

# IRELAND NOW

## EDITORIAL

*The Republic* is the journal of the Ireland Institute for Historical and Cultural Studies. The Ireland Institute was established in 1996 with the objective of promoting republican ideas and thinking, and self-determination (in the broadest sense) in Ireland. What concerns the Institute are the republican principles of liberty, equality and fraternity; democracy, citizenship and internationalism.

This journal is part of the programme to further these objectives. It will be a forum for serious thinking and new approaches; theory, debate and research will all find a place. While the journal will promote standards of quality and excellence, it is not intended to be exclusive or élite. Republican ideas and principles will shape and inform the contents of the journal.

*The Republic* will bring this approach to bear on a wide range of contemporary issues. In this first issue contemporary Ireland is held up to the scrutiny of this perspective and while republicanism has often been misunderstood or misrepresented in modern Ireland, the articles here show the continuing relevance and potential of its ideals and principles. In five commissioned essays the contributors address aspects of culture, history-writing, economics, politics and international issues in an Irish context. There are also six shorter pieces from invited non-governmental organisations (NGOs) dealing with some of their concerns.

COLM RAPPLE argues that a lack of leadership and vision is leading to greater inequality, more exclusion and less democratic control in the economy; he sees a need to reassert a positive role for the state in economic management and for greater use of what democratic control remains with the government.

The fragmentation and lack of opportunity for collective discourse and action in contemporary society dismays THEO DORGAN; but he sees hope in the resistance strategies of individual poets and the many points of social interaction in everyday life.

LIAM O'DOWD asks how ideals of democracy, sovereignty and independence can be defended when economic and political structures are becoming increasingly globalised; he envisages a role, however, for the promotion of these ideals in alerting people to the problems associated

with globalisation, and in finding democratic solutions.

The premise that both states in Ireland have failed to deliver in terms of equality, independence and democracy is the starting point for KEVIN MCCORRY; he proposes a new political formation to advance a radical alternative agenda and including republicans, socialists and others.

MARY CULLEN describes a rich tradition of feminist ideas and involvement which has been excluded from the writing of history at some cost to movements for democracy and equality; she argues that renewed dialogue between feminists, republicans and socialists can reinvigorate these ideas and movements.

Modern republicanism can trace its origins back to the Enlightenment and the eighteenth-century revolutions in France and America. The articles here make clear that its ideals and principles retain their vitality and validity today. Certainly the contributors found the task we set them challenging: how to address contemporary issues from the perspective of republican ideas. Equally there is no easy agreement about the precise content of each of these ideals and principles. Democracy, sovereignty, equality, independence and the rest, are ideas as hotly contested today as in the past. But what emerges from these essays is a conviction that republican thinking and ideas can provide an important critical perspective on the contemporary world, point to its shortcomings and problems, and help suggest ways forward.

In future issues of *The Republic* we will be inviting contributions to help us develop and expand this approach. Over time a deeper understanding and wider recognition of the importance of republican ideas can result. Republican ideals will themselves be developed, refined and invigorated through challenge and debate, and a broad-ranging republican critique of contemporary and historical issues may emerge.

These are the tasks that we have set ourselves. We hope that readers of *The Republic* will participate in the argument and discussion that will follow. Through this debate we can find ways forward to the possible republics the contributors in this issue point towards.

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