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Coiste na nIarchimí

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■ Report from 4th Annual Summer School organised by Coiste na nIarchimí



'Cherishing all the children of the nation equally?'

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Official representative for the Leonard Peltier Defence Committee speaks to Coiste - **PAGE 11**

■ YOUTH CAMP

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Youth Event Long Kesh

On 12th August, PNB organised an educational visit to the Maze/Long Kesh regeneration site. Linda Girvan, from the OFMDFM, gave forty teenagers a guided tour of the site. This included one of the H Blocks and the prison hospital as well as the cages area.

Linda described the conditions under which the prisoners lived and a former prisoner was also there to give first

hand accounts to the young people.

Another speaker described the situation from a visitor's point of view and how visiting the site in the 1980s impacted upon her.

Some discussion centred round the hunger strike period and some participants revealed that the said period would be on their school curriculum this year and that this visit would benefit their studies.



Seán Crowe TD who was involved in the Youth Against H Blocks during the protest period in 1981



Martina Anderson, Sean Crowe, Pat Sheehan, Dominic Adams, Carál Ní Chuilín

Solidarity shown with Palestinians at recent visit to Belfast



Mike Ritchie and Laurence McKeown were delighted to welcome former Fatah ministers Mr Qaddura Fares and Mr Abd ur Razzak to Coiste's office on Saturday 16 September 2006. Both had been ministers - dealing with the Israeli wall and prisoners/ex-prisoners respectively - in the Palestinian Authority up until Hamas' victory earlier this year. They were in Ireland at the invitation of the Glencree Reconciliation Centre, to explore elements of the peace process. They informed Coiste of recent developments aimed at establishing a unity government for Palestine. Mike and Laurence assured them of the deep solidarity felt by republicans for the Palestinian struggle.

ITC Training - a round-up

A number of republican ex-prisoners have participated in this very successful training programme over the last 2-3 years.

It is organised in conjunction with BURC/trade unions and republican and loyalist ex-prisoner groups and includes

training in A+ hardware and software, Net + and Microsoft Certified Professional.

Previously, as part of the programme, the participants have spent 5 weeks on placement in South Africa during the latter element of the course. Those from

our group who participated have highly recommended the course.

A third 'run' of the course is due to commence in September 2006 although it is unlikely that the placement in South Africa will happen due to funding restrictions.



Left -right:
Martina
Anderson,
Dominic
Adams,
Colin
Halliday.
Below: local
musicians
entertain the
participants





Andrée Murphy, Matt Carthy, Elisha Mclaughlin and Toireasa Ní Fhearaíosa

Annual Scoil Samhraidh

■ Coiste na nIarchimí held its 4th annual summer school in Tí Chulainn, Mullaghbawn, South Armagh from Wednesday 16th - Friday 18th August 2006. The title of the event was '**Cherishing all the children of the nation equally?**' and it was officially opened by the Deputy Mayor of Newry and Mourne Council, Sinn Féin councillor, Martin Connolly.



Mary Lou McDonald, MEP pictured with Coiste staff



From left - Martina Anderson, Colin Halliday, Phil Scraton, Billy McQuiston and Séanna Walsh

From left - Inez McCormack, Fergus O'Hare, Anne Carr and Mina Wardle

Rosie McCorley, one of the organisers of the event said that, "The summer school gave participants an opportunity to reflect upon where we have come from and where we hope to go.

Given that this is the 90th anniversary of the Easter Rising and the Proclamation we felt it appropriate to use the quote, "cherishing all the children of the nation equally" as it is a very relevant one today in a rapidly changing Ireland. "It was fitting also that on the

25th anniversary of the 1981 hunger strike, we should recall Bobby Sands' words, 'our revenge will be the laughter of our children', which brought in the themes of children and imprisonment. Young people demanded their civil rights in the 1960s and in



Audience at the session featuring loyalist and republican ex-prisoners



From left - Bobby Gilmore, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland; Linda Moore, NI Human Rights Commission; Raymond McCartney, chairperson of Coiste; Bunmi Salaka, Louth African Women's Support Group; Duncan Morrow, Community Relations Council; James Doorley, National Youth Council of Ireland

the three decades that followed it was mainly young people who filled the prisons.” Reflecting the above ideas under the broad theme of ‘children’ the summer school kicked off on Wednesday afternoon with the first session entitled, ‘The future we give

our children’. This brought together representatives of statutory bodies including the Community Relations Council and the NI Human Rights Commission. Taking up the same theme later that evening, Mary Lou McDonald MEP delivered a com-

elling presentation on Sinn Féin’s view of what it means to cherish all the children of the nation equally. On the following two days the summer school incorporated workshops entitled, ‘Children of the 60s - raising a radical voice’; Children of the conflict



From top: some of the speakers in lively discussion; Mike Ritchie and Andrew Rawding share a joke. Right: Mike Ritchie, director of Coiste



Pictured at poster launch of the Summer School

From top - Andréa Murphy, Elisha McLaughlin, Matt Carthy

- a generation imprisoned'; and 'A new generation - following tradition or breaking new ground?' A broad range of speakers gave excellent presentations, some of them extremely personal, others funny and others

very moving. They came from a variety of sectors including Community Relations, ex-prisoners (loyalist and republican), People's Democracy, Civil Rights Movement, Human Rights, Migrant Rights and Sinn Féin young

political representatives. There was a refreshing and energetic debate involving the audience in each workshop and the issues raised during the formal sessions prompted discussion which continued well into the small hours of



Top row (l-r) - Martin Connolly, Deputy mayor of Newry and Mourne Council; Bobby Gilmore, James Doorley, Duncan Morrow, Laurence McKeown. Bottom row (l-r) - Linda Moore, Raymond McCartney, Bunmi Salako, Dominic Adams



Matt Carthy, Andrée Murphy, Eisha McLaughlin, Tofreasa Ní Fhearaíosa

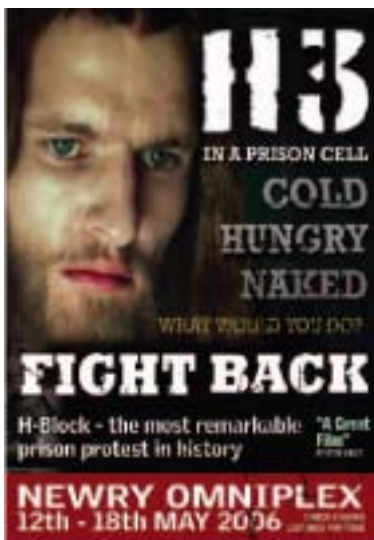


the morning. Rosie McCorley said that Coiste was very happy with the outcome of the event. "It's generally agreed that it was a huge success, probably our most successful to date. "People remarked on the qual-

ity of the debate, the easy flow of the event, the excellent audience participation, the blend of humour, craic and serious subject matter, and of course, the high standard of the accommodation. "We, as organisers, are de-

lighted to hear that participants found our event to have been enjoyable and thought-provoking and that all are looking forward to Coiste's 5th annual Scoil Samhraidh next year," Coiste's Rosie McCorley concluded.

Above left - right: Tofreasa Ní Fhearaíosa; local musicians entertain summer school participants



H3 Film showing with Loyalists

On Monday 19 June a number of republicans from the Coiste network held a showing of the film 'H3' in Tar Anall. This came about as a result of a request from a loyalist ex-prisoner who said that a number of people from his network were interested in seeing the film at a location arranged by republicans. They asked that a group of loyalists and republicans watch the film together and then have a discussion afterwards on relevant issues.

The PNB team are always open to engaging with any group expressing a desire to meet with republican ex-prisoners but we were particularly keen to take up this offer as we have previously been unsuccessful in securing any real engagements with loyalist ex-prisoners.

On the night, there were 6 republicans and 8 loyalists. The film was watched very attentively and afterwards there was a very active discussion on the issues raised in it. Imprisonment in general was discussed in a very open and honest way. It was acknowledged by all that the event was a very useful and positive one which should have happened a long time ago. It was also agreed that it should be the beginning of a process involving further engagements.





Laurence
McKaown
and Dave
Bailey

Leonard Peltier

■ On 7 July Dave Bailey, an official designated representative for the Leonard Peltier Defence Committee, was invited by Coiste to inform us of the current situation regarding the ongoing imprisonment of Leonard Peltier and to advise us on how we could assist the campaign for his release. Dave then accompanied us to Tar Anall, the ex-prisoners' centre on the Falls Road, to the unveiling of a quilt in memory of the 1981 hunger strikers.

We print in full overleaf the text of a statement sent by Leonard Peltier commemorating the hunger strike:



GREETINGS MY RELATIVES,

Again I must say 'my relatives' because we are all related in one way or another by natural design of the Creator and by our common concerns for the earth and freedom. I have to acknowledge that another year has passed since my illegal imprisonment; thirty years have gone by while I remain illegally incarcerated.

It seems that this year is one for reflection. Relatives from struggles around the world are stopping to reflect on the lives of friends, comrades, and loved ones who are now gone. During the past thirty years I have seen many people leave my life and journey to the spirit world. I have learned from the many people that have come into my life the true meaning of friendship and solidarity. With that, I must salute and address my friends, brothers and comrades in Ireland. I especially want to express my condolences to the families of the Hunger Strikers from a quarter-century ago. I want to send my warmest greetings to my friend Gerry Adams. I also want to salute each of my friends throughout Ireland that have supported me for so many years.

I pray that you will continue to lend me your support and consider me your friend.

At this time, my friends and relatives in Ireland are suffering loss, but also celebrating the memories of those from their communities who have now gone to the spirit world. 25 years ago you lost 10 young men in the prime of their lives. Men who would have been starting families or graduating from university if they'd been born into a more just society suffered in the most inhumane way possible.

When Bobby Sands died on May 5th, 1981, millions of people from around the world joined their voices together to condemn the British government that allowed him to perish. I joined my voice to theirs. I fasted in solidarity with the Hunger Strikers for forty days during that dreadful year. Fasting is something that I have done many times, when I was a free man, while participating in our sacred Sun Dance. The sufferings of our relations in Ireland are pains that we as Indian people know all too well.

Our suffering, our fasting and our struggling links us together with a common bond. That is why I say to you, there in

Ireland, you are my relatives. As your relative, let me join my thoughts, tears, and prayers with yours as you commemorate your fallen, especially those who died on Hunger Strike in 1981. My family and your families, my pain and your pains, my people's struggle and the struggles of your people are all connected... we truly are all related.

Thirty-one years ago the Lakota elders asked for help and protection from the GOON squad that was terrorizing the Lakota Nation. I, along with many others, responded to that call. I simply responded to a call to help others protect our lands, culture and traditions. I ask that you not lose focus on the real issue, which is that people suffering extreme hardships need not be suffering? Even today we see children, women and elders being murdered in Pine Ridge and Belfast, on Big Mountain in Navajo country and in the Basque country in Spain... and all in the name of justice. From Chiapas to El Salvador and all around this Mother Earth lands are being taken, cultures are being robbed of their languages, and the extermination of traditions are occurring on a daily basis.

I must share with you that, as the years



Dave
Bailey
and
Bik
McFarlane

My family and your families, my pain and your pains, my people's struggle and the struggles of your people are all connected... we truly are all related

have passed, every day I hear routinely the sounds of my cell door opening in the morning and closing at night. Yet, I have not forgotten what I was asked to do when I was asked to respond to the call our Elders sent- a cry for help. Now I once again must call on you for your help. I ask you to join your voices and efforts with mine. A young Cheyenne man by the name of Dave Bailey is representing me in Ireland and England, in an effort to highlight my case, and search for solutions in that part of the world that will eventually mean I never again have to hear the sounds of cell doors opening and closing.

I ask you to do all you can to support his efforts, my efforts, and the efforts of all Indian people. I humbly thank you for the warmth, hospitality, and support that you have shown our people over the years when they have come into your community. As you commemorate your fallen and your dead, remember that our suffering is linked to yours. We mourn with you and pray for you... as relatives.

Mitakuye Oyasin (We are all related)
In the Spirit of Crazy Horse
Leonard Peltier

The fourth Annual conference at Teach Ban June 2006

The 4th annual conference at Teach Ban in Donegal this year was attended by a diverse section of people representing many different communities throughout the island. The theme was "Identities of Choice- lifting the bloodlines of ethnicity to the lifelines of human rights".

The conference began with the opening address by Pat Colgan CEO, from the Special European Union Programmes Body who informed us as regards to funding for the future for the Community and Voluntary sector.

The theme for the first session was "A rights-based or recon-

ciliation model of peace building". The panel were introduced and we heard the views of Bernadette McAliskey South Tyrone Empowerment Programme, Pete Shirlow University of Ulster and Professor William Schabas Irish Centre of Human Rights.

This was followed by round table discussions and a question and answer session.

After lunch we were treated to a drama production, a multi media play with sound and film slides documenting " A Traveller in Progress". This was well received by the enthusiastic audience and featured traveller and former Glenroe actor, Micheal Collins. In the afternoon session there was a choice of interesting workshops. They ranged from

Women in Peace Building to Identities of Ulster (Irish and Ulster Scots).

The evening entertainment was provided by Joe McMahon (Lesser spotted Ulster) who gave a personal and humorous account of his adventures.

The second day of the conference began with Eamon McCann who also shared personal

stories and was followed by three other speakers who gave their perspective on Identities of Choice.

The first of these was Magdalena Keirdelevics from the Polish Cultural and Information Centre who gave an account of

her experiences of life in this country.

The next to speak was Ruth Taillon who talked about "A strand of the Protestant diaspora" and finally, William Temple from the Apprentice boys of Derry gave a very personal and informative talk.

The Closing address was made by Melanie Verwoerd from the Mandela Rhodes Foundation.

On a more personal note, the organisers and staff at An Teach Ban have to be congratulated for not only their choice of topics and speakers but on the entertainment, surroundings and indeed the whole atmosphere of this wonderful event. I know that both Rosie and myself look forward to the 5th Annual conference.

■ "Identities of Choice - lifting the bloodlines of ethnicity to the lifelines of human rights"

From Cuba to the H-Blocks

With the picturesque Knockatallon Mountains, Co. Monaghan, as a backdrop, the 2006 Campa Náisiúnta Óige got underway on Friday 23rd July 2006.

The venue for the event was the Sliabh Beagh Tourism Centre. Busloads of enthusiastic participants arrived throughout Friday and by the time of departing on Saturday evening, it had become yet another memorable occasion for those involved.

The youth camp was the fourth such annual event, organised by Coiste na n-Iarchimí, under the Processes of Nation Building Programme. Previous youth camps were held on the Aran Islands, just off the Galway coast, Benburb Priory in Co. Tyrone and Carlingford.

The two dominant aspects of the youth camp were the focus on Cuba on the Friday night and the 25th Anniversary of the 1981 hunger strike on Saturday. Linked to these was the election of hunger striker Kieran Doherty as T.D. for Cavan/Monaghan and his subsequent death.

Shortly after 6:00 pm events kicked off. A three-course meal set participants in good stead for the remainder of the evening and an official welcome to the area from T.D. Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin followed this. A short documentary film, detailing the life of revolutionary icon Ché Guevara

was then shown.

Former republican prisoner, Jim 'Flash' McVeigh, and a member of the Cuban-Ireland support group, Stephen McCloskey then spoke on Che's links to Ireland. The film showed the strong links between the struggle for Irish independence and the anti imperialist struggle in Cuba. Stephen encouraged participants to become involved in assisting the economic regeneration of Cuba by joining Work Brigades and travelling to the country.

As the discussion ended so too did formal political activity for that day, as those present donned their glad rags for the social end of the weekend. Barry Kerr had been booked to sing but as always a few enthusiastic participants took to the stage also.

The following morning local tour guide, Jimmy Cosgrove, took us to a bridge connecting counties Fermanagh and Monaghan. There stands a monument to republicans who frequented the area whilst they were 'on the run'. Former prisoner, Seán Lynch from Fermanagh, then gave an account of each of the volunteers named on the plaque and recalled their association with the area. Jimmy then recounted the history of the road, having been 'closed' by the British army (they blew it up) and re-opened on nu-



Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, TD with Coiste staff



From left - Pauline Martin, Laurence McKeown, Rosena Brown, Bernadette O'Hagan, Pádraigin Uí Mhurchadha



Mick Beyers and Rosie McCorley

merous occasions by the locals of the area. Following the tour we returned to the Sliabh Beagh centre. Seán then introduced a film made about local IRA Volunteer Séamus McElwaine.

Seán was a close friend of Séamas and was on active service alongside him at the time of the SAS ambush, which claimed the young life of Séamus McElwaine. Seán was lucky to have survived, having been badly wounded when shot numerous times by the SAS. The DVD recounted Séamus's life journey and was told by his friends and comrades.

Speaking at the end of the screening of the DVD Seán said, "There was nothing romantic about the armed struggle. It was tough and it was hard and thankfully we now have new opportunities and new methods to advance our politics and our struggle.

After lunch, participants heard the story of the election of former prisoner and 1981 hunger striker, Kieran Doherty TD. The story of the election trail in Monaghan and the wider campaign for the republican prisoners was told by Bernadette O'Hagan, Cllr. Pádraigin Uí Mhurchadha, who had recently been elected Deputy Mayor of Monaghan Town council and Pauline Martin. The three women spoke of their in-

put into the election campaign and urged the young people present to involve themselves in politics. Following this we had the highlight of the weekend, Lá Spóirt Kieran Doherty, re-enacting a typical school sports' day complete with egg and spoon race and sack race. We were given 'Lá Spóirt Kieran Doherty' T-Shirts which we displayed proudly throughout.

We formed into teams for the event. Ours comprised of the 'West Tyrone Contingent' as well as a female comrade from the 'South Down Compadré'. Just as we readied ourselves for the first event we were cheated as a Louth comrade (whom Tyrone GAA team had beaten that very day) took his revenge and launched a water balloon attack on the Tyrone contingent.

With this distraction we were cheated out of a final spot and with no backdoor system available, we withdrew at the semi final stage. Following the final - which the 'Belfast Workers Brigade' won - a full-blown water balloon fight broke out.

Campa Náisiúnta Óige 2006 will be remembered for the craic, and a fine mix of social political and cultural events concluding in a brilliant weekend in a brilliant weekend in Co. Monaghan. On behalf of everyone present I would like to thank Coiste. Here's to Summer 2007.

