**FORUM SEEKS**

 **AMERICANS SUPPORT FOR**

**RE-UNITING IRELAND**

The Commodore Barry Irish Center started St Patrick’s Day week with a double header. It began with a forum held by on IRELAND’S FUTURE (IF) and finished with a Mick Moloney concert/ceilidh. The weather forecast was intimidating but not for the intrepid folk who packed the festively decorated Fireside Room and concert hall that had recently featured Joanie Madden’s CHERISH THE LADIES, America’s premier traditional Celtic music group.

The Ireland’s Future panel consisted of Ireland Senator Frances Black Chair; Maria Walsh (MEP) from Donegal; Belfast Attorney, Niall Murphy, Secretary of IF and U. S. Representative Brendan Boyle. The purpose of the organization is to promote the broadest possible participation in the debate and planning for the Irish border referendum provided for in the Good Friday Agreement. Britain’s exit from the EU and Northern Ireland’s vote to remain in the EU, now protected by the Northern Ireland Protocol, has deepened the need for transformative planning. IF believes an All-Ireland Civic assembly is necessary because of the “continuing failure of the Irish government to play an explicit and leading part in the task of nation building” and Britain’s refusal to outline criteria for the referendum.

 Murphy noted the range of issues to be addressed beginning with the wording and timing of the referendum, the legal process for implementing the results, defining a new constitution and the professional research required to define key economic issues at play in Ireland’s reunification. Congressman Boyle noted that there is a ”pragmatic middle” that consistently shows up in polls that may support for Ireland’s unity if done inclusively. He noted that addressing Irelands future in this manner needs the engagement of Dublin, London Brussels and Washington.

Questions were raised about the status of prisoners and the voice and vote of the farmers in NI. LaSalle College HS teacher Justin Harbour questioned trusting the British that have done so much to obstruct the restoration of Gaelic language, to promote an ‘amnesty’ plan no one in Ireland wants and is currently writing their own history of NI. Interested parties wishing more information may contact Ireland’s Future at contact@irelandsfuture.com and search the irelandsfuture.com website.

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