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## American Irish Newsletter - January 1999

American Ireland Education Foundation - PEC

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# AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 24, Number 1

January 1999

## Loyalists Play on Talks Crisis

Editorial reprinted from the Dec. 4, 1998 *Irish News*

The lack of progress in the Stormont talks can only be regarded as a cause for deep concern.

It is hardly a coincidence that loyalists extremists have decided that the time is now right to step up their campaign of intimidation and violence in Portadown. Taken together, the two developments have undoubtedly provoked depression and even alarm in many quarters. However, it is essential that all these matters should be kept in their proper context.

Drumcree involves a number of volatile factors, but it is basically a fairly straightforward issue. Fanatical Orange Order members based mainly in the Portadown area are determined to march along the nationalist Garvaghy Road at all costs.

They were even prepared to ignore the murders of the three Quinn children in Ballymoney and Constable Frank O'Reilly in Portadown, even though supporters of the Drumcree campaign carried out the killings.

Although many other senior Orange figures are appalled by events over the last six months, the organization's hierarchy has not found the courage to insist that the protests should be abandoned.

The Drumcree demonstrators are not only motivated by sectarian hatred but also have a specific political objective in mind. As their leader, Harold Gracey, announced last July, they want to bring down the Agreement.

It came as no surprise to find [DUP leader] Ian Paisley offering encouragement to the Drumcree mob as the violence escalated on Thursday night.

The Portadown Orangemen regard the British government and the Parades Commission with just as much contempt as they direct against the nationalist residents of the Garvaghy Road. Those nationalists are entitled to expect that the authorities will provide them with an appropriate level of protection as long as the loyalist threat remains in place. As long as the Orangemen refuse to engage in dialogue with the commission and the residents, there can be no prospect of a march through the nationalist district.

The Stormont talks involve a much more complex set of circumstances and are plainly going through a particularly sensitive stage. There have been disturbing indications of what amounts to a revolt among some sections of the Ulster Unionist assembly group over crucial arrangements for the new North-South bodies.

## Newsbits

Singer Sinead O'Connor will attend the launch today of *Across the Bridge of Hope*, a CD aimed at raising money for the Omagh bomb fund. Featuring actor Liam Neeson and singers Van Morrison, Sinead O'Connor, Boyzone, The Corrs and other stars, the launch will take place at a gala event in London tonight. Following the Omagh bombing in August in which 29 people were killed, two music industry professionals, Ross Graham and Tim Hegarty, invited musicians and singers to raise money for the victims. (*Irish News*, 11/23/98)

A controversial court case involving a west Belfast man who was denied access to a lawyer during 48 hours of almost constant interrogation has led to a change in British custody laws. "Anto" Murray was refused access to lawyers during 12 RUC interrogation sessions over two days and nights. Murray stayed silent for the entire period, despite being threatened by the RUC that the non-jury courts could draw "adverse inferences" if he refused to answer questions....In Feb. 1996 the European Court of Human

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## **OUR VIEW:**

### ***The Price of Peace Is Politics***

*The work of the Mitchell Agreement remains largely incomplete since the British and Irish governments signed onto it last spring. The Ulster Unionists' political posturing on the decommissioning issue and the governments' failure to move the peace process past it are responsible for this impasse.*

*Northern Ireland First Minister and UUP leader David Trimble's rallying cry that the IRA give up its weapons before meaningful political structures are put in place rings hollow when IRA guns are silent and republican politicians are putting forward reasonable suggestions on the makeup on the nascent government of the North. It could be argued the pressure of armed conflict brought the political situation of the north to a head and caused the peace process to take place--and caused armed groups to forgo armed conflict in favor of politics. Political leaders, including former Senator George Mitchell, gave the people of Ireland the hope that political structures for the north and all of Ireland could be viable. Trimble and the unionists are squandering that hope by doing nothing and offering nothing in place of the conflict.*

*Decommissioning is essential--every bit as essential as genuine political progress.*

## **PEACE PROCESS UPDATE**

### **November 9**

The deadlock over arms decommissioning shows no sign of loosening as Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams emerges from talks with British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

### **November 10**

Sinn Fein mid-Ulster MP Martin McGuinness says that the IRA will not hand over any arms even as a gesture.

### **November 11**

The British government accepts as genuine the Loyalist Volunteer Force's cease-fire. The extreme loyalist group will now qualify for prisoner releases under the Mitchell Agreement. The group vows to hand over its haul of weapons only if the IRA decommissions 10 times as much.

### **November 18**

Initial reports from the Independent Commission on Policing in Northern suggest that the membership of the Royal Ulster Constabulary should effectively disband and reapply

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to join a newly constituted force to be named the Northern Ireland Police Service.

Former Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds, who helped begin the peace process five years ago, stresses that decommissioning arms had never been a precondition for implementing the Mitchell Agreement and unionists are wrong to insist on it.

### **November 19**

The LVF shelves plans to decommission weapons today because UUP MP Ken Maginnis says the LVF are ruthless killers whose motives for decommissioning are suspect.

### **November 22**

Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern says there is an irresistible dynamic working towards national unity. On Irish television, he says, "I do think that it will happen. I would imagine, as happens in other countries in these circumstances, that you will find a constitutional referendum again.

*(continued on Page 6)*

## From the North

by Robert Heatley, *Belfast, Northern Ireland, co-founder of the Campaign for Democracy, a predominantly Protestant organization*

As of Dec. 17, the date I wrote this article, the main issues holding up the peace process remain unresolved. As Professor Charles P. Mullaney pointed out in the December issue of this newsletter, David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, is responsible for this hiatus; as I pointed out, higher up in the chain of command the buck stops with British Prime Minister Tony Blair. It was his "slippy-tit" letter to the UUP giving an unsustainable interpretation of the decommissioning clauses of the Mitchell Agreement that gave Trimble and the other brands of unionism their opportunity fight a rearguard sabotaging action.

It has been shown that the issue of decommissioning is not, in itself, the main motivation for the unionists' intransigence and that it is a cover for their inability to countenance any kind of change that would impinge on the Orange/unionist complexion of the UK state in the North. It is true to say that, with the exception of the unionists themselves (and Blair's indulgence of them), everyone else agrees with Mullaney's legal interpretation of what the decommissioning clauses in the Agreement mean.

Facts demonstrate that decommissioning is a deliberate obstructionist ploy. October 31, 1998, was the deadline for the identification of areas for cross-border cooperation. Mullaney further points out that "...by late this year or early in 1999, legislation providing for the formal establishment and transfer of powers to new institutions, including the Assembly and North-South bodies, must be completed at Westminster and in the Dublin Parliament." Thus, by Feb., 1999, the Northern Ireland Executive was scheduled to end its shadow period and acquire formal powers.

In other words, because of unionist stalling, deadlines are being missed all over the place. The discussions on cross-border bodies ought to have included the two Sinn Fein shadow Executive members as of right (because of their electoral mandate); however, because of Trimble's refusal to set up this body, the wrangling has been confined to the unionists and the SDLP. Even so, the cross-border issue as yet remains unresolved. Trimble's strategy of excluding SF and doing a deal with what unionists regard to be soft or "weak-kneed" nationalism does not seem to have been an unmitigated success in this particular respect.

It is worth pointing out that Blair's unwillingness to face down the unionists has, to a very large extent, placed ownership of the political process in the hands of the UUP, a party now second to the SDLP in terms of electoral strength. At the same time, SF stood marginally ahead of the DUP in the elections for the Assembly.

When unionists are challenged on their failure to deliver these components of the Agreement to which they signed up, they try to adopt an air of sweet reasonableness and argue that whatever the legal stipulations, their political difficulties and realities need to be considered. Even so, they argue, after 30 years of very bloody conflict, why now is there a hurry? Apologetics such as this are, however, transparent. Trimble and his party cronies are correct in seeing in the Mitchell Agreement much that is favorable to them. For the foreseeable future, they retain the border; and they would like to achieve the May 1999 deadline for getting changes to Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution—if only they could do so without having to deliver on any of the aforementioned matters.

They also have their Assembly, although not one crafted to what they would desire. Yet, they must know that while they attempt to cherry pick in this way and fail to give a positive leadership in reaching an honest accommodation with republicanism/nationalism, they are encouraging the destructive elements within their own ranks to build up a head of steam. They seem to be thinking that, if it does engulf them, they will be able to survive it in some way and be reconciled with their rejectionist unionist kin.

Meanwhile, out there in the sticks, the unreconstructed Orangemen of the County Armagh, such as Grand Master Denis Watson, and Portadown spokesman Davy Jones are doing their best to confine the Mitchell Agreement to the flames. As of Dec. 17, the so-called proximity talks on Drumcree have come to a close without agreement, posing another possible (some would say probable) threat to the peace and safety of the whole community. This is the epitome of everything that is wrong with the British approach to their governance within the North. By striving to get "both sides" to resolve the matter in this way, they are reinforcing the idea that the Garvaghy Road residents have a moral obligation to concede something. This is sheer nonsense! There is a right and a wrong involved here. The Orangemen have no right to force an unwanted, provocative, supremacist march through a community that is—and has been—its traditional victim. There really is no such thing as a compromise between the Orangemen marching down that road and the Orangemen not marching down that road. The fact that they have laid siege to the residents for more than seven months, threatening and intimidating in every possible way, speaks volumes on its own account.

British government, make it clear, once and for all, that this unionist supremacy within the North is finished.



**Newsbits** (continued from Page 1)

Rights declared that Murray had had his human rights violated. The court ruled it was a breach of human rights to deny applicants legal advice in circumstances where inferences could be drawn from silence during questioning. New instructions will now mean that courts will not be able to infer anything from someone in police custody refusing to answer questions before they have consulted a lawyer. (*RM Dist.*, 12/2/98)

Roberts Rinehart, the publisher of Sean McPhilemy's *The Committee*, a book that exposes the links between the unionist establishment, British armed forces, and loyalist killers, has nominated the book for best investigative book published in 1998 to the Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc. (IRE). IRE, based at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, will select the winner of its award at its convention in Kansas City, MO, in June, 1999. (*Paul D. McGuigan, Washington State PEC director*, 9/2/98)

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams intends to accept an invitation from President Yasser Arafat to visit Palestinian self-rule areas, the Irish republican party said on Thursday. Sinn Fein said Adams had spoken to Arafat by telephone from Canada, where he was meeting Prime Minister Jean Chretien and Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy.... "The two men discussed the struggle for justice in their respective countries and the centrality of self-determination and democracy in securing a lasting peace settlement," Sinn Fein... said in a statement. (*Reuters*, 10/22/98)

## AMERICAN IRISH MONUMENTS DOT OUR LANDSCAPE

By Kevin P. Murphy, *Massachusetts*

Throughout the US, there are statues and monuments dedicated to American Irish molders of our nation. These monuments are physical lessons in American Irish history.

At Hermann Park in Houston, Texas, stands a statue of Texas hero Sam Houston. Houston once said that "every drop of my blood in my body comes from an Irish source."

At Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, stands a monument to the Ninth Massachusetts Irish Regiment, which served with gallantry in the Civil War.

In Baltimore, Maryland, stands a statue of Col. John E. Howard. Irish-born Howard's troops defeated the British Army at the battle of Couperus during the Revolutionary War.

In Chicago's Garfield Park stands a statue to John F. Finerty. Finerty fled Ireland in 1864 after fighting for Irish freedom. He served in the Union army during the Civil War, founded the Chicago Citizen newspaper, and became a Congressman.

In Southington, Connecticut, stands a monument to the French Army's Irish brigades that fought against Britain in the American Revolution.

In Prescott, Arizona, stands a monument to William Owen O'Neill, who was a comrade of Teddy Roosevelt and an army captain. He was killed while charging up San Juan Hill in Cuba.

At Madison Square in Savannah, Georgia, stands a statue of Revolutionary War hero William Jasper, who was born in Ireland. British troops killed Jasper while he was raising the American flag on a British fort in Savannah.

Throughout America stand countless more monuments to American Irish achievement.

*Source: Library of Edward Kelley, Boston, Massachusetts*

(continued from Page 1)

It was particularly striking to hear [SDLP deputy leader] Seamus Mallon, whose commitment to the process has been total, speak yesterday of the "very substantial anger" which existed over the unionist attitude.

...[UUP leader] David Trimble faces many difficulties, some of his own making and others carefully stage-managed by his internal opponents....

In many ways, the venom aimed at Trimble during the DUP conference last week and the appearance of Paisley at Drumcree should have helped to concentrate minds. Unionists must choose between the DUP's failed tactics of confrontation and personal abuse and the constitutional path towards a peaceful settlement offered by the [Mitchell Agreement].

When all the bluster is stripped away, the way ahead should be clear.

# BLAIR TO IRELAND: LET'S WORK TOGETHER

Excerpts from Tony Blair's Nov. 26, 1998 speech to the Irish Parliament

The peace process is at a difficult juncture. Progress is being made, but slowly. There is an impasse over the establishment of the Executive; there is an impasse over decommissioning. But I have been optimistic the whole way through. And I am optimistic now. Let us not underestimate how far we have come; and let us agree that we have come too far to go back now. Politics are replacing violence as the way people do business. The [Mitchell] Agreement... holds out the prospect of a peaceful long-term future for Northern Ireland and the whole island of Ireland.... That Agreement heralds the prospect of an end to violence and a peaceful future for Northern Ireland. Our duty is to carry it out.... You have voted to end the territorial claim over Northern Ireland, essential to the Agreement.

It is time now for all the parties to live up to all their commitments. Time for North-South bodies to be established to start a new era of co-operation between you and Northern Ireland.... Time to set up the institutions of the new government. Time for the gun and the threat of the gun to be taken out of politics once and for all, for decommissioning to start. I am not asking anyone to surrender. I am asking everyone to declare the victory of peace....

We need not be prisoners of our history.... We can understand the emotions generated by Northern Ireland's troubles, but we cannot really believe, as we approach the 21st century, there is not a better way forward to the future than murder, terrorism and sectarian hatred....

The old ways are changing between London and Dublin. This can spur the change and healing in Northern Ireland, too. The old notions of unionist supremacy and of narrow nationalism are gradually having their fingers prised from their grip

on the future. Different traditions have to understand each other. Just as we must understand your yearning for a united Ireland, so too must you understand what the best of unionism is about. They are good and decent people, just like you. They want to remain part of the UK—and I have made it clear that I value that wish. They feel threatened. Threatened by the terrorism with which they have had to live for so long. Threatened, until the [Mitchell] Agreement, that they would be forced into a united Ireland against the will of the people of North.

Yet, they realize now that a framework in which consent is guaranteed is also one in which basic rights of equality and justice are guaranteed and that those who wish a united Ireland are free to make that claim, provided it is democratically expressed, just as those who believe in the Union can make their claim. It is all about belonging. The wish of unionists to belong to the UK. The wish of nationalists to belong to Ireland. Both traditions are reasonable. There are no absolutes. The beginning of understanding is to realize that. My point is very simple. Those urges to belong, divergent as they are, can live together more easily if we, Britain and the Irish Republic, can live closer together, too....

We now have a real opportunity to put our relations on a completely new footing, not least through working together in Europe. I know that is what our peoples want, and I believe we can deliver it....

The Taoiseach has spoken of the exciting new relationships that will unfold as the people of Scotland and Wales, as well as Northern Ireland, express their wishes through their

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own parliaments and assemblies. The new British Irish Council must reflect and explore these opportunities. We have much to gain by cooperating better across these islands in areas such as transport, education, the fight against illegal drugs.

I want our co-operation to be wider and more fundamental still—above all in Europe... We have had different approaches to agriculture, to monetary union, to defense. But increasingly we share a common agenda and common objectives: completion of the Single Market and structural economic reform; better conditions for growth and jobs in Europe; successful enlargement; a united and coherent foreign policy voice for Europe; a more effective fight against crime, drugs, illegal immigration and environmental damage; flexible, open and accountable European institutions.... Together we can have a stronger voice in Europe and work to shape its future in a way which suits all our people....

What I welcome above all is that, after keeping us apart for so long, Northern Ireland is now helping to bring us closer together. But I do not believe Northern Ireland can or should any longer define the relationship between us. Our common interests, what we can achieve together go much, much wider than that. Our two countries can look to the future with confidence in our separate ways. But we will be stronger and more prosperous working together.

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# Trimble Makes a Burke of Himself

Excerpt from the December 13, 1998 *Irish News*

*Eamon Collins contrasts recent positive moves by the IRA with the "colonial" mindset David Trimble displayed in his Oslo speech, when he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize.*

....David Trimble gave a lecture laced with paranoia and historical ambiguities at Oslo that was directed at Sinn Fein and the IRA. He claims to be a practical man opposed to vapor and vision. His delivery in Oslo was nothing but vacuous and vaporous and will pass into history as such....

Is it any wonder the IRA has refused to decommission? Who could blame them? There are actually more positive aspects to the IRA's actions than anything Trimble has to offer. The North-South bodies which we now learn have not been agreed are to have implementation powers rather than executive powers, and Sinn Fein's reasonable demands that there be a body on the Irish language and equality are likely to be rejected. The ministries in the executive and the North-South bodies are fairly minimalist demands, but not even the most minimal can be delivered. The unionists want decommissioning. They really want a deal with the SDLP and the exclusion of Sinn Fein--but Sinn Fein has too strong an electoral power base to be denied.

The IRA held a convention and obviously managed to pass power from the convention to the army council. He dissidents who have caused such havoc within the republican movement had this power vested in the convention in an attempt to wrest all power from the present leadership to them. They have failed, and with them their objective of continued conflict....Power resides to a great extent in the only place where it has the capacity to sustain a long-term military campaign, Belfast. This is a welcome development that should strengthen the present leadership strategy and policy that is

committed to peace.... It should also "free up" both Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness to do the invaluable work for peace they have both proved themselves able and genuine about.

[Irish Prime Minister] Bertie Ahern is correct when he says there is no need to read too much into the IRA's refusal to decommission and that the changes within the IRA are not necessarily unhelpful. He is correct; the changes are helpful and will reinforce the republican movement's commitment to peace. Conservatives and unionists, such as former home affairs minister at Stormont John Taylor, who now demands prisoner releases should be stopped, would do better to recognize that fact....

Taylor should think back to the period when the B Specials were disbanded, when he made it possible for them to hold onto their guns by forming gun clubs and being absorbed in both the UDR and RUC reserves. He should remember the British army's wish to disarm the "province" of its 100,000 legally held guns which the then GOC General Freeland felt were a threat to peace and democracy. The army was not concerned about shotguns but the 'other' that was declared on firearms licenses, which were clearly revolvers and rifles. Unfortunately, the British army did not get the RUC's cooperation and political backing required to decommission these weapons. The RUC refused to give a breakdown of the gun licenses.

Did [SDLP leader and Nobel Peace Prize recipient] John Hume mention any of this in his speech? No. Hume's speech was about inclusion.... Decommissioning will happen only when all the structures that were agreed in the [Mitchell Agreement] are put in place.

Was it necessary for David to go all that way to utter the usual self-serving

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unionist platitudes that lay all the blame on evil republicans for the last 30 years' conflict? No-one in the audience at Oslo believed that, so why say it? [It was] for the audience back home in the backwaters, where the Orange lodges meet to discuss...where the next great battle for unionism will be fought....

....David didn't end with this. Oh no, he went on to demand that no "concessions" be made because such "magnanimity in politics is seldom the truest wisdom."

He took [a] line from Edmund Burke to reinforce his attack, but clutched a further lightning rod from history by saying: "We are (David and the unionists) the inheritors of that intellectual tradition that encourages us to identify with the cultural alliance of the English-speaking peoples."

On this point, David has got it badly wrong. He needs to read up on his inheritance, which has something to do with how capitalism developed the nation state from which emerged aspects of democracy and equality in the "mother country" but not in the colonized territories to which David's legacy, culture, and heritage belong. The niceties of the nation state did not extend to there; rather, an imperialist policy that was totalitarian in all its respects did.

It is to that tradition of colonial subjugation of native peoples in an age of oppression and coercion that David belongs and to nothing else. What a pity his speech didn't include an apology to the peoples his tradition oppressed, rather than being an apologist for the old civil service colonial justice departments.

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# UN Wants Sweeping Overhaul for RUC

Excerpt From the November 19, 1998 *Irish News*

The United Nations has called for the "reconstruction of the RUC" in a high-profile report presented by its Committee Against Torture.

It is the third time the influential UN committee has made recommendations for human rights reforms to the British government, but the first time such wide-ranging changes have been called for in Northern Ireland.

In three hard hitting recommendations, the UN committee yesterday called for: the closure of detention centers, and particularly Castlereagh Holding Center, at "the earliest opportunity;" the abolition of plastic bullets as a means of riot control; and the "reconstruction of the RUC so that it more closely represents the cultural reality of Northern Ireland."

Referring to the RUC, the report also recommended "an extensive program of re-education for members of the RUC directed at the objectives of the [Mitchell Agreement] and the best methods of modern police practice."...

While the UN has raised the issue of detention centers in the past, leading Northern Ireland-based human rights watchdog—the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)—said it was the first time such sweeping reforms were called for.

CAJ legal officer Paul Mageean said the British government should act on the report "without delay." He said it would be difficult for it to duck the recommendations—as previous British administrations had done. The Labor government, he said, had made human

rights central to its foreign policy and would be under pressure to match this at home.

A Northern Ireland Office spokesman said it was pleased the UN recognized the peace process had changed the situation in Northern Ireland. He highlighted as a welcome development the establishment of the Northern Ireland Bill, which introduces legislation linked to the [Mitchell Agreement].

He added that reports from the Independent Commission on Policing and the criminal justice review body would be available next year, signaling that this "will enable us to make further progress on the recommendations made by the UN committee."

## Bloody Sunday Inquiry Finds few Soldiers

Families of the 14 men whom soldiers in the British Parachute Regiment killed on Bloody Sunday in 1972 are dismayed that those soldiers testifying before the Saville inquiry into Bloody Sunday will not be prosecuted on the basis of any evidence they give the new investigation. The families are also disappointed that only 114 of the approximately 3,000 Parachute Regiment soldiers who were in Derry on January 30, 1972, have come forward.

Earlier last year, families of the dead considered withdrawing from the inquiry, announced last January, over the question of immunity from prosecution. While Lord Saville's announcement is not a *carte blanche* immunity ruling, the families said they will be considering the ruling in depth and looking at all possible consequences.

When news broke last November that the inquiry's public hearings had

been delayed for a second time, it also emerged that an estimated 750 civilians had presented themselves to the tribunal with evidence. The number of witnesses coming forward in recent months has been so large that Lord Saville decided to postpone the public opening of the inquiry from February to September next year.

Lord Saville said the 114 soldiers who had come forward to the inquiry or had responded to correspondence from the inquiry contained the "majority of soldiers" who fired on an internment march in Derry on January 30 1972, killing 14 men and injuring 14 others. The inquiry team confirmed in late November last year that it had the names of 3,000 soldiers believed to have been in Derry on Bloody Sunday. Lord Saville said he intends to trace other soldiers.

The 114 names fall far short of the

number of soldiers operating in and around Derry's Bogside on the day of the shootings. It is believed there were 320 members of the First Battalion Parachute Regiment in Bogside while campaigners have claimed other soldiers were present on Derry's walls.

At the Widgery inquiry into Bloody Sunday, Lord Chief Justice Widgery found that 108 rounds were fired by soldiers although families of the dead have claimed the real total was much higher and included illegal dum-dum bullets. Witnesses to the killings have consistently claimed that a number of those who died were shot from Derry's Walls, a point ignored by Lord Widgery in his 1972 inquiry.

Lord Saville has also appealed to journalists who had covered the Bloody Sunday march to come forward, noting that 30 had so far made themselves known.



## Action Requests

Write the letter below, call, or e-mail. Be courteous. Have friends, organizations, business associates, and others do the same. Please mention your membership in the PEC.

Write: President Bill Clinton, The White House, Washington, DC 20500, 202 456-1111, fax 202 456-2461, e-mail: president@whitehouse.gov

Message: Please pressure the British government and Northern Ireland First Minister David Trimble to stop stalling the Irish peace process over arms decommissioning. Urge all parties to implement the Mitchell Agreement.

Write: Rt. Hon. Marjorie Mowlam, M.P., Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Old Admiralty Building, Whitehall, London SW1A 2AZ, UNITED KINGDOM

Message: I urge you to pressure Northern Ireland First Minister David Trimble to stop stalling the peace process over arms decommissioning and to fully implement the Mitchell Agreement.

(continued from Page 2)

It might take 15 to 20 years when people might vote again. It is up to them, republicans and others who would like to see one jurisdiction in this country, to convince people that in areas of co-operation and developing joint policies, and working the implementation bodies and other areas of co-operation, this system is better than devolution."

### November 26

In his historic speech to the joint houses of the Irish government, Blair urges all sides to "crack on" in the peace process (see related article, R&D).

### November 28

President Clinton is to be asked in January to intervene in the decommissioning row that has stalled the setting up of the shadow executive at the Stormont Assembly (see Action Request, this page).

The Northern Ireland Womens' Coalition calls on Trimble to drop his demand for immediate IRA decommissioning. Joint leader Monica McWilliams also offers to redesignate the coalition's two assembly seats to unionists in a bid to bolster the UUP leader's position.

### December 1

Ahern suggests that Trimble needs a positive signal from paramilitaries on decommissioning before he makes a move on the establishment of the new Executive for the Assembly. It is thought a possible compromise might be achievable with the IRA dropping the word "never" from its stance toward decommissioning weapons.

### December 2

Northern party leaders make progress in discussions about setting up seven or eight cross-border bodies and 10 departments. The SDLP wants a trade and investment implementation body, but the UUP resists it. The outline agreement means the two governments can set the legislative process in train so that the new bodies can be in place at the time of the proposed formal transfer of powers in the spring.

### December 4

The UUP pulls out of the deal on cross-border bodies. Without agreement, a report might not be ready for the Assembly on December 14 or before Christmas. Parties would then return in mid-January, after the recess, and legislative deadlines would be missed for Dail Eireann and Westminster. It could be May or later before powers would be transferred.

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