

### **Calls for a Border Poll are divisive and unnecessary**

Increasingly, almost every issue in this country is viewed myopically through sectarian glasses with orange and green lenses.

So it is with the growing clamour for a Border Poll on a united Ireland, driven largely by Sinn Fein, and now supported by a number of new organisations, some academics, a variety of media commentators and other nationalist parties, north and south, desperate not to be left behind this wave of manufactured urgency.

The Border Poll argument is cynically presented as a 'done deal' based on a simple and dangerous concept of territorial realignment. It is, we are being told, only a matter of dotting the i's and crossing the t's.

There is no discussion about the nature of Irish society, outside vague and diversionary arguments around the optics. The Border Poll campaign has no time for, and no intention of discussing, the fundamental transformation of our social, political and economic structures. The clear but unspoken message is simple: 'Labour must wait'.

This construct is simplistically hung on a range of convenient hooks - Brexit, shifting demographics, projected census returns, threats to the Good Friday Agreement, through to 'national destiny': an indication of the manufactured nature of the arguments.

The cold, hard reality – which apparently holds little sway with the Border Pollers – is that none of these factors justify a Northern Ireland Secretary of State initiating the process unless he /she is presented with evidence that a majority of electors may choose to change the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. That condition is not yet met.

When the rhetoric is stripped away, when the concrete realities are exposed, then the border poll campaign becomes an undisguised all-class alliance designed to promote the policies of Sinn Fein and benefit the aspirations of some sections of the professional middle-classes, north and south.

This thinking, common to civic nationalists and Sinn Fein, is determined by the 'two communities' model in Northern Ireland and an appalling and dangerous arrogance that 'we' are in the ascendancy.

The argument is premised on little more than a religious headcount with the implicit assumption that 'catholic equals united Ireland' and 'protestant equals union with Britain'.

This is the worst form of cultural identity politics and ultimately it is built on foundations of sand. Worse still, the dangers of pressing a divisive nationalist agenda in a community which is already deeply divided risks being characterised as a sectarian crusade.

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What the border poll campaigners don't want to consider, and don't want raised, is the necessary discussion on the fundamental restructuring of Irish society to ensure that working people control their own destinies.

The Workers Party has always pursued and remains committed to the objective of a unitary socialist state on this island. We have long recognised that is a long term and onerous project and it can only be built on working class unity rather than the territorial unity of a united capitalist Ireland which offers no solution to the urgent problems facing working people, north and south.

It is constantly frustrated by those who see their privileged positions threatened by that outcome, but it is also thwarted by those who happily and arrogantly dismiss and disregard the million people on this island who don't want to be forced into a "united" Ireland against their wishes.

There is a real risk and potential for sectarian violence in the aftermath of a border poll – irrespective of the outcome. The people on this island, and particularly in Northern Ireland, have witnessed more than enough bloodshed, intimidation and death – but that has been the outcome of belligerent nationalism, British and Irish, for decades.

These real and ominous possibilities border poll campaigners seem content to ignore or disregard.

The unity of the working class and a fundamental transformation of our social, political and economic system remain an absolute and non-negotiable prelude to the creation of a single unitary state. Simply, hoisting the green flag will not end the misery, exploitation and oppression of workers and their families in Dublin or in Belfast.

It is incumbent upon all progressive forces in this country, on all socialists, trade unionists, democrats and anti-sectarian forces to challenge and oppose the ill-conceived clamour for a Border Poll, expose it for the shallow, sectarian scam that it is, and to continue to build the basis of working-class unity as the only secure foundation for the people of this island and beyond.

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