

***IRISH CITIZENS,  
WE MUST EMPOWER OURSELVES!***

*The Control of the State by Vested Interests is the  
Source of Ireland's Problems*

*Empowerment of the Citizens is the First Step  
to Establishing Democracy*

*Only Democracy will Ensure the Needs  
and Wellbeing of All*

# An Chomhdháil Phobail | The People's Convention

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***We are not Powerless!***

***Let us Act as the Sovereign People  
that we are!***

*In any crisis, there is always a single defining factor through  
which we can take control of the situation*

***Today that factor is the Empowerment of the Citizens***

*Political parties are simply private member clubs  
of vested interests who rule over the people*

We submit these ideas and solution to the people and to all organisations that  
are striving to further the interests of the Irish people

- The People's Convention  
November 2011

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## **Introduction – The Irish People and Our State**

The Irish people are at once an ancient and a fully modern people.

We are well educated, hardworking and steeped in democratic tradition. We are known the world over for our generosity and our solidarity with other peoples in their times of crisis.

As a people, we have been tested harshly by history. Each time we have proven resilient and have rallied to re-assert our rights. The deep seated desire to live in a free and fair society and to live in harmony with other peoples is ingrained in our national make-up.

As a sovereign people, we are the rightful masters of our own destiny and of all the natural and other resources of our territory. This right of sovereignty exists without restriction; it cannot be given away by anyone, whether by treaty, by forfeit, by conquest or otherwise.

Earlier generations have defined and asserted our sovereign rights, our community, our nationality and our identity. We have had some success in the past, but our national advance has never resulted in the empowerment of the people.

The only legitimate reason for the existence of the State is to ensure that every person's needs are met and that each can achieve their fullest potential and legitimate aspirations.

It is not the role of the State to grant us our rights. The State exists so that we may assert our rights and exercise them – it is our servant. The citizens must direct the State and decide its policy and laws; it is the people who give it legitimacy, not the other way around.

The people, its citizens, do not control the State - we face today's challenges in this context.

Today, a new type of crisis is upon us, threatening us in new ways, with grave consequences for individuals and whole sections of society. It is possible that it will affect generations to come.

The one factor which will give us control over our current situation, and the future, is the empowerment of the citizens, not just in words or aspiration, but in practice.

If we empower ourselves, we will overcome this crisis too.

# 1. The Issue – A People Ruled Over Rather than Ruling

In the period since the onset of the debt and banking crisis in 2008, a series of extraordinary decisions have been made in the name of the Irish people:

- The IMF/ECB/EU has been allowed to take over managing our national budgets.
- Tens of billions of Euro have been paid to bailout national and international bond holders/investors who recklessly gambled fortunes.
- The National Pension Reserve Fund has been liquidated as part of the policy to treat private debt as part of the State's sovereign debt, even though much of it was in fact insured.
- State companies are to be sold off in a depressed market (on the cheap in other words) to raise funds to pay for the bailout.
- The working population have had severe cutbacks in pay and pensions and a variety of levies and charges were imposed. More cutbacks, charges, levies and new taxes are being prepared in further budgets.
- Neglected, the domestic economy has been starved of credit, leading to business closures, mass unemployment and immigration.
- Decisions made mean that vital public services in health and social care have been slashed.

The so-called '*years of plenty*' were only a mirage. They did not eradicate poverty nor put in place basic child care, education, health and other services, neither did they develop our domestic resources or economy. The ten years before 2008 was a period of massive gambling by the financial sector. This drove the property and infrastructure markets into false expansion and inflated pricing, leaving businesses and householders with unsustainable debt.

The decisions that were made in the lead up to the crisis and since then have been made in our name. However, we were never afforded the opportunity to decide on any of the policies that are having such disastrous consequences now.

Likewise, we were never asked if we wanted to sign over our natural resources

to exploitation by private companies – mostly foreign – on terms which are amongst the worst in the world. The same occurred in the EEC negotiations which effectively surrendered our vast fisheries to exploitation by everyone except our own Irish fishermen.

In regard to the EU - when we rejected the Nice and Lisbon treaties, we were brow beaten into re-voting on the same issues until we got it right.

The powers-that-be tell us that we have the right to vote for a government at the time of General Elections. But look what happened after General Election 2011, we voted to remove the last government placing our trust in the promises of the so-called opposition parties.

Once in power, these parties reneged on the policies that they fought the election on. In opposition they opposed the bailout of the bondholders, set their face against the closure of hospitals, cuts in welfare, increased income tax and so on. Now they have adopted the self-same policies of the previous government that were rejected at the polls.

Not only does the will of the people not determine State policy in Ireland but the State is not subject to the supervision of the electorate either. Not only did the regulators fail to control the financial institutions but they actually collaborated in the abuse.

The decisions that are made in our name are made by a handful of powerful people and the Dáil is used to rubber stamp them. We are openly told that the IMF is in town and we must do their bidding.

We live in a state in which we, the citizens, are ruled over rather than ruling.

## 2. The Cause – Private Member Clubs of Vested Interests

From the beginning the Dáil has framed and passed laws to ensure that the selection and election of public representatives would be dominated by political parties. These political parties have come to represent the powerful vested interests that control our state.

These same vested interests own the financial institutions and own or control the print and broadcast media which played a huge role in inflating the property bubble; and own the estate agencies and the legal and audit/accountancy firms that fed off it.

The political parties are nothing more than private member clubs of these same vested interests.

Thus a false and illusory system of ‘*government*’ and ‘*opposition*’ groupings in the Dáil has been created. They have instituted the reprehensible ‘*whip*’ system to ensure that elected members of these private clubs only vote as instructed – even when it violates their own conscience as individuals and, likely as not, they have even failed to attend the debate on the proposed legislation.

It doesn’t matter what they put in place by way of laws because enforcement of the law is very much a matter of whether it protects these vested interests or not.

Under this system of political parties we have:

- Massive fraud amounting to billions and no one is in jail.
- Mismanagement of the State and economy; not just failure of supervision but actual collusion by the regulators. No one is in jail.
- Shameful abuse of countless women and children and men in State or private institutions under State supervision, and no officials are in jail.

We are ruled over by a cabal<sup>1</sup> of political parties of vested interests.

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1. A *cabal* is a group of people united in some close design together; usually to promote their private views and/or interests in a church, state, etc. often by intrigue.

### **3. The Solution – Implement the Constitution End the rule of Political Parties**

So the matter is clear. We need to end the rule over us, the citizens, by this system of political parties of narrow interests.

They play out a game of government and opposition in the Dáil but on all the critical questions they actually collaborate in implementing unjust policies. This is proven time and again whenever they swap places after a general election.

These parties who have ruled since the foundation of the State know that they are deeply unpopular. They know that people are demanding change and reform. They are even bringing forward proposals for reform but not one such proposal has as its aim the empowerment of the people.

To achieve the change that is required, we need no new law, no referendum, and no reforms as such. We, the electorate, simply have to implement the basic law of the State, Bunreacht na hÉireann, to end the rule of political parties.

#### **We must change the way we elect our representatives to the Dáil.**

Bunreacht na hÉireann, Article 16.2.1° says: *“Dáil Éireann shall be composed of members who represent constituencies determined by law.”*

We must implement this key provision of the Constitution – by electing people who will *“represent constituencies”* - not those representing political parties, and not independent individuals who represent themselves – if we want to empower ourselves as citizens.

We must organise ourselves on a constituency basis to select candidates from our community who will undertake to seek and carry a mandate on all questions to the Dáil. In this way we can ensure that the creation and implementation of policy and supervision of the State will finally come under the control of the citizens.

In this way we can end the dictate of political parties and stop the domination of the State and our lives by vested interests and their private member clubs.

## 4. The People's Convention – An Organisation of All Citizens

The solution requires that the people establish their own organisation, one completely different in character to what has gone before.

In November 2010 a group of citizens took the initiative<sup>2</sup> to create this organisation of electors. It is called The People's Convention (as Gaeilge: An Chomhdháil Phobail, CPPC for short).

Uniquely, The People's Convention has been conceived as a single organisation of all voters through which we can empower ourselves. Through this one organisation citizens will **Select – Elect – Mandate – Supervise – Recall** our constituency representatives. In this way the citizens become rulers of the State.

There is no qualification for membership of this constituency body, other than being an elector, membership is automatic. This too is unique because, unlike political parties, nobody has to agree with any policy position to participate with full and equal rights in The People's Convention. Neither does anyone have to take up the politics of giving and receiving favours, which is the hallmark of political parties. In this way the broadest possible basis of unity is established; everyone is united on a simple democratic basis - around the exercise of the rights of citizens and our entitlement.

The most important feature of The People's Convention is the fact that it allows us, the citizens, to play a full role in the life of the State and not just at election time.

This is how we become empowered.

Before elections we chose suitable candidates to stand; after elections we mandate our representatives on all policy matters – budgets, treaties and laws – which have been formulated either in the Dáil or in the constituencies by the people themselves. During the life of the Dáil, The People's Convention will supervise the implementation of the adopted programme and if necessary they will recall those representatives who fail to fulfil their obligations.

This will also put an end to the divisive nonsense that sets so-called national and local issues against each other. The people have needs that must be fulfilled at various levels of the State - through The People's Convention we can ensure policies that will fulfil all those needs.

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2. See Appendix E1

## 5. How it Works

The People's Convention needs to be established in every constituency as a political organisation of all electors - through which the people will exercise their democratic right to direct State affairs at national and local level. It is not just for election time. The People's Convention is active before, during and after elections; it organises the discussions and votes on policy issues to mandate the constituency representatives; and crucially it supervises and checks up on the implementation of the policies adopted.

**Select Citizen Candidates:** In any election the first democratic act is the selection of candidates. These should be people we can trust to act as constituency representatives without fear or favour. Proposals for names of candidates will be discussed in advertised public meetings in school, town and parish halls held in all electoral wards. This will lead up to a constituency convention or vote to finalise a list of candidates. Each candidate will sign the solemn Undertakings<sup>3</sup> to uphold the right of the people to direct state policy and to discharge the mandate as decided by constituency vote on the issues that arise during the life of the Dáil or local Council.

Each constituency decides its policy position in accordance with the wishes of the electorate of that particular constituency. Each also decides for itself who should be its candidates, there is no headquarters imposing candidates or policies.

**Elect The People's Convention Candidates as Dáil or Local Authority Representatives:** The People's Convention will work to have their candidates elected in preference to those selected in private by the political parties, who have shown themselves to be opposed to citizen empowerment.

**Mandate /Initiate Policy:** After the election, The People's Convention will organise discussion in the constituency on every proposal and will organise votes to instruct the constituency representatives on their mandate on each issue. Every representative is expected to act in accordance with the constituency mandate, whether or not they were originally selected by The People's Convention as a candidate in the election.

Elected representatives will play a role in the discussion by way of provision of information and background for proposals formulated in the Dáil or locally All forums for discussion such as internet and paper publications as well as town hall style meetings will be used.

*3 See appendix E2 for the wording of the candidates undertaking.*

While initiation of policy through mandating of elected representatives will effectively return the right of initiative to the people - the Constitution must be amended to restore the right to call referendums<sup>4</sup>.

**Check Up/Supervise all State agencies:** The Peoples Convention will follow up to ensure that mandates given are followed and above all to check on the implementation of the policies – budgets, laws, treaties – that were adopted, and to check on the performance of state institutions..

Any public representative who fails in their duty of service to the people will be subject to local referendum of recall and asked to resign their seat and all public offices in accordance with the solemn undertakings they signed as candidates.

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*4. In the original Free State Constitution the people had the right of initiative which meant that they could propose new laws and call referendums on issues of concern to them. This was removed in the later Bunreacht despite widespread protests.*

## 6. Building the Organisation

The task now is to build The People's Convention in every constituency and in every part (local electoral wards) of each constituency. To coordinate the effort, there is a need to create a National Committee<sup>5</sup>. Building the organisation requires individuals who see this necessity; and step forward and begin the work in their area. The National Committee will do what it can to assist.

Each constituency organisation of The People's Convention needs to create a committee to organise the meetings, publicity, fundraising and votes on selection of candidates and policy matters. The function of the constituency committee is to organise and facilitate, not to direct policy discussions. The initiative for policy can come from anybody or any organisation of the people, and of course from the Dáil or local authority deliberations and proposals.

It is inevitable that there will be those who will say that with all this discussion, meetings and taking of votes people will not have time to participate and also live their lives.

There are two points to be made here:

- Firstly, it is necessary. We have been effectively denied democratic control over State policy for 90 years, the political parties do not represent us or our interests. None of them want to empower citizens. In fact, they are planning to make it more difficult for citizens to exercise our rights and to further erode national sovereignty. Only we, ourselves, can bring about our own empowerment.
- Secondly, so many of us already devote huge amounts of time in voluntary and other work made necessary by the failure of the State to provide for people's needs or in protesting at the many attacks on our rights and livelihood. If we are able to use our energy in a positive way, to build the basis for solving these problems, then much of the effort that goes into volunteer work or protests will become unnecessary.

The People's Convention is neither a reactive organisation nor a protest movement. It is a new way to organise ourselves to rule our country without being under the thumb of vested interests or the political parties that have wrecked the country.

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5. See E3 which sets out the basic structures and the Draft Rules

## **7. From Each According to their Ability and Means**

The first step begins with ourselves. Just like the saying that a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step, so the creation of an organisation of all citizen voters begins with individuals who see the necessity to get organised.

Everyone has plenty of obligations in life – work, caring for others, studies and so on. So the effort must be to reduce the burden by everyone carrying the bit of the load that they can manage. We all vary in our abilities and have varying amounts time and energy resources. But it is possible for everyone to make a contribution for the betterment of all - and all such contributions are needed.

We begin by empowering ourselves.

We need to make a conscious decision to empower ourselves, to reject the concept of being ruled over, and to engage with our fellow citizens to bring about change.

Sign-up and register with The Peoples Convention, join the discussions and help build the movement. Talk to your neighbours, work colleagues, fellow students and call a local meeting, starting with a neighbourhood gathering. By example we will create the conditions for others to follow.

Every organisation of the people – political, social, cultural, and campaigning – should likewise take a decision to mobilise in support of this movement to empower the people

This document is available in some quantities to kick start work in your area and constituency. More can be produced as funds are made available from each constituency as each gets organised. There is no American philanthropist to fund this movement, only ourselves the citizens. Likewise there are no organisers readily available to go to every area of the country to do the work in them. Those of us who have developed this initiative are actively pursuing it in our own constituencies; we are happy to share experiences and help in any way we can. We have developed various tools and resources, especially this Pamphlet, the website, Twitter feed and the Facebook page.

Some hundreds of citizens have signed up and expressed an interest in The People's Convention throughout the country.

Join in! Contact information and website are inside the front cover.

*Ní neart go cur le chéile*

**Donate to assist the work of The Peoples Convention:**

Funds are needed to help the development of CPPC, please donate whatever you can, however big or small it will go to good use.

Funds are needed to cover the costs of printing, postage, Internet development, meeting rooms etc.

Donation can be made by cheque payable to "*The Peoples Convention*" and posted to our address (on the inside cover of this pamphlet).

Donations can also be lodged directly to the bank account at:

Bank,                   AIB Bank, 66 South Mall, Cork, Ireland.  
A/C Name:       The Peoples Convention  
A/C number:   32137079  
Sort Code:       93-63-83

Donations can also be made online via Credit Card / Paypal, please visit our website at <http://www.cppc.ie/donate>



This section  
Contains a number of articles about  
Issues that People raised in the discussions  
around Empowerment,  
as well as the  
Candidate Undertakings and  
Draft Rules of CPPC



## **Appendix A: Generation of Policy**

The People's Convention as an organisation has only one policy: democracy, how to secure it, how to exercise it and how to defend it.

The role of The People's Convention is to create the means and provide the forums for citizens to formulate the people's policies on all issues. When the citizens of a constituency wish to express their opinion, select candidates, call a referendum, even publish draft laws, they will do so through The People's Convention.

### **Will there be divisions in The People's Convention on matters of policy?**

Yes and no. Yes there will always be differences of opinion on how society should proceed on any matter. But these differences of opinion should not lead to divisions amongst the people themselves - differences can contribute to finding the best solutions to problems and opportunities for advancement.

The fundamental approach to all matters of State or social policy, which may be properly a matter for regulation by the community, should be that the aspirations and potential of every individual can be realised to the maximum. Therefore we should try to create the means to fulfil these aspirations.

If we make a policy in any area that should prove to be inadequate or contrary to the needs of the people then we can initiate new proposed legislation and make the appropriate changes without having to wait for a General Election.

The roots of many of the social problems in our society and behind the recent riots in England, for example, are to be found in the sense of powerlessness, alienation, lack of entitlement or stake in one's own society. This is particularly felt by the youth and not just those suffering from deprivation and poverty. The People's Convention will encourage all, especially our youth, to participate in the exercise of citizen's power.

Even though the right to vote is limited at the moment to those 18 and over, progressive opinion is that a 16 year old is mature enough to exercise their franchise.

## **Appendix B: Role of Political Parties**

At the moment everything in Ireland seems to be upside down.

The current political system is one of rule over the people by a system of political parties. These parties do not just implement the policies of the powers-that-be at home in Ireland but when they lose their way they simply bow to the dictate of more powerful foreign powers-that-be - the interests of the few are equated with the interest of the people as a whole.

There is no basis for the idea that we, the people, should be *'given'* or *'granted'* our democratic rights by political parties or a government made up of political parties.

With the political parties, the rights of citizens are ignored but the so-called rights of bond holders and other gamblers are protected. Private investor debts have become sovereign debts by a sleight of hand.

Everything is reduced to the language of the market, people do not matter. Citizens are referred to as *"customers"* and *"clients"* by the State agencies.

The political parties justify their existence by claiming to be the creators of policy to meet the needs of the people, society and the State. But in reality we, the people, already have those basic policies which, simple stated, are for schools, hospitals, child care, infrastructure, care of our aged, business supports and a sustainable economy that engages the skills of all our people and provides for our needs.

It is not policies we are lacking but the implementation of measures to make a reality of them.

### **How did this come about?**

From the beginning the Dáil was transformed into a cabal of political parties of vested interests. By use of the Constitutional provision which says that the Dáil should legislate for how elections are held, a system in favour of political parties (and their backers) was developed and thus the Constitution was subverted.

They even managed to remove the rights of the people to initiate policy and call a referendum on any matter that was a part of the original Free State Constitution.

It is the aim of The People's Convention to seek the removal of all laws which place the system of political parties in the ascendancy over the people.

### **Have political parties no rights then?**

Political parties are an expression of the right of free association and organisation of like-minded citizens in the society to advocate any democratic policy for the advance of society or, even more narrowly, their own advancement or some section of society whom they may represent.

The rights of political parties should be recognized and protected in so far as they are an expression of a right of citizens, but not to the detriment of the rights of all citizens, the majority of whom do not subscribe to their organisations.

No political party has as its objective the empowerment of the people. None currently accepts the principle of selection, election, recall, mandate, control and supervision by the citizens – therefore they are fundamentally undemocratic, irrespective of their stated policies.

We should not allow such narrow organisations, albeit of fellow citizens, to have the final say in the affairs of our State.

### **Do political parties have any legitimate function in the life of the State and its citizens?**

They may do, but this function must be understood for what it is (in its limitations) and given its proper place, recognizing that each party is proceeding from a narrow position.

Political parties can inform the debate, can carry out research and publish opinions to enrich the conversations and debates that take place amongst the citizens on how to direct our affairs.

### **So, should we have no politicians, no political leaders then?**

If we want to ensure that politics truly serves the interests of the people, we the citizens must become the politicians<sup>6</sup> with each playing our part, according to our ability and means, in deciding and implementing policy at all levels of the State, local and national.

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6. The (Greek) word "politics" means "of, by or relating to the citizens".

We should oppose the doctrinaire “*we need strong leaders*” thinking that is often brought up at times of crisis. This is the thinking that is put about by the powers-that-be when they want to foist their party political system and their leaders on us, we do not need dictators, benign or otherwise.

Leadership is going to emerge from policy debated and adopted in Convention which binds people to a common purpose. The people will elect office holders to carry out these policies and will check up on its implementation. This is exercising leadership. The role of any individual is subservient to the effort of the people acting through their Convention.

## Appendix C: The ‘European Project’ and Sovereignty

The coalition Government has promised “*major constitutional change*” and is already putting in place plans for a “*Convention*” expected to take place during 2012. Already we have had two referendums to amend Bunreacht na hÉireann, many more are expected in the coming few years to give effect to the proposed changes already announced.

This Constitutional Review is being advanced in the guise of ending “*crony government*” and the “*corruption*” of the past. But disguised in this so-called reform is another agenda, one that was not set by the Irish people or even in this country, it is an agenda handed down from Europe.

No reform on the agenda of the European or Irish powers-that-be has as its objective the empowerment of the people - in fact the very opposite is true.

The movement towards tighter political integration set in motion by the Maastricht, Nice and the Lisbon treaty changes, known as the ‘*European Project*’, is marching on. Already about 75% of our laws come directly from the EU and discussions are ongoing to extend this even further into areas previously excluded, such as our taxation and industrial policy - such extension of EU powers is expected to proceed without reference to the people at all.

**The proposed ‘reforms’ include:** National List Voting, Fewer TD’s, a Petitions system, Unelected Legislators, Enhanced Committee powers etc. More detail on these are available via the internet at [http://cppc.ie/constitutional\\_review](http://cppc.ie/constitutional_review) - citizens need to discuss these questions with full information.

The notions to abolish or reform the Seanad are proposals being made in a vacuum. They are a distraction to quieten disaffection with the entire corrupt political system – it is no more than ‘*a bone to the dog*’.

The real danger in these proposals is that they will distance the electorate from the limited mechanics of power that we currently have and concentrate even more power in the hands of the private member clubs in Dublin and Europe.

The plan, stemming from the Lisbon Treaty, is to drive the ever increasing political union of Europe, in other words a United States of Europe, and put an end to the last vestiges of our Sovereignty.

## Appendix D: The ‘Reform’ Movement Hides what is Necessary

There have been many hundreds of new organisations created by thousands of concerned people to address some aspect or another of the current situation or even to propose an overall solution. Many initiatives have been taken with new action groups, campaigns, protests and resistance movements springing up, with not a few new political parties also.

Reform is the order of the day.

The mantra of ‘*reform*’ has even been adopted by the powers-that-be and their political parties. However, the reforms they have in mind are to lessen even that political engagement with the system that citizens have had until now. They are hell bent on using the crisis and the appetite for agitation and reform to drive forward the ‘*European Project*’.

Many so-called reforms are being peddled in place of, and to wreck, the simple demand of the people for empowerment.

All talk of ‘*left alternatives*’ or ‘*there is a better way*’ simply continues the system of political party dictate by posing a new ‘*fairer*’ variant of what we already have or leading us on the path of pointless protests, petitions, and vacuous discussion about political or democratic reforms, none of which have as their objective the empowerment of the citizens of this country.

Any reforms to ‘*increase engagement*’ or ‘*increase participation*’ which do not amount to unfettered empowerment of the citizens are simply attempts to prop up the current system of party political rule.

We do not want to be simply ‘*consulted*’ by party politicians or the civil or local public servants. We do not want to persuade the government of the value of fulfilling our needs. We are neither ‘*clients*’ nor ‘*customers*’, as the state bureaucracy insultingly terms us - reducing all citizens to market commodities.

We as a people have aspirations on every front, all of which are legitimate, which can be met because our country is rich and we are resourceful and cultured. Every person has the right to expect that not only their needs are met but that their fullest potential and dreams can also be fulfilled.

We only lack one thing – empowerment of the citizens – to achieve all.

No reforms advocated by the Dáil parties or even the new fledging parties or other organisations have as their aim the unfettered control of the State

by its citizens. In other words they are not designed to empower the people. Most will result in further disenfranchising the electorate, consolidating the dominance of the political party system. These *'reforms'* are akin to tinkering with the peripheral aspects and the mechanism of elections and representation. They will do nothing whatsoever to put the people in charge and to put in place policies that favour the people.

### **Will The People's Convention be running campaigns and protests to call for new State policy?**

The People's Convention does not dissuade anyone from raising their voice or organising against the denial of their rights. But it is important that the precious energy of the people is not dissipated in pointless protests or gestures. For example, the general advice from some quarters in advance of the Irish Congress of Trade Union's mass demonstration on November 27th 2010 declared that it was *"our last chance"* at making a protest in advance of the forthcoming draconian budget. In which case why protest if it is going to be that meaningless?

Similarly, the *'We the Citizens'* road show had the intention of showing how a *"Public Forum Would Make the Coalition's Life a Lot Easier"* as if the issue is one of hardship for a government rather than the deprivations being suffered by the people.

We should, by all means, resist every curtailment of our democracy and all attacks on the welfare of citizens but above all we must take urgent steps to empower the citizens of this country. We should not be diverted by exercises which *"march us up the hill and march us down again"*, which are cloaked in the language of *'democracy'* or *'left'* phraseology. Empowerment of the citizens of this country is the order of the day!

No proposal of the political parties will result in the empowerment of the electorate and place decision making on all matters in the hands of the citizens. No Dáil party, in all their thousands of pages of policies, holds out such a simple and democratic proposal as the empowerment of the citizens.

The various ideas that they float are just tinkering with the forms of representation such as reducing the number of Dáil representatives, or abolishing the Seanad, or making TD's sign in to work! There is undoubtedly need for reform of many things, but any reforms that do not empower the electorate are illusions – so much smoke and mirrors to confuse people and obscure reality.

Notwithstanding the many areas in which people would like to see change, first and foremost is the issue of how we select and elect candidates to represent us in the Dáil; how those representatives carry the mandate of the constituents on each matter to be decided in the Dáil; how we ensure that the policies that are adopted are implemented by government and officials; and how we ensure that all State officials are answerable for their actions.

There is a great demand for political reform from the people of Ireland in the wake of the economic collapse and the affect it is having on the lives of citizens. Not surprisingly the forces which have visited the present disaster upon us are not behind in donning the mantel of reform.

This has been seized upon by the political parties of vested interests as another opportunity to turn reality on its head. Their proposals for political reform are accompanied now by an increasingly deafening din for *“fiscal restraint”*, *“living within our means”*, *“ending abuse of the welfare system”*, *“showing the world that we can pay our way”*, *“paying our national debts”* and so on.

In other words they are trying to turn the table on the electorate whom they accuse of voting for the previous set of policies which created the property bubble and subsequent collapse and has led to so-called unsustainable expenditure in the areas of social need – health, welfare and education.

## **Appendix E1: Formation of The People's Convention**

A group of citizens, from all walks of life, including professionals and business people, launched The People's Convention late in 2010.

They were stirred into action by the shameful actions of the powers-that-be and their political parties in heaping the burden of the all sided crisis (social, economic and banking) on the people. The Dáil political parties of the status quo are united in their collaboration and cooperation in facing down the just resistance of the people to the so-called '*burden sharing*' measures and '*political reform*' programmes.

The creation of The People's Convention does not have as its aim anything other than the empowerment of the citizens by creating a mass political organisation of citizens without pre-condition.

The initiative for The People's Convention has come from a number people of middle age, some of whom have small businesses and various other walks of life, long-time friends who have been involved for many decades in the social, community or political life of the community in different parts of the country.

Reflecting on the serious situation that the people of Ireland are facing since 2008 and the abject failure of the parties of the status-quo to offer anything but hardship they resolved to come up with an initiative that addresses the crucial issue of the lack of empowerment of the people because they concluded that only the people themselves can bring forward solutions and pro-people policies on any matter.

Having analysed the role of political parties of all types with their narrow basis for membership, the elevation of the role of their leaders, and their failure to empower the people as decision makers and rulers of the country, the group of friends decided that only a mass organisation of all electors (without pre-condition) would suffice to direct the affairs of State.

## **Appendix E2: Candidate Undertakings**

A solemn declaration on accepting nomination for election as a candidate of The Peoples Convention:-

On nomination as a candidate of The Peoples Convention I declare:

Sovereignty in Ireland rests with the people of Ireland, all authority derives from the people and all political, social and economic affairs must be directed according to the will of the people.

1. As a delegate to Dáil Éireann, I accept that the people are the rightful decision makers on all matters of state policy and that such right of decision making exists before, during and after elections.
2. As a delegate to Dáil Éireann I accept the responsibility of bringing the principal points of all legislation before the Dáil back to the constituency for consideration and decision by the people.
3. I accept that it is the right of the people to have their say on any proposed legislation, treaties or international agreements and that I will look for and accept the mandate on how to vote in relation to all matters. I regard that this solemn undertaking as a matter of conscience for me and though a particular mandate may on occasion not be in accordance with my personally held beliefs I consider discharging the people's mandate as a binding undertaking which takes precedence.
4. I accept the right of the electorate to recall me as an elected representative if they so decide and to consequently resign from the Dáil and any offices held.
5. I undertake to support the re-introduction of the right of citizens to call both local constituency based and national binding referenda on any matter.
6. I undertake to support the reduction of the age for voting to 16 years.
7. I undertake to work to ensure the strengthening of The Peoples Convention throughout the country as the means by which the people may exercise their will in our democracy.

Signed and witnessed before a publically held meeting of the constituency selection convention on:-

Signed by Candidate,

witnessed by Chairperson of Selection Convention and dated.

## **Appendix E3: Draft Rules & Constitution**

### **An Chomhdháil Phobail | The People's Convention (CPPC)**

#### **Preamble**

We are a country of great natural wealth and resources, we have abundance of all of the primary sources of food and we have the knowledge to exploit it. We are a highly cultured people who have contributed much to world civilization - in the arts, sciences and politics, over some thousands of years. As a people, we are known the world over for our empathy with, and freely given practical assistance, to peoples facing crisis of all kinds - famine, natural disasters, war and persecution.

Since the foundation of the state in 1922, the Irish electorate has laboured under a political regime which has seen our sovereignty usurped by a system of contending political parties who have acted in favour of vested interests, both national and foreign. The entitlement of the people themselves to initiative and to call a referendum was a provision of the first Constitution, but from the beginning the powers-that-be frustrated the exercise of this right, and then removed it altogether.

The electoral system has been reduced to a choice between parties with no discernible policy differences, who have fundamentally sold our birth right to vested interests and in the case of our mineral, oil and gas resources, virtually given them away.

CPPC's aim is to renew the electoral system through a movement by which the people choose candidates of good character and competence. Such selection of candidates takes place in each constituency before the actual voting in the election. We believe that the people do not need political party representatives in Dáil Éireann. We need directly selected, elected members of our communities who will carry the constituency mandate on all laws, budgets and treaties before they are voted upon. Such representatives will seek a mandate on each issue, and will be subject to recall if they fail in their high responsibilities.

Conventions will be established in every Constituency so that people can exercise their sovereign rights directly, and not just for a few minutes at each election, but on a day to day and week to week basis - continuously. The reason for existence and main objective of CPPC is to create the means for the people of Ireland to exercise control over our democratic systems and processes.

## **1 - The People's Organisation**

1.1 An Chomhdháil Phobail I The People's Convention (CPPC) is a political organisation of the entire Irish electorate<sup>7</sup>.

1.2 The guiding principle of CPPC is that sovereignty in Ireland rests with the people of Ireland and that all affairs of State must be subject to the will of and decision by the people.

## **2 - Motto & Emblems**

2.1 Our motto is: "*Secure, Exercise and Defend our Democracy!*"

2.2 Organisation name & acronym are An Chomhdháil Phobail I The People's Convention (CPPC)

2.3 The colours are gold-ochre and turquoise-green (RGB 189,79,25 and RGB 0,73,73), Font 'Arial Round Bold' – Name and Acronym colours are reversed.

## **3 - The Aims of CPPC**

3.1 The purpose of CPPC is to ensure the broadest democratic involvement in exercising our sovereignty as a people.

3.2. We seek to ensure the practical exercise of our democratic rights in selecting, electing and instructing our elected representatives on all affairs of the Irish State, its internal and external relations, including the provisions contained in the national budgets and governing our international relations and treaties and conventions to which we are signatories.

3.3 We will create a People's Convention in every constituency.

3.4 CPPC will organise fund raising, establish administrative supports, acquire technology and equipment, conduct advertising and anything else deemed necessary or helpful to the achievement of these aims.

3.5 CPPC will cooperate with every democratic organisation of the people (cultural, political, and social) to achieve effective democracy in Ireland.

3.6 CPPC will not endorse any candidate unless they have been properly selected by the Constituency convention and have formally accepted the candidate undertakings in section 9 below.

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*7. CPPC is not a political party. It will seek registration, but not as a party, so that the slate of candidates chosen by the People's Conventions in every constituency is identified on the ballot paper as candidates of CPPC, in accordance with the current electoral laws. However, it may be that the exclusion of people's organisations from the registration process will have to be challenged in the Supreme Court.*

#### **4 - CPPC has one Policy**

4.1 CPPC does not set forth policy on any matters other than those that ensure and safeguard our democracy and the exercise of that democracy.

4.2 It is the right of the people to decide all policy matters that are properly the business of the State to regulate.

4.3 Policy decisions must involve the entire community, through discussion and decision at constituency level and through mandate of representatives.

4.3 We hold that the people, through their local Convention, have the right to immediately recall and replace their representatives or to call for new or changed policy on any matter through popular constituency or national referenda.

4.4 Four immediate proposals of CPPC are that the state's Constitution should be amended to:-

4.4.1. Enshrine the right of the people to recall their representatives.

4.4.2. Enshrine the right of the people to call referenda.

4.4.3. Incorporate and formalise the system of People's Conventions.

4.4.4. Set the legal voting age to 16 years of age and above.

#### **5 - The Fundamental Organization** of CPPC is the Constituency Convention

5.1 The fundamental organization of the CPPC is the constituency Convention which is organized according to the system of Dáil constituencies. All decisions by the people are made in the constituency Conventions and directly through their mandated representatives in the Dáil.

5.2 The Constituency Convention has the right to select candidates and to vote on all policy matters independent of any other constituency convention or the National Convention.

5.3 All voters in their area of residence without restriction have the right to participate and vote in the constituency Convention, including those who may not be on the electoral register at any particular time. As such, all voters are considered members of the People's Convention and are ordinary members.

5.4 In addition CPPC allows all citizens 16 years of age and upwards to take part in and vote on all matters in the constituency Conventions.

5.5 There is another type of membership known as the registered member. Registered members of CPPC in the constituency organise the affairs of the

Convention at the local level in accordance with this Constitution. In addition to the qualification of ordinary members, registered members pay modest annual subscription and have their names entered on the register of organisations for the purpose of the law governing registration.

5.6 The Constituency convention sends delegates to the National Convention for the purpose of regulating the affairs of CPPC and complying with current electoral law on registration of political parties.

## **6 - The National Convention**

6.1 The National Convention is the ultimate decision making body for approving and amending this constitution, electing the officers of CPPC and submitting the list of candidates for national elections compiled from the names selected in the constituencies.

6.2 The National Convention has no right to change candidate lists selected by the constituency conventions and does not make policy other than to ensure democratic decision making.

## **7 - Organisation and Officers**

7.1 There are Constituency Conventions (CC).

7.1.1 Officers are elected from the list of registered members by all ordinary members. Each CC will have a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and Election Agent. In addition, each CC will have a Constituency Convention Spokesperson.

7.1.2 Each Constituency Conventions elects delegates to attend and vote at the National Convention and regulate the affairs of CPPC.

7.1.3 The People's Conventions will organise constituency meetings as required by CPPC in the area.

7.1.4 5% or 2,000 ordinary members on the electoral roll may call for a referendum on any issue in their constituency.

7.2. National Convention (NC)

7.2.1. Officers will be elected at the National Convention – National Spokesperson, Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Public Relations Officer, Internet Facilitator, Election Manager, General Manager and Fundraising Manager

7.1.2 The National Convention will meet at least once a year.

## **8 - Selection of Candidates**

8.1 Candidates are selected by popular conventions held in the wards and parishes of each constituency. The people look for citizens of good reputation, who live in their area and are active in the service of the community and society. Those identified are invited to allow their names to go forward to the selection Convention/Vote of the Constituency voters for selection as candidates of CPPC – for Dáil, European and local elections and other elections such as Údarás na Gaeltachta.

8.2 Candidates agree to become registered members of the CPPC and to conduct themselves according to the candidate's undertakings, outlined in the next section.

8.3 A candidate for selection is always an individual citizen but can be a member of a political party who is proposed in the meetings of the Convention by the people of their area.

8.4 Candidates for selection are free to advocate policies on any matter in the election but to be eligible for selection as a CPPC candidate they must:

8.4.1. Agree to the Candidate Undertakings (see 9), and

8.4.2. Join CPPC as a member, and

8.4.3. Allow their name to go forward as a Convention candidate on the ballot paper.

## **9 - Candidates' Undertakings**

9.1 All elected Convention members must seek policy mandates from their constituency convention on all matters. They must participate in Constituency wide meetings to discuss the principles of all proposed legislation, budgets and treaties and accept the ultimate decision of the Constituency Convention on each matter. The CPPC organisation in each constituency is responsible for organising the widest consultation, meetings in every area of the constituency and a vote on the issues involved.

9.2 Candidates who stand on behalf of the people's Conventions undertake to accept a vote of recall and resign from office (in the Dáil or elsewhere) even if they hold ministerial or other office.

9.3 Candidates who are elected on the platform of CPPC undertakes to support a resolution in the Dáil to organise a referendum to amend the State's Constitution (Bunreacht na hÉireann) for the provisions outlined in section 4.4 above.

## **10 - Rules** (to be elaborated)

### **10.1 Conventions – Constituency**

10.1.1 The Business of the Convention

10.1.2 Election of Officers

10.1.3 Duties of Officers

10.1.4 Selection of Candidates at Constituency Meetings

10.1.5 Discussing and deciding policy for new or amended legislation, national budget or international treaties and conventions

10.1.6 Selection of Delegates to the National Convention

10.1.7 Standing orders for the conduct of meetings and voting

### **10.2 The National Convention**

10.2.1 The business of the National Convention

10.2.2 Election of Officers

10.2.3 Duties of Officers

10.2.4 Standing Orders for the conduct of meetings and voting

## **11 - CPPC Websites**

11.1 CPPC has created the website *<http://www.cppc.ie>* as a primary means of reporting our progress, promoting and developing the organization in every corner of Ireland and a forum for discussion of the problems of democracy and overcoming the obstacles. New Constituency Conventions will be registered and their work supported via this website.

11.2 The website also allows for individuals to sign up as registered members.

11.3 The web will be used to provide a facility for organising formal discussion around specific proposals and to collect opinion via online voting - prior to proposal being brought before local conventions for final decision.

**Publishers Note:**

*This edition of the pamphlet was published on 4th November 2011. Further enhancements are being planned, all contributions and suggestions are invited. The ideas of The Peoples Convention are evolving as we engage in the work of building the movement and as we learn from that experience.*

*The first edition of “IRISH CITIZENS, WE MUST EMPOWER OURSELVES!” was published as a draft in October 2011, this followed the initial leaflet published on November 27th 2010, announcing the formation of CPPC.*

## An Chomhdháil Phobail | The People's Convention

The People's Convention is the only proposal that will Empower the people before, during and after elections, by:

- Engaging every citizen in selecting suitable candidates to go forward as the people's constituency delegates for the elections;
- Electing only those who agree to seek a mandate for all Dáil votes – laws, treaties and budgets;
- Engaging every citizen in proposing and/or deciding every issue of policy in the State and local area;
- Engaging every citizen in checking up on the implementation of Dáil decisions; and
- Effectively putting in place democratic rule by the people.

thereby:

- Ending the un-constitutional party '*representative*' system and the equally corrupt party '*whip*' system that sees TDs voting shamefully against their own conscience and contrary to the interests of the constituents;
- Dispelling the falsehood that public policy can only be created by private member clubs;
- Stopping the continuous substitution of public policy by private policy;
- Eliminating the false dichotomy between '*local*' and '*national*' issues;
- Ending the wholesale plunder of the natural and labour resources of the Irish people; and
- Above all, ending rule by the cabal of political parties of vested interest over the people of Ireland.

This is the necessity for The People's Convention.

No other proposal will result in the empowerment of the citizens.

**Visit website at [www.cppc.ie](http://www.cppc.ie) - Register / Join the work**

*Price suggestion for this pamphlet is €1, or any donation.*