bhfuil £8.3m infheistithe san iomlán in áiseanna do phobal na Gaeilge i mBéal Feirste, i nDoire, ar an lúr, in Ard Mhacha agus i gCo. Aontroma, i gCo Dhoire agus i gCo an Dúin fosta. Tá cuid de na tionscadail seo curtha i gcrích agus an chuid eile acu ag céimeanna éagsúla na forbartha. Sna blianta amach romhainn leanfaidh muid ar aghaidh ag aithint tionscadal atá réidh le forbairt agus ag cuidiú le h-eagraíochtaí pobail a gcuid riachtanas sa todhchaí a fhorbairt. Tá sé ar intinn againn tosú amach ar dhianfheachtas stocaireachta i leith réimse foinsí cistiúcháin eile chun go mbeidh acmhainní leanúnacha ann d’fhorbairt chaipiteal na Gaeilge sa todhchaí.

OIDEACHAS

Gan amhras is ceann de na scéalta ratha é an gaelscolaíocht ó thaobh athbheochan na Gaeilge de, sa tuaisceart. Nuair a thosaigh Máirtín Mag Aonghusa mar Aire Oideachais i ndiaidh Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, bhí 1,461 dalta ag fáil oideachais trí mheán na Gaeilge in 18 scoil, agus inniu tá 4,633 dalta ag freastal ar 67 gaelscoileanna agus aonaid. Tá Sinn Féin bródúil as an ról a ghlac siad san fhorbairt sin mar gheall ar obair ghníomhaithe an pháirtí ina gceantair féin ag cuidiú le scoileanna a bhunú agus á gcothú fosta. Chomh maith le sin is ábhar bróid é dícheall ár n-ionadaithe poiblí, ó na comhairleoirí áitiúla suas go dtí na trí Aire Oideachais Shinn Féin i gcumhacht le linn na tréimhse sin.

CISTE INFHEISTÍOCHTA GAEILGE

Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge(CIG) was established by Sinn Féin to assist in the building of the physical infrastructure required to meet the needs of the burgeoning Irish language community in the North of Ireland. This £8m fund was secured by Gerry Adams at high level political talks at Hillsborough in February 2010.

As an active Board member of CIG I am proud to report that, 2years after the official launch, we have assessed and agreed a sizeable number of projects across the north. Because our funding is limited to a maximum of 50% per project, applicants have attracted a further £5.56m from a range of public funds, including European sources. £2.75m from our £8m investment fund has now been committed to 15 projects, meaning that £8.3million in total has been invested in Irish medium community facilities in Belfast, Derry, Newry, Armagh and also in counties Antrim, Derry and Down. Some of these are completed and others are at various stages of development. In the years ahead we will continue to identify projects that are primed for development and also assist community organisations in developing their future needs. We intend to embark on an intensive lobby of a range of other funding sources to ensure that Irish language capital development is resourced into the future.

EDUCATION

Irish Medium Education is undoubtedly one of the success stories of the Irish Language Revival in the North. When Martin Mc Guinness became Education Minister after the GFA, 1,461 pupils were being educated through Irish in 18 schools while today the figure is 4,633 in 67 schools and units. Sinn Féin is proud of the role it has played in this development both in terms of the work of party activists in helping to establish and sustain schools in their areas and the efforts of our elected representatives from local councillors right up to the three Sinn Féin Education Ministers over that period.

Ba é Máirtín Mag Aonghusa, an chéad Aire Oideachais, a chuir Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta agus Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta ar bun agus cuspóir leis forbairt agus comhordú straitéiseach na gaelscolaíochta a chumasú anois agus amach anseo. Lean Cairtriona Ní Ruadháin agus John Ó Dowd araon ag cur leis an dul chun cinn sin le sé bliana anuas leis na gníomhartha seo a leanas -

- Transfhoirmiú an chaidrimh idir an Roinn Oideachais agus earnáil na gaelscolaíochta
- Infheistíocht do fhoirgnimh nua ag Bunscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh, Gaelscoil na Móna, Scoil na Fuisceoige, Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagáin, Gaelscoil Uí Dhochartaigh, Gaelscoil Uí Néill agus Coláiste Feirste.
- Infheistíocht £2m in acmhainní ranga ag leibhéal na réamhscolaíochta, an bhunoideachais agus an iar-bhunoideachais
- Infheistíocht bhreise £2m in Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta a mhaoinigh foirgnimh úra do Bhunscoil Bheanna Boirche i gCaisleán Uidhilín agus do Ghaelscoil Éanna i nGleann Ghormlathie
- Faomhadh stádais reachtúil do sholáthar réamhscolaíochta Gaeilge i ndeich gceantar éagsúla chomh maith le feabhsú suntasach i leibhéil mhaoiniúcháin agus i gcaighdeán an tsoláthair réamhscoile
- Faomhadh do sholáthar bhunoideachais trí Ghaeilge i sé cheantar nach raibh sé ar fail iontu cheana féin, ina measc Gleann Ghormlathie, Cromghlinn agus Machaire Fíolta
- Meadú sa mhéid postanna gaelscolaíochta do mhúinteoirí faoi oiliúint

Lena chois sin thuas, anois maoiníonn An Roinn Oideachais fosta:

- Áiseanna don aos óg, trí mheán na Gaeilge
- Acmhainní Gaeilge laistigh de scoileanna Béarla, an tionscadal Léargas i nDoire ina measc
- Tionscadail trí mheán na Gaeilge sna Scoileanna Seirbhísí Breise, agus le déanaí an tionscnamh £234,000 de chuid Líofa ina measc

Tá neart forbairtí dearfacha eile le tuairisciú agus is féidir tuilleadh eolais a chur ar fáil más gá. In ainneoin na bhforbairtí seo atá thar a bheith dearfach den chuid is mó díobh, tá Sinn Féin eolach go géar ar na ceisteanna iompair gan réiteach atá ag cur isteach ar Choláiste Feirste agus tá muid ag déanamh ár ndícheall chun cuidiú le teacht ar shocrú.

Martin Mc Guinness, the first Education Minister, established Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta to enable the strategic coordination and development of Irish medium education into the future. Both Cairtriona Ruane and John O'Dowd have continued to build on that progress over the last the last 6 years by the following actions:

- Transforming the relationship between the Department of Education and the Irish Medium Sector.
- New build investments at Bunscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh; Gaelscoil na Móna; Scoil na Fuisceoige; Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagáin; Gaelscoil Uí Dhochartaigh; Gaelscoil Uí Néill and Coláiste Feirste
- A £2m investment in classroom resources at preschool, primary and post-primary levels
- A further £2m investment in Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta which has provided new buildings for Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche, Castlewellan and Gaelscoil Éanna, Glengormley
- Approval of statutory status for Irish medium preschool provision in ten different areas, and providing a significant improvement in funding levels and standards for preschool provision.
- Approval of Irish medium primary provision in 6 areas that did not previously have this including Glengormley, Crumlin and Magherafelt;
- Increase in the number of positions for trainee teachers in Irish medium education;

In addition to the above, the Department of Education now also funds:

- Irish medium Youth facilities
- Irish medium resources within English medium schools, including the Léargas project in Derry
- Irish medium projects within Extended Schools, including the recent £234K per annum Líofa initiative.

There are many other positive developments to report which can be provided if required. Despite the overwhelmingly positive developments, Sinn Féin is acutely aware of the outstanding transport issues affecting Coláiste Feirste and we are doing our utmost to assist in resolving these.

FORAS NA GAEILGE

Bunaíodh Foras na Gaeilge faoi Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta mar an t-eagras maoiniúcháin trasteorann do thionscnaimh Ghaeilge agus é mar shainchúram aige fosta cur chun cinn, maoiniú agus tacú le foilsitheoireacht i nGaeilge. Ar an mheán cuirtear amach níos mó ná céad leabhar Gaeilge in aghaidh na bliana. Tá níos mó ná fiche foilsitheoir ar fud na 32 chontae freagrach as réimse leathan leabhar ag dul ó shaothair acadúla go scéaltaí do pháistí, beathaisnéisí, foclóirí agus a lán eile.

Anuas ar sin, faigheann ar a laghad sé thréimhseachán tacú ón Fhoras: na míosacháin Comhar, Feasta, An tUltach, Beo, agus na ráitheacháin An Sagart agus An Timire. Is foilseacháin iad seo a raibh deachrachaí beaga nó móra acu ach ar tháinig slán trí thréimhse nuair atá an t-éileamh ar na meáin chlóite ag íslíú go ginearálta. Thug FnaG tacú do roinnt nuachtán fosta ina measc 'Lá Nua', 'Foinse', agus le blianta beaga 'Gaelscéal' cé go raibh deachrachaí le díolacháin in achan cás.

CISTE CRAOLTÓIREACHTA GAEILGE

Rinne Sinn Féin idirbheartaíocht le haghaidh an Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge a bhunadh chun cláracha theilifíse ard-chaighdeán a mhaoiniú agus chun earnáil táirthe neamhspleách Gaeilge a chothú i dtuaisceart na hÉireann. Cuireadh i gcrích ar a laghad seachtó uair a chlog de chlár Ghaeilge in aghaidh na bliana agus iad curtha amach ag TG4, RTÉ agus BBCNI. Ba chuid an-tábhachtach í den obair seo an oiliúint do fhóirne táirgthe le Gaeilge, rud a chuir le leathadh na h-earnála. Bhí leathnú amach go dtí an tuaisceart den chainéal TG4 i 2005 mar chuid de Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta ina ábhar gliondair do chuid mhaith daoine.

Anuas ar sin fuair Sinn Féin £12m sa bhreis don Chiste Craoltóireachta Gaeilge i 2012 rud a chuir go mór le infheictheacht, le stádas agus le cur chun cinn na Gaeilge sna meáin fhísiúla. Toisc go gcaitheann 70% de na costais táirgthe bheith caite sa tuaisceart cuireadh go mór le fostaíocht ar bhonn áitiúil.

FORAS NA GAEILGE

Foras na Gaeilge was established under the Good Friday Agreement as the cross border funding body for Irish language projects with a remit also to promote, aid and contribute towards the funding of publications in Irish. Over 100 books on average are published in Irish each year. They range from academic works to children's stories, dictionaries, biographies and many others involving over twenty different publishers throughout the 32 counties.

In addition, at least six periodicals have benefitted from Foras support: the monthly Comhar, Feasta, An tUltach and Beo as well as the quarterly An Sagart and An Timire. These are all publications which have gone through periods of greater or lesser difficulty but yet have survived at a time of reduced demand for the print media in general. FnaG has also been involved in the support of several Irish language newspapers, eg 'Lá Nua', 'Foinse' and more recently 'Gaelscéal' though all have had difficulty with sales levels.

IRISH LANGUAGE BROADCAST FUND

Sinn Féin negotiated for the establishment of the Irish Language Broadcast Fund to finance the production of high standard television programmes and also to foster an independent Irish speaking production sector in the north of Ireland. At least seventy hours of Irish language programming has been achieved yearly, these programmes going out on TG4, RTÉ and BBCNI. Training for Irish speaking production staff is an important element of this work which has supported the expansion of the sector. The expansion of TG4 into the north by 2005 as part of the GFA, has been a very popular measure.

Sinn Féin negotiated a further £12m for the Irish Language Broadcast Fund in 2010 which has contributed hugely to the visibility, status and promotion of Irish in the televisual media. Because a minimum of 70% of production costs must be spent in the north this has given local employment a much needed boost.

GNÍOMHARTHA INMHEÁNACHA SHINN FÉIN

An bhliain seo caite ceapadh Oifigeach Gaeilge le Sinn Féin chun gníomhaíocht an pháirtí i leith na Gaeilge a fhorbairt. Dhá bhliain ó shin chuir muid beartas cuimsitheach Gaeilge le chéile agus tá muid á láidriú go leanúnach ó shin. D'athdhearbhaigh an páirtí fosta a thiomantas do ghaelú an pháirtí, do Shlógadh bliantúil a eagrú agus do nuachtlitreacha rialta a chur amach. Spreagann muid fosta ár mbaill uilig den pháirtí an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim agus í a labhairt. Íocann an páirtí as chuid de chostais na mball le freastal ar an dianchúrsa bliantúil le Oideas Gael i nDún na nGall.

AN BÓTHAR AMACH ROMHAINN

Cuirtear an-bhéim ar an fhíric nach bhfuil Acht na Gaeilge ann go fóill ach cé go bhfuil sin fíor tá sé rí-shoiléir go bhfuil an-chuid dul chun cinn déanta gan é. Caithfidh muid leanstan ar aghaidh ag iarraidh an achta agus ag tapú achan deis chun stocaireacht a dhéanamh ar a shon. Ach ná ligimis ó radharc na h-éachtaí atá curtha i gcrích gan é.

Leanfaidh an Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge ar aghaidh ag cuidiú le tógáil cultúrlanna agus infreastruchtúir na Gaeilge ar fud fad na sé chontae agus tacóidh Airí Shinn Féin leis an teanga chomh fada agus is féidir leo trína ranna féin. Ach leanfaidh an chuid is mó den obair ar an teanga ar aghaidh sna scoileanna, sna h-eagraíochtaí pobail agus trínár ngníomhaithe ar an talamh. Tchífidh muid an méid is féidir linn a chur i gcrích agus muid ag obair le chéile sna cúig bliana déag amach romhainn. Tá neart déanta agus go leor le déanamh go fóill!

SINN FÉIN INTERNAL PARTY ACTIONS

Last year Sinn Féin appointed an Oifigeach Gaeilge to develop activity around the language, particularly in the South. 2 years ago we produced a comprehensive Irish language policy which we continue to strengthen. The party also reaffirmed its commitment to Gaelú an Pháirtí and is committed to organising an annual Slógadh and producing regular newsletters. We also encourage all our party members to learn and speak Irish and we have contributed to the costs of those attending annual dianchúrsaí at Oideas Gael in Donegal.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Much focus has been placed on the fact that we still have no Irish language Act and while that is the case, it is abundantly clear that much has been achieved without it. We must still call for the Act and lobby for it at every opportunity. But let's not lose sight of the huge achievements that have been made without it.

Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge will continue to help build cultúrlanna and Irish language infrastructure throughout the north and Sinn Féin Ministers will support the language where possible through their departments. But the bulk of the work on the language will continue through our schools, community organisations and by our activists on the ground. Let's see what we can achieve together in the next 15 years. Plenty has been done and there's still plenty more to do!

Séamas Ó Donnghaile



Tá Séamas Ó Donnghaile ina phríomhoide ar Bhunscoil Mhic Reachtain i dTuaisceart Bhéal Feirste le dhá bhliain déag anuas. Tá sé ina chathaoirleach ar Chumann Chluain Ard, eagrais deonach a bunaíodh in Iarthar Bhéal Feirste in 1936, a bhfuil iomrá leitheadach ar an teagasc Gaeilge a dhéanann siad. Tá polasaí aon teanga ag an Chumann ó bhí 1953 ann. Tá Séamas ar an fhoireann teagaisc ansin le breis agus 20 bliain. Tá Séamas i mbun taighde dochtúireachta i dtreo chéim Ed.D. ar Ollscoil na Banríona. Tá suim ar leith aige i straitéisí teagaisc sa tumoideachas. Bhain sé céim MA amach i Léann an Aistriúcháin. Ghlac Séamas codanna as aiste Ed.D. leis an alt seo a scríobh, aiste a bhí bunaithe ar Chearta Daonna agus Feasbhaidh Acht na Gaeilge.

Séamas Ó Donnghaile has been the principal of Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain in North Belfast for the last 12 years. He is the chairperson of Cumann Chluain Ard, West Belfast, a voluntary Irish language organisation renowned for its work in the teaching of Irish since 1936. It has had an Irish Language Only policy since 1953 and Séamas has taught there for over 25 years. Currently, Séamas is working towards a doctorate in education, Ed.D., in QUB with a specific interest in immersion pedagogy. He holds an M.A. in Translation Studies. Séamas has used extracts from an assignment on Human Rights and the absence of an Irish Language Act for this article.

Is mór an t-ábhar inní ag mórán sna Sé Chontae é nach bhfuil Acht Gaeilge againn. Is ábhar é a phléitear go mion acu sin a bhfuil suim i gCearta Daonna acu agus a chuirfeadh an cheist: Más ann d'Acht Teanga sa Bhreatain Bheag agus in Albain, cén mhoill atá ar a leithéid a bheith ann abhus? Caithfear an cheist seo a phlé i gcomhthéacs na staire fosta, stair a léiríonn an nimh a bhí san fheoil dúinn mar Ghaeil. Rinne An Cairdinéalach Ó Fiaich tagairt do Spenser (1552-1599): *'It hath ever been the use of the conquerors to despise the language of the conquered, and to force him by all means to learn his ... the speech being Irish, the heart must needs be Irish'* (Ó Cuív, 1969: 104). Ar ndóighe, is é an fear amháin é a scríobh gur cheart don náisiúnachas s'againn a bheith *'uprooted by the sword'* (Foster, 1988: 8).

Cá hionadh frustras a bheith orainn le fada as an mhoill agus as an bhac ar Acht na Gaeilge a sholáthar. Fuair cainteoirí Ghaeilge na hAlban a leithéid in 2005 agus cainteoirí Breatnaise in 1993. Go díreach as Westminster a tháinig an chosaint don teanga agus don phobal sin. Ós féidir le rialtas glasaighe Shasana sin a dhéanamh ar shon daoine eile 'in áiteacha eile sa Ríocht Aontaithe', is ceart Acht na Gaeilge a iarraidh ar Westminster/Stormont ar dhá phrionsabal ar a laghad. Ar an chéad dul síos, féadtar cearta Gaeilgeoirí a dhaingniú sa dlí. Sa dara

The delay in bringing forward an Irish Language Act has been a matter of some concern for many here in the North of Ireland and the question is often asked by those interested in Human Rights and/or Language Rights: if Scotland and Wales have a Language Act, what is the delay in the North? To answer questions centred on the delay in delivering the Irish Language Act, Irish Language issues must be seen not only within the context of a Human Rights arena but also within an acutely hostile, historical context. Irish speakers will see the words of Edmund Spenser (1552-1599), as cited by the late Cardinal Ó Fiaich, as a sound starting point: *'It hath ever been the use of the conquerors to despise the language of the conquered, and to force him by all means to learn his ... the speech being Irish, the heart must needs be Irish.'* (cited in Ó Cuív, 1969: 104). Spenser, it must be added, believed that Irish nationality had to be *'uprooted by the sword'* (Foster, 1988: 8).

It is no surprise that we feel frustration at the long delay and obstacles to an Irish language Act. Gaelic speakers in Scotland got an Act in 2005, and Welsh speakers in 1993. This protection for the languages and their communities came direct from Westminster. Since the narrow minded English government can do this for people, "in other parts of the UK", it is right to look for an Irish language Act at Westminster/Stormont on two points of principle at least. Firstly the rights of Irish speakers can be guaranteed in law. Secondly the majority

háit, léirigh an tromlach a chaith vóta ar shon na nAchtanna sin i Westminster go raibh siad aibí go leor gan a bheith sa chosán acu sin ar suim leo caomhnú cultúir. Tá difir lá agus oíche idir sin agus Stormont agus cúrsaí Gaeilge idir camánaibh acu.

Ní hionann Acht Teanga a bheith ann agus slánú teanga. Ní hionann a leithéid a bheith ann agus fás suntasach ar líon na gcainteoirí a bhíonn ag teanga. Is é is mó a chothaíonn acht teanga go bhféadfaí go gcaithfí mar chaipitil chultúrtha eacnamaíoch le teanga i dtimpeallacht chúraim.

An Ghaeilge Faoi Rial Stormont

Tá rianta chumhacht na gcoilíneach le feiceáil sna Sé Chontae go beo beathach go dtí an lá inniu – Acht (Éire) 1737 um Riarú an Cheartais (Teanga). Leis seo, agus is amhlaidh go fóill, ní bheadh ach Béarla sna cúirteanna. Chuirfeadh Acht Teanga deireadh lena leithéid de theaghrán a bheith orainn. Bheadh sé ar a chumas ag rialtas Stormont dul i gcionn deireadh a chur le hAcht seo 1737. Ar an drochuair, ní bheadh sé ar a gcumas acu deireadh a chur d'aonghuth leis an cheann corr agus leis an fhuath a thugtar don Ghaeilge agus do Ghaeilgeoirí, lorg na hainriaile a chleacht Aontachtóirí a riamh anall.

Tá muidne, mar dhream nach ionann againn an Ghaeilge agus airm a bhfuil buntáiste nó bagairt pholaitiúil ag teacht léi, tá sinne thíos leis an éagcumas atá ag baint leo sin a shíleann gurb ionann feasbhaidh tacaíochta agus bata mór lena mbuailtear an chomharsa. Ina dhiaidh sin, tuigean muid fosta go bhfuil an Ghaeilge as cuimse uasal agus nach maitheadh sí dúinn é dá mbainfeadh muid an mhí-úsáid sin aisti. Tuigtear nár leas na Gaeilge é gach cinneadh faoi Acht Teanga a fhágáil ag Stormont nuair nach féidir leis an dá mhórpháirtí comhaontú a sholáthar ar an díth.

Coiste um Cearta Eacnamaíoch, Sóisialta agus Cultúrtha

Sa tuairisc a d'fhoilsigh siad seo ar an 42ú Seisiún (Mí na Bealtaine, 2009), agus mar gheall ar Mhíreanna 16 agus 17 san aontú, mhaigh an coiste thuasluaite (paragraf 17) go raibh siad '*...buartha ar fad nach ann don chosaint don Ghaeilge sna Sé Chontae, cé go bhfuil a leithéid ar fáil don Bhreataine de réir Acht na Breatnaise (1993) agus de*

who voted for these Acts at Westminster, showed they were mature enough not to block the path of those who were interested in promoting culture. The difference is like day and night between that approach and Stormont, when they are batting Irish language issues about.

Language Acts will not save languages from death nor will they facilitate systematic growth in the number of speakers who use and value it. The true relevance of an Irish Language Act lies in the potential for creating a safe arena for what is a threatened language to bloom and to be viewed as cultural and economic capital.

Irish Under Stormont Rule

One of the sentiments and practices of colonial power is still in place today in the Nol in the form of the 1737 Administration of Justice (Language) Act (Ireland). This declared, and still declares in the Nol, that the language of the courts will be English. An Irish Language Act would end this. Stormont has within its power to set the wheels in motion to abandon the 1737 Act – what it does *not* have within its power, currently, that would facilitate this, is the collective ability and good will to leave behind the equal measures of silent scorn and downright hostility bequeathed by generations of Unionist misrule.

The Irish-speaking community, for whom the Irish Language carries no political weight, advantage or threat, is being penalised by political inaction and ill-will based on the beliefs of those who would view their withdrawal of support as stick with which to beat their neighbour. Those being penalised will argue that the Irish is far too noble a language to allow itself to be sullied so. Reluctantly, we must accept that leaving all decisions regarding the Irish language to those in Stormont is unrealistic especially when the two biggest parties are poles apart on the issue.

Committee On Economic, Social And Cultural Rights

In their report after their 42nd Session (May, 2009), and in consideration of reports submitted by states parties under Articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, the above committee, concluded (para. 17) that they were '*...concerned that there is still no protection in respect of the Irish language in Northern Ireland, whereas the Welsh and the Gaelic*

réir Acht na Gàidhlice (2005). Is é a mhol an coiste céanna (agus é a bheith in áit roimh dheireadh 2016): *'...go nglacann an Stát ... le hAcht Gaeilge le hoidhreacht chultúrtha agus le mionteangacha a chaomhnú agus a spreagadh agus iarrtar ar an Stát eolas sonraitheach a thabhairt ar an dul chun cinn sa chéad tuairisc eile ar an tréimhse.'* Is léir ar an méid seo go mbíonn súil ghlinn ar an fheasbhaidh forbairtí teanga/cultúir anseo sna Sé Chontae. Is amhlaidh go léiríonn cur chuige an rialtais i leith na Gaeilge an neamhthoil don Ghaeilge a bhíonn ann.

POBAL

Mar phríomhoide scoile, molaim go hardacmhainneach an obair atá déanta ag POBAL le tamall mór fada de bhlianta anuas aird a dhíriú ar na míbhuntáistí agus ar an droch-chaitheamh le tuismitheoirí / le páistí sa Ghaeloideachas. Dhírigh siad aird ar na laigí ar na seirbhísí a bhíonn ann do pháistí ag banaltraí, ag dochtúirí, ag radharceolaithe, ag cuairteoirí sláinte agus ar uile. Tá sé tábhachtach glacadh le dearcadh Janet Muller, príomhfheidhmeannach POBAL, a mhaíonn nach i gcónaí feasbhaidh tacaíochta is cúis leis sin ach gur *'more as a result of a lack of information, guidance and knowledge'* a chaitear go holc leo. Mar thuismitheoir, chonaic mé féin a leithéid ach an amhlaidh ar chor ar bith go bhfuil Stormont ag cur leis an athrach cur chuige a bheas de dhíth? Go dtí seo, ní hann don fhianaise a bheadh de dhíth ormsa a chothódh muinín a bheith agam astu. Chuir POBAL leis an fhianaise atá leis an fheasbhaidh suime nó tola atá don Ghaeilge ann ach is léir fosta go bhfuil obair le déanamh againn féin mar Ghaeil daoine a thabhairt linn.

Nuair a bunaíodh Bunscoil Phobal Feirste, an chéad bhunscoil Ghaelach sna Sé Chontae, in 1971, ba bheag a síleadh ag an am go mbeadh daoine ag caint ar na deacrachtaí seo in 2013. Ar ndóighe, ba le tréan dúthrachta agus neart croí a bunaíodh an scoil agus an dream a bhunaigh an chéad scoil sin, is iad féin a bhí mar lóchrann romhainn. Thuigfeadh siad sin gan stró an streachailt a bhí le déanamh ar shon na Gaeilge – ach tá difir eadar an dream sin agus an dream atá 'i réimeas' thuas ar an ard: ba

languages are protected by the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, respectively.' In offering their recommendation on the issue, the same committee wished to see (before the end of 2016) *'...the State party, or the devolved administration in Northern Ireland, adopt an Irish Language Act, with a view to preserving and promoting minority languages and cultural heritage, and invites the State party to provide detailed information on the progress made in its next periodic report.'* From the above, it is clear that many of those interested in linguistic/cultural rights cast a critical eye on the lack of developments in the Nol. Government approaches to issues of language have presented us with examples of a questionable level of commitment, an example of which follows.

POBAL

As principal of an Irish-medium school, I must commend highly POBAL's work in highlighting the disadvantages faced by children and their families as deeply thought-provoking. They have shone a light on the inadequacies in services for children from nurses, doctors, opticians, health visitors and many others. That said, Janet Muller of POBAL makes it clear that often it is not a lack support or empathy or malice towards the Irish language that creates the inadequacies in services to children. She states that it is *'more as a result of a lack of information, guidance and knowledge.'* I have witnessed this at first as a parent of an Irish-speaking child but I do not feel that Stormont is going far enough to embrace the changes we must see. To date I do not feel encouraged by Stormont's record on the Irish language.

It is hard to conceive that those who established Bunscoil Phobal Feirste, the first Irish-medium primary school in the Six Counties, in 1971, would face the same challenges and difficulties we face in 2013. Those same people who strove might and mane to secure for their children (and ultimately for the whole community) an Irish-medium school, acted as a lantern showing us the way forward. They understood and accepted the challenges they embraced but there is a world of a difference

don Ghaeilge sa chéad áit a bhí siad sin dílis agus gach rud eile sa dara háit. Ní he mar sin é don SDLP/Sinn Féin óir is iomaí sin ní a thig roimh an Ghaeilge. Níl neart air mar tá siad uilig sáite i bpróisis pholaitiúla. Níl Stormont ábalta tús áite don Ghaeilge gan a bheith ag caint ar na Cearta Daonna a théann le hAcht Teanga.

Baineann cinntiú Achta Teanga anois le coir is cúiteamh idir polaiteoirí. Bíodh is go bhfuil siad atá i bhfách le hAcht Teanga, ar cuma leo ann nó as í nó atá glan ina héadan, ciallaíonn feasbhaidh achta go mbeidh míbhuntáistí nach beag ag páistí sa Ghaeloideachas. Tuigeann pobal na Gaeilge nach ionann do gach duine i Stormont an dearcadh ar an Ghaeilge ach tuigeadh gach duine nach gcuirfear ó dhoras go deo an dream a bheas ag obair i dtreo achta. Tá scríofa ag Packer (2010: 77), agus é ag díriú airde ar fhéiniúlacht teanga: *'(linguistic identity) has been often at the root of disputes, that is, the equal right of each person to ... develop his or her (linguistic) identity free from prescription or coercion. This strikes at the heart of human dignity. It concerns self-esteem. It raises questions relating to ... education, culture and other primary fields of life – interests which people do not surrender easily ... certainly the case for persons whose mother tongue is not the main or official language of the state.'*

Cairt na hEorpa do Theangacha Réigiúnacha nó Mionlaigh (ECRML)

Shínigh an RA an Chairt ar 2 Márta 2000 agus deimhníodh ar 27 Márta 2000 í; tá sí i bhfeidhm ó bhí 2 Iúil 2001 ann. Tá scríofa ag Ó Laighin (2005: 32), gur *'pragmatic acknowledgement of Europe's formal commitment'* atá ann san chur chuige s'acu i éagsúlacht teanga.

Baineann Cuid II de ECRML le cuspóirí ginearálta agus le prionsabail a bhíonn le plé ag údarais phoiblí agus iad ag leagan amach polasaithe, reachtaíochta agus cleachtas. Baineann cuid III le gealltanais ar leith i dtreo achar áirithe ar a n-áirítear an t-oidreachas. Chuir an RA an Ghaeilge i gCodanna II agus III agus ghlac siad le 36 gealltanais a bhain le

between that generation of activists and those charged with securing language rights: for them, their first loyalty was to Irish, everything else came second. SDLP/Sinn Féin are not in a position to put Irish before all else, no matter how strong they are at advocating for the rights of Irish speakers. Stormont has yet to prove that it can put the needs of the Irish language at the top of their agenda, much less the associated Human Rights within the Irish Language Act.

Language Rights and the Irish Language Act have clearly been drawn into a relentless tug-of-war scenario. Whilst there are very real considerations for politicians who are either supportive of, vexed by or indifferent to Irish, the absence if an Irish Language Act has, and will continue to have, a very real, adverse impact on children in the ImE sector. The Irish-speaking community is aware of the varying views Stormont's politicians have of Irish. Packer (2010: 77), points to a central issue that should convince opponents of the Irish Language Act in both Stormont and Westminster that the desire that drives the campaigns for it will not wane: *'... (linguistic identity) has been often at the root of disputes, that is, the equal right of each person to ... develop his or her (linguistic) identity free from prescription or coercion. This strikes at the heart of human dignity. It concerns self-esteem. It raises questions relating to ... education, culture and other primary fields of life – interests which people do not surrender easily ... certainly the case for persons whose mother tongue is not the main or official language of the state.'*

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML)

The ECRML was drawn up originally by the Council of Europe (CoE). The UK signed the Charter on 2 March 2000 and ratified it on 27 March 2000; it came into force on 2 July 2001. It is, in the words of Ó Laighin (2005: 32), a *'pragmatic acknowledgement of Europe's formal commitment'* in their approach to linguistic diversity.

Part II of the ECRML is concerned with general objectives and principles that must be considered by public authorities when formulating policies, legislation and practice. Part III is concerned with specific undertakings for practices, among other areas, in education. The UK included Irish under Parts II and III and accepted 36 specific Part III

Cuid III (fuair an Bhreatnais 52 agus 39 a fuair Gaeilge na hAlban).

Tá an méid thuas tábhachtach mar níor ghlac an RA ach le 36 gealltanais ar son na Gaeilge agus gan cead acu glacadh le níos lú ná 35 as an 100 a bhí ann. Chuir siad an chuma orthu féin, i dtaca le ECRML de, go bhfuil rialtas na Breataine ag cur lena bhfocal nuair nach leor a bhfuil siad geallta dó. Againne, mar Ghaeil, níl ciall ar bith leis. Shínigh rialtas na Breataine aontú nach leor dúinn é.

Go dtí go gcruthaíonn siad sin i Stormont/Westminster tiomantas praiticiúil i leith na Gaeilge, agus go dtí go gcomhlíonann siad a ngealltanais de réir Chomhaontú Chill Rímhinn, caithfidh pobal na Gaeilge tacaíocht ar son achta a lorg uathu sin nach bhfuil Gaeilge acu. Tá sé seo barrthábhachtach nuair a chuimhíonn muid an méid a deir Fishman (1997: 83): '*...threatened languages are frequently surrounded not so much by hostile outsiders as much by unsympathetic insiders.*' Tá sé le ciall go bhfuil tacaíocht thromlach an phobail de dhíth le hacht a chinntiú do na glúnta atá romhainn.

Tá breis agus 4,000 páistí ar ghaelscoileanna sna Sé Chontae. Tá an ceart sin acu go bhfásfaidh siad aníos i dtír a chothaíonn iad, a spreagann iad, a chinnteoidh a gcearta dóibh agus a cheiliúránn a gcumais agus a n-oidhreacht chultúrtha. Ní féidir a rá faoi láthair go bhfuil sin acu ina iomlán. Tá siad ann i Stormont a bhíonn ag obair go dian dícheallach ar shon na Gaeilge is léir. Tá DCAL, faoi stiúir Charál Ní Chuilín, ag déanamh obair mhór le *Líofa 2015* agus táthar le moladh. Ach táthar i sáinn – bíonn aontú traspháirtithe de dhíth le gach cinneadh (beag nó mór) a ghlacadh agus ar an drochuair, léiríonn sin nach i sáinn atáthar ach i marbhsháinn.

Tagairtí

Foster, R. F. (1988) *Modern Ireland – 1600– 1972*. London: Penguin.

commitments (Welsh was afforded 52 and Scottish Gaelic 39).

The important point here is that the UK only marginally exceeded its commitment to Irish at this juncture: it chose to agree to 36 commitments of a possible 100. They were not permitted to opt for any less than 35. On the face of things, in terms of the ECRML, the British government is stepping up to a mark – not *the* mark. The issue for the Irish-speaking community is quite simple: it is not enough that the UK signed up to an agreement that cannot fully deliver on needs.

Until those seated in Stormont/Westminster show a practical commitment to honouring their commitments, for example, under the St. Andrew's Agreement, the challenge for the Irish-speaking community is to secure as much support as possible for an Irish Language Act from those who do not speak Irish. This is especially important when we consider Fishman's (1997: 83) position regarding support for lesser used languages: '*[T]hreatened languages are frequently surrounded not so much by hostile outsiders as much by unsympathetic insiders.*' This means that the support of the majority of the community is needed to secure an Act for future generations.

We have over 4,000 children in Irish Medium classrooms in the North of Ireland. They have a right to expect that they will grow up in a country that will nurture them, support them, secure their rights and celebrate their abilities and heritage. Sadly, Stormont is falling far short of the mark in this respect. It is important, however, that we acknowledge the sterling work of those who battle on a daily basis to make small gains on behalf of our hereditary/native language. DCAL, under Minister Carál Ní Chuilinn, are to be praised highly for their *Líofa 2015* initiative. That said, because decisions (big and small) need cross-party support, Stormont presents as a huge problem in the quest for a Language Act. It can best be described not as a case of 'check' but rather one of 'checkmate'.

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Robert McMillen



Ta taithí 25 bliana ag Robert McMillen in iriseoireacht na Gaeilge agus an Bhéarla sna meáin chlóite, ar an raidió agus ar an teilifís. Is é eagarthóir Gaeilge an 'Irish News' é, scríobhann sé do 'beo.ie' agus tá mír ealaíona aige ar 'Blas' de chuid Raidió Uladh.

Faoi láthair, tá sé i mbun taighde do shraith faisnéise teilifíse. Tá Blag ócáideach, dátheangach aige ag 'robertmcmillen.ie'

Robert McMillen has 25 years experience working in Irish and English language media in their various forms. He is the Irish language editor of 'The Irish News' contributes to 'beo.ie' and has a weekly arts review slot of BBC Radio Ulster's Irish language programme, 'Blas'. At present Robert is also busy researching a documentary television series he hopes to make in the near future. He has an occasional blog at 'robertmcmillen.ie'

Maidin an 11 Aibreáin, 1998 a bhí ann agus bhí mé féin agus an t-iriseoir Nell McCafferty ar an bheagán daoine a bhí faoi Stormont, lá i ndiaidh shíniú Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta.

Bhí idir fhaoiseamh, dhóchas agus lúcháir orainn - ach ní raibh a fhios againn cad chuige. Bhí a fhios againn gur tháinig ar shocrú stairiúil, ach ní raibh a fhios againn cad é an chiall a bhí leis. Cad é an difir a dhéanfadh sé do shaol achan lá shaoránaigh an tuaiscirt, idir aontachtach agus náisiúnaíoch. Cad é an difir a dhéanfadh sé domsa mar Ghaeilgeoir? Ar an drochuair, níl mé cinnte go fóill.

"Déanfaidh Rialtas na Breataine, go háirithe i ndáil leis an nGaeilge, más cuí agus más mian le daoine amhlaidh ... gníomh diongbháilte chun an teanga a chur chun cinn." B'shin agat é, imprimatur Rialtas ardcheannasach na Breataine, don chéad uair riamh, go gcuirfí an Ghaeilge chun cinn, 632 bliain ó cuireadh Reachtanna Chill Chainnigh, chéad pholaitiú na Gaeilge, i bhfeidhm. Cúiteamh éigin as an choilíneacht faoi dheireadh, Forbairt na Gaelscolaíochta, teacht ar TnaG/TG4 ar fud an limistéir, lucht na Gaeilge bheith i gcroílár chinntí a bhainfeadh leis an teanga, fáilte chroíúil roimh an Ghaeilge sa saol poiblí agus meas úr uirthi an radharc a bhí romhainn.

Níor thug muid faoi deara an mhaidin dhóchasach sin, áfach, na coinníollacha a luadh - "más cuí agus más mian le daoine", "mar a mbeidh éileamh cuí ann" " más féidir é". B'fhéidir gur shíl muid a bharraíocht den Chomhaontú na laethanta luatha sin, gur chreid muid go leigheasfadh sé gach olc.

San idirthréimhse 15 bliana, tá maolú i ndiaidh teacht ar an dóchas - ach níl mé in ísle brí. Ní

It was the morning of 11 April 1998 and myself and Nell McCafferty were amongst the few people who were up at Stormont, the day after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement.

We felt relief, hope and joy – but we didn't know why. We knew that a historic agreement had been reached but we didn't know what exactly that meant. What difference would it make to the everyday lives of ordinary Northerners, both unionist and nationalist? What difference would it make to me as an Irish speaker? Sadly, I'm still not sure.

"... the British Government will in particular in relation to the Irish language, where appropriate and where people so desire it ... take resolute action to promote the language." There it was, for the first time ever, the sovereign British government, giving its imprimatur for the promotion of the Irish language, 632 years since the enactment of the Statutes of Kilkenny first politicised the language. Some redress for the colonisation at last: the development of Irish-medium education, TnaG/TG4 available throughout the land, Irish-speakers at the heart of decisions which would affect the language, a hearty welcome for Irish in public life and a new respect for it was the image before us.

That hopeful morning, however, we didn't notice the conditioned mentioned – "where appropriate and where people so desire it"; "where there is appropriate demand"; "where possible." Perhaps we put too much faith in the Agreement in those early days, believing it would cure all ills.

In the 15 years since, the hope has subsided – but I am not disheartened. I don't think the articles in the

chreidim gur athraigh na míreanna Gaeilge sa Chomhaontú an dóigh ar amharc daoine ar an Ghaeilge i modh radacach, ach chuir sé tús le próiseas a rinne i bhfad ní ba dheacra é neamhaird a dhéanamh uirthi agus diaidh ar ndiaidh, tá barúlacha ag athrú mar thoradh ar chuid mhór cúiseanna, an Comhaontú ina measc.

Go híoróineach, ba le haimhleas na Gaeilge é rath an Chomhaontaithe - Tionóil agus Feidhmeannas áitiúil roinnte cumhachta ag rialú i Stormont - mar aistríodh cumhachtaí reachtaíochta ó Westminster go dtí an Pharlaimint úr réigiúnach in oirthear Bhéal Feirste. Bhí todhchaí na teanga anois ag brath ar dea-thoil na bpáirtithe polaitíochta aontachtacha - dea-thoil nárbh ann dó. Bhí mé i Stormont, mar shampla, nuair a thug an Feisire David McNarry iarraidh an Ghaeilge a chosc sa Tionóil. Chuala mé Gregory Campbell - fear a raibh an Ghaeilge ar chúraimí s'aige - ag magadh ar an teanga, agus is beag seans a chailleann siad beag is fiú a dhéanamh den teanga ina bhfuil an traidisiún scríofa is sine san Eoraip, seachas traidisiúin na Gréige agus na Róimhe. I ndiaidh theacht fríd choilíniú agus concas, ní dada é dímheas an Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) agus an Ulster Unionist Party (UUP).

Agus le cúpla bliain anuas, tá beagán teasa ag spréadh tríd theach fuar Stormont agus polaiteoirí de chuid na bpáirtithe aontachtacha ag tiontú suas ag imeachtaí a bhaineann leis an Ghaeilge. Agus i ndiaidh Airí Cultúir, Ealaíona agus Fóillíochta a bhí go hiomlán naimhdeach don teanga, cuidíonn sé go mór go bhfuil Aire againn sa Roinn Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta (RCEF), Carál ní Chuilín, atá go hiomlán báuil agus í ag iarraidh oiread a dhéanamh agus is féidir taobh istigh de na laicísí a chuireann córas mí-éifeachtach Stormont agus an cúlú eacnamaíochta uirthi. Agus ach go bé Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta ann, ní bheadh a leithéid d'Aire ann!

Mar sin, is beag an baol go mbeadh 'Líofa' ann, dá lochtaí é (díobháil áiseanna agus airgid) tá sé ag déanamh dul mór chun cinn leis an Ghaeilge - agus ní maith liom an focal - a "normalú". Tá baill shinsearacha an Seirbhís Póilíneachta TÉ ag foghlaim Gaeilge agus iad an-oscailte faoi. Tá ceiliúráin agus an gnáthdhuine sínithe suas don togra a bhfuil sé d'aidhm aige 1,000 cainteoir líofa Gaeilge a chruthú faoi 2015. Tá sparántachtaí

Good Friday Agreement referring to Irish have radically changed anyone's opinion of Irish but gradually opinions are changing for a number of factors and the Accord is one of them.

Ironically, the success of the Agreement – a local power-sharing Assembly and Executive ruling from Stormont - has dealt a blow to Irish because legislative powers were transferred from Westminster to the new regional parliament in east Belfast. The future of the language now depended on the good will of the Unionist political parties – a good will which didn't exist. I was in the Stormont chamber when David McNarry tried to get Irish banned in the Assembly. I heard Gregory Campbell – a man who had responsibility for the language – mock it and he rarely misses a chance to belittle the language which has the oldest vernacular literature in Europe apart from the Greeks and the Romans. After coming through colonisation and conquest, the disrespect of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the Ulster unionist Party (UUP) won't bother it much.

For a couple of years now, however, there is a little heat being generated in Stormont's cold house with members from unionist parties turning up to Irish language events and after a string of Ministers for Culture, Arts and Leisure who were openly hostile, it helps to have a minister in DCAL who is totally committed to Irish, Carál ní Chuilín and who is trying to do as much as possible within the constraints of the ineffective Stormont system and the economic recession. Of course, without the Good Friday Agreement we wouldn't have had such a minister.

We wouldn't have had 'Líofa', which, despite its faults (lack of facilities and money) is making great strides in promoting the - and I don't like the word - "normalisation" of Irish. There are senior members of the Policing Service NI learning Irish and they're very open about it. There are celebs and ordinary people who have signed up for a project whose aim is to create 1,000 fluent Irish speakers by 2015 and the minister has managed to find money for

curtha ar fáil aici do lucht foghlamtha. Níor thug sí Acht Gaeilge isteach go fóill ach ar an chóras lochtach, seicteach ar an Chnoc atá an milleán. Tá glacadh úrnua cruthaithe ag an Chomhaontú sna háiteanna sin agus i measc na ndaoine sin atá oscailte di, ach beidh daoine i gcónaí ann a bheas nimhiúil do rud ar bith a bhaineann leis an chultúr dúchais

Mar gheall ar an Chomhaontú a bunaíodh Foras na Gaeilge, mar chomharba ar Bhord na Gaeilge, mar chuid den Fhoras Teanga. Anois, is iomaí locht atá ar Fhoras na Gaeilge. Tá sé léirithe aige arís agus arís eile nach dtuigeann sé cúrsaí na meán cumarsáide mar a chonaic muid le bás 'Lá Nua', 'Foinse' agus 'Gaelscéal'. Tá sé i ndiaidh na heagraíochtaí Gaeilge a chur a throid eatarthu féin leis an tSamhail Nua Mhaoinithe; tá sé ag cur polasaí na rialtas i gcrích in áit bheith ag léiriú an bhealaigh chun cinn don rialtas, tá an chuma air go bhfuil sé fríd a chéile cuid mhór den am.

Níl a fhios agam an bhfuil sé ar mhíbhuntáistí an Fhoras Teanga go gcaitheann an deartháir mór, Foras na Gaeilge, an deartháir beag mí-aibí, Ulster Scots, a thabhairt leis gach áit. Mar shampla, bíonn leathanach amháin de mo chuid ar an 'Irish News', 'The Bluffer's Guide to Irish', ag cur thar maoil le nuacht faoi ranganna Gaeilge, fud fad na hÉireann gan a bheith ag caint ar na mílte rang a réachtáiltear ó Mhoscó go Tóiceo. Ach má chuardaíonn tú rannóg na gcúrsaí ar shuíomh oifigiúil idirlín an Boord ó Ulster Scotch, níl oiread agus ceann amháin á ofráil. Ach ar ais chuig an Ghaeilge.

Cé go bhfuil an chuma air nach dtig leis an Fhoras na rudaí móra a dhéanamh, tá sé iontach maith ag na rudaí beaga, ceann amháin a mbeidh toradh fadtéarmach leis, dar liom. Mhaoinigh Foras na Gaeilge Oifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge i Misean Oirthear Bhéal Feirste. Is í Linda Ervine an duine sin agus tá sé léirithe ag Linda go bhfuil craos ar mhuintir Phrotastúnach oirthear Bhéal Feirste don Ghaeilge. Nuair a bhí 20 duine taobh amuigh den Skainos Building agus bratach na Breataine ar a nguailneacha le linn na léirsithe ag tús na bliana seo, bhí 65 duine taobh istigh ag foghlaim faoin Ghaeilge agus faoi logainmneacha Bhéal Feirste. Tá sé feicthe agam go mion minic, i nGleann Gormlaidhe, i gColáiste an tSrutháin Mhilis, fríd na scairteanna a fhaighim ag an 'Irish News' ó dhaoine

Gaeltacht scholarships. She wasn't able yet to bring in an Irish Language Act but the faulty, sectarian system on the Hill should be blamed for that. The Agreement has created a new acceptance in places and amongst people who are open to persuasion, but of course there will be people who will always be opposed to anything connected with native Irish culture.

As a result of the Agreement, Foras na Gaeilge was set up as part of An Foras Teanga, the North-South Language Body as successor to Bord na Gaeilge. Now Foras na Gaeilge has many faults. It has proven again and again that it doesn't understand the media as the demise of 'Lá Nua', 'Foinse' and 'Gaelscéal' has shown. It has had Irish language voluntary organisations at each other's throats with its ill-fated New Funding Model; it is following government dictats rather than promoting a way forward for the government and it looks as if it doesn't know what it's doing a lot of the time.

I don't know whether it's a disadvantage to the North-South Language Body for the big brother, Foras na Gaeilge, to have to bring its little brother, Ulster Scots, everywhere with him. For instance, one of my Irish pages in 'The Irish News', 'The Bluffer's Guide to Irish', is overflowing with news about Irish classes all over Ireland, not to mention the thousands of classes which are run in Moscow or Tokyo. However, if you look up the Courses section on the official Boord o Ulster-Scotch website, there isn't a single one being offered. But back to Irish.

Although it appears as if Foras na Gaeilge can't seem to get the big things right, it is very good at the little things, one of which I think will have long-term results. Foras are funding an Irish Development Officer at the East Belfast Mission. That person is Linda Ervine and Linda has proven without a shadow of a doubt that there is a huge appetite for the Irish language amongst east Belfast Protestants. When there were 20 people protesting outside the Skainos Building where classes were being held during the flag protests earlier this year, there were 65 people inside learning about the Irish language and Belfast place-names. I have seen it time and time again, in Glengormley, at Stranmillis College, through the calls I get at 'The Irish News' from people all over the place, "who didn't have the

a deir, “nach raibh deis acu an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim” (agus de gnách sin cód gur Protastúnaigh iad!), tá sé feicthe agam go bhfuil dáimh láidir ag gach aicme creidimh leis an teanga. (Scairt ball de na hoird dhílse orm cúpla bliain ó shin le rá go raibh cúigear nó seisear ina lóiste a raibh an-suim acu sa Ghaeilge!) Gidh go bhfuil próifíl an-ard ag Linda, tá rudaí iontacha eile sa tsúil mar chuid de Scéim Pobail Gaeilge an Fhorais agus scéimeanna eile in Ard Mhacha le Cairde Teo, in Iúr Cinn Trá, i nDoire, ar an Ómaigh, ar na Corra Críocha, in Oileán a Ghuaill, i gCarn Tóchair agus in áiteanna eile (mo leithscéal as gan gach ceann a lua.)

Is dócha gur i gcúrsaí oideachais is mó atá tionchar an Chomhaontaithe le feiceáil.

Cuireadh líne amháin san Ord Oideachais 1998 le 'dualgas reachtúil a chur ar an Roinn Oideachais chun oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge a spreagadh agus a éascú de réir na socrúithe láithreacha don oideachas comhtháite. Mar thoradh ar an Chomhaontú a bunaíodh Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta agus lontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta i 2001, dhá eagras atá ag saothrú go dúthrachtach chun leasa na hearnála Gaeloideachais. Is é an t-oideachas Gaeilge an tseoid i gcoróin ghluaiseacht na Gaeilge agus corradh le 37,000 páiste san earnáil agus cuid de na scoileanna ar na hinstiúidí léinn is fearr sa tír.

Tá gealltanais amháin tugtha sa Chomhaontú a bhfuil mé féin ag baint tairbhe as. Deirtear go bhfuil mé sprionlaithe go maith ó thaobh airgid de - deir mo pháistí sin ar scor ar bith – cionn is nár mhaith liom íoc as teilifís satailíte mar sin, tá freeview agam agus ní chaithim íoc gach mí as pictiúr maith TG4! Tá an taifeadán ar an seinnteoir lán de chláracha den chéad scoth, agus ar TG4 a fuair mé 90% acu. Ó tharla an stáisiún, a bunaíodh dhá bhliain roimh an Chomhaontú, bheith ar fáil i bhfad níos forleithne mar gheall ar an socrú idir an dá rialtas, tá cláracha a thugann súil eile ar an saol ar fáil ag daoine - i rúndacht a dtithe féin, más gá - eolas a chur ar shaol na Gaeilge agus ar an saol ina iomláine fríd an Ghaeilge. Leis an stáisiún iontach teilifíse seo, tá an teanga á normalú ag cláracha den chéad scoth ar spóirt - cé go bhfuil cuid de mhuintir an deiscirt ag gearán go bhfuil an tráchttaireacht ar an rugbaí ar fáil i nGaeilge amháin! - cláracha faisnéise agus ceoil.

chance to learn Irish” (which is usually code for saying they are Protestants!) that all religious creeds are interested in Irish. (A member of the loyal orders rang me a few years ago and told me there were five or six of them in his lodge who were very interested in Irish.) Although Linda Ervine has a high profile, there are other great things going on as part of Foras’ Scéim Pobail Gaeilge with other schemes in Armagh with Cairde Teo, in Newry, in Derry, in Omagh, in Cookstown, in Coalisland, in Carnogher and in other places (sorry if I haven’t mentioned you.)

However, I suppose it is in education that the impact of the GFA is felt most. A line was inserted into the Education Order 1998 to “place a statutory duty on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate Irish medium education in line with current provision for integrated education.” It then followed that Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and lontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta were set up in 2001, two organisations which are ceaselessly fostering the Irish-medium sector. Irish-medium education is the crowning achievement of the Irish language movement with over 37,000 children in the sector which has some of the best educational establishments in the country.

There is one promise made in the GFA that I am particularly enjoying. I’m told I’m a little bit on the frugal side where money is concerned – so my kids tell me – just because I don’t want to pay for satellite television. So I have freeview and I don’t have to pay every month for a good picture on TG4! The recorder on the player is full of great programmes and about 90% of them I’ve recorded from TG4. Now that the station, set up two years before the GFA came into effect, has a much wider reach because of an arrangements between the Irish and British governments, programmes that show life through “another eye” is available to most people in the north – in the secrecy of their own homes if necessary – who can now see Irish language life and the whole world through Irish speakers’ eyes. With this great TV station, the language is shown as something normal with top-class sports programmes - although some southerners are complaining about Irish-only commentary of rugby and Gaelic matches!) - documentaries and music programmes.

Sin ráite, ar na tograí is rathúla a d'fháisc as an Chomhaontú, tá an Ciste Craoltóireachta Gaeilge gidh gurbh éigean fanacht sé bliana go dtí 2004 go dtí gur bunaíodh é. Agus ainneoin an ratha a bhí agus atá air - caighdeán na gcláracha, líon na gcláracha, ardchaighdeán an oiliúna ar fáil do dhaoine óga atá ag iarraidh bheith ag obair san earnáil theilifíse agus scannánaíochta agus araile - bhí an bhaol ann go gcuirfeadh stop leis an mhaoiniú. B'éigean do Gerry Adams ó Shinn Féin brú a chur ar Phríomh-Aire na Breataine ag an am, Gordon Brown leis an £10 milliún a fháil a choinneodh ag dul é. Teip eile ag an Chomhaontú a réitíodh ag an aicsean díreach.

Tá cúrsaí ag athrú sna comhairlí áitiúla sa tuaisceart fosta, bhuel iad sin atá inrochtain ag an Ghaeilge. Rudaí beaga siombalacha ar nós comharthaí Nollaig Shona taobh amuigh de Halla na Cathrach i mBéal Feirste agus seoladh Seachtain na Gaeilge in oifigí an Chomhairle in Ard Mhacha anuas ar an dea-obair leanúnach atá ag dul ar aghaidh i gcomhairlí eile ar nós an lúir agus Mhuirn agus Dhoire.

Bím i gcónaí faoi gheasa ag an obair atá a dhéanamh ag POBAL i leith Acht na Gaeilge. Is léir go bhfuil cuid mhór machnaimh, cur agus cúiteamh, saineolas agus páis curtha isteach san fheachtas - feachtas in aisce go dtí seo?

I sochaí normálta ar bith, bheadh na moltaí atá curtha chun cinn ag POBAL glactha go sciobtha d'aon ghuth ach is íobartach eile ag an pholaitíocht threibhiúil é an tAcht. Sin ráite, cé gur gealladh Acht Gaeilge le linn idirbheartaíochta Chill Rímhinn, tarraingíodh an gealltanais siar i gníomh suarach caimiléireachta polaitiúil, ach maítear, le dochar an droim láimhe a mhaolú, gur bunaíodh an An Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge le macasamhail Chultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich i mBéal Feirste a bhunú i gcathracha agus i mbaile móra ar fud an tuaiscirt. Ní leor é ar ndóigh ach ní chuirfeadh stop leis an éileamh ar son Acht Gaeilge. Tá an teanga anois fréamhaithe i réimeas na gceart agus ar bhonn ceart teanga, tiocfaidh an tAcht, luath nó mall.

Tá na forbairtí seo uilig ag titim amach ainneoin mar chomhlíonadh gealltanais Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta nó gur cuireadh i bhfeidhm go hiontach patuar iad.

Having said that, another great success to come out of the GFA is the Irish Language Broadcast Fund (ILBF), although we had to wait until 2004 for it to be set up but even then, despite its success – the standard of the programmes, the number of broadcast hours produced, the training they give to young people setting out on a career in TV or film - it was in danger of running out of funding. It took Gerry Adams from Sinn Féin to put pressure on the British Prime Minister of the time, Gordon Brown, to come up with the £10 million needed to ensure the ILBF kept going. A failure of the GFA rectified by some direct action.

Things are even changing in some local councils in the north, well, those which are amenable to the Irish language. Simple little symbolic things like Christmas signs on Belfast City Hall and the launch of Irish language week in the Mayor's office in Armagh not to mention the great work going on in councils such as Newry and Mourne, Magherafelt and Derry.

I'm always inspired by the work POBAL has done over the years in relation to its work on a possible Irish Language Act. It is obvious that a lot of thought, debate, expert knowledge and passion has gone into their – fruitless so far – campaign for an Irish language act.

In any normal society, their carefully worked out proposals would have been immediately and unanimously implemented but it has proven to be another victim of tribal politics here. Having said that, although Acht na Gaeilge was promised during the discussions at St Andrews, the commitment was withdrawn in a craven act of political chicanery. It has been claimed that, in order to do some damage limitation, the British agreed to fund Irish Language Investment Fund with the purpose of setting up centres such as Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich in Belfast in cities and major towns throughout the north. Of course it isn't enough and it won't stop the demand for an Irish Language Act. The GFA has now established the language in the sphere of rights and with recognition of language rights an Act will surely come, sooner or later.

The uneven progress of the Irish language since 1998 is due to the non-implementation or the lacklustre application of the obligations therein. Had

Dá ndéanfaí mar ba cheart é, tchí Dia an borradh a bheadh faoi chúrsaí teanga gan a bheith ag caint ar an turasóireacht, na meáin, na healaíona, an chruthaitheacht, an oideachais, fostaíocht agus ní fios cad é eile. Anuas air sin, d'aithneofaí sin go bhfuil an Ghaeilge mar dhroichead idir dhá phobal atá scartha ar feadh an-fhada ach ní gléas i an teanga chun innealtóireacht shóisialta a chur i gcrích. Ní ann don Ghaeilge athmhuintearas a chothú ó thuaidh gidh go bhfuil buanna ar leith aici sin a chur i gcrích.

Theip ar Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta ar chuid mhór dóigheanna. Cinnte, tá deireadh ar éigin leis an doirteadh fola ach tá an ghnáth mhuintir níos measa as maidir le cúrsaí sláinte, ioncaim, poist, caighean bheatha agus an chuma air go bhfuil an seicteachas ag dul i dtreise. B'fhéidir gur shíl muid a bharraíocht den Chomhaontú na laethanta luatha sin, gur chreid muid go leigheasfadh sé gach olc.

Measaim go bhfaighidh an bhíogóideacht agus an ghangaid in éadan na Gaeilge bás mar gheall ar na millte gearradh. Ní féidir le reachtaíocht bealaí smaointeoireachta daoine a athrú, ach tá sé tábhachtach go leagann an rialtas dúshraith oifigiúil ina dtig leis an athrú sin bláthú, agus a aithint gur ann do chearta teanga atá aitheanta ar fud na hEorpa agus níos faide i gcéin. Anuas air sin, an rud a athróidh na sean-bhealaí smaointeoireacht ná dea-thoil, muid ag baint suilt as ár gcultúr féin agus cuireadh a chur ar gach duine teacht chuig an chóisir.

they been put into effect as they should have, Heaven knows what a boost it would have given to tourism, the media, the arts, creativity, education, entrepreneurship and employment and who knows what else! On top of that, Irish would be recognised for what it can be, a bridge between two people divided for too long. Having said that, Irish is not a tool for achieving some kind of social engineering although it is wonderfully placed to do just that.

The GFA has failed on many levels. Thankfully, the bloodshed has all but gone but ordinary people are worse off than ever as far as health, income, jobs, standard of living and it looks like sectarianism is getting worse rather than better. Perhaps we read too much into the GFA in those early days, believing it would end all our ills.

I think bigotry against the Irish language will die by a thousand cuts. Legislation cannot change the way people think but it is important that government lays the foundation where change can blossom and that there are such things as language rights which are recognised throughout Europe and further afield. On top of that, what will change long-standing attitudes more readily is for us to enjoy our own culture and to invite everyone along to the party!

Eoghan Ó Néill



Iriseoir is ea é Eoghan Ó Néill, agus tráchttaire aitheanta sna meáin Chaeilge. Duine de bhunaitheoirí an nuachtáin 'Lá' é, agus eagarthóir reatha ar www.nuacht24.com. Bhain sé duais 'Iriseoir na Bliana' ag Gradaim an Oireachtais in 2011.

Oibríonn sé ag Raidió Fáilte i mBéal Feirste agus is údar é ar dhá leabhar Gaeilge, 'Cathracha' agus 'Cathracha i gCéin is i gCóngar.'

Eoghan Ó Néill is a Belfast born journalist. He was a co-founder of the Irish language daily newspaper 'Lá' and is a regular commentator in the Irish language media. In 2011 he won the Journalist of the Year award at the Oireachtas National Awards. Eoghan works at Raidió Fáilte and also at www.nuacht24.com and is author of two travel books.

Comhaontú

Is é an focal sin 'comhaontú' an focal is tábhachtaí i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta. Doiciméad é a d'éascair as comhréiteach idir polaiteoirí Aontachtacha is Náisiúnacha, idir rialtas Sasanach is rialtas Éireannach. Ní Gaeil a dhréachtaigh an doiciméad seo. Ní hé amháin gur daoine gan Gaeilge formhór iad sin a dhréachtaigh an Comhaontú ach déarfainn go raibh tromlach de lucht a dhréachtaithe ar nós cuma liom faoin Ghaeilge nó dubh in aghaidh na Gaeilge. Mar sin, ní léiríonn sé ar bhealach cuimsitheach na mianta atá agamsa ná atá agatsa ó thaobh na Gaeilge de. Ach ní iontas sin.

Ag cuimhneamh dúinn ar stair náireach Thuaisceart Éireann ó thaobh na Gaeilge de, ó lá a bhunaithe go dtí an lá inniu féin, cén t-iontas gur géilleadh an méid is lú ab fhéidir do phobal na Gaeilge i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta? Agus gur gléasadh ar géilleadh i bhfocail débhríocha teibí chun baint dá n-éifeacht. Ach sin uilig ráite, ba dhring sa doras é an Comhaontú. Ding sa doras de shórt nach raibh riamh ann i stair na Sé Chontae.

Roimh Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, bhí an doras druidte. Bhí trí shraith de ghlais mhóra á choinneáil druidte agus cúpla tairne daingnithe isteach sa fráma, díreach ar eagla na heagla! Ní raibh aitheantas dá laghad don Ghaeilge ag aon leibhéal in aon reachtaíocht nó in aon chomhaontú a bhain leis an Tuaisceart. Go hoifigiúil, ní raibh ann don Ghaeilge sna Sé Chontae.

Agreement

The word 'agreement' is the most important word in 'The Good Friday Agreement.' It reminds us that this is a document which was the result of an agreement between politicians, mostly Unionist and Nationalist, along with two governments, the Irish and the British governments. It is not a document drafted or designed by Irish speakers. I would even venture that many, perhaps the majority, of those who did draft the Agreement were not in the least interested in Irish or were indeed hostile to it. Therefore the Good Friday Agreement is not a reflection of my agenda for the Irish language or indeed the agenda of most Irish speakers. But that is not surprising.

When we remember the shameful history of Northern Ireland in relation to the Irish language, from the setting up of the state until the present day, it should come as no surprise that the Irish language didn't feature more strongly in the Good Friday Agreement. And whatever recognition was given to the language in the GFA was, for the most part, couched in abstract and ambiguous language to minimise its effect. But having said that, for Irish speakers, the Agreement was a wedge in the door. And there had never been such a wedge before in the history of the North.

Prior to the Good Friday Agreement, not only had the door been closed, but it had been reinforced with three rows of locks and, just in case, had a few heavy duty nails hammered into the frame. Before the Good Friday Agreement, Irish wasn't recognised at any level, in any legislation or in any agreements relating to the North. Officially it didn't exist.

Mar sin, más lag féin an tús é, ba choiscéim sa treo cheart é Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta sa mhéid is gur thug sé aitheantas éigin don Ghaeilge ag leibhéal oifigiúil den chéad uair riamh. Lena chois sin, thug an Comhaontú ar na húdaráis coimhitmintí áirithe a chomhlíonadh ó thaobh na teanga de. Is in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta agus san earnáil déanta cláracha teilifíse Gaeilge a tháinig na buntáistí is suntasaí agus is soiléire.

I gcás an Ghaeloideachais, tháinig lontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta agus Chomhairle na Gaelscolaíochta ar an tsaol mar gheall ar an Chomhaontú. Ach ab é an Comhaontú, déarfainn go mbeimis inniu féin ag troid ar son aitheantais do formhór na nGaelscoileanna agus ag éileamh grúpa ar rialtas na Breataine grúpaí ar nós an lontaobhais nó an Chomhairle a bhunú. Seachas sin, tá eagrais againn inniu atá ag troid na gcathanna, ní ar son aitheantais ach ar son áiseanna breise agus ar son cóiríochta do scoileanna a bhfuil aitheantas faighte acu cheana féin.

San earnáil déanta cláracha teilifíse Gaeilge tá Ciste Craoltóireachta na Gaeilge i ndiaidh a chinntiú go bhfuil scéalta is dearcaí Ghaeil na Sé Chontae le sonrú ar an scáileán teilifíse i gcéin is i gcóngar.

Agus cuimhnigh air seo.

Is iad an Ghaelscolaíocht agus an earnáil déanta cláracha theilifíse Ghaeilge an bheirt fhostóir is mó i saol na Gaeilge sa tuaisceart. Fostaíonn siad na céadta, céadta duine. Agus is dhá earnáil iad a bhfuil an t-aos óg i dtreis iontu. Tá siad thar a bheith tábhachtach do fhás an phobail Ghaelaigh. Agus gan Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, is cinnte nach mbeadh leathoiread dhul chun tosaigh déanta ag an dá earnáil seo is a rinneadh le 15 bliain anuas. Ní hionann sin is a rá nach bhfuil agus nach raibh easnaimh ann, nach bhfuil rudaí is gá a réiteach is a bhisíú. Ní hionann sin is a rá nár chuidigh rudaí eile le forbairt na n-earnálacha seo mar aon leis an Chomhaontú. Ach ní thig beag is fiú a dhéanamh den ról lárnach a bhí ag an Chomhaontú sa chomhthéacs seo.

Therefore, even if it was a small start, the Good Friday Agreement was a step in the right direction, - the first official recognition of the Irish language since the setting up of the state. But the Agreement also obliged those signing it to fulfil certain commitments to the Irish language. And it is in the field of Irish medium education and in the making of Irish language television and film programmes that we see most readily the outworking of those commitments.

In terms of Irish medium education the Agreement allowed for the establishment of two bodies, lontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta. lontaobhas to deal with funding, Comhairle dealing with all other issues. If it hadn't been for the Agreement we would most likely still be campaigning in 2013 to get recognition for the bulk of Irish medium schools and pressing the British government to set up bodies such as the lontaobhas and Comhairle. As it is we have had these two bodies working away for over a decade and rather than campaigning to get schools recognised by the Department, they have been able to campaign for better accommodation, capital funding etc.

In the Irish language television sector the Irish Language Broadcasting Fund has ensured that the stories and viewpoints of Irish speakers in the North have been heard and seen far and near. That has brought a freshness and energy to the Irish language community.

And bear this in mind.

Irish medium schools and the Irish language television sector employ more Irish speakers than any other sector in the North. They employ many hundreds of people. And in each sector young people are very strongly represented. So both sectors are crucial to the development of the Irish language community now and in the future. Without the Good Friday Agreement I doubt whether either of them would have progressed to the degree which they have. That isn't to say that there have been things which haven't happened or things which have to be improved on. That isn't to say that there haven't been other factors which have also helped to influence the growth of both these sectors. But we shouldn't understate or underestimate the central role which the

Rud sonrach eile a tháinig mar gheall ar an Chomhaontú, ná ardú feasachta. Roimh 1998 d'fhéadfadh cuid mhór den phobal anseo dul ar aghaidh agus gan fios acu go raibh ann don Ghaeilge nó do phobal na Gaeilge ar chor ar bith. Ní hamhlaidh anois é. Na saolta seo tá an Ghaeilge agus ceisteanna a bhaineann leis an teanga ina gcuid den díoscúrsa phoiblí ó thuaidh. In ainneoin rialtas na Breataine rialacha an daonlathais a athscríobh arís is arís eile, (cá mhéad próiseas comhairliúcháin a dtig le rialtas neamhairde a dhéanamh díobh?) in ainneoin biogóidí áirithe an Ghaeilge agus gach a bhaineann léi a dhamnú, tá an Ghaeilge ina beocheist anseo sa tuaisceart inniu. Ní bheadh sí ina beocheist mar seo ach amháin Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta agus Comhaontú Chill Rímhinn a bheith ann.

Agus is ceart a lua Coiste na Sáineolaithe ar Cháirt na hEorpa agus an dóigh ar choinnigh siad sin leis an bhrú ar na húdaráis, ar chomhairlí agus ar institiúidí stáit. Ar ndóigh, tá agus bhí ról lárnach ag POBAL i gcur chun tosaigh tuairimí is mianta an phobail Ghaelaigh roimh agus i ndiaidh don Comhaontú a bheith sínithe. Agus rinne sé éachtaí.

Thar aon eagrais ná grúpa eile rinne POBAL an ding Ghaelach sin sa doras a shá agus a bhrú isteach ann níos faide agus níos láidre. Choinnigh siad aird an phobail ar cheist na Gaeilge agus ar cheist na gceart. D'eagraigh siad pobal na Gaeilge ar bhealach nár eagraíodh roimhe iad agus reáchtáil siad feachtais éifeachtacha. Rinne siad ionadaíocht don phobal ag an leibhéal is ísle agus ag an leibhéal is airde. Is cuid mhór mar gheall ar POBAL go bhfuil Acht na Gaeilge agus straitéis na Gaeilge ina mbeocheistanna i gcónaí.

Agus ná déantar dearmad go bhfuil cairde againn i saol na polaitíochta. Dlúthchairde. Tá sé faiseanta a bheith ag díspeagadh ar pholaiteoirí i gcoitinne ach tá polaiteoirí áirithe a rinne cion fir ar son na

Agreement has played in ensuring that Irish medium education and Irish medium programming and broadcasting have progressed significantly over the past 15 years.

Another development which followed the publication of the Good Friday Agreement has been the increased profile of the Irish language both here in the North and further afield. Before 1998 a large part of the population here could have continued completely unaware that the Irish language or an Irish language community existed in the North. That doesn't happen now. Nowadays Irish and its role, status etc, are part of public discourse here. Even though the British government has rewritten the rules on occasions (how many consultation processes can a government ignore?), and though certain bigoted people damned the Irish language and everything associated with it, Irish remains an important subject of public discourse here. Which wouldn't have been the case if it hadn't been for its inclusion in the Good Friday and the St Andrews Agreements.

And we shouldn't forget the role which the Committee of Experts on the European Charter for Language Rights have played in keeping the authorities, the councils, and the institutions of state focussed on fulfilling their obligations to the language. Not surprisingly POBAL has had a central role in articulating and progressing the opinions and the aims of the Irish language community before and after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. And they have done excellent work.

More than any other organisation POBAL has strived to keep that Irish language wedge in the door and indeed to push it further in. They have kept Irish in the public mind and focussed particularly on the issue of the rights of Irish speakers. They have organised Irish speakers to a degree which hasn't been done before and have organised some very successful and imaginative campaigns. They have represented Irish speakers at the highest and indeed at the most local level. It is largely because of POBAL that an Irish Language Act and an Irish language strategy are still live issues.

And I'm not forgetting that we also have political friends in many political parties. Very good friends. It is fashionable to disparage politicians. But some politicians in Stormont, in the councils and in other

Gaeilge ag Stormont, sna comhairlí, sna hinstiúidí. Ina dhiaidh sin ar fad, tá polaiteoirí, agus POBAL, agus eagrais is grúpaí Gaelacha, uilig ag brath ar an phobal a bhfuil siad ionadaíocht dóibh a bheith glórach nó gníomhach nó páirteach ar bhealach éigin san obair. Níl aon leithscéal ag duine ar bith againn gan a bheith ag iarraidh saol Gaelach a chruthú inár gclann féin, i measc lucht ár n-aitheantais, inár bpobal agus sa sochaí. Thig linn roinnt dár gcearta a fháil, ní ó reachtaíocht ach trí bheith ag gníomhú ar ár son féin.

Tá troid le déanamh ar bhonn laethúil sna seomraí boird agus sna monarchana, sna meáin sóisialta agus sna mórmheáin traidisiúnta, sna cumainn agus sna hinstiúidí, sa státseirbhís agus sna cúirteanna agus i bhfiche earnáil eile, chun ár gcearta a bhaint amach. Níl cur i gcrích an Chomhaontaithe ag brath ar POBAL amháin, ná ar ár gcairde polaitiúla, ná ar aon chomhghuaillíocht le grúpaí nó le pobail eile. Tá sé ag brath fosta orainne, inár saol laethúil, pobal iolrach tarraingteach bríomhar Gaelach a thógáil. Pobal ilchineálach ina bhfuil spás do gach duine beag beann ar chreideamh ná ar chúla, ar aicme ná ar ghnéas ná ar aon rud eile.

Cuideoidh sin le baint den doicheall agus den choimhthíos a mhóthaíonn daoine áirithe sa tuaisceart faoin Ghaeilge. Seans nach laghdódh sé naimhdeas is fuath an dreama sin, agus ní beag a líon, a dhiúltaíonn aon spás a cheadú don Ghaeilge sa stát seo. Dar leo sin gurb é an tromluí is mó ar an tsaol acu dá músclódh siad ar maidin agus comharthaí bóthair i nGaeilge le taobh na gcomharthaí i mBéarla. Nó go mbeadh státseirbhísigh áirithe ann a mbeadh líofacht sa Ghaeilge acu le taobh a líofacht sa Bhéarla. Nó go mbeadh bunús daoine sa tsochaí seo ar a gcompond leis an Ghaelachas agus leis an Éireannachas mar aon leis an Bhriotanachas agus an Bhéarla.

Níl de fhreagra againn ar na daoine sin ach a dhearbhuí dóibh sin go mbeadh iolrachas agus éagsúlacht agus saoirse ar leas na sochaí ar fad. Agus ar leas gach uile dhuine againn. Go mbeidh meas ar a gcearta siúd sa sochaí nua atá á múnú

institutions have done sterling work for the Irish language. Even so, ultimately politicians, POBAL, and Irish language groups and organisations all depend on the community and people whom they represent to play their part, to voice their opinions, to take some active role. And none of us has an excuse to sit back passively rather than to try in our own families, amongst our friends and acquaintances, in our communities and in society to create an Irish language life for ourselves and for others. We can attain some of our rights not only by legislation but by our own hard work and endeavour at home, at work, in the community.

We need to make our case on a daily basis in boardrooms and in factories, in the new social media and in the traditional media, in societies and in institutions, in the courts and in the civil service and indeed in many, many other sectors to get our rights as Irish speakers. Realising the potential of the Good Friday / St Andrews Agreements is not only dependent on POBAL or on progressive politicians or on alliances with other communities or groups. It also depends on us. On our creating, in our daily lives, an Irish language community which is pluralist, attractive, and dynamic. A diverse community where there is room for everyone irrespective of creed (or none), of background or race, of class, of sexual orientation, or of anything else.

Such a vibrant community will help to reduce the hostility and the estrangement of people within this society who don't feel at ease with the Irish language. It mightn't however reduce the hostility, very deep hostility on occasions, of a substantial number of people here who refuse to make space for the Irish language in this society. For some of them, their worst nightmare is to waken one morning and to find Irish language road signs alongside the English language ones. Or to discover that certain civil servants are now bilingual rather than purely English speakers. Or that most people have become comfortable with Irishness and the Irish language alongside Britishness and the English language.

The only answer to those people is to repeat yet again that pluralism and diversity benefit all of society. All citizens. And that the new society which is being born here will certainly respect their rights. But that it will also respect the rights of Irish

againn. Ach go mbeidh a oiread measa céanna ar chearta an phobail Ghaelaigh chomh maith. Táimid ag cur le cearta agus ag cur le measa; ní ag baint de chearta ná ag laghdú measa.

Tá sé le sonrú le roinnt blianta anuas go bhfuil níos mó Aontachtaithe agus Protastúnaigh páirteach i saol na Gaeilge, nó oscailte don Ghaeilge, ná mar a bhí ag am ar bith ó bunaíodh an stát. Caithfidh pobal na Gaeilge iarracht ar leith a dhéanamh chun treisiú air sin. Chun a chur ar a shúile do gach duine go dtig leo dul leis an Ghaeilge gan a ndílseachtaí ná a dtuairimí pholaitiúla nó creidimh nó eile a thréigiúint. Ní thig a rá go bhfuil an t-athrú sin ag tarlú go díreach mar gheall ar Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, ach is cinnte gur chuidigh an Comhaontú le daoine a chur a cheistiú cuid de na múnlaí fadbhunaithe sa tsochaí seo.

An bhfuil oiread déanta le go mbeimis sásta, ó thaobh na Gaeilge de, agus an Comhaontú 15 bliain d'aois? Áiríonn roinnt againn an ghloine a bheith leathlán. Leathfolamh atá sé dar le roinnt eile againn. Thig cás a dhéanamh ar son ceachtair den dá léamh. Tá mise den dream a fheiceann gloine leathlán. Ní thiocfadh leis an chomhaontú riamh ach muid a thabhairt fad áirithe.

Ó thaobh na Gaeilge de, ráiteas a bhí ann. Ráiteas a chuir in iúl don domhan, agus do mhuintir na Sé Chontae go háirithe, nárbh fhéidir leanúint leis an pholasaí aonteanga a lean Tuaisceart Éireann ón lá a bhunaithe go dtí sin. Chuir an Comhaontú in iúl go raibh deireadh leis an seanpholasaí a leanadh le beagnach 80 bliain - 'Ná cloistear Gaeilge, ná labhraítear Gaeilge, ná feictear Gaeilge.' Neamhtheanga a bhí sa Ghaeilge sna Sé Chontae ó am a bunaíodh an stát. Go dtí an lá a síníodh Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta. An lá sin, tógadh an chéad choiscéim bheag shiombalach i dtreo eile. Coiscéim bheag i bpróiseas fada deacair frustrach dúshlánach.

Le go n-éireodh leis an phróiseas seo, caithfear leanúint linn ag tógáil pobail ón bhonn aníos trí bhunú is bhuanú fiontair forasacha nua. Beidh gá leis an dara tonn de fhiontair is tograí ar talamh a bheidh, in imeacht ama, chomh tábhachtach rathúil is atá na Cultúrlanna éagsúla, Raidió Fáilte, an Cheathrú Gaeltachta agus eile sa lá inniu. Taobh ar

speakers. Irish speakers are attempting to add to citizens rights not to diminish them; they are attempting to increase respect for rights, not to diminish that respect.

It is noticeable, not just in Belfast but throughout the North, that more and more Unionists and Protestants feel comfortable learning or using Irish or just being open to the language. The Irish language community must do all in its power to ensure that that trend continues and indeed do as much as possible to strengthen that development. We have to show that anyone can be involved in the Irish language without having to abandon their political loyalties or their religion. We can't say that this development is a direct result of the Good Friday Agreement. But for sure the Good Friday Agreement has set many people here in the North questioning established patterns and truths. And perhaps also their attitude to the Irish language.

Has there been enough progress to allow us to feel content as we look back at 15 years since the Good Friday Agreement? Some of us see a glass half full. Others a glass half empty. In the case of the Irish language there is a valid argument for either! But I'm in the glass half full category. The Agreement could only bring us so far.

In terms of Irish it was a statement. A declaration that it was the beginning of the end of the One Language State. Of an almost 80 year long policy based on 'See no Irish, hear no Irish, speak no Irish.' Irish was a non-language in Northern Ireland from the day that the state was set up. Until the day that the Good Friday Agreement was signed. That day we took a tiny step, a symbolic tiny step, in the other direction. A tiny step in a long, frustrating, challenging, difficult process.

And if that process is to realise its full potential we need to have certain elements in place. We need to keep building from community level up. We need a second wave of Irish language centres and ventures and enterprises which, in time to come, will be as important as the first wave which gave us the various Cultúrlanna, and Raidió Fáilte and Aisling

thaobh leis na fiontair seo, ní mór treisiú ar na pobail Ghaelacha atá ag teacht chun cinn fud fad na Sé Chontae, leithéidí Gaelphobal an tSraitha Báin, Cairde Teo i gContae Ard Mhacha, Glór Uachtar Tíre i gContae an Dúin, muintir an Chairn i gContae Dhoire agus pobail eile mar iad.

Cuid lárnach d'aon phróiseas leis an Ghaeilge a threisiú is í cur chun cinn na Gaelscolaíochta is tacú le tuismitheoirí atá ag tógáil a gclann le Gaeilge. Agus beidh an próiseas seo ag brath fosta ar bhaint den doichead nó den aineolas nó den fhuath atá ag cuid den phobal anseo maidir leis an Ghaeilge. Thig déanamh amhlaidh trí plé leo, trí chomhréiteach a dhéanamh nuair is cuí, agus go háirithe trí chruthú pobal iolrach fuinniúil Gaelach a bhréagnóidh an íomhá atá ag roinnt acu de Ghaeil is de phobal na Gaeilge. Agus is éigean reachtaíocht a achtú, Acht na Gaeilge, a chuideodh leis an Ghaeilge a chur i lár an aonaigh. Reachtaíocht a thabharfadh torthaí praiticiúla don phobal ar an talamh mar aon le bheith ag bogadh an stáit seo i dtreo an dátheangachais.

Beidh ról lárnach ag POBAL san obair seo ar fad nó is éigean an guth neamhspleách agus an fhadtaithí atá ag POBAL.

Níl agus ní raibh an Comhaontú riamh ag dul a dhéanamh na hoibre seo uilig dúinn. Ach ba é an chéad bhogadh suntasach ar shiúil ó Thuaisceart Éireann aonteanga. Glacaimis leis go raibh fiúntas ann ach tuigimís fosta nach ndeachaigh sé leathoiread chomh fada agus a ba ghá. Mar a deirim, is furasta argóint a dhéanamh ar son an ghloine a bheith leathfholamh oiread is go dtig leat argóint a dhéanamh go bhfuil sé leathlán.

Ach críochnaím leis an cheist seo

An mbeimis níos fearr as mura síneofaí Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta ar chor ar bith?

Ní dóigh liom é.

Ghéar Theatre Company and An Ceathrú Gaeltachta and An Ceathrú Póilí bookshop and Nós magazine and many others. The process also needs to support and to encourage more Irish language communities such as Gaelphobal an tSraitha Báin in Strabane, Cairde Teo in Armagh, Glór Uachtar Tíre in County Down, An Carn in County Derry and so many others.

Any process to promote the Irish language must give a priority to Irish medium education and to supporting those families raising their children bilingually. And another central issue will be trying to reduce hostility to the Irish language or ignorance about the Irish language. That can be done sometimes by discussion or education, by compromise when appropriate, and above all by creating a dynamic attractive diverse Irish language community which will give the lie to those who portray the Irish language in a one dimensional way. And yes, we can't forget the need for legislation. For an Irish Language Act which would help a lot not only in practical terms but also will start to create a bilingual state.

POBAL will have a central role in all this work, contributing both an independent voice and invaluable experience.

So, looking back over 15 years, let us recognise that the Good Friday Agreement was never going to fulfil the ambitious agenda which Irish speakers would like to see implemented. But it was the first and a significant move in the right direction. Let us accept that it was worthwhile but also understand that it hasn't gone anywhere near as far as necessary. It would be possible to argue that the Good Friday Agreement has done a lot for the Irish language. However it would be equally possible to argue the opposite. The glass is half full but it is equally half empty!

But I finish with a question.

Would the Irish language and the Irish language community be better off if the Good Friday Agreement hadn't been signed?

I don't think so.

Garaí Mac Roibeaird



Tá Garaí pósta ar Patricia agus triúr iníonacha acu. Tá sé ag obair le Gaeloideachas le breis agus 20 bliain. Ceapadh ina mhúinteoir é i Meánscoil Feirste i 1994 agus ansin ceapadh ina phríomhoide ar an scoil é i mí Mheán Fómhair 2001. Tá sé ar iasacht faoi láthair le Foireann Fheidhmithe an Údaráis um Oideachas agus Scileanna mar Bhainisteoir Tionscadail um Thacaíocht don Earnáil Ghaeloideachais.

Garaí Mac Roibeaird is married to Patricia, and they have three daughters. He has been working in the Irish-medium Education sector for more than 20 years. He joined Meánscoil Feirste in 1994 as a teacher, and was appointed as principal in September 2001. He is presently seconded to the Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team as Irish Medium Sector Support Project Manager.

Thosaigh mé ag obair le Gaeloideachas i 1990 mar thiomsaitheoir airgid le Glór na nGael. Ceapadh i mo mhúinteoir mé i Meánscoil Feirste i 1994 agus ceapadh i mo phríomhoide ar an scoil mé i Meán Fómhair 2001. Mar thuismitheoirí chuir muid ár dtriúr iníonacha tríd na Gaelscoileanna: Naíscóil Bhreandáin, Bunscoil Phobail Feirste agus Coláiste Feirste, tá an duine is óige i gColáiste Feirste go fóill. Fuair an triúr acu oideachas den chéad scoth: beidh an duine is sine acu, Bríd, ag baint céime amach sna Teicneolaíochtaí Cruthaitheacha i mbliana; tá Fionnghuala ag déanamh staidéir ar innealtóireacht in Ollscoil na Gaillimhe; agus thosaigh Eimear ar chúrsaí Ardleibhéil sa scoilbhliain seo. Mar sin de, is i gcomhthéacs an Ghaeloideachais is mó a bhéarfadh mé freagra ar an cheist seo.

Naimhdeas foscailte a thug Stát na Breataine agus a chuid eagraíochtaí oideachasúla don Ghaeloideachas le linn na tréimhse luathfhorbartha seo. Ba é an naimhdeas céanna agus an diúltú aitheantais do na lárionaid oideachasúla seo, na naíscóileanna, na bunscoileanna agus an Mheánscoil, a spreag pobal a bhí daingean diongbháilte go mairfeadh na Gaelscoileanna nuaghinte agus go mbeadh rath orthu.

Seo an tréimhse nuair a bhailigh an pobal céanna airgead ó dhoras go doras ba chuma faoin aimsir, obair dheonach agus íobairtí móra. D'fhreastail ár bpáistí ar a gcuid scolaíochta i ndroch-chóiríocht, easpa bhocht áiseanna teagaisc agus foghlama ach le foireann teagaisc agus neamtheagaisc a bhí antiománta, diúltaíodh do gach iarratas le haghaidh cuidithe agus aitheantais arís agus arís eile. Ina ainneoin seo uilig léirigh an Gaeloideachas ábaltacht agus nuálaíocht agus chruthaigh sé braistint chomhuintearais, fíis, muintín agus bród

I have been involved in Irish-medium Education (IME) since 1990, as a fundraiser for Glór na nGael, a teacher and later Principal in Meánscoil / Coláiste Feirste. As parents we had our three daughters educated through the medium of Irish in: Naíscóil Bhreandáin, Bunscoil Phobail Feirste and Coláiste Feirste, our youngest is still attending Coláiste Feirste. All three have had an excellent education: the eldest, Bríd, will be graduating this year with a degree in Creative Technologies; Fionnghuala is studying Engineering in Galway University; and Eimear began her AS courses this present school year. Therefore, it is in the context of Irish-medium Education I will address this question.

The early period of development in IME met with open hostility from the British state and its educational organisations. This open hostility and refusal to recognise IME educational centres, nursery schools, primary and post primary schools was answered by a community that was determined that the nascent Gaelscoileanna would survive and be successful.

This was the period when our community carried out door to door collections in all weathers, voluntary work, and great sacrifice. Our children attended their schooling in poor accommodation, with a desperate lack of learning and teaching resources and taught by highly committed but often unqualified teaching and non-teaching staff, every request for recognition and assistance was routinely refused. In spite of this the Gaelscoileanna showed capacity and innovation creating a sense of belonging, vision, trust and pride

nasctha le hardleibhéil rannpháirtíochta an phobail a choinnigh na scoileanna beo agus iad ar lorg aitheantas Roinn an Oideachais, a tháinig ar deireadh thiar thall nuair nach raibh leithscéal nó fáth inchreidte fágtha ag na hÚdaráis Oideachasúla a thuilleadh.

Léiríonn na clásail i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, agus i gComhaontu Chill Rìmhinn a tháinig ina dhiaidh, aitheantas do na gníomhartha atá de dhíth leis an Ghaeilge a chosaint, a chaomhnú agus a chur chun cinn, agus go háirithe, an géarghá atá le hAcht na Gaeilge. B'ábhar mór dóchais seo do Gaeilgeoirí fud fad na tíre, nó léirigh na Comhaontuithe seo poitéinseal iontach do dhul chun cinn ár dteanga dhúchais. Ar feadh na mblianta fada, rinne na hAontachtaithe fonóid faoin Ghaeilge, ag tabhairt masla i ndiaidh masla eile dí, gach ceann acu níos measa ná a chéile. De dheasca easpa tionchair nó cumhachta pholaitiúil a bheith ag polaiteoirí náisiúnacha/poblachtacha, ní dhearnadh aon dul chun cinn ar aon shaincheist a bhain leis an Ghaeilge. Sholáthair na Comhaontuithe réamhluaithe meicníocht a sháródh an meon aigne cúng, frith-Ghaeilge a chuir cosc ar aon dul chun cinn teanga agus ar fhorbairt na Gaelscolaíochta. Gheall Comhaontú Aoine an Chéasta 'comhurráim' agus ba ar chúrsaí na Gaeilge ba mhó a bhí seo riachtanach.

Ag freagairt na ceiste: An bhfuil na gealltanais i leith na Gaeilge á gcomhlíonadh? Níl, sin an freagra is fusa. Tá na seandearachtaí céanna ann go fóill: droch-chóiríocht scoile, easpa áiseanna cuí teagaisc agus foghlama, easpa foirne leis na cáilíochtaí cuí, easpa deiseanna traenála agus forbartha d'fhoireann scoile, easpa dul chun cinn i soláthar iarbhunscolaíochta taobh amuigh de Bhéal Feirste, agus eile.

Ar ndóigh, bhí forbairtí ann san idirlinn ar Ghaeloideachas: 'tógálacha nua', forbairt áiseanna, cúrsaí traenála do mhúinteoirí agus chúntóirí ranga, agus infestíocht eile. Ach, ní hionann comhiomlánú na ngnóthachan imeallach seo agus comhlíonadh na ngealltanais i leith na Gaeilge a rinneadh sna Comhaontuithe polaitiúla, mar dar liom, dul chun cinn i giorcalacha atá ann. Gealltanais á gcomhlíonadh? A mhalairt de scéal atá ann i mo bharúilse, nó tá bagairtí ar an Ghaeilge anois atá chomh contúirteach agus a bhíodh nuair a bhí muid faoi smacht na 'Rialóirí Díreacha.' Tá an Ghaeilge faoi chos an stáit go fóill.

combined with high levels of community participation which sustained schools as they sought DE recognition, which eventually came when the educational authorities had run out of credible excuses for continuing refusals.

The Irish language clauses in The Good Friday Agreement, the subsequent St Andrew's Agreement, represent a recognition of, and a commitment to actions required to preserve and promote the Irish language, and specifically the need for an Irish Language Act. All of this held great promise and potential to Irish speakers throughout the country; it demonstrated the potential for the promotion of our native tongue. For too long the Irish language has been subject to ridicule and derision by Unionist politicians trying to outdo each other. The lack of political influence and office for nationalists / republicans prevented any meaningful progress being made on the Irish language issues. The aforementioned agreements provided a mechanism to circumvent the narrow anti-Irish mindset that had prevented any meaningful language development, especially in Irish-medium Education. The Good Friday Agreement offered 'parity of esteem' and nowhere was this more needed than in Irish language matters.

Turning to the question: Have the promises in relation to the Irish language been fulfilled? The simple answer is no. The issues that were there 15 years ago still remain: poor accommodation, a lack of adequate teaching and learning resources, a lack of suitably trained staff with certain subjects for IME settings, limited progress in sectorally-sensitive training opportunities, and the lack of progress in the establishment of post-primary provision outside of Belfast, and other issues.

Of course there have been actions around IME issues, 'new builds', resource development, training courses for teachers and classroom assistants, and other investments. However, the aggregation of these marginal gains does not, in my opinion, represent the fulfilment of the promises given in the political agreements that gave us local government. Indeed, I would contend that in the time since The Good Friday Agreement the Irish language is still under threats which are still as treacherous as they were under 'Direct Rulers'. Irish is still under the state's boot.

Tá na Gaelscoileanna anois faoi smacht Roinne atá naimhdeach go fóill, a bheag nó a mhór, don Ghaeloideachas. Tá an nuálaíocht agus an cheannaireacht a léiríodh sa luath-thréimhse imithe anois sa ré úr seo, agus déantar neamhaird iomlán ar na riachtanais uathúla atá ag an tumoideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge.

Mar thaca leis sin, tagraím don Athbhreithniú ar an Ghaelscolaíocht 2009, an cás cúirte a bhain Coláiste Feirste in éadan Roinn an Oideachais, agus an Dréacht-Straitéis le Forbairt na Gaeilge a Chosaint agus a Fheabhsú a thosaigh An Roinn Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta faoi stiúir Charal Ní Chuilín in 2012.

Ghlac an t-iar-Aire Oideachais Cáitríona Ruane, le Tuairisc an Athbhreithnithe agus na moltaí a rinneadh inti i 2009. Léirigh an Tuairisc na deiseanna agus na dúshláin a bhí ann don Ghaeloideachas go soiléir. Moladh feabhsú íogair-earnála i gcúrsaí traenála d'fhoireann scoile: Gobharnóirí, múinteoirí, cúntóirí ranga, foireann chúnta. Aithníodh an géarghá le forbairt áiseanna teagaisc agus foghlama. Aithníodh moltaí le gnóthachtáil daltaí a fheabhsú agus a chinntiú. Pléadh straitéis le soláthar úr a bhunú, go háirithe in earnáil na hiarbhunscolaíochta taobh amuigh de Bhéal Feirste. Luadh an droch-chóiríocht scoile atá san earnáil. Tugadh moltaí maidir le dul i ngleic le deacrachtaí foghlama nó riachtanais speisialta foghlama atá ag daltaí sna Gaelscoileanna, agus bhí seo iontach tábhachtach ar fad.

Níl mé á rá go n-aontaím go huile is go hiomlán leis an tuairisc nó leis na moltaí ar fad; bhí agus tá bearnaí ann. Bhí an córas a d'úsaid Roinn an Oideachais lochtach, mar shampla níor tugadh cuireadh do Choláiste Feirste, an t-aon iarbhunscoil lán-Ghaeilge amháin sna Sé Chondae, an scoil is mó, le breis agus 500 dalta, agus a dtuismitheoirí, an fostóir is mó Gaeilgeoirí sa Tuaisceart; rinneadh neamhaird orainn agus an Roinn ag dul don tuairisc seo. Ní hiontas ar bith go raibh muid in amhras faoin tuairisc seo.

Ach in ainneoin na lochtanna, bhí sí ann, thug sí deiseanna agus dúshláin araon agus d'fhoscail sí doras dúinn; nó sin an dearcadh deimhneach a bhí ag cuid mhaith againn ag an am.

IME schools have been subsumed into a Department that is still, by and large, hostile. The innovation and leadership shown by Gaelscoileanna in their early days has disappeared post-recognition, and the unique requirements of IME in the immersion context have been ignored.

In support of this I would refer to the Review of Irish-medium Education 2009, the case taken before the courts by Coláiste Feirste in support of pupil transport to the school, and the Draft Strategy for Protecting and Enhancing the Development of the Irish Language initiated by the Department of Culture, Art and Leisure 2012.

The former Minister for Education, Caitríona Ruane, accepted the IME Review Report with its recommendations in 2009. The report clearly highlighted the challenges and opportunities that faced IME. Sectorally sensitive improvement in training for schools staff: Governors, teachers, classroom assistants, and ancillary staff was recommended. The dire need for the development of teaching and learning resources was identified. Recommendations to improve pupil and guarantee pupil achievement were identified. Strategies for new provision, especially in post-primary outside of Belfast were discussed. The poor accommodation issues were mentioned. Proposals for tackling learning difficulties or special educational needs for IME pupils were made, this was wonderful!

I am not stating that I agree whole heartedly with everything in this report or its recommendations, there were and still are gaps in it. The process used by the Department of Education was flawed, for example Coláiste Feirste was not invited to take part, the only IME post-primary in the 6 Counties, the largest IME school with over 500 pupils attending, and their parents, the largest employer of Irish speakers in the North - they were completely overlooked in this report. Is it any wonder that the report was regarded with suspicion?

Yet in spite of its faults it was a start, it presented both opportunities and challenges, it opened a door for us, that was the positive reaction that most of us held at the time.

Amharcaim ar chúrsaí oideachais i dtimthriall 7 mbliana: nuair a théann dalta óg isteach i Rang 1 sa bhunscoil, nó i mBliain 8 san iarbhunscoil, tá 7 mbliana ag an dalta san insitiúid sin. Seacht mbliana ag múinteoirí buanna agus scileanna an dalta a aithint, a chothú, a fhorbairt agus a fheabhsú, acadúil, pearsanta agus sóisialta. Mar an gcéanna, sa tréimhse chéanna, ní mór don mhúinteoir agus don scoil aon deacrachtaí nó baic fhoghlama a aithint chomh maith, agus teacht ar straitéisí lena mbainistiú.

I 2009 ghlac Roinn an Oideachais leis an Athbhreithniú. Mar a dúirt mé, d'aithin muid na deiseanna agus na dúshláin ach níor ghlac an Roinn leis na freagrachtaí a thug an Tuirisc don Roinn, don Aire Oideachais agus do na heagraíochtaí oideachasúla eile atá againn. Tá na daltaí a shiúil trí dhoirse na nGaelscoileanna don chéad uair sa bhliain chéanna, 2009, níos mó ná leathbhealach trína dturas oideachasúil sa scoil sin gan na moltaí agus na gníomhartha riachtanacha a d'fheabhsódh agus a shaibhredh a n-eispéireas scoile a bheith curtha i bhfeidhm. Roinn an Oideachais, atá ciontach as an fhaillí seo a dhéanamh ar na daltaí seo, ar na scoileanna agus ar an phobal Gaeilge.

In ainneoin na bhfaillí seo, tá an Ghaelscolaíocht ag dul ó neart go neart. Is í an t-aon earnáil amháin atá ag foscailt scoileanna nua gach bliain; tá líon na ndaltaí ag meadú agus tá torthaí Choláiste Feirste ar gach leibhéal ag feabhsú ar bhonn bliantiúil. Gabhaim comhghairdeas ó chroí le gach duine atá páirteach sa scéal iontach seo.

Rinne tacadóirí an Ghaeloideachais iarrachtaí an iarbhunscolaíocht a bhunú taobh amuigh de Bhéal Feirste, ach ar chúis amháin nó ar chúis eile, theip ar na hiarrachtaí seo. Ní seo an t-am dom anailís a dhéanamh ar na fáthanna sin. Is é an pointe is tábhachtaí, tá bunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge i gach contae sa Tuaisceart anois, ach níl na daltaí céanna ábalta leanstan ar aghaidh chuig an chéad chéim loighciúil eile, an iarbhunscoil ina gceantracha féin. Is maith is cuimhin liom an slua daltaí a tháinig isteach chuig Meánscoil Feirste gach lá ó Lúir Cinn Trá. Inniu tá daltaí ag taisteal isteach gach lá ó Dhún Pádraig, ó Chromghlinn, ó Oileán an Ghuail agus ó Dhoire Theas. Dá gcúirtí moltaí an Athbhreithnithe i bhfeidhm, dá gcomhlíontaí gealltanais Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta agus Chomhaontú Chill Rímhinn, ní bheadh ar na páistí seo éirí go luath gach maidin

I look on educational issues in 7 year cycles: when a young pupil enters P1 or Year 8 in post-primary that pupil will spend 7 years with that institution. Seven years for teachers to recognise, foster, develop, and perfect their charges' skills and gifts, academic, personal and social. Likewise, the same period of time for a teacher, and the school, to identify any learning difficulty, and to agree on strategies to manage those same difficulties.

In 2009 the Department accepted the Review. Like I said, we recognised the opportunities and challenges, however, the Department, the Minister of Education, and the educational organisations did not accept their responsibilities that came from accepting the Report. The pupils who walked through the doors of Gaelscoileanna for the very first time that same year are now more than half way through their educational journey and the recommendations and crucial actions that would enhance and enrich their school experience remain to be implemented. The Department of Education is responsible for neglecting our pupils, schools and the Irish speaking community.

In spite of this neglect IME is going from strength to strength, it is the only sector that continues to open new schools each year. Pupil population is increasing and Coláiste Feirste is improving on its results at every level, year on year. I wholeheartedly congratulate all those involved in this wonderful story.

Supporters of IME have made several attempts to establish post-primary provision outside of Belfast but have failed for one reason or another and I don't think it is proper for me to offer any analysis on the reasons for their failure in this article. The important point I wish to make is that IME Bunscoileanna are now established and recognised in each of the 6 counties yet the pupils attending them are unable to continue with their education to the next logical step: post-primary in their own area. I well remember a squad of pupils travelling into Meánscoil Feirste from Newry every day, now we have pupils travelling from Downpatrick, Crumlin, Coalisland and South Derry. Had the promises in the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrew's Agreement been fulfilled there would now be no need for children to be rising so early in the

agus tabhairt faoi thurais chomh fada sin. Nó dá mbeadh orthu taisteal, ar a laghad bheadh bus scoile ann lena n-iompar chun na scoile slán sábháilte, mar a dhéantar in Albain.

Bhí ar Choláiste Feirste cás cúirte a ghlacadh in éadan Roinn an Oideachais i ndiaidh don Aire Oideachais diúltú bus a chur ar fáil do dhaltáí ag taisteal ó Dhún Pádraig. Cé gur bhain an scoil an cás sin, níl bus acu go fóill! Dá gcomhlíontaí na gealltanais a tugadh, bheadh an ceart ag tuismitheoirí an Ghaelscolaíochta a roghnú dá bpáistí ag gach leibheál agus spreagfaí iad leis an Ghaeloideachas a roghnú.

Labhraíonn na 'boic mhóra' i saol an oideachais faoi 'luach breise', mar rud atá deacair a thomhas. Chluinfeá go minic an cheist, 'Cad é an luach breise?' ag comhdhálacha agus seimineáir. Fuair ár n-iníonacha ardchaighdeán oideachais, mar a luaigh mé ag tús an ailt seo ach fuair siad buntáistí breise chomh maith: féinmhuinín, aibíocht, caoinfhuilíocht, i measc buanna eile. Ach thug an Ghaeloideachas rud éigin dóibh nach dtig le hearnáil nó córas ar bith eile a thabhairt: féiniúlacht.

Tuairiscíodh ar na mallaibh gur léirigh daonáireamh 2011 go raibh míthuiscintí ann maidir le náisiúntacht, agus roinnt daoine ag tabhairt 'Northern Irish' orthu féin; nó ag rá gur mhothaigh siad níos Briotanaí ná Éireanaí. Chuir cara dom síos go maith air seo agus, in áit locht a fháil ar a leithéidí, dúirt sé nach raibh iontas ar bith ann go bhfuil siad trína chéile nuair a ghlacann tú san áireamh a gcuid scolaíochta. Lean sé leis, 'Sa Ghaeloideachas teagascann muid féiniúlacht, scaipeann muid an t-amhras, an ceo agus an mearbhall atá ar phobal i ndiaidh na gcéadta bliain de dhaorsmacht. Tugaimid ar ais an dúchas a baineadh ar shiúl uainn – ár n-ainmneacha, ár logainmneacha, ár dteanga agus an dearcadh atá againn féin mar Ghaeil ar an saol. Sa Ghaeilge agus sa Ghaeloideachas, tá an eochair againn a scaoilfeas saor muid.' Sin an luach breise is tábhachtaí leis an Ghaeloideachas.

In ainneoin na ngealltanais, na bhfocal mór in aimsir toghcháin, i ndiaidh 15 bliana 'féin-riail' níl an dul chun cinn ab fhéidir a dhéanamh, nó atá tuillte againn, déanta go fóill. Glacadh náire iad atá

morning to undertake such long journeys, and in the event that they would have to travel, at least they would have a proper designated school bus to take them to and from school in a safe fashion, as happens in Scotland.

Coláiste Feirste had no alternative but to seek a judicial review against the Department of Education when the Education Minister refused to provide a bus for pupils living in the Downpatrick area, and although the school won its case a bus has still not been provided! Had the promises been fulfilled parents would now have, as of right, the choice of IME at primary and post-primary level for their children; indeed they would be encouraged to take up the choice of IME.

The 'bigwigs' in the world of education talk about the 'value added' that can be difficult to calculate or identify. What is the 'value added?' would be a common question at conferences and seminars. Our daughters received a very high standard of education, as I stated at the beginning of this article, but they received other advantages as well: self-confidence, maturity, tolerance and others. However Irish-medium Education gave them something that no other sector can give: identity.

It was recently reported that the 2011 census has revealed that misinterpretations of national identity are now arising with a growing number of people claiming to be 'northern Irish', or that they feel more 'British' than Irish. A friend of mine gave an excellent description recently. Instead of finding fault with such statements, he said that it is no wonder people are confused when you consider their schooling. He continued: 'In Ghaeloideachas, we teach identity, we destroy the doubt, the fog and the confusion that a people suffer after centuries of oppression. We understand the heritage that was taken from us – our names, our place names, our language and our perspective on the world as Gaels. In the Irish language and in Irish-medium Education we have the key that will set us free.' That is the fundamental value added of Irish-medium Education.

In spite of the promises and the fine words we hear when an election is coming up, after 15 years of 'self-rule' the would-be progress, the progress we deserve, has not yet taken place. Let those who are

ciontach as drochstaid na Gaeilge agus an Ghaeloideachais inniu. Tá muid dubh dóite den bheagán, den chorr-alt as Gaeilge i nuachtán, den abairt nó den fhocal anseo is ansiúd; nó mana nó sluán, 'cara', an 'cúpla focal'. Mar a scríobh Pádraic Ó Conaire i 1923, (as Béarla ar an drochuair): 'A language which was nothing more than an ornament to a race never survived and never will survive.' Mura bhfuil athrú meoin acusan a bhfuil an tionchar, an chumhacht agus an chinnteoireacht acu, beidh an toradh céanna ar an Dréacht-Straitéis le Forbairt na Gaeilge a Chosaint agus a Fheabhsú, dá fheabhas an cuspóir, agus a bhí ar na gealltanais eile nár comhlíonadh.

responsible for the present poor progress of the language and IME hold their heads in shame. We are fed up with tokenism, the odd article as Gaeilge in a newspaper, the odd phrase or word here and there, the slogan, 'cara' and the obligatory 'cúpla focal'. Pádraic Ó Conaire wrote in 1923, unfortunately in English, 'A language that was nothing more than an ornament to a race never survived and never will survive.' Unless there is change in mindset among those who hold influence, power and responsibility for decision-making, the proposed Strategy for Protecting and Enhancing the Development of the Irish Language, however well-meaning, will have the same result as all the other unfilled promises.

Séamus Mac Seáin



Is comhbunaitheoir é Séamus Mac Seáin de chuid Ghaeltacht Bhóthar Seoighe i mBéal Feirste, de chuid Bhunscoil Phobal Feirste, agus Choláiste Feirste agus de chuid Chultúrlann Mc Adam Uí Fhiaich.

Séamus Mac Seáin is a co-founder of the Shaws Road Gaeltacht in Belfast, he is a co-founder of Bunscoil Phobail Feirste and Coláiste Feirste and co-founder of Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich.

An Comhaontú - Aisling Nó Tromluí?

"Department of Education
29 November 1965

Dear Mr Brown,

I can now let you know that it is the Ministry's view that instruction given entirely through the medium of Gaelic would not constitute efficient and suitable instruction for pupils of an Independent school. A complaint would therefore be served by the Ministry. If the proprietors did not remove the deficiency complained of within a specified time then the Ministry would strike the school off the register. It is an offence against the law to conduct an unregistered school."

Sin sliocht as litir a chuir Roinn Oideachais Thuaisceart Éireann chuig Cathaoirleach Theaghlaigh Ghaelacha Bhéal Feirste, Séamus De Brún, i 1965 nuair a chuaigh siad a fhiosrú scoil Ghaelach a bhunú sa chathair. Tá bagairt shoiléir sa litir go gcuirfí bunaitheoirí na scoile i bpríosún dá leanfadh said ar aghaidh. Tá a fhios ag cách anois nach dtug na teaghlaigh aird ar an bhagairt agus gur bhunaigh said an scoil ar scor ar bith. Ba é bunú na scoile sin a chuir tús leis an Ghaeloideachas atá anois ar fáil i ngach contae de shé chontae thuaisceart Éireann inniu. Bíodh is nár éirigh leo an scoil a dhúnadh, rinne siad a seacht ndícheall gach constaic a chur ina bealach. Níor thug siad maoiniú don scoil go dtí 1984 i ndiaidh blianta fada de streachailt agus ní thioctadh an maoiniú an t-am sin féin ach ab é go raibh sé fóirsteanach ó thaobh na polaitíochta de.

The Good Friday Agreement - Vision Or Nightmare?

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29 November 1965

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That is how the old Ministry of Education at Stormont responded to a request from Irish Speaking families in Belfast when they explored the possibility of setting up an Irish Language Primary school in 1965. There is a clear threat in the reply that those who would set up such a school could end up in prison. We now know that the families didn't heed the warning and went on to set up the school anyway. The school opened on Shaws Road in 1971 and today in 2013, Education through the medium of the Irish Language can be accessed in all of the six counties. Although the old Stormont regime failed to prevent the school being set up they continually placed difficulties in the way of its development and it wasn't until 1984, after a hard fought campaign of 13 years and changed political circumstances that the school received state funding.

Nuair a bunaíodh Coláiste Feirste fiche bliain níos faide ar aghaidh i 1991, bhí an Roinn Oideachais ó thuaidh chomh diúltach céanna agus a bhí siad i 1971. Ní raibh siad sásta aon chuidiú a thabhairt agus go deimhin, chosc siad ar rannóg ar bith rialtais cabhair a thabhairt, fiú amháin ar bhonn Leasa Shóisialaí, ainneoin an scoil a bheith suite i gceann de na ceantair is mí-phribhléide sa tír. B'éigean do lucht bunaithe na scoile treabhadh leo ar an ghannchuid ar feadh cúig bliana gan phingin d'airgead poiblí, go dtí sa deireadh, de bharr brú polaitíochta thuaidh agus theas, mhaoinigh siad an scoil. Is iomaí athrú a tháinig ó shin sna sé chontae, buíochas le Dia, ach tá rud amháin a d'fhan seasmhach buan i rith an ama, agus is é sin an dearcadh diúltach atá ag an Roinn Oideachais ar feadh a mbaineann sé le hoideachas Gaelach de.

Bhí go leor daoine a cheap go mbeadh deireadh leis an leatrom agus leis an chos ar bholg ar Ghaeil nuair a toghadh rialtas a raibh roinnt chumhachta le bheith de dhlúth agus de inneach ann agus go mbeadh cothrom na Féinne ann do chách ach, monuar ní mar sin a tharla ó thaobh an Oideachais Ghaeilge de. Ní féidir an locht a chur ar Aontachtaithe biogóideacha mar a thioctadh fadó nó is Airí de chuid Shinn Féin a bhí ina nAirí Oideachais sna sé Chontae ó bhí 2001 ann. Ach leanann an diúltachas céanna agus an leatrom céanna ar Ghaeil óga go fóill, ainneoin ghealltanais Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta.

Tá dearbhaithe i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta go gcaithfidh Rialtas Stormont gach is féidir a dhéanamh leis an Ghaeloideachas a éascú agus bíodh agus gur tugadh cabhair áirithe don earnáil, dhiúltaigh an Roinn Oideachas scun scan ó 2001 brú a chur ar na Boird Leabharlainne na cearta céanna saorthaisteal chun na scoile a chur ar fáil do dhaltaí Choláiste Feirste agus a bhí ar fáil do scoileanna Béarla. Bhí páistí Choláiste Feirste nach raibh aon rogha acu, ag taisteal 4 uair a chloig gach lá as áiteanna tuaithe chomh fada ar shiúil le Dún Phádraig, le leanúint lena n-oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge de cheal ar saorionpar mar a bhí ag na

The delaying tactics didn't stop there of course and when the first Irish Language Secondary school, Coláiste Feirste, was set up 20 years later in 1991 the Dept. of Education resolutely refused to assist in any way to allow children who had received all their primary education through the medium of Irish to continue their education in that language. They also prevented other departments from assisting the school, even on a social welfare basis, despite the school being situated in one of the most deprived areas of Belfast. The people who set up the school had to struggle on and provide all the resources needed to sustain the school for another five years by which time the school had over 200 pupils. Again the changing political landscape led to the granting of state funding five years on. Many things have changed for the better in the North since 1971 and 1991 but The Department of Education continues to be restrictive in its dealings with the Irish Medium sector and nowhere has this been more evident than in the campaign for free transport for pupils attending Coláiste Feirste.

There was a sense of optimism in Irish Language circles when the power sharing Executive was set up in 2001 that the old ways were gone and that we were entering a new era of co-operation and respect for all but unfortunately that has not been the experience of those dealing with the Dept. of Education. And especially on the question of free transport for pupils attending Coláiste Feirste in Belfast. This time bigoted Unionism can't be blamed, as was the case under the old Stormont regime, because Sinn Féin has held the Education portfolio since 2001. The same old restrictive practices continue to be applied against young Irish speakers despite all the promises made in the Good Friday agreement.

The Good Friday Agreement states that the Government is obliged to assist the development of the Irish medium and Integrated sectors and some small steps have been taken in that direction but for some reason or other the Department steadfastly refuses to make the Education Boards provide the same transport facilities for the Irish Medium sector as it does for the English Medium sector which includes the integrated sector. Irish speaking children from outlying areas such as Downpatrick who want to continue their education through the medium of Irish are obliged to spend 4 hours a day travelling to and from Coláiste Feirste

scoileanna Béarla. Tá an tOideachas iomlánaithe agus an Gaeloideachas luaithe go sonrach i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta mar earnálacha a bhfuil cabhair ar leith i dteidil acu agus cé gur cuireadh busanna ar leith ar fáil do dhaltáí Lagan College le taisteal ó Dhún Phádraig go Béal Feirste gach lá, diúltaíodh an ceart céanna do dhaltáí Choláiste Feirste a bhí ag dul ón bhaile chéanna. Ní amháin sin ach nuair a d'iarr tuismitheoirí Choláiste Feirste ar an Roinn ligint dá bpáistí taisteal ar bhusanna Lagan College, nó ar bhusanna Methodist College, a raibh fuilleach suíochán iontu, diúltaíodh iad. Bhí sé soiléir do na tuismitheoirí go rabhtar ag iarraidh bac a chur ar a gcuid paistí leanúint lena gcuid oideachais trí mheán na Gaeilge, rud a bhí glan i gcoinne Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, dar leo.

I ndiaidh do na tuismitheoirí a bheith ag tathaint ar an Roinn an rud ceart a dhéanamh dá bpáistí, shocraigh siad ar athbhreithniú cúirte a lorg ar chinneadh an Rialtais. Ba iad na tuismitheoirí iad féin a thóg an cás nó ba ar a gcuid páistí siúd a bhí an éagóir á déanamh. Nuair a dúradh le tuismitheoirí amháin, a bhí leis an chás a thógáil, go raibh sé ag cur aiféaltais ar an Aire, d'éirigh sé as agus b'éigean don scoil seasamh isteach ina áit le cearta daonna na bpáistí a chosaint. Chuaigh siad san fhiontar ar airgead mór a chailleadh dá dteipfeadh ar an chás, ach dar leo, nach raibh aon rogha acu agus go gcaithfí an éagóir a chur ina ceart. Chuaigh an cás ar aghaidh agus ainneoin go ndearna dlíodóirí na Roinne iarraidh a chruthú nach raibh i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta ach doiciméid inmhianaithe ('aspirational document'), argóint a chuirfeadh an Comhaontú féin i mbaol dá nglacfaí léi, rialaigh an breitheamh Treacy sa chúirt go raibh dualgas ar an Roinn Oideachais cabhair a chur ar fáil leis an Ghaelscolaíocht a éascú de réir Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta agus go raibh cuidiú le taisteal chun na scoile mar chuid de sin. Tugadh an breithiúnas ar son na scoile mar aon le costais dhlí i mí na Samhna 2011, ach níor chuir an tAire O Dowd, a tháinig i gcomharbacht ar Chaitríona Ruane, breithiúnas na cúirte i bhfeidhm agus níl taisteal chun na scoile ar fáil do dhaltáí Choláiste Feirste go fóill i mí an Mhárta 2013.

on ordinary service buses while their English medium counterparts are provided with a dedicated bus service to and from school from the same area. Lagan College and Methodist College both have dedicated buses to Belfast but when the parents of Irish speaking children asked to be accommodated on the same buses they were refused despite empty seats being available. It became clear to the parents of the Irish speaking children that a deliberate attempt was being made to restrict their children's opportunity to continue their education through the medium of Irish contrary to the Good Friday Agreement.

Despite continual pleading with the Department that their children be treated fairly the parents eventually decided that they had no alternative but to ask for a judicial review of the Department's decision. The parents initiated the review but it seems that one of the parents was told that he was embarrassing the minister and he decided to step back. It was at that stage that Coláiste Feirste itself stepped in to continue the legal review in the sure knowledge that there would be a substantial financial penalty to be paid should the review go against them. But the school felt they had no alternative but to try and protect their pupils' human rights. In court the review was vigorously contested by the Department who went so far as to argue that the references pertaining to Irish Medium Education in the Good Friday Agreement were only "aspirational documents" and not binding. This strange argument made on behalf of a Sinn Féin minister (Caitríona Ruane) could have undermined the whole basis of the Good Friday Agreement itself had the Judge accepted it. The judge even drew the Department's barrister's attention to the seriousness of that approach for the Good Friday Agreement if he continued. Fortunately better counsel prevailed and he didn't pursue the matter. The Judge eventually ruled in favour of the school and said that the Department was obliged to provide transport for the children. The judgment with costs was awarded to the school in November 2011 but as yet the Sinn Féin minister who replaced Caitríona Ruane, John O Dowd has refused to implement the judgment almost 2 years after the review was initially sought.

Ní fios go fóill cad chuige ar ghlac na hAirí Oideachais seasamh chomh láidir sin ar an cheist nó thug státseirbhísih Chaitríona Ruane féin bealach gan dul chun na cúirte nuair a mhol siad scéim phíolóta a chur sa tsiúil ar feadh 3 bliana go bhfeicfí cad é mar a bheadh cúrsaí ag deireadh na tréimhse, agus san am chéanna gan réamhshampla a bhunú, rud a mbíonn Airí Rialtais buartha faoi i dtólamh. Ach arís, tógadh seasamh i gcoinne an mholta agus d'fhág sin na mílte punt de chostais ar na cáiníocóirí. Is dócha nach bhfaighidh muid amach a choíche cad é a bhí taobh thiar den chinneadh seo nó go hiondúil ní bhíonn trédhearcacht ag baint leis na socraithe seo a dhéantar i seomraí cúil na bpáirtithe polaitiúla ag daoine anaithnide.

Ach má bhí cás daltaí Dhún Phádraig go holc, ba mheasa i bhfad é cás pháistí Ard Eoin i mBéal Feirste atá ag freastail ar Choláiste Feirste. Tá 109 dalta as tuaisceart Bhéal Feirste ag freastail ar an scoil ach diúltaíonn an Roinn saorthaisteal a chur ar fáil de bharr go dtiocfadh leis na páistí dul síos Bóthar na Seanchille chun na scoile a déir An Roinn, mar go mbeadh sé taobh istigh den limistéir thrí mhíle atá leagtha síos mar threoir le saorthaistil a chur ar fáil chuig scoil ar bith. Diúltaíodh don iarratas ainneoin gur chuireadh ar a súile dóibh ag tuismitheoir amháin, a chaill a fear céile le linn na dtrioblóidí, go mbeadh sí ag cur beatha a bpáistí i mbaol agus iad á seoladh síos Bóthar na Seanchille ag caitheamh éide Choláiste Feirste. Bíonn ar an bhean sin, a chuir triúr páistí chuig Coláiste Feirste, bíonn uirthi na céadta punt a chaitheamh gach bliain le hiad a chur síos go lár Béal Feirste agus suas Bóthar na bhFál chun na scoile, le bheith cinnte go mbeidh siad sábháilte. Dúirt an Roinn léi go raibh dualgas ar thuismitheoirí í leith sábháilteacht a gcuid páistí agus iad ar a mbealach chun na scoile agus ní ar an Roinn, dearcadh atá rud beag fuarchúiseach muna bhfuil sé cruálach féin. In san chur agus cúiteamh seo uilig idir tuismitheoirí agus an Roinn, ní mór cuimhneamh go gcuirtear breis agus 2,000 bus ar fáil do hiar-bhunscoileanna sna sé chontae gach lá, ach nach bhfuil oiread agus ceann amháin acu ar fáil do pháistí ilarbunscoile Gaeilge. Tharla sin uilig ainneoin beirt Theachta Tionóil as Tuaisceart Bhéal Feirste, Gerry Kelly agus Carál Ní Chuilín, a bheith ag impí ar Aire as a bpáirtí féin an rud ceart a dhéanamh do na páistí seo. An bhfuil sairse ag Aire a rogha rud a dhéanamh ar neamhchead do bhaill eile an pháirtí? agus go

It's still difficult to fathom why the ministers have taken such a strong stance against the provision of buses given the fact that Caitríona Ruane's own Civil service colleagues proposed a pilot scheme, at very little cost, for a period of 3 years which would not have created a precedent (which is anathema to all ministers) which would have seen the majority of the Downpatrick children through their time at the school. Substantial costs to the tax payer were of course incurred as a consequence of having to go to the Judicial Review. It's highly unlikely that we will ever find out what lies behind all this because transparency is not something we associate with political parties of whatever hue.

If we thought that the treatment of the Downpatrick children was bizarre and incomprehensible, then the treatment of Coláiste Feirste pupils living in North Belfast bordered on child abuse. There are 109 pupils from the Ardoyne area attending Coláiste Feirste but when they applied for free bus travel, they were told that since they could travel down the Shankill Road to school and be a couple of hundred yards short of the statutory 3 mile limit for bus passes, that they were not entitled to them. When challenged on this refusal by one parent who had lost her husband during the Troubles, that she would be putting her three children's lives at risk by sending them down the Shankill Road dressed in a Coláiste Feirste uniform, she was told that it was a parent's responsibility to ensure the safety of the children going to school, and not the Department's. A cruel statement if ever there was one. Gerry Kelly and Carál Ní Chuilín, two Sinn Féin colleagues of Caitríona Ruane's from North Belfast, made representation on the children's behalf to Minister Ruane. But in a letter signed by the Minister, she said the issue lay around the perception of what is, "hostile and what is safe." It is evident that someone in the Department, with the agreement of the Minister, perceived that sending children down the Shankill Road dressed in a uniform with a Coláiste Feirste monogram was safe. Most people would have thought otherwise. If a minister can disregard her own colleagues on an issue such as this, which is clearly one of basic human rights then what chance is there of getting redress on other more important issues? Although Caitríona Ruane has been replaced by John O'Dowd as Education

háirithe ar neamh chead do bheirt atá san fheidhmeannas? An bhfuil Airí Poblachtacha i Stormont atá an oiread sin faoi scáth ag a státseirbhísigh féin nach dtig leo dul in éadan a gcomhairle? Anois, d'imigh Cairtriona Ruane ón aireacht Oideachais agus tháinig John O'Dowd. Tá ceisteanna tromcúiseacha le cur mar gheall ar an leatrom atá déanta agus cad é is féidir leis an Ghaelphobal a dhéanamh lena cheartú. Tá Sinn Féin lán de dhaoine atá glórach go maith ar chúrsaí cearta daonna agus is iad atá ann sa chás seo, ach tá siad balbh ar an cheist áirithe seo. Ba mhaith fios a bheith againn cén fáth.

D'éirigh le Coláiste Feirste sa chúirt i mí Dheireadh Fómhair 2011, agus taobh istigh de choicís tháinig feidhmeannaigh amach ón Roinn Oideachais ar lorg eolais chruinn faoi riachtanais na scoile óna hionadaithe. Fuair siad liosta de na busbhealaí éagsúla a theastaigh go géar ó na daltaí a mbíonn ag taisteal achar fada gach lá chun na scoile. Trí seachtaine i ndiaidh an chruinnithe, dúirt na feidhmeannaigh nach bhfaigheadh an scoil a raibh de dhíth. D'iarr an scoil orthu athmhachnamh a dhéanamh agus teacht ar ais le freagra níos dearfaí. Le linn an chéad dá mhí déag eile, rinne an scoil teagmháil leis an Roinn roinnt uaire, trí litreacha agus r-poist, le tuairisc a fháil ar cad é mar a bhí ag éirigh leo. Ní bhfuair siad de nuashonrú ach nach raibh nuashonrú ar fáil, agus phléigh an scoil gearán a chur chuig an Ombudsman. Má chreid phobal na Gaeilge go raibh an scoil i gcainteanna leis an Roinn i rith an ama, ní amhlaidh a bhí, ach go raibh neamart á déanamh uirthi. I mí Feabhra 2013, tháinig an Roinn ar ais i dteagmháil leis an scoil, le moladh sealadach a chur roimpi. Dúirt siad go dtiocfadh leo bus a sholáthar le freastal ar dhaltaí an Choláiste i nDún Phádraig agus i gceantar na Cromghlinne, ach níor thagraíodh do na busbhealaí eile, Tuaisceart na cathrach san áireamh, a d'ardaigh an scoil leo. Le blianta fada, caitheadh go héagórach leis an scoil. Ní ionadh é, mar sin, agus moill chomh fada ann gan an focal as an Roinn, dá mbeadh easpa muiníne as an Roinn. Faoi láthair, tá an scoil, mar aon le pobal na Gaeilge ag fanacht le feiceáil an mbogfaidh an Roinn chun tosaigh nó nach mbogfaidh. Agus má bhogann, cé chomh gasta agus cé chomh fada a rachaidh síad. Beidh le feiceáil.

Cé gurb iad cearta bunúsacha daonna na bpáistí seo atá ag dó na geirbe agam san alt seo, tá impleachtaí i bhfad níos leithne ná sin ag eascairt as

Minister, she still has some responsibility for human rights issues which would raise some concerns given her stance on the bus issue.

When Coláiste Feirste won its Judicial Review in October 2011, officials from the Department came out within two weeks to meet representatives of the school and find out exactly what was required. Having been given a list of bus routes needed to serve current pupils travelling long distances to the school, the officials told the school three weeks later that it could not have what it had requested. The school asked them to re-think their attitude and come back with a more positive answer. During the following twelve months, the school wrote a number of letters and emails to the Department asking for updates. The only update was that there was no update and the school considered taking the issue to the Ombudsman. If the community thought that the school was in negotiation with the Department during this time, in fact they felt they were just being ignored. In February 2013, the Department contacted the school with a provisional proposal to provide a bus from Downpatrick and from Crumlin to Coláiste Feirste, but withheld any reference to any of the other routes the school had raised with them, including North Belfast. The long wait and lack of ongoing contact, as well as so many years of mistreatment has eaten away at community confidence in the Department. At the minute, the school and the Irish speaking community are waiting to see if the Department will move ahead positively or not, and if so, how fast and how far. Time will tell.

Although this article is concerned mainly with the lack of human rights for Irish speaking school children the controversy surrounding the bus issue

diúltú na Roinne ar an heist seo, dar liom. Murar féidir le Gaeil óga cothrom na Féinne a fháil faoin réimeas comhroinnte atá i gcumhacht i Stormont, an bhfuil ár ndílseacht tuitte aige mar réimeas? Bhí go leor de Ghaelphobal na sé Chontae den bharúil i bhfad sular bunaíodh an Feidhmeannas ar chor ar bith go mbeadh an Ghaeilge agus an dóigh ar caitheadh le lucht a labhartha ina “theist liotmas” ar dlisteanacht an stáit nua. An dtig linn a rá go fírinneach i ndiaidh 10 mbliana den Rialtas í Stormont gur shásaigh siad an teist sin ó thaobh na Gaeilge de? Gealladh Acht Gaeilge dúinn ach ní bhfuair muid é ach fuair muid an scéim “Líofa” ina áit, a bhfuil cuma mhaith air ar pháipéar agus atá ina ghléas maith bolscaireachta. Ní droch rud ann féin é, ach níl ann sa deireadh ach bealach leis na daoine uilig a bhí ag foghlaim na Gaeilge cheana féin a bhailiú isteach faoi aon lipéad amháin agus corr “Celeb” a chaitheamh isteach leo, agus sin uilig ar fíor bheagán costais. Tuigeann muid uilig go bhfuil bunús na bpolaiteoirí Aontachtacha i Stormont i gcoinne aon ruda a bhaineann leis an Ghaeilge agus ní chuireann sé iontas ar Ghaeil gur sin mar atá, ach ní shílím go raibh mórán ag dúil go mbeadh Sinn Féin chomh diúltach céanna nuair a bhí cinntí le glacadh a rachadh píosa den bhealach le déanamh suas ar son neamart agus naimhdeas 50 bliain de shean réimeas Stormont. Tá Sinn Féin i gcomhpháirt leis an Democratic Unionist Party i Stormont agus máistrí ina dteach féin más fíor, ach mura féidir le Gaeil a gcearta bunúsacha a fháil ar rud chomh simplí le saorthaistil chun na scoile do pháistí óga, cad é an seans atá ann go bhféadfaí cothrom na Féinne a fháil ar rudaí níos tábhachtaí ná sin. An aon iontas mar sin go bhfuil na ceantair náisiúnacha faoi mhí phribhéid a oiread agus a bhí siad a riamh ó thaobh dífhostaíochta, drochshláinte, drochthithíochta, agus srl de. Tá ceisteanna le cur is dóigh liom, ní amháin faoi fheidhmiú na cumhachta i Stormont, ach faoi éifeacht agus faoi chur chuige na ndaoine atá dár rialú.

Tá go leor anailíse agus gearáin déanta ar an ábhar seo ach cad é atá le déanamh faoi?

Tá “Fóram Iompair” le bunú is dóigh liom atá scartha agus neamhspleách ar an pháirtí pholaitíochta, le gníomh phraiticiúil a dhéanamh leis na páistí seo a thabhairt slán sábháilte chun na scoile gach lá fad agus go bhfuil muid ag troid lena

has wider implications I believe. If school children from the Irish speaking community cannot be afforded basic rights that should be available in any normal society then has the Stormont regime a right to command our allegiance? Before the Executive was set up there were many in the Irish speaking community who held the view that how the new Executive interacted with those who used the language would be the litmus test for its legitimacy. Can we really claim that the executive has passed that test? We were promised an Irish Language act but it failed to materialize and in its place we got the “Líofa” scheme which is a good propaganda tool and not a bad thing in its own right but it is only another way of bringing all those who were learning the language anyway under one label with a few “Celebs” thrown in for good measure. That is not what we signed up for I believe. Most people in the Nationalist community were not surprised by the negative attitude displayed by the more bigoted elements within the Unionist Establishment but they weren’t expecting Sinn Féin to be just as negative in regards to free travel for Irish Speaking school children. If that negativity can be engendered by a simple demand for free bus travel for school children then is it any wonder that there has been no diminution in the bad social conditions of the more deprived nationalist areas, be it in employment, housing, health or child mortality rates. I think that after 10 years of power sharing at Stormont serious questions have to be asked not only about the working of the executive itself but also about the calibre of our representatives and their efficiency. The Irish saying springs to mind, “Arbh fiú an tairbhe an trioblóid?” - Was it worth the trouble?

But enough of analysing the problem. What can be done to alleviate the busing situation in the absence of positive action by the Department of Education?

I would suggest that Irish speakers set up a transport action group to bus Irish speaking children to school from outlying areas and from Ardoyne until the problem is solved. If we were to do that I believe it would be a great incentive to the

gcearta a bhaint amach. Is cinnte go bhfuil muid láidir go leor le córas iompar a eagrú do pháistí Ard Eoin agus áiteanna eile ach muid a bheith eagrúithe faoina choinne. Ní neart go cur le chéile. Agus thig linn a bheith cinnte dá dtosaímis ag déanamh ar ár son féin gur gasta a thabharfadh an Roinn á gcearta do na páistí. Is é an rud is mó a chuireann eagla agus sceon ar pholaiteoirí ná an pobal ag déanamh as dóibh féin.

establishment parties to move on the issue because there is nothing more they fear than people doing things for themselves.

Máire Zepf



Is scríbhneoir agus máthair lán-aimseartha í Máire Zepf. Is colúnaí í do an tUltach agus scríobhann sí go rialta don New Humanist, i gcló agus ar líne. Foilsíodh a céad leabhar do pháistí 'Tubáiste ar an Titanic' le Cló

Mhaigh Eo sa bhliain 2012. Tá cónaí uirthi in Ard Mhic Nasca lena fear céile, triúr clainne, beirt choinín agus bailiúchán ilteangach de phictiúrleabhair ghleoite.

Máire Zepf juggles fulltime motherhood and writing. She is a columnist for an tUltach magazine and a regular contributor to the New Humanist, in print and online. Her first book for children, 'Tubáiste ar an Titanic' was published by Cló Mhaigh Eo in 2012. She lives in Hollywood with her husband, 3 children, 2 rabbits and an ever-growing collection of much-loved multilingual picture books.

Tá cúig bliana déag tharainn ó síníodh Comhaontas Aoine an Chéasta. Is féidir le cuid mhór tarlú thar amscála mar seo. Má chuireann tú le chéile an Chéad agus an Dara Cogadh Domhanda, agus Cogadh na Saoirse agus an Cogadh Cathartha sa mhullach orthu sin, níl tú ach ag tarraingt ar chúig bliana déag. Taobh istigh de chúig bliana déag, thioctadh leat an Túr Eiffel, and Titanic agus Pirimid Mhór Giza a thógáil (le beagán cuidithe ó 40,000 sclábháí, ar ndóigh). Ní eisceacht ar bith muintir an tuaiscirt sna cúig bliana déag seo chuaigh thart. Sna blianta seo, tá claochlú feicthe againn – sa pholaitíocht, i meon na ndaoine agus sa ghnáth-shaol – do Ghaeilgeoirí chomh maith. Tá sé furasta anois dearmad a dhéanamh den gheit a bhaineadh sé as duine sa bhliain 1998 dá bhfeicfeadh siad Máirtín Mag Aonghusa agus Ian Paisley, iad gualainn le gualainn ag co-rialú Tuaisceart Éireann cineachta. Cúig bliana déag ó shin, nuair a stad muid de bheith ag amharc ar ár bhfoirgnimh a bheith á bpléascadh, agus thosaigh muid ag amharc ar cinn nua a bheith á dtógáil, ní raibh a fhios againn go fóill faoin Odyssey, Chearnóg Victoria nó Ionad an Titanic. Ní raibh sa Cheathrú Gaeltachta ach brionglóid. Idir amanna, chonaic muid díchoimisiúnú, athraithe maidir le cúrsaí póilíneachta, fionraí an tionóil agus a athchur. Ní thioctadh le duine ar bith a shéanadh gur amanna stairiúla a bhí iontu. Ach ar tháinig an rath céanna ar shaol na Gaeilge is a tháinig ar ghnéithe eile? An raibh dul chun cinn téagartha, feiceálach, radacach ann i gcúrsaí teanga? Bhí agus ní raibh. Ó thaobh mo thaithí laethúla féin agus shaol mo pháistí, Sea – gan amhras – tá athrú suntasach dearfach tagtha ó síníodh Comhaontas Aoine an Chéasta i 1998. Ach, ní hea – ní mar thoradh díreach ar pholasaí ag éirí as an doiciméad stairiúil sin a tharla na hathraithe seo, ach mar gheall ar fhuinneamh síoraí ghluaiseacht na Gaeilge thart orainn.

Fifteen years. A decade and a half. A lot can happen over this kind of timescale. The combined spans of the First and Second World Wars, added to the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War don't quite reach 15 years. In 15 years, you could build the Eiffel Tower, the Titanic AND the Great Pyramid of Giza (with a little help from 40,000 slaves, of course). The last 15 years in Northern Ireland are a case in point – they have borne witness to a transformation in politics, in attitudes and in daily experiences, including those of Irish speakers. It's easy to forget how extraordinary the sight would have been, seen from the perspective of 1998, of Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley side-by-side, governing a devolved Northern Ireland. This is no 'soft underbelly' of Irish politics, but a coalition of extremes. When 15 years ago, we stopped watching our buildings being blown up and started watching new ones being built, we did not yet know the Odyssey, Victoria Square or the Titanic Building. The Gaeltacht Quarter was but a twinkle in the eye. We've lived through decommissioning and changes to policing, through assembly suspensions and reinstatements. No-one here could honestly deny that these have been historic times. But have the fortunes of indigenous language kept pace with other ground-breaking change? Has progress on the issue of language been robust, visible, transformative? My answer to that is a resounding 'Yo', or a 'Nes' if you prefer. As seen from my own daily experience and that of my children, Yes – there has been significant and positive change since the enactment of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. But No - this has not been as a direct result of policy arising from that historic document, but rather from the untiring energy of the language movement around us.

Ní bean mhór matamaitice mé de gnách, ach bhí suim agam a oibriú amach gur ionann cúig bliana déag agus 41.7% de mo shaol. Níl iontas ar bith go mothaíonn sé cosúil le tamall fada ó shin dom. Rugadh agus tógadh mise in Ard Mhic Nasca, Co. an Dúin, i nGaeltacht aon-tí a shínigh go teorainn an ghairdín. Bhí réimse fórsa cumhachtach dofheicthe dár scaradh ón domhan taobh amuigh maidir le cúrsaí teanga agus cultúir. Ar an taobh istigh, bhí Raidió na Gaeltachta, Clannad, finscéalta agus an Ghaeilge, agus ar an taobh amuigh agus ar scoil, bhí na Cairteanna, an Beano, Enid Blyton agus Béarla. D'fhoghlaim muid, mar a dhéanann páistí dhátheangacha i gcónaí, an dóigh le bogadh go cúramach idir an dá dhomhan agus an dá theanga seo gan iad a mheascadh a choíche. Bhain muid an-sult ar fad as saoire sa Gaeltachta agus cuairteanna annamha chuig teaghlaigh eile Ghaelacha i nDún Pádraig nó i nGaeltacht nua Bhóthar Seoighe. Ach den chuid is mó, bhí muid linn féin. Bhí bród agus grá againn as ár dteanga baile, ach, agus muid i lár na dTrioblóidí, bhí muid sásta don chuid is mó í a choinneáil faoi cheilt. An chéad uair a d'inis duine dom go sotalach go raibh an Ghaeilge 'marbh', chuir sé cineál mearbhaill orm, leis an fhírinne a rá, os rud é nach raibh mé féin i bhfad ag dul don Bhéarla ag an phointe seo. Ach de réir a chéile, d'fhoghlaim mé gur fiú idirdhealú idir iad siúd nach bhfuil a fhios acu agus iad siúd nár mhaith leo fios a bheith acu. Tá an t-idirdhealú céanna cuidiúil dom go fóill.

Nuair a d'imigh mé go hOllscoil Oxford chun staidéar a dhéanamh ar an Stair sa bhliain 1995, baineadh geit asam – ní hamháin mar gheall ar na fallaingeacha agus na cláracha moirtéil a bhí le caitheamh againn – ach mar gheall ar an dearcadh, agus an tsuim, i leith na Gaeilge. Thosaigh sé ag an agallamh, agus na hollúna do mo cheistiú maidir le hathbheochan agus le forbairt na teanga. Chuir siad ceisteanna dúshlánacha orm maidir leis an chaidreamh idir traidisiún scríofa agus traidisiún labhartha na nGael. Mholl siad téamaí Gaelacha dom don staidéar. Ba léir go raibh meas acu ar an teanga, gidh nach raibh baint acu léi. Bhí sé simplí: ba áis luachmhar í an Ghaeilge a d'oscail doirse cultúrtha agus staire. Mar sin, b'fhiú í a chosaint. Ní raibh gá le hargóintí faoi 'húinéireacht' na teanga, faoi Bhriotanachas, faoi líon na gcainteoirí nó faoi airgead do leapacha otharlainne. Ní raibh amhras leagtha ar mo pholaitíocht féin; níor mhothaigh siad bagairt ná masla uaim. Bhí mé fuascailte. Go dtí an bomaite sin, níor thuig mé an t-uallach - an chastacht gan fáth – a bhaineann le bheith i do Ghaeilgeoir i nÉireann. Faoin am ar síníodh Comhaontas Aoine an Chéasta i

I'm not usually one for maths, but was intrigued to find that 15 years actually accounts for 41.7% of my entire life. That might explain why it feels like a long time ago. I was born and raised in Holywood, Co. Down in a compact one-house Gaeltacht that extended out to the boundaries of our garden. There was an invisible, but highly charged, linguistic force-field separating us from the outside world. On the inside, there was Raidió na Gaeltachta, Clannad, Irish mythology and Gaelic, and on the outside and at school, were the Charts, the Beano, Enid Blyton and English. We learned, as bilingual children always do, how to tread between these worlds and languages carefully – never confusing one with the other. We relished holidays in the Gaeltacht and rare visits to other Irish-speaking families in Downpatrick or in the fledgling Shaw's Road Gaeltacht in West Belfast, but for the most part, we went it alone. We were confident and proud of our home language, but – this being the Troubles – were also very happy to hide our light under a bushel. The first time (of many) that someone arrogantly 'informed' me that Irish was a dead language was a little confusing to be honest, considering I hadn't been speaking English all that long, but I soon learned to distinguish between those who didn't know and those who didn't want to know. I still find that distinction invaluable today.

When I went to Oxford to study History in 1995, however, my mind was blown – not just by the requirement to wear gowns and mortarboards – but by attitudes to, and interest in, the Irish language. Already at interview, I was being quizzed by the professors on what was being done to preserve and to promote the language. They asked me challenging questions about the relationship between written and oral Gaelic traditions in Ireland. They actively encouraged me to study Irish topics. They valued what I valued despite their detachment from it – it was simple: Irish was a precious resource and gateway to cultural and historical understanding. Therefore it was deserving of protection. What, no argument about 'ownership' or Britishness? No analysis of numbers of speakers or whether money should be used for hospital beds instead? No suspicions about my politics? No perceived threat or implied offence of any kind? I was liberated. And it was only then I realised that being an Irish-speaker in Ireland is an unnecessarily complex gift.

mí Aibreán 1998, bhí mise 21, i mo chónaí i Londain, ag obair i ngníomhaireacht fógraíochta ansin agus ag baint suilt as spleodar na cathrach. Bhí mé geallta le fear Gearmánach, agus gidh go raibh ár bpáistí féin go fóill i bhfad romhainn sa todhchaí, sílim gur cuireadh síol ag an am sin – mar gheall ar na hathraithe polaitiúla sna Sé Chontae - nach mbeadh sé as an cheist níos mó go dtiocfadh linn bogadh ar ais go hÉireann sa todhchaí dá má mhaith linn.

I 2001, i ndiaidh roinnt míonna a chaitheamh i München na Gearmáine, bhog muid ar ais go Béal Feirste – é féin ar son post léachtóra in Ollscoil na Ríona, agus mé féin chun bheith ar ais i gcroílár an teaghlaigh. Thosaigh mé ag obair mar Oifigeach Forbartha i nDún Pádraig, fostaithe ag Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail. Is sa phost seo, agus mé ag plé leis an chomhairle áitiúil, maidir le fógraí sráide, le comhfhreagairt, le seirbhísí agus le polasaí teanga, a thuig mé don chéad uair an deighilt idir na gealltanais a tugadh i gComhaontas Aoine an Chéasta agus an Chairt Eorpach do Theangacha Réigiúnacha agus Mionlaigh, agus an staid reatha ar an talamh. Agus le bheith sóiléir anseo, ní raibh Comhairle an Dúin ar dhóigh ar bith naimhdeach don teanga. Bunaithe ar dhualgais a leagann an Chairt Eorpach ar na comhairlí ar fad ó thuaidh, d'fhorbair Comhairle an Dúin polasaí ciotach, ach sódhéanta, maidir le comharthaí bóthair dhátheangacha (bhí orainn achainní a chuir chucu le níos mó ná trian d' ainmneacha na gcónaitheoirí air, de réir chlár na dtoghthóirí. Ansin chuir siad suirbhé amach, agus bhí ar thromlach na daoine aontú leis chun fógra dhá theangach a fháil.) Ghlac siad le comhfhreagras Gaeilge, agus freagraíodh i nGaeilge é. Mhaoinigh siad scéimeanna samhraidh agus chuir siad páipéar agus cártaí gnó Gailge ar fáil do chomhairleoirí. Bhí tionchar dearfach ar na polasaithe seo, gan amhras, ach chuir sé buaireamh orm gur 'géilleadh' dúinn iad, agus seo ó chomhairle naisiúnach agus i ndiaidh cuid mhór oibre ón taobh s'againne – plé maidir le cainteoirí áitiúla, cur i láthar ar uimhreacha an daonáireamh, agus corrdhíospóireacht maidir le tionchar sráidainmneacha Gaeilge ar phraghasanna tithe. Ní hé go raibh siad ag cur na Gaeilge chun cinn go réamhgníomhach ach ag géilleadh don bhrú ón phobal. Fiú má bhí aitheantas ann don Ghaeilge faoin Chairt Eorpach, ba léir go raibh gach comhairle saor, ó thaobh an dlí de, chun a bpolasaí féin a chumadh, de réir mar ba mhaith leo. Agus, ar

By the time the Good Friday Agreement was signed in April 1998, I was 21, living in London, working in an advertising agency there and enjoying the bright lights and big smoke with my German husband-to-be. Settling down and raising a family were still far from our minds at this stage, but the fact that Northern Ireland had entered this momentous new phase planted a little seed that, should we ever want to, settling near my home was now not entirely out of the question.

In 2001, after a few months in Munich, we moved to Belfast, lured by a lectureship at Queen's (him) and a place back in the bosom of the family (me). I started working in Downpatrick as Development Officer for the local Irish group – Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail. It was in this capacity, and specifically in dealing with the local council in relation to signage, correspondence, services and language policy, that the gulf became clear to me between what had been promised by the Good Friday Agreement and in the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and how things stood on the ground. And to be crystal clear, Down District Council was not in any way unsympathetic to the language. Based on the duties placed on all councils in the North by the European Charter, Down District Council developed a slightly cumbersome, but nonetheless workable policy in relation to bilingual street signs (whereby, upon receiving a petition from over a third of residents of a street as defined by the electoral register, they would survey the whole street and create bilingual signs if the majority were in favour). They agreed to receive correspondence in Irish and to respond in Irish. They funded Irish language summer schemes and provided business cards and headed paper in Irish for councillors who wanted it. All of these policies had a positive impact, but it was unnerving that even those were 'won' from a majority nationalist council after presentations about census figures, speaker numbers, lots of legwork, and the odd argument about the effects of bilingual signage on houseprices. It was less proactive language promotion and more reluctant language concession. Even though the European Charter gave recognition to Irish, clearly each council was legislatively free to decide for themselves in whichever ways they saw fit, whether or not they would like to allow local Irish speakers such luxuries, and many councils chose not to. If I heard the quote "*where appropriate and where people so desire it*" from the

ndóigh, shocraigh cuid mhór comhairlí gan seo a dhéanamh ar dhóigh ar bith. Chuala mé an sliocht úd ó théacs an Chomhaontais – “*mar a mbeidh éileamh cuí ann*” go minic agus é mar leithscéal. Más rud é go raibh gealltanais mór tugtha i gComhaontas Aoine an Chéasta maidir le “*gníomh diongbháilte chun an teanga a chur chun cinn*”, is léir gur baineadh a chumhacht fríd na focail sin. Tá sé cosúil le dlí a déarfadh “ba chóir do dhaoine cáin a íoc, más maith leo”. Fiú má leagaimid seicteachas agus aineolas ar leataobh ar feadh bomaite, cad chuige a roghnódh eagraíochtaí phoiblí rud a dhéanamh nuair a chosnódh sé airgead agus a chruthódh sé obair bhreise dóibh? Níor chóir cinneadh mar seo a bheith fágtha oscailte acu.

Faoin am seo, bhí mé ag tógáil mo thrí pháiste féin go trí-theangach (Gearmáinis lena nDaidí, Gaeilge liomsa agus Béarla leis an domhan taobh thiar de sconsa an ghairdín). Ba í an difríocht is suntasaí ó m’óige féin ná nach mothaíonn siad chomh haisteach. Téann siad ar chuaiirteanna rialta chun na Cultúrlainne, áit a bhfuil labhairt na Gaeilge normálta. Freastalaíonn siad ar imeachtaí do pháistí i nGaeilge. Tá réimse iontach leabhar acu, dlúthdioscanna, raidió, agus suíomhanna idirlín (a bhuíochas don BBC), agus bhí siad i láthar ag mór-imeachtaí teanga. Tá aithne acu ar chuid mhór Gaeilgeoirí – taobh amuigh den chlann chomh maith. B’fhearr leo cartúin i nGearmáinis ná i nGaeilge an deiscirt, ach bíonn scleondar an domhain orthu ó am go chéile nuair a chluineann siad Gaeilge ‘s’againne’ ar an teilifís.

Tá sé níos fusa bheith muiníneach faoin ilteangachas ná nuair a bhí mise óg, nuair a bhí sé chomh annamh. Tá cuairteoirí sláinte an lae inniu traenáilte, is dóiche mar gheall ar imircigh, ach tá siad ábalta comhairle chiallmhar stuama a thabhairt maidir le tógáil clainne le teangacha difriúla. Ag an dochtúir, ag an fhiacloir, i siopaí agus i rith measúnaithe forbartha leanaí, déanaim ‘ateangaireacht’ nuair atá mo pháistí ró-óg le Béarla a labhairt. Go dtí seo ní raibh fadhb againn. Tá aithne agam ar dhaoine i dteaghlaigh eile nach raibh an t-eispéireas céanna acu. Bhí an t-ádh ormsa go dtí seo go raibh dochtúirí, múinteoirí agus cuairteoirí sláinte oilte agus oscailte agam. Ach níor chóir go mbeadh ‘ádh’ ag baint leis seo. Níl cosaint an dlí ar mo chúl nuair a thagam ar chuaiirteoir sláinte nó teiripe cainte a insíonn dom go gcaithfidh mé éirí as na teangacha mar go bhfuil deacrachtaí

Good Friday Agreement once, I heard it a thousand times. It became clear to me that the grand promise of the agreement to ‘*take resolute action to promote the language*’ was instantly negated by the inclusion of those words. It’s like saying ‘people should pay tax, but only if they feel like it.’ Even if we set aside sectarianism and ignorance for a moment, why would public bodies actively choose to do something that costs them money and puts extra work on their desks? The decision of whether or not to implement at all should not have been left wide open.

By this point, I had come full circle and was now raising my own three children trilingually (German with their father, Irish with me and English from the world beyond the garden fence). But the fundamental difference is that my children could never feel as ‘alien’ as we did. They visit the Cultúrlann where speaking Irish is normal. They attend children’s events. They have an amazing selection of children’s books, CDs, radio, some Irish websites (thank you BBC), and they have been to large-scale Irish events. They know lots of Irish-speakers, both blood relations and not. They identify little with southern dialect, and prefer to watch their cartoons in German rather than in southern Irish, but have been hugely excited when they hear ‘our’ Irish on occasional children’s broadcasts.

I noticed very quickly how much easier it was to be confident about multilingualism nowadays compared to my own upbringing, when that was such an exceptional experience. Current health visitors had been trained, presumably because of an expectation of immigrants, but nonetheless, were encouraging me to use the ‘one person one language’ system which is internationally recommended for multilingual development. At developmental assessments, at the doctor’s, dentist’s or simply in a shop, I have always interpreted when the children were too young to speak English, and so far (touch wood) all has been well. I know many other families who speak Irish as a home language, and so I am aware – just like with the council – that experiences vary dramatically, and that I have clearly been lucky in having contact with well-trained and open-minded care-givers. But

cainte ag mo pháiste, nó an múinteoir a deir go bhfuil sé ag cur isteach ar a disléicse. Nó níos fearr arís, samhlaigh an cás go dtiocfadh liom cuairt dochtúirí nó measúnú leanaí a dhéanamh trí mheán na Gaeilge, gan an cluiche aistriúcháin a imirt ar chor ar bith.

Mar a fheicimse féin é, níor chomhlíonadh gealltanais an chomhaontais mar nach raibh siad scríofa láidir go leor. Mar sin, bhí scléandar an domhain orm nuair a léigh mé, i 2006 faoin ghealltanais nua tugtha tríd Comhaontas Chill Rímhinn go mbeadh Acht na Gaeilge ann do na sé chontae. Bhí mé dóchasach go mbeadh idir chosaint agus chur chun cinn i gceist anseo agus é scríofa i ndlí nach féidir sleamhnú amach as. Ní bheadh muid ag bráth ar dhearcadh pearsanta ná ar dheathoil pholaitiúil níos mó. Agus ní bheadh muid inár n-aonar níos mó i measc chlann na dteangacha ceilteacha ar na hoileáin seo, agus muid gan reachtaíocht teanga. Rachadh Luathróna chuig an damhsa! Nó sin an chuma a bhí air.

Bhí aisfhreagairt dearfach ar son Acht na Gaeilge sna comhairliúcháin, agus bhí go maith go dtí gur bogadh freagracht don acht chuig an Tionól – agus an DUP, mar an pháirtí is mó, a thug gealltanais toghcháin dá gcuid féin go gcuirfeadh siad reachtaíocht ar bith ar dhroim seoil. Ó tógadh an cheist seo, tá naimhdeas as cuimse le léiriú don Chaeilge – sa tionól, sna comhairlí agus sna meáin. Agus leis an fhírinne a rá, goilleann sin orm. Sna blianta fada dofheicthe, agus sna blianta gan aitheantas ná áiseanna, ní raibh tréan-ionsaí mar seo déanta orainn riamh. Go tobann, tá mé ag labhairt ‘teanga na lepreachán’. Tá mé ag sárú cearta agus féiniúlachtaí dhaoine eile, agus ag tabhairt masla dóibh nuair a labhraím. Tá mé ag cur neamh-Ghaeilgeoirí faoi mhíbhuntáiste agus ag coinneáil pinsinéirí as leapacha otharlainne. Agus seo uilig sula n-éirim as mo leaba ar maidin. Tá daoine ann a bhfuil aiféala orthu gur tógadh an cheist seo riamh, mar gheall ar an nimh atá scaoilte linn ó shin. Ach leo siúd, deirim seo. Ní raibh

it shouldn't come down to luck. There is no legislative protection waiting to step in should I be told, as others have been, that I need to speak only English because my child has speech difficulties or dyslexia, for example. Or imagine, if you will, the scenario in which I could even access doctors or undergo developmental checks in Irish, and wave farewell to the game of charades that is the translating back and forth between health professional and child.

As far as I can see, whether intentionally or not, the promises contained within the Good Friday Agreement amounted to nothing because they were not worded robustly enough. The potential for transformative change escaped through the gaping wide loophole written into it. So it was with great excitement that I read about the seemingly watertight and clear promise in the St. Andrew's Agreement of 2006 to introduce an Irish Language Act. My hope was that this would enshrine the principles both of protection and promotion of the language in a wriggle-free piece of legislation. No longer would it be a matter of personal choice or political will. And no longer would we remain the only ones amongst our Celtic language siblings on these islands – the Welsh, the Scots Gaelic speakers the southern Irish speakers – to have no such legislative protection. Cinderella would go to the ball! Or so it seemed.

The consultations contained a majority of positive responses for a Language Act, and all was well. That was, until responsibility for it was shifted to the Northern Ireland Assembly, whose largest party, the DUP, had made an election pledge to thwart any such legislation. The issue has aroused unprecedented opposition towards the language, in the assembly, in local politics and in the media. And if I'm honest, that hurts. In all of the invisible times and all of the times where the language community struggled on without resources and without recognition, we were never attacked openly like this. Suddenly, I'm speaking a 'leprechaun language'. I'm taking away other people's rights and identities and offending them when I speak. I'm disadvantaging non Irish-speakers and I'm keeping pensioners from hospital beds. All before I've even got up in the morning. There are those who bemoan that the question was ever raised, given the venom that it has brought forth. But to them I say this. Movements for change, be they anti-racist, asking

gluaiseacht ann riamh chun cearta a bhaint amach – cé acu do vótaí do mhná, fhrith-chiníochas, chearta aeracha nó cibé – nár thosaigh stoirm fhrithghníomhach. Agus ní eisceacht ar bith í an teanga. Níl seo faoi Bhriotanachas (nár chuala muid Éilís II i mBaile Átha Cliath agus í féin i mbun cúpla focal?) agus níl sé faoin teanga a bheith ‘fuadaithe’ ag poblachtánaigh. Is cuma cé a labhraíonn teanga, ní leo í. Ní le duine ar bith teanga. Ach is suimiúil fosta smaoinemh go bhfuil mionlach callánach frithghníomhach sa deisceart chomh maith, rud nach mbaineann lenár bpolaíocht thuas anseo. Caithfidh muid cuimhneamh ar thorthaí suirbhé an rialtais anuraidh, a thaispeáin go bhfuil tromlach na ndaoine a d’fhreagair an suirbhé ar son Acht na Gaeilge, ar son Gaeilge a bheith mar ábhar i ngach scoil, ar son aistriúchán ar dhoiciméid. Tá lucht an fhuatha sa mhionlach. Mar a dúirt mé cheana, tá daoine ann nach bhfuil a fhios acu agus iad siúd nár mhaith leo fios a bheith acu.

Bhí sé de phléisiúr agam ar na malluibh, anois agus mé mar údar, cuairt a thabhairt ar roinnt ghaelscoileanna agus casadh ar dhaltaí cliste, spreagtha iontu. Chuaigh sé i bhfeidhm go mór orm an méid dul chun cinn atá déanta againn ó bhí mise i mo pháiste. Tá saol na Gaeilge faoi bhláth, mar thoradh ar an obair chrua ata curtha isteach thar na blianta agus thar na glúine ag daoine deonacha, díograiseoirí teanga agus eagraíochtaí Gaeilge. Is sa phaisean agus sa díograis seo a mhaireann croí na teanga – agus ní féidir le dlí ar bith seo a chruthú. Ach tá áit thábhachtach ann do reachtaíocht- chun cosaint a thabhairt dúinn ó ionsaithe polaitiúla agus chun na constaicí do dul chun cinn na Gaeilge a bhaint. Is féidir leis an teanga a dhéanamh feiceálach, agus athróidh seo an ceangal a mhothaíonn gnáth-mhuintir an tuaiscirt léi. Sílim go bhfuil sé in am don stát ‘fuadach’ dá chuid féin a dhéanamh agus freagracht a ghlacadh as an tseoid luachmhar seo mar chuid d’ár gcomhoidhreacht, mar gur ghealladh sin linn, mar gurb é sin an rud ceart le déanamh. Agus mar go bhfuil muintir Thuaisceart Éireann á lorg.

votes for women, gay rights or whatever, always elicit a reactionary storm. Fact. This example is no different. It’s not about Britishness (as the Queen Elizabeth II speaking beautifully-pronounced Irish in Dublin last year so poignantly showed), and nor is it about it having been ‘politically hijacked’ by republicans. A republican can speak Irish until he’s blue (or green) in the face. It does not make a 2000 year old language ‘belong’ to him. Interestingly, there is a vocal and reactionary minority on the issue in the Republic as well. According to a Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure survey last year, the majority of people in Northern Ireland support the introduction of a language act (and translation of documents, and Irish being taught in all schools) and this also happily exposes the haters as unrepresentative of opinion. As I said before, there are those who don’t know and those who don’t want to know.

I have had the pleasure recently, in my newest incarnation as children’s author, to visit some of our gaelscoileanna and to meet the bright, engaged pupils they are turning out. It’s hard to do that and not to be moved as to how far the language has come since I was a child. There is a positive blossoming to be witnessed, behind which is the blood, sweat and tears of volunteers, passionate enthusiasts and hard-working organisations. This is where the heart and soul of the future of Irish lies, – a grass-roots energy no legislation in the world could conjure up. But legislation can protect the future of the language from political attack. It can remove the obstacles that stand in our way. And it can make a positive difference by making the language visible, for this in itself makes it a part of everyday life and the identities of everyone. It’s time for the state to do a little hijacking of its own and to reclaim responsibility for this precious part of our shared heritage. Because it promised. Because it’s the right thing to do. And because the people of Northern Ireland want it.

Stáid na Gaeilge agus an Ghaeloideachais 15 Bliana i ndiaidh Chomhaontú Aoine An Chéasta

Spléachadh ar Thorthaí an tSuirbhé

Aithnítear go forleathan go gné iontach tábhachtach atá san Oideachas i dtaca le athbheochan agus le hathbhunú teanga de, agus i 1998, dar leis a lán, bhí sé ceart agus cóir tagairt ar leith a dhéanamh dó i ngealltanais Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta (CAC). Sa lá atá inniu ann, tá an Gaeiloideachas ar earnáil do na hearnálacha is láidir i saol na Gaeilge ó Thuaidh. Mar sin, i mí an Mhárta 2013, bheartaigh POBAL suirbhé gairid a dhéanamh, ag díriú ar dhearcadh agus ar thuairimí iad sin a bhfuil baint acu leis an Ghaeloideachas, múinteoirí agus ábhar mhúinteoirí, maidir le stáid na Gaeilge agus an Ghaeloideachais, cúig bliana déag i ndiaidh an Chomhaontaithe. Roghnaigh muid líon bheag de cheisteanna. Ar dtús, d'iarr muid ar na freagróirí a leibhéal de shásamh a chur in iúl i dtaca le gach ceann do na gealltanais, díreach mar a bhí siad déanta i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta. I ndiaidh sin, chuir muid trí cheist faoi fhorbairt na teanga agus faoin Ghaeloideachas, ag iarraidh fáil amach cén leibhéal tábhachta a chreid na freagróirí a bheith le cur chuige bunaithe ar reachtaíocht, ar pholasaí agus ar straitéis.

Le caoin chead ó Chomhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, scaip muid cóipeanna den suirbhé ag comhdháil bhliantúil na Comhairle (15 Márta 2013). Chuaigh muid i dteagmháil chomh maith le Coláiste na hOllscoile Naomh Muire, agus chuidigh Roinn na Gaeilge linn le cóipeanna leictreonacha an tsuirbhé a sheoladh amach. Ós rud é go raibh muid i mbéal na Cásca, ó thaobh an téarma acadúla de, cuir muid sprioc dháta gairid le pilleadh na gceistneoirí. San iomlán, fuair muid 140 suirbhé líonta ar ais. Tá roinnt patrún suimiúil ann agus déanfaidh me iarracht na príomhphointí a cheapadh anseo. Chomh maith leis na ceisteanna, bhí spás ar dhuilleog an tsuirbhé le go dtiocfadh le freagróirí ráitis breise a scríobh, rud a rinne cuid acu. Thug muid faoi deara, agus tá tábhacht leis seo, go n-imríonn imeacht ama agus aois na bhfreagróirí tionchair cheana féin ar an dóigh a n-amharctar ar na ceisteanna seo. Ar na ráitis a scríobh ar na duilleoga suirbhé, bhain cuid díobh le haois, le

The State of the Irish Language and Irish Medium Education 15 Years After the Good Friday Agreement

Survey Results at a Glance

It is widely recognised that Education is a major factor in successful language revival and restoration, and in 1998, many felt that it was right and proper that the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) made specific reference to it. Today, Irish Medium Education is one of the strongest of the Irish language sectors in the North. Therefore, in March 2013, POBAL decided to carry out a short survey focussing on the attitudes and opinions of those involved in Irish Medium Education, or those training as IM teachers, on the state of the language and of IM education fifteen years after the GFA. We selected a small number of questions. Firstly, we asked respondents to comment on their level of satisfaction as to the fulfilment of each of the commitments as they appeared in the Good Friday Agreement. In a following section, we put 3 questions regarding the level of importance which the respondents placed on legislative, policy and strategic approaches in relation to the development of the language and of Irish Medium education.

With kind permission from Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, we distributed copies of the survey at its annual conference (15th March 2013). We also approached St Mary's University College and the Irish language department assisted us in sending out electronic copies to its students. Since we were at this time in the run-down to the academic Easter holidays, we set a limited closing date for responses. In total, we received 140 responses to the survey. Some interesting patterns emerge in relation to attitudes and I shall attempt to capture the key points here. As well as the questions, there was also space on the survey sheets for respondents to make further comments, and a number did this. It may be significant to note that already, the passage of time and the age of respondents may have an influence on how matters are viewed. Amongst the comments noted on the forms, some related to age, with respondents saying they were, 'ro-óg' / 'too young' at the time of the signing of the Agreement

freagróirí ag maíomh go raibh siad 'ró-óg' nuair a síníodh an Comhaontú le go mbeadh cuimhne cheart acu ar staid na Gaeilge roimhe sin. Scríobh daoine na ráitis ghinearálta seo a leanas, chomh maith: 'Barraíocht de dhíth go fóill'; 'Na gealltanais ó Chill Rímhin agus ón Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta a chur i bhfeidhm ANOIS!'; 'Níl go leor dul chun cinn déanta'; agus, 'Tá sé in am Acht na Gaeilge a bheith againn'.

Ar an Ghaeloideachas féin, scríobh siad roinnt ráiteas: 'Níl an Ghaeilge ar chomhchéim i CCEA nó i Roinn an Oideachais'; 'Cothrom na féinne a thabhairt don Ghaeloideachas ó thaobh pleanáil & áiseanna do'; 'Drochchoiriú na scoileanna faoin tuath'; agus chomh maith leo siúd, scríobh an ráiteas seo a leanas, 'Ceapaim go bhfuil siad seo ar fad an-tábhachtach ach nach féidir le múinteoirí/príomhoidí/scoileannadearmad a dhéanamh ar an dualgas atá orthu féin an Ghaelscolaíocht/Gaeilge srl a chur chun cinn ar bhealaí éagsúla'.

Is féidir anailís dháttheangach iomlán ar an suirbhé, mar aon le graif, a léamh ar na leathanaigh a leanann an t-alt seo.

Don suirbhé, maidir le comhlíonadh ghealltanais an Chomhaontaithe, d'fhiafraigh muid an raibh na freagróirí iontach sásta, sásta, míshásta, iontach míshásta nó nach raibh a fhios acu. I dtaca leis an ghealltanas go ndearna an rialtas, '*gníomh díongbháilte chun an teanga a chur chun cinn*', dúirt 59.28 % go raibh siad míshásta nó iontach míshásta, agus níor dhúirt ach leath chuid an fhigiúir sin (29.28 %) go raibh siad sásta nó iontach sásta. Bhí an céatadán (30.00 %) a dúirt go raibh siad 'iontach míshásta' giota beag níos airde ná an céatadán a dúirt go raibh siad 'míshásta' (29.28 %).

I dtaca leis an dara gealltanas de, '*úsáid na teanga a éascú agus a spreagadh sa chaint agus i scríbhneoireacht sa saol príobháideach agus sa saol poiblí mar a mbeidh éileamh cuí ann*', dúirt 64.99 %

to remember clearly what the situation was for Irish beforehand. Other general comments read, 'Barraíocht de dhíth go fóill' / 'Too much still needed'; 'Na gealltanais ó Chill Rímhin agus ón Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta a chur i bhfeidhm ANOIS!' / 'Implement the GFA and St Andrews promises NOW!'; 'Níl go leor dul chun cinn déanta' / 'Not enough progress has been made'; and, 'Tá sé in am Acht na Gaeilge a bheith againn' / 'It is time we had an Irish Language Act'.

Specific to IM Education, a number of comments were made: 'Níl an Ghaeilge ar chomhchéim i CCEA nó i Roinn an Oideachais' / 'Irish isn't on an equal footing in CCEA or in the Department of Education'; 'Cothrom na féinne a thabhairt don Ghaeloideachas ó thaobh pleanáil & áiseanna do' / 'Give fair treatment to IM education from the point of view of planning and resources'; 'Drochchoiriú na scoileanna faoin tuath' / 'The bad state of repair of schools in rural areas'; and also the following comment, 'Ceapaim go bhfuil siad seo ar fad an-tábhachtach ach nach féidir le múinteoirí/príomhoidí/scoileanna dearmad a dhéanamh ar an ndualgas atá orthu féin an Ghaelscolaíocht/Gaeilge srl a chur chun cinn ar bhealaí éagsúla' / 'I think that this is all very important indeed but that teachers / heads / schools cannot forget their own duties to promote Irish and IM education in various ways.'

The full survey analysis with graphs can be seen, in bilingual form, in the following pages in this publication.

In the survey, we asked respondents whether they were very satisfied, satisfied, didn't know, or were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied that the promises of the GFA were being fulfilled. In relation to the commitment, '*to take resolute action to promote the language*', 59.28 % said they were 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied', whilst only half that number (29.28 %) said that they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'. A slightly higher percentage (30.00 %) said they were 'very dissatisfied' than those were simply 'dissatisfied' (29.28 %).

On the second GFA commitment, '*encourage the use of the language in speech and writing in public and private life where there is appropriate demand*', 64.99 % said they were 'dissatisfied' or 'very

go raibh siad 'míshásta' nó 'iontach míshásta', agus dúirt líon i bhfad níos lú ná leath chuid an chéatadáin seo, 25.71 % go raibh siad 'sásta' nó 'iontach sásta.'

Maidir leis an tríú gealltanas, *'iarracht chun deireadh a chur, más féidir é, le srianta a chuirfeadh nó a d'oibreodh in aghaidh chothú nó fhorbairt na teanga'*, bhí 59.99 % 'míshásta' nó 'iontach míshásta', agus dúirt i bhfad níos lú ná leathchuid na ndaoine seo (21.42 %) go raibh siad 'sásta' nó 'iontach sásta'. Dúirt líon measartha ard de fhreagróirí na ceiste seo, 'ní fios' (17.14 %).

Bhain an ceathrú ceist le, *'foráil maidir le hidirchaidreamh le pobal na Gaeilge, agus a gcuid tuairimí a léiriú d'údaráis phoiblí agus gearáin a imscrúdú'*, agus fuair muid an saghas réimse de fhreagraí cosúla sa chás seo. Cé go ndúirt 54.28% go raibh siad 'míshásta' nó 'iontach míshásta', ní dúirt ach 22.85% go raibh siad 'sásta' nó 'iontach sásta', agus arís, dúirt líon measartha ard de fhreagróirí 'ní fios' (20.71%)

Athraíonn patrún na bhfreagraí beagáinín maidir leis an chéad dá ghealltanas eile, a mbaineann an dá cheann acu le craoltóireacht Ghaeilge. Astu siúd, cuireann an cúigiú gealltanas dualgas ar rialtas na Breataine, *'an scóip atá ann chun Teilifís na Gaeilge a chur ar fáil ar bhonn níos forleithne i dTuaisceart Éireann a scrúdú, mar ábhar práinne, in éineacht le húdaráis iomchuí na Breataine agus i gcomhar le húdaráis chraolacháin na hÉireann'*, agus i gcás na ceiste seo, druideann an bhearna giota beag idir na freagróirí atá 'sásta' agus iad nach bhfuil. Dá ainneoin sin, dúirt beagnach leathchuid de na daoine (49.28%) go bhfuil siad 'míshásta' nó 'iontach míshásta', i gcomparáid le 31.42% a dúirt go bhfuil siad 'iontach sásta' nó 'sásta'. D'fhreagair 17.14% 'ní fios'.

Geallann an séú coimítmint go ndéanfaí, *'bealaí níos éifeachtaí a lorg chun spreagadh agus tacú airgeadais a thabhairt do léiriú scannán agus clár teilifíse trí Ghaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann'*. Dúirt 42.85% go bhfuil siad 'míshásta' nó 'iontach míshásta', agus dúirt 28.56% go bhfuil siad 'sásta' nó 'iontach sásta'. D'fhreagair 17.85% 'ní fios' agus níor fhreagair 10.71% an cheist.

Baineann an gealltanas deireanach, seachtú gealltanas an Chomhaontaithe, le dualgas an stáit

dissatisfied', whilst significantly less than half this percentage, 25.71 % said they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'.

The third commitment, *'seek to remove, where possible, restrictions which would discourage or work against the maintenance or development of the language'*, found 59.99 % 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied', with significantly fewer than half of these (21.42 %) saying they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'. This question received quite a high level of 'don't knows', from 17.14 % of respondents.

The fourth question related to making, *'provision for liaising with the Irish language community, representing their views to public authorities and investigating complaints'*, and this showed a similar spread of responses. Whilst 54.28 % were 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied', only 22.85 % were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied', and again, there was a high number of 'don't knows', at 20.71%.

The pattern changes slightly in relation to the next two commitments, both of which relate to Irish language broadcasting. The fifth commitment in the GFA, commits the British government to, *'explore urgently with the relevant British authorities, and in co-operation with the Irish broadcasting authorities, the scope for achieving more widespread availability of Teilifís na Gaeilge in Northern Ireland'*, and the gap between 'satisfied' and 'dissatisfied' closes somewhat. In spite of this, almost half (49.28 %) state that they are 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied', in comparison with 31.42 % who say they are 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied'. 17.14 % say they do not know.

The sixth promise commits the British government to, *'seek more effective ways to encourage and provide financial support for Irish language film and television production in Northern Ireland'*. 42.85 % say they are 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied', whilst 28.56 % say they are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'. 17.85 % say they do not know, and 10.71 % did not answer the question.

The seventh and final commitment in the GFA relates to the inclusion in domestic legislation of a

leis an Ghaelscolaíocht a spreagadh a chur sa reachtaíocht intíre, is e sin, *'dualgas reachtúil a chur ar an Roinn Oideachais chun oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge a spreagadh agus a éascú de réir na socruithe láithreacha don oideachas comhtháite'*. Dúirt 50.70% go raibh siad 'míshásta' nó 'iontach míshásta' i gcomparáid le 32.14% a bhí 'sásta' nó 'iontach sásta'. Suntasach go leor, b'fhéidir, i bhfianaise chúlra na bhfreagróirí, dúirt 12.14% 'ní fios' agus níor thug 5% freagra ar bith.

Ar dhuilleog an tsuirbhé ansin, tá trí cheist maidir le forbairt reachtaíochta, pholasaí agus straitéise. Chuir an chéad cheist, i dtaca le forbairt na Gaeilge agus an Ghaeloideachais as seo amach, cén tábhacht atá le, *'hAcht na Gaeilge cuimsitheach ceartbhunaithe'*. Dúirt 90.7% go raibh sé 'riachtanach', 'iontach tábhachtach' nó 'tábhachtach'. Sna catagóirí seo, dúirt sé huaire níos mó daoine go raibh Acht na Gaeilge 'riachtanach' ná mar a dúirt go raibh sé 'tábhachtach'.

Chuir an dara ceist, i dtaca le forbairt na Gaeilge agus an Ghaeloideachais as seo amach, cén tábhacht atá le, *'polasaí cuimsitheach agus tuiscint níos forbartha ar an Ghaeloideachas taobh istigh den Roinn Oideachais'*, agus d'fhreagair 93.56% go raibh sé 'riachtanach', 'iontach tábhachtach' nó 'tábhachtach'. Dúirt an oiread daoine faoi dhó go raibh sé 'riachtanach' ná mar a dúirt go raibh sé 'iontach tábhachtach'. Níor fhreagair 4.28% an cheist.

D'fhiafraigh an cheist deireanach cén tábhacht atá le, *'straitéis ghníomaióch earcaíochta le spriocanna cinnte a bheith ag an Roinn Oideachais le cur le líon na ndaltaí sa Ghaeloideachas'*. Dúirt 93.56% go raibh sé 'riachtanach', 'iontach tábhachtach' nó 'tábhachtach'. Is é seo an céatadán céanna a roghnaigh na catagóirí áirithe seo sa dara ceist (cé go bhfuil miondifríochtaí i gcéim na tábhachta a thugtar).

Tá sé soiléir ón suirbhé gairid seo go mothaíonn na freagróirí go fóill ardleibhéal de mhíshástacht maidir leis an dul chun cinn atá déanta i leith forbartha agus cothaithe na Gaeilge agus an Ghaeloideachais. Braitheann siad go dteipeann ar an rialtais a chuid dualgas a chomhlíonadh. Dá fhad a mhaireas an cás sin, is amhlaidh is mó an chontúirt go ndearmadfaidh na glúnta atá le teacht mionsonraí na ngealltanais, ach go mothóidh siad frustrachas

duty on the state to encourage Irish Medium Education, to *'place a statutory duty on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate Irish medium education in line with current provision for integrated education'*. 50.70 % of respondents were 'dissatisfied or 'very dissatisfied' whilst 32.14 % were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'. It is perhaps quite significant given the background of the respondents that 12.14 % said they did not know and 5 % more did not answer this question.

The survey then goes on to ask three questions relating to legislation, policy and strategy development. The first asked what importance *'a comprehensive, rights-based Irish Language Act'* has to the development of the language and to Irish Medium education. 90.7 % of respondents said that it was 'vital', 'very important' or 'important'. Of these categories, more than six times more people said the Irish language Act was 'vital' rather than 'important'.

The second of these questions asked what importance, *'a comprehensive policy and more developed understanding of Irish medium education within the Department of Education'* would have for the development of Irish and IM education. 93.56 % said it was 'vital', 'very important' or 'important'. Twice as many respondents felt this was 'vital' rather than 'very important'. 4.28 % did not answer the question.

The final questions asked what importance, *'An active recruitment strategy with definite aims by the Department of Education to increase the number of pupils in Irish medium education'* has, and 93.56 %, the same percentage as in the previous question (although in a slightly different breakdown of emphasis) said that it was 'vital', 'very important' or 'important'.

It is clear from this short survey that there remains a high level of dissatisfaction amongst respondents as to the progress being made in relation to the development and promotion of Irish and IM Education and the perceived failure of government to fulfil its obligations. The longer this remains the case, the greater the danger that new generations will cease to remember the precise detail of the commitments, but will nonetheless experience a sense of frustration and disappointment that, in

agus díomá go leanúnach de dheasca na gconstaicí agus an mhíbhuntáiste a bhíonn rompu gach lá, beag beann ar a gcuid oibre crua agus ar a gcuid diongbháilteachta féin.

spite of their own determination and hard work, obstacles and disadvantage remain an everyday reality.

Tuairisc ar
shuirbhé POBAL
Márta 2013

Pobal Survey
Report
March 2013

**STÁID NA GAEILGE AGUS AN GHAELOIDEACHAIS
15 BLIANA I NDAIDH CHOMHAONTÚ AOINE
AN CHÉASTA**

Tuairisc ar shuirbhé POBAL, Márta 2013

Rinneadh an suirbhé seo le múinteoirí, cúntóirí ranga, príomhoidí agus oifigigh Ghaeilge agus oideachais, le linn chomhdháil bliantiúil Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta. D'fhreastáil timpeall 300 duine ar an chomhdháil. Tugadh cóip den suirbhé amach le pacáiste eolais na comhdhála. Fuarthas 126 suirbhé líonta ar ais.

Chomh maith leis seo, cé go raibh na micléinn féin ar sos na Cásca ag an bpointe seo, chuir muid cóip leictreonach chuig Coláiste Ollscoile Naomh Mhuire, agus d'iarr muid ar micléinn an Roinn Ghaeilge é a líonadh agus a sheoladh ar ais chugainn.. Fuarthas 14 suirbhé ar ais roimh an spriocdáta.

As an 140 san iomlán a fuarthas, bhí cuid acu nár líonadh isteach ina n-iomlán. Sna cásanna sin, cuireadh isteach an rogha 'Gan Freagra' agus muid ag ullmhú na dtorthaí seo. Tugtar na torthaí mar fhigiúir agus mar chéatadáin. De réir an ghnáth chleachtais, slánaíodh suas ná síos na céatadáin le sraith fhada de fhigiúir i ndiaidh an phointe deachúlaigh a sheachaint.

Gabhann muid buíochas le Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta agus le Coláiste Ollscoile Naomh Mhuire as ucht a gcuidithe.

**THE STATE OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE AND IRISH
MEDIUM EDUCATION 15 YEARS AFTER THE
GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT**

Report on POBAL's Survey, March 2013

This survey was carried out with teachers, classroom assistants, head teachers, and Irish language education officers, during Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta's annual conference. Around 300 people attended the conference and were given copies of the survey with their conference information packs. We received 126 completed copies back.

In addition, although the students were already on their Easter break at this point, we sent an electronic copy of the survey to St Mary's University College and asked students in the Irish language department to complete and send them back to us. We received 14 copies back before the closing date.

Of the 140 total replies received, there were some which had not had replies to every question. Where this was the case, we have noted this in the findings under 'No answer'. The findings have been expressed both as numbers and as percentages. It should be noted that according to normal practice, percentages have been rounded up or down to avoid giving multiple figures after the decimal point.

We should like to thank Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and St Mary's University College for their help.

Na ceisteanna/The Questions

15 bliana ó shin, tugadh roinnt gealltanais i leith na Gaeilge i gComhaontú Aoine an Chéasta. An dóigh leat go bhfuil na gealltanais seo á gcomhlíonadh? Gheall siad:

15 years ago, a number of commitments were made in the Good Friday Agreement in relation to the Irish language. Do you believe these promises are being fulfilled? They were:

1. gníomh diongbháilte chun an teanga a chur chun cinn

take resolute action to promote the language;

lontach sásta/very satisfied – 20 (14.28%)

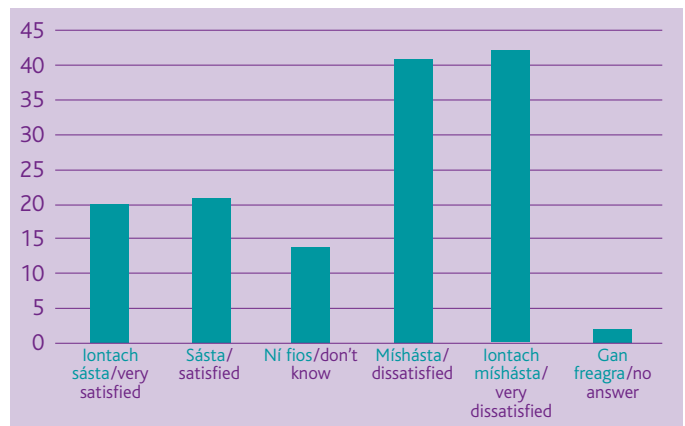
Sásta/satisfied – 21 (15.00%)

Ní fios/don't know – 14 (10.00%)

Míshásta/dissatisfied – 41 (29.28%)

lontach míshásta/very dissatisfied – 42 (30.00%)

Gan freagra/no answer – 2 (1.42%)



2. úsáid na teanga a éascú agus a spreagadh sa chaint agus i scríbhneoireacht sa saol príobháideach agus sa saol poiblí mar a mbeidh éileamh cuí ann:

facilitate and encourage the use of the language in speech and writing in public and private life where there is appropriate demand;

lontach sásta/very satisfied – 15 (10.71%)

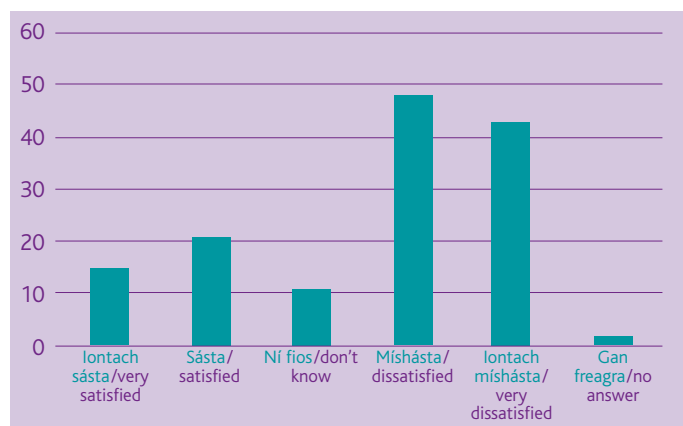
Sásta/satisfied – 21 (15.00%)

Ní fios/don't know – 11 (7.85%)

Míshásta/dissatisfied – 48 (34.28%)

lontach míshásta/very dissatisfied – 43 (30.71%)

Gan freagra/no answer – 2 (1.42%)



3. iarracht chun deireadh a chur, más féidir é, le srianta a chuirfeadh nó a d'oibreodh in aghaidh chothú nó fhorbairt na teanga;

seek to remove, where possible, restrictions which would discourage or work against the maintenance or development of the language;

lontach sásta/very satisfied – 9 (6.42%)

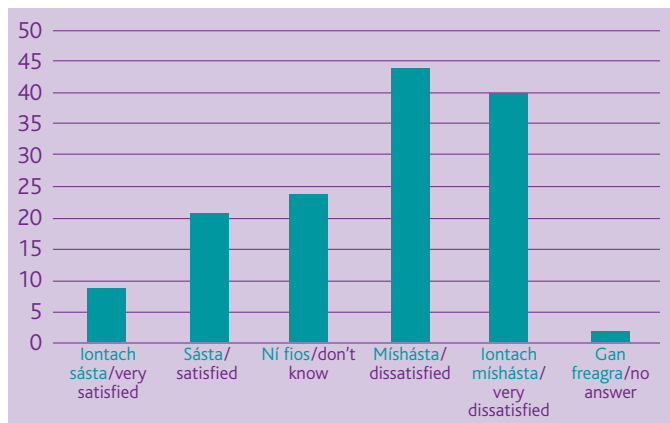
Sásta/satisfied – 21 (15.00%)

Ní fios/don't know – 24 (17.14%)

Míshásta/dissatisfied – 44 (31.42%)

lontach míshásta/very dissatisfied – 40 (28.57%)

Gan freagra/no answer – 2 (1.42%)



4. foráil maidir le hidirchaidreamh le pobal na Gaeilge, agus a gcuid tuairimí a léiriú d'údaráis phoiblí agus gearáin a imscrúdú;

make provision for liaising with the Irish language community, representing their views to public authorities and investigating complaints;

lontach sásta/very satisfied – 8 (5.71%)

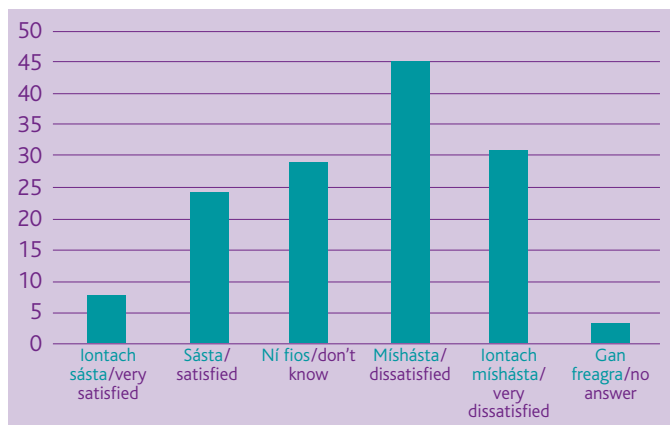
Sásta/satisfied – 24 (17.14%)

Ní fios/don't know – 29 (20.71%)

Míshásta/dissatisfied – 45 (32.14%)

lontach míshásta/very dissatisfied – 31 (22.14%)

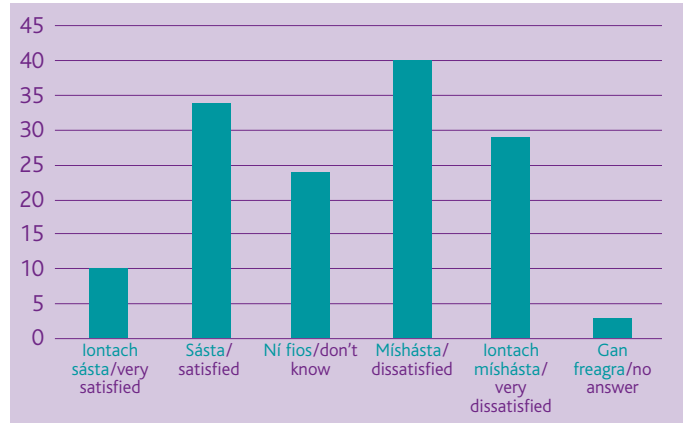
Gan freagra/no answer – 3 (2.14%)



5. an scóip atá ann chun Teilifís na Gaeilge a chur ar fáil ar bhonn níos forleithne i dTuaisceart Éireann a scrúdú, mar ábhar práinne, in éineacht le húdaráis iomchuí na Breataine agus i gcomhar le húdaráis chraolacháin na hÉireann;

explore urgently with the relevant British authorities, and in co-operation with the Irish broadcasting authorities, the scope for achieving more widespread availability of Teilifís na Gaeilge in Northern Ireland;

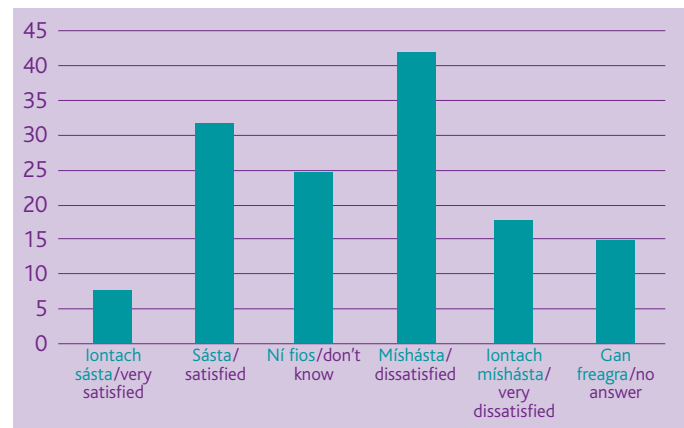
- lontach sásta/very satisfied – 10 (7.14%)
- Sásta/satisfied – 34 (24.28%)
- Ní fios/don't know – 24 (17.14%)
- Míshásta/dissatisfied – 40 (28.57%)
- lontach míshásta/very dissatisfied – 29 (20.71%)
- Gan freagra/no answer – 3 (2.14%)



6. bealaí níos éifeachtaí a lorg chun spreagadh agus tacú airgeadais a thabhairt do léiriú scannán agus clár teilifíse trí Ghaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann;

seek more effective ways to encourage and provide financial support for Irish language film and television production in Northern Ireland;

- lontach sásta/very satisfied – 8 (5.71%)
- Sásta/satisfied – 32 (22.85%)
- Ní fios/don't know – 25 (17.85%)
- Míshásta/dissatisfied – 42 (30.00%)
- lontach míshásta/very dissatisfied – 18 (12.85%)
- Gan freagra/no answer – 15 (10.71%)



7. Chomh maith, cuireadh line amháin san Ord Oideachais le 'dualgas reachtúil a chur ar an Roinn Oideachais chun oideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge a spreagadh agus a éascú de réir na socruithe láithreacha don oideachas comhtháite'

Also, one line was added to the Education Order, to 'place a statutory duty on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate Irish medium education in line with current provision for integrated education';

lontach sásta/very satisfied – 12 (8.57%)

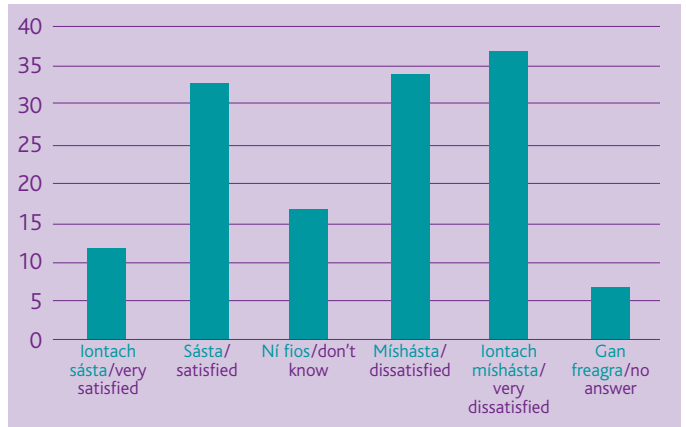
Sásta/satisfied – 33 (23.57%)

Ní fios/don't know – 17 (12.14%)

Míshásta/dissatisfied – 34 (24.28%)

lontach míshásta/very dissatisfied – 37 (26.42%)

Gan freagra/no answer – 7 (5.00%)



8. I do thuairim féin, i dtaca le forbairt na Gaeilge agus an Ghaeloideachais as seo amach, cén tábhacht atá leis na gníomhartha seo a leanas:

In your opinion, regarding the future development of the Irish language and Irish Medium Education, how important are the following actions:

(a) Acht na Gaeilge cuimsitheach ceart bunaithe

A comprehensive rights-based Irish Language Act

Riachtanach/vital – 86 (61.42%)

lontach tábhachtach/Very important – 28 (20.00%)

Tábhachtach/Important – 13 (9.28%)

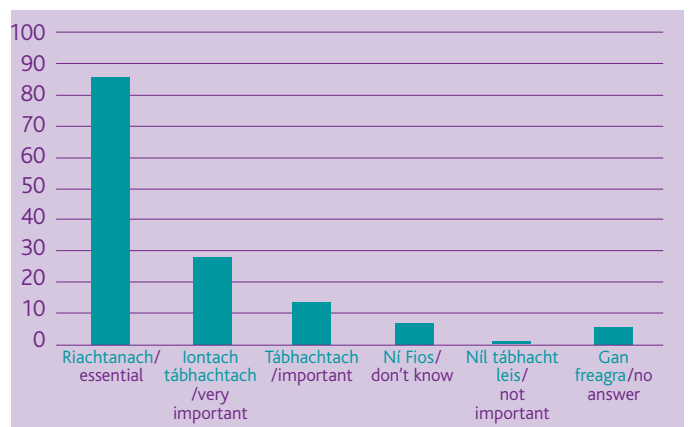
Ní fios/Don't know – 7 (5.00%)

Níl tábhacht leis/Not important – 1 (0.71%)

Gan freagra/No answer given – 5 (3.57%)

(Nóta – D'athraigh duine amháin 'Acht na Gaeilge' go 'Acht teanga' ar an suirbhé, agus dúirt siad go raibh seo 'Riachtanach'. Tá an moladh seo mar cheann den 76 thuasluaite.)

(Note – One person changed 'Irish Language Act' to 'Language Act' on the survey and marked this as 'Essential'. This answer has been counted as one of the 76 mentioned above.)



(b) Polasaí cuimsitheach agus tuiscint níos forbartha ar an Ghaeloideachas taobh istigh den Roinn Oideachais

A comprehensive policy and more developed understanding of Irish medium education within the Department of Education:

Riachtanach/vital – **83 (59.28%)**

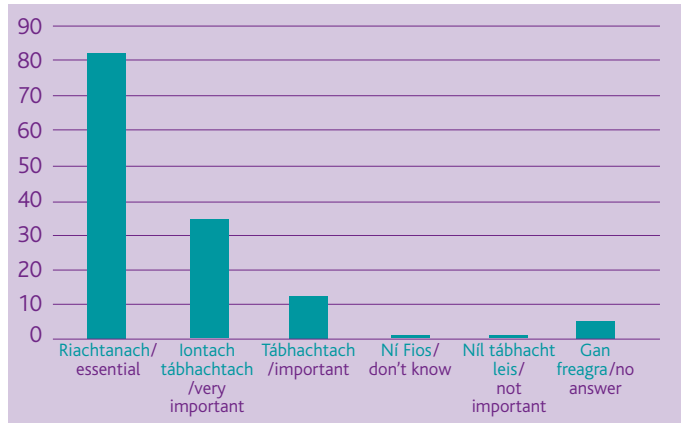
Iontach tábhachtach/Very important – **35 (25.00%)**

Tábhachtach/Important – **13 (9.28%)**

Ní fios/Don't know – **1 (0.71%)**

Níl tábhacht leis/Not important – **2 (1.42%)**

Gan freagra/No answer given – **6 (4.28%)**



(c) Straitéis ghníomaíoch earcaíochta le spriocanna cinnte a bheith ag an Roinn Oideachais le cur le líon na ndaltaí sa Ghaeloideachas

An active recruitment strategy with definite aims by the Department of Education to increase the number of pupils in Irish medium education:

Riachtanach/vital – **77 (55.00%)**

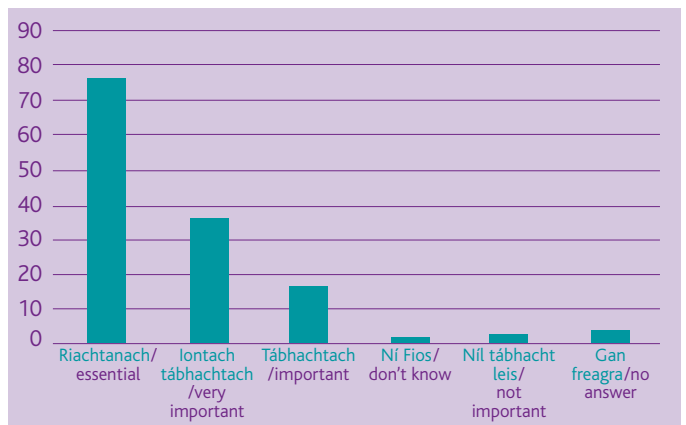
Iontach tábhachtach/Very important – **37 (26.42%)**

Tábhachtach/Important – **17 (12.14%)**

Ní fios/Don't know – **2 (1.42%)**

Níl tábhacht leis/Not important – **3 (2.14%)**

Gan freagra/No answer given – **4 (2.85%)**



Is léir go raibh cuid daoine nach raibh iomlán cinnte faoi staid na Gaeilge roimh shíniú Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta. Tá seo le feiceáil sa mhéid freagair 'Ní fios' sna ceisteanna, agus luaigh roinnt de na daoine a líon an suirbhé go raibh siad 'ró-óg' ag am an siniúcháin le cuimhne ceart a bheith acu ar stádas na Gaeilge roimh an síniú, agus mar sin de go raibh siad 'lontach míshásta' nó 'lontach sásta' le cúrsaí sa lá atá inniu ann, nó nach raibh siad eolach go leor le freagra beacht a thabhairt.

Is in sna trí cheist deireanach a raibh daoine don mhór chuid aontaithe. Mhóthaigh siad go raibh Acht na Gaeilge 'Riachtanach' nó 'lontach tábhachtach', chomh maith le Polasaí Cuimsitheach agus Straitéis Ghníomhach don Ghaeloideachas.

Tuairimí Eile

Bhí roinnt tuairimí ag cuid de na daoine a líon isteach an suirbhé. Seo thíos cuid de na rudaí a scríobh siad.

"Níl an Ghaeilge ar chomhchéim in CCEA nó i Roinn an Oideachas."

"Níos mó tacaíocht d'athbheochan na Gaeilge ar bhonn pobail-bunaithe."

"Cruthú níos mó acmhainní nua-aimseartha Gaeilge a chur ar fáil"

"Fís ón rialtas."

"Drochchoiriú na scoileanna faoin tuath."

"Maoiniú, áiseanna, poist."

"Barraíocht de dhíth go fóill."

"Níl go leor dul chun cinn déanta."

"Na gealltanais ó Chill Rímhin agus ón Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta a chur i bhfeidhm ANOIS!"

"Ceapaim go bhfuil siad seo ar fad an-tábhachtach ach nach féidir le múinteoirí/príomhoidí/scoileanna dearmad a dhéanamh ar an ndualgas atá orthu féin an Ghaelscolaíocht/Gaeilge srl a chur chun cinn ar bhealaí éagsúla."

"Scéim faoi leith a bheith ann chun 'scoileanna Béarla' a thiontú go dtí 'Gaelscoileanna!'"

"Cothrom na féinne a thabhairt don Ghaeloideachas ó thaobh pleanáil & áiseanna do."

"Ba cheart go mbeadh Gaeilge riachtanach chun post a fháil sna stait sheirbhísí ar fud an Oileán."

"Tá sé in am Acht na Gaeilge a bheith againn."

It is clear that some people were unsure about the state of the Irish language before the GFA was signed. This can be seen in the number of 'Don't know' answers given, and some of the people who completed the survey said they were 'too young' at the time of the signing to remember properly the state of the language beforehand, and therefore they were either 'Very happy' or 'Very unhappy' with things as they are now, or that they weren't knowledgeable enough to give a precise answer.

It is in the final three questions that people were most united. They felt that an Irish Language Act was either 'Vital', or 'Very important', as well as a Comprehensive Policy and Active Strategy for Irish Medium Education.

Other opinions

Some people who filled in the survey had a number of additional opinions. Below are some of the things they said.

"Irish isn't on an equal footing in CCEA or in the Department of Education"

"More support for the community-based Irish language revival."

"Creation of more modern Irish language resources"

"Vision from government."

"The bad state of repair of schools in rural areas"

"Funding, resources, jobs."

"Too much still needed."

"Not enough progress made."

"Implement the GFA and St Andrews promises NOW!"

"I think that this is all very important indeed but that teachers / heads / schools cannot forget their own duties to promote Irish and IM education in various ways."

"A specific scheme to change 'English speaking schools' to 'Irish medium' schools!"

"Give fair treatment to IM education from the point of view of planning and resources"

"Irish should be essential to securing a civil service post on the entire island."

"It is time we had an Irish Language Act"

15?



POBAL,
Aonad 6,
Teach Uí Chorráin
Ionad an Dá Spuaic
155 Sráid Northumberland
Béal Feirste BT13 2JF
Tel: +44 (0) 28 9043 8132
eolas@pobal.org
www.pobal.org

