Laoighseach Ní Choistealbha

A chairde,

Is mór an onóir dom seasamh sa toghchán seo mar iarrthóir don ról mar Leas – Uachtarán don Gaeilge in Aontas na Mac Léinn. Is as Dún na nGall dom, agus tógadh mé i mbaile beag ar an teorainn leis an Tuaisceart. Tógadh le Béarla amháin mé, ach thaitin an Ghaeilge chomh mór liom gur shocraigh mé tabhairt fúithi mar ábhar ollscoile in OÉ Gaillimh.

Tá mo bhunchéim díreach bainte amach agam – céim sa Ghaeilge, Stair, agus Scríbhneoireacht Chruthaitheach – agus i láthair na huaire tá mé ag plé le máistreacht sa Nua – Ghaeilge, fós i nGaillimh. Ní dóigh liom go bhfagfaidh mé an áit ariamh! I 2015, toghadh mé mar Oifigeach na Gaeilge do Chomhaltas na Mac Léinn in OÉ Gaillimh, ról a thaitin go mór liom. Obair fhiúntach a bhí inti, agus ba mhaith liom leanúint le mo thuras fhoghlama, gníomhaíochta, agus teangeolaíochta mar Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge.

Tuigim go maith na deacrachtaí a bhaineann le foghlaim teanga, le deacracht na Gaeilge mar teanga – mar is féidir léi bheith deacair! Ach mar dhuine a d’fhoghlaim an teanga mar fhoghlaimeoir T2 (dara teanga), tá eolas maith agam ar phróiseas na foghlama, agus na deacrachtaí a chuirtear romhainn ag an chóras oideachais. Is é mo thuairim gur cheart dúinn an ‘bagáiste’ seo a cheanglaítear leis an Ghaeilge a bhréagnú – go bhfuil sí deacair, go bhfuil sí dódhéanta, nach bhfuil fiúntas ag baint léi, gur le muintir na Gaeltachta nó le páirtithe polaitíochta poblachtanacha amháin í, go mbaineann sí le treibheanna áirithe.

I mo thuairim, tá sé thar am an bagáiste seo a scaoileadh ón teanga. Is rud neodrach í, agus is linne uilig í. Níl seasamh polaitiúil aici. Ba thrua mór na tíre seo go ceanglaíodh an teanga le hÉirinn fhoirfe na hathbheochana, agus gur chuir ceannairí na tíre seo dualgas an chaomhnaithe ar mhic léinn na tíre seo, le córais lochtacha, le cúrsaí Gaeilge lochtacha, le meon lochtach. Caithfidh muid súil a thabhairt ar an todhchaí. Caithfidh muid uirlis nua a dhéanamh den teanga.

I mo ról mar Leas – Uachtarán don Ghaeilge, déanfainn cinnte go dtabharfainn súil ar an todhchaí, ar an Ghaeilge mar mheán bríomhar cumarsáide, mar oidhreacht pháistí na tíre seo – iad uile.

*Hi everyone!*

*It’s a great honour for me to stand in this election as a candidate for the role of Vice President for the Irish language in the Union of Students in Ireland. I am from Donegal, and I was raised in a little town on the border with the North. I was raised with only English, but I liked Irish so much that I decided to undertake it as a university subject in NUI Galway.*

*` I have just finished my undergraduate degree – a degree in Irish, History, and Creative Writing – and at the minute I am doing a Masters in Modern Irish, still in Galway. I don’t think I’ll ever leave the place! In 2015, I was elected as Irish Officer for the NUIG Student’s Union, a job I really enjoyed. It was worthwhile work, and I would like to continue on with my learning, activism, and linguistic journey as the Vice President for the Irish Language.*

*I understand well the difficulties that come with learning a language, with the difficulties that come with learning Irish itself as a language – because it certainly can be difficult! But as someone who learned the language as purely a second language, I really understand the learning process, and the difficulties that are put before us within the education system. It is my opinion that we should get rid of the ‘baggage’ that comes with the Irish language – that it’s too difficult, that it’s impossible, that it’s worthless, that only those in the Gaeltacht or the republican parties can have any right to use it, or that only certain groups have any say over its future.*

*In my opinion, it’s over time to free the language from this baggage. It is a neutral thing, and therefore it belongs to us all. It is not a political stance. It was the greatest shame of this country that the Irish language was attached to ideals of a perfect, old – fashioned Irish – Ireland of the Revival period, and that the leaders of this country placed the responsibility for reviving the language on the students of this country, with faulty systems, faulty Irish syllabi, faulty mindsets. We must turn our faces to the future. We must make a new instrument from this language of ours.*

*In my role as the Vice President for Irish Language, if elected, I would be certain to turn my face to the future, to the Irish language as a vibrant means of communication, as the rightful heritage of the children of this country – all of them.*