

## Óráid – Lá an Fhorógra

D'iarr Janice ormsa labhairt beagán libh inniu faoi laochra, agus labhairt faoi thábhacht na Gaeilge i gcomhthéacs 1916. Tuigimid gur thosaigh an tÉirí Amach ar Luan Cásca 1916, gur ansin a léigh ár gcomhGhaeilgeoir, Pádraig Mac Piarais, an Forógra, agus gur ansin a scaoileadh na chéad urchair san iarracht sin ar son na saoirse. Ach deirtear gur thosaigh Éirí Amach na nGael blianta roimhe leis an Athbheochan Chultúrtha. I bhfad roimh an Éirí Amach, thuig na daoine a bhunaigh eagraíochtaí nua na linne sin – an Cumann Lúthchleas Gael in 1884, Conradh na Gaeilge sa bhliain 1893, Sinn Féin i 1905 agus na daoine a thosaigh ag cur litríocht Bhéarla na hÉireann chun cinn nach cúige eile de chuid na Breataine a bhí in Éirinn, ach gur tír inti féin í – gur náisiún ann féin a bhí ionainn, muidne, an dream atá ag suí sa halla seo inniu. Rud nach dtuigeann go leor daoine ná go raibh seisear as an seachtar a shínigh Forógra na Poblachta i 1916 mar bhaill de Chonradh na Gaeilge. Ba í an Ghaeilge an spreagadh ag go leor acu, mar atá again anseo inniu.

Ní troid ar son na saoirse a bhí san Éirí Amach. Go cinnte, theastaigh saoirse ó na mná agus na fir sin. Ach bhí fíís níos leithne acu. Naoi mí roimh an Éirí Amach, thug Pádraig Mac Piarais an óráid is cáiliúla dár thug sé riamh. Bailithe le chéile ag sochraid Uí Dhonnabháin Rossa bhí mórchuid na bhfear agus na mban a bheadh mar cheannairí san Éirí Amach a bhí á phleanáil ón lá sin ar aghaidh. Labhair an Piarasach faoin gcineál Éireann a bhí uaidh. Éire a bheadh ní hamháin saor, ach Gaelach freisin, ní hamháin Gaelach ach saor chomh maith. San Fhorógra a léigh sé os comhair Ard Oifig an Phoist, bhí fir agus mná cothrom – agus ba é an Forógra an chéad cháipéis saoirse i stair an domhain a chuir fir agus mná ar chomhchéim. Thabharfaí aire do gach uile pháiste sa náisiún, rud atá scríofa go ríshoiléir ann. Agus chaithfí go cothrom le gach uile saoránach, is cuma cén reiligiún a bhí acu, cén aois iad, nó cár bh as dóibh. Daoine laochrúla a bhí sna sínitheoirí agus iontu siúd a chuir a saoil ar an líne dúinn an tseachtain stairiúil úd.

Bhí fíís acu, ach bhí said mar mhionlach. Agus mórchuid na tíre faoi gheasa ag cultúr agus nósanna thír eile ag an am, threabhaigh said leo go ciúin agus go díograiseach – iad ina mionlach i gcónaí. Ach bhí an ceart acu agus táimid bródúil astu. Ba laochra iad.

Agus is mionlach muid féin, na daoine atá ag suí sa halla seo inniu. Is mionlach sibhse a roghnaigh bhur n-oidéachas meánscoile a dhéanamh trí mheán na Gaeilge. Agus is laochra sibh. Is mionlach taobh istigh de mhionlach iad na daltaí a tháinig ó bhunscoileanna Béarla chun meánoideachas trí Ghaeilge a bhaint amach. Agus is laochra sibh. Is mionlach iad na múinteoirí a roghnaigh a bheith ag múineadh trí mheán na Gaeilge nuair nach raibh muinín iomlán acu sa teanga. Agus is laochra sibh. Is mionlach iad na múinteoirí a bhí ann sna blianta luatha den scoil a d'fhág postanna buana chun fíís

níos tábhachtaí a chur i gcrích. Sílim go mbeadh bród ar an bPiarsach, ar Mac Diarmada, ar Phluincéad, ar Mac Donnacha, ar an gConghaileach, ar Cheannt agus ar athair an Éirí Amach, Tomás Ó Cléirigh, a bheith ag suí i bhur measc inniu.

Níl tada mícheart le bheith sa mhionlach. Níl tada mícheart le bheith spreagtha ag fíis. Níl tada mícheart le bheith spreagtha ag rud níos doimhne ná saibhreas ná an saol compordach. Tá rud éigin mícheart le bheith ciúin nuair nach bhfuil rudaí i gceart. Is é sin an teachtaireacht a thug sínitheoirí an Fhorógra dúinn céad bliain ó shin.

Ach ní cáipéis stairiúil amháin é an Forógra. Is ábhar inspioráide é. Is dúshlán reatha é. Dúshlán dúinne i 2016.

Ní gá go mbeadh duine ag fail bháis le go mbeadh sí nó sé ina laoch. D'fhéadfá a rá gurb é seo an t-am le maireachtáil ar son na hÉireann seachas a bheith ag fail bháis ar a son. Laoch atá sa duine a chaitheann an saol nó fiú cuid den saol ag déanamh an rud ceart, a duine a chreideann i níos mó ná í nó é féin, a fheiceann luach níos tábhachtaí i sonas an phobail ná i meáchan a phóca. Bímis ag cuardach laochra le leanúint. Agus bímis inár laochra. Tá go leor laochra agamsa, fir is mná, Éireannaigh agus eachtrannaigh, cuid acu beo agus cuid acu ar Shlí na Fírinne, óg agus aosta. Tá duine amháin acu siúd ag siúd a thugann inspioráid domsa, a bhí sách dána chun an rud a bhí le déanamh a dhéanamh nuair a bhí gá leis, chun an chéad cúpla focal eile a rá. Ar aon dul le Pádraig Mac Piarais, bhí an fear seo sách dána le scoil lánGhaeilge a bhunú beag beann ar chomh deacair is a bheadh sé, agus bheadh saol gach éinne sa seomra an-difriúil murach é. An gcuirfeadh sibh fáilte anois roimh athair na scoile, ár bpríomhoide, Séamus Ó Ceanainn.

### **Speech – Proclamation Day**

Janice asked me to speak briefly to you today about heroes, and to talk about the importance of the Irish language in the context of 1916. We understand that the Rising started on Easter Monday 1916, that it was there our fellow Irish speaker, Pádraig Mac Piarais, read the Proclamation, and that it was there the first shots were fired in that effort for freedom. But it is said the Gael Rising years before with the Cultural Revival. Long before the Rising, the people who founded the new organisations of the day understood – the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884, Conradh na Gaeilge in 1893, Sinn Féin in 1905 and the people who started promoting the English language literature of Ireland that Ireland was not another province of Britain, but a country in her own right – that we were a nation in our own right, us, the group sitting in this hall today. Something a lot of people don't understand is that six of the seven who signed the Proclamation of the Republic in 1916 were members of Conradh na Gaeilge. Irish was the inspiration for a lot of them, as it is for us here today.

The Rising was not a fight for freedom. Sure, those women and men wanted freedom. But they had a broader vision. Nine months before the Rising, Pádraig Mac Piarais gave his most famous speech ever. Gathered together at the funeral of O'Donnavan-Rossa were the majority of the men and the women who would be leaders in the Rising which was being planned from that day onwards. Mac Piarais spoke about the kind of Ireland he wanted. An Ireland that would not only be free, but also Gaelic, not only Gaelic but also free. In the Proclamation he read before the General Post Office, men and women were equal – and the Proclamation was the first freedom document in the history of the world which put men and women on an equal footing. Every single child in the nation would be looked after, something which is clearly stated in it. And every single citizen would be treated equally, no matter what religion they had, what age they were, or where they were from. The signatories were heroic people as were those who put their lives on the line for us on that historic week.

They had a vision, but they were in the minority. With the majority of the country under the spell of the culture and ways of another country at the time, they ploughed ahead quietly and diligently – always in the minority. But they were right and we are proud of them. They were heroes.

And we ourselves are a minority, the people sitting in this hall today. You who chose to undertake your secondary school education through the medium of Irish are a minority. And you are heroes. Those who came from English language primary schools to pursue your secondary school education in Irish are a minority within a minority. And you are heroes. Those teachers who chose to teach through the medium of Irish when they were not fully confident in their ability in the language are a minority. And you are heroes. Those teachers who were there in the early days of the school, who left permanent positions to pursue a more important vision, are in the minority. I believe Mac Piarais would be proud to sit in your midst today, as would Mac Diarmada, Pluincéad, Mac Donnacha, Conghaile, Ceannt and the father of the Rising, Tomás Ó Cléirigh.

There is nothing wrong with being in the minority. There is nothing wrong with being inspired by a vision. There is nothing wrong with being inspired by something deeper than wealth or a comfortable life. There is something wrong with being quiet when things aren't right. That is the message the signatories of the Proclamation gave us one hundred years ago.

But the Proclamation isn't only a historical document. It is a source of inspiration. It is an ongoing challenge. A challenge for us in 2016.

A person doesn't need to be dying to be a hero. You could say this is the time to live on behalf of Ireland instead of dying on her behalf. A person who spends their life, or even part of their life, doing the right thing is a hero, someone who believes in more than himself or herself, who sees a greater importance in the happiness of the public than in the weight of their own pocket. We should be searching for heroes to follow. And let us be heroes. I have many heroes, men and women, Irish and foreign, some of them alive and some of them passed on, young and old. One of those who inspire me, who was bold enough to do what had to be done when it was needed, will give the next few words. As with Mac Piarais, this man was bold enough to establish a school fully in Irish with little regard for how difficult it would be, and the lives of everyone in this room would be very different if it weren't for him. Will you please welcome now the father of the school, our principal, Séamus Ó Ceanainn.