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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 24, Number 2

February 1999

"Irish Immigration" Stamp Misses the Boat

The United States Postal Service (USPS) late last year announced it would issue a commemorative stamp honoring the Irish who immigrated to the US in a press release announcing its 1999 stamp program. The announcement marked a victory for PEC activists who have campaigned long and hard for a stamp honoring the contribution of the Irish who emigrated during the Great Hunger to the development of this country.

The stamp design misses the mark, however. The same agency that found it in itself to honor Elvis and Tweety failed to put an image on the stamp that captures the American Irish contribution to the development of this nation. Despite our recommendations, the role of the American Irish in the Civil War, the armed forces, industry, politics, art, and culture, and so on, are missing. Instead, the stamp depicts a boat entering a deserted harbor. On the wharf in the foreground are barrels, a bit of rope, and the bow of a docked ship.

This stamp could commemorate boats or empty harbors if it weren't for the words, "Irish Immigration" at the bottom of the stamp. The image itself projects a bizarre silence that belies the creativity, personality, and energy the Irish brought to America. Had the artist read our letters or conducted the slightest bit of research, the outcome might have been dynamic and relevant or, at least, interesting. Instead, the stamp merely locates the greatest years of Irish immigration to the time before airplanes.

The USPS's failure to make a statement through the stamp is not unusual for the agency, however. The insipid and banal have plagued the USPS since it decided earlier this decade to market its product for young collectors who, presumably, have no interest in history or art, rather than continue its unofficial role as a forum to honor what is worthy in American culture.

The USPS press release announcing the stamp provides a chronology of Irish immigration to the US and makes no mention of what the impact of that immigration has been on the US (*see Page 6 for full text*). While this information is boring and essentially pointless—in itself, it makes no argument for a stamp—it will, nonetheless, educate the few who care to read it.

The PEC urges you to contact the USPS again (*see Action Request, Page 6*) and express your disappointment with the stamp, which is scheduled at press time to be released either this month or in March at a yet-to-be-determined location. Tell the USPS you will not purchase the stamp or any other commemorative until it issues a stamp that honors the contribution of the American Irish, particularly those who came here during the Great Hunger, to the development of this nation.

Newsbits

The last Irish miscarriage of justice case in England was finally ended today, after Danny McNamee won his appeal against his conviction for conspiracy to cause explosions in London in 1982. McNamee spent 11 years in...jail...for a crime he did not commit....The prosecuting authorities are believed to have been aware of McNamee's innocence at the time....Lord Justice Winton Thomas said they had to accept that McNamee's original trial would not have found him guilty had all the facts been made available to it. Forensic evidence linked the explosive devices alleged to have been made by McNamee to IRA member Dessie Ellis. This evidence was deliberately withheld from the original trial. McNamee, from Crossmaglen, South Armagh, had already been released under the [Mitchell Agreement], but his family and supporters quickly celebrated a victory, won through years of letter-writing, public campaigning, and painstaking legal and investigative efforts. (*RM Dist. 12/17/98*)

Trouble broke out during a loyalist Apprentice Boys parade in Derry

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OUR VIEW:

Stamp Should Honor the American Irish

Once upon a time, the USPS produced works of art to honor dead presidents, Girl Scouts, the armed forces--those things that identified and ennobled our culture.

Those were the days--the days before marketing and profits turned the USPS into a self-sticking McDonald land of ugly, multicolored designs intended to appeal to young potential, presumably tasteless, collectors. It is fitting that we can purchase stamps in grocery stores.

The USPS has lost sight of itself and the importance of its role as a recorder and transmitter of American culture and history. After all, this is the same agency that, in its Celebrate the Century series, will remember WWII with images of WWI doughboys and the famous WWI "Uncle Sam Wants You" recruiting poster. (The poster has already figured in the same series for the 1910s to recall WWI.) Clearly, neither accuracy nor integrity, let alone dignity, are important to the USPS as it achieves unprecedented profit levels.

In this light, the Irish Immigration stamp does not represent the worst of the USPS but the agency's lack of interest in and information about the American Irish. Perhaps we should be grateful that the stamp does not depict a leprechaun or a mug of beer--images the PEC has fought for decades. Nonetheless, the USPS has yet to honor the role of the American Irish in the development of this nation. We urge you to continue calling for this stamp and educating the public about it.

PEACE PROCESS UPDATE

December 8

President Clinton has separate meetings in Washington with Northern Ireland First Minister David Trimble, SDLP leader John Hume, and Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams. He appeals to unionist and nationalist politicians to move the peace process forward, reminding them they should "obey not only the letter of the Mitchell Agreement but its spirit as well." British Prime Minister Tony Blair holds a new round of talks to overcome the impasse in implementing the Mitchell Agreement.

December 10

The Independent Commission examining the future of policing in Northern Ireland is to view the previously unpublished Stalker and Stevens reports into allegations of a security force shoot to kill policy and of Royal Ulster Constabulary involvement in the killing of suspected republicans.

Northern Ireland's First Minister David Trimble and SDLP leader John Hume are awarded the Nobel Peace prize.

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December 12

There will be no decommissioning of IRA arms or explosives, the organization's most powerful body rules.

December 18

The parties at Stormont Castle broadly agree to 10 ministries, six North-South administrative bodies, and six areas of cooperation. The ten departments will be: Agriculture and Rural Development; Environment; Regional Development; Social Development; Education; Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment; Enterprise, Trade and Investment; Culture, Arts and Leisure; Health, Social Services and Public Safety; Finance and Personnel. The six implementation bodies will be: Inland Waterways; Food Safety; Trade and Business Development; Special EU Programs; Language (Irish and Ulster Scots); Aquaculture and Marine Matters. The six areas for cooperation include some aspects of: Transport; Agriculture; Education; Health; Environment; Tourism.

(continued on Page 5)

From the North

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

For perhaps the first time there is a clear public demonstration of a serious clash between the Ulster Unionist Party and the British government. Previously, they have tried to down play such differences. Everyone will be watching to see whose will prevails—with the bets on the British government.

The clash arises because, at this stage in history, their interests have diverged at least in one important respect. The British feel compelled to alter the way in which the North has been governed, but the majority in "Ulster" Unionism will not countenance any change at all.

Westminster is seeking to pacify and stabilize the situation in Northern Ireland while, at the same time, maintaining its hold on this part of colonized Irish territory—at least for the foreseeable future. Its attempt to create a devolved Assembly, with nongovernmental powers, is integral to this scheme, and it ties in with other devolutionary projects in Scotland and Wales. This strategy is intended to stymie democratic nationalist strivings for self-government within the islands of Britain and Ireland—that is, the dismantling of UK colonialist structures.

The British governing establishments whose politics are expressed by the New Labor, Conservative, and Liberal Democrat parties are, in the face of an ever encroaching and evolving European Union, presently deeply divided on what this challenge means for the continuing existence of the UK as it has been known.

The Liberals are wholeheartedly and uncritically in favor of the EU (and its new Euro currency), even if this does lead to a new absorbative federal

superstate. But they do not see this as necessitating a breakup of the present UK. Rather, they visualize it as a potential region with, possibly, the Irish Republic drawn much closer in. This would give the English muscle with which to confront the Franco-German dominance within the EU. Hence, British-instigated suggestions that the Republic ought to "rejoin" the Commonwealth alongside provisions in the Mitchell Agreement for a "Council of the Isles" and a "British-Irish intergovernmental council," and so on.

The Conservatives are all over the place on the EU, with most of them against further integration. Whichever way they go, though, their plans for the UK and Ireland are not much different from those of the Liberals. Why should they be, since they originated them?

Yet, they do look askance at devolution, and they prefer the present centralized UK setup. Their ex-Prime Minister, John Major, publicly espoused the "bloc within the EU" theory in admonishing of the Scots who were threatening England's hegemony.

On the EU, New Labor is "outed." It favors the integrative processes, even if this means that Westminster will become a regional administration with lost real powers and autonomy in the monetary and fiscal spheres. Also, still wants Westminster to lord it over the UK, possibly as it was before the Irish Republic defected in 1949.

Therefore, the three parties are as one with respect to their objectives for Ireland, regardless of what the EU might hold in store. It is this tri-partisanship that informs the thrust of policy of any British government, although it appears that New Labor is

more anxious to move the situation on than were the Conservatives and are, as a consequence, coming into more open conflict with what Northern Ireland unionism wants. The secretary of state, Mo Mowlam (whom unionists of all descriptions hate) has at last produced a timetable for the implementation of the Mitchell Agreement that is aimed at getting on with the business, despite Trimble's obstructive tactics.

She wants everything in place by March 10, although that is a target date. She has set out business for commencement on Jan. 18 (this year), and this requires the Assembly to debate and approve the cross-border bodies and executive agreed last December according to the d'Hondt procedure, with no reference to a decommissioning requirement.

If this means anything, it should mean an inclusive executive with Sinn Féin in it. However, UUP spokesman Michael McGimpsey envisages a much slower pace. He stalls with "there (is) no definitive package to put to the Assembly" (on Jan. 18). Everyone must be wondering why all the trouble and strife was necessary in getting the December agreement on cross-border bodies and the size of an executive if this agreement cannot now be put to a vote of the Assembly.

But the reason is, of course, that the unionists might have to bring further odium on themselves (and upset the secretary of state's timetable), since they fear that approval would trigger the automatic formation of the executive and then the obstacle to full implementation would have been removed. How much does Mowlam want the North pacified and stabilized and relationships with the Dublin government made stronger and closer?

How she handles this latest unionist attempt at prevarication and stalling will tell us much about that.

Newsblits *(continued from Page 1)*

today, resulting in the arrest of at least three people. Scuffles broke out as up to 4,000 marchers passed through The Diamond in the city center. The loyalist marchers tried to break through police lines on their return route from the town.... Talks between the marchers and nationalist residents on the route of the annual Lundy parade... broke down without agreement on Friday evening. The Parades Commission ruled earlier this week that the Apprentice Boys' return march from ...St. Columb's Cathedral should be rerouted away from the disputed Diamond area in the mainly nationalist city center. The organization was angered at the decision and branded the new route impracticable. Nationalist residents were equally angered about the parade's going through the city center but said they would not organize a protest. (IAIS 12/12/98)

A newly emerged loyalist paramilitary group says they bombed a Northern Ireland pub last night in an attempted assassination of a senior IRA commander. The recently emerged Orange Volunteers made its claim in a coded message to the offices of Ulster Television in Belfast. No one was hurt in the explosion at McKenna's Bar near Crumlin, County Antrim, but the building was damaged.... The Orange Volunteers emerged late last month when they put on a show of strength—several hooded men with weapons posing for the cameras at a secret location. The pub blast happened soon after talks involving Prime Minister Tony Blair's chief-of-staff Jonathan Powell failed to achieve agreement to end the Orange Order standoff at Drumcree before Saturday's Orange parade... through Portadown, County Armagh. (RM Dist. 12/17/98)

Eleanor Rogers Cox, American Poet

By Kevin P. Murphy, *Massachusetts*

One of the first American women to gain stature in poetry publications was Eleanor Rogers Cox. She was born on Dec. 27, 1868 in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh. She and her family immigrated to New York when she was a child, and she was educated at St. Gabriel's school in New York. Celtic art and poetry fascinated her from an early age.

Eleanor became a poet of such note that she was chosen to represent the US at poetry seminars in Europe. Her writings became regular features in such publications as *The Century Magazine*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *The New York Times*. She wrote biographies of Lord Byron, Austin Dobson, and Andrew Lang.

Eleanor also wrote books of Irish poetry, including *Latter-Day Poetry of Ireland*, *Finovar of the Fair Eyelids*, and *Singing Fires of Erin*. These works coincided with the rising interest in the US in Irish art, music, dance, and poetry in the early 1900s. In the early part of this century, Eleanor's works played an important role in keeping Irish culture alive in America.

Eleanor Rogers Cox died on Jan. 17, 1931 in New York City.

Source: Library of Edward Kelley, Dorchester, Massachusetts

British Queen Knights George Mitchell

Former US Senator George Mitchell, who brokered the peace agreement between Britain and Ireland last spring, received from Queen Elizabeth the honorary title of grand knight of the order of the British Empire at the New Year. It is one of the highest honors that can be bestowed.

Mitchell is in the company of former British Prime Minister John Major, who became a companion of honor in recognition of the role he played in the ground work that led to the historic Mitchell Agreement.

Mitchell and Major were highlighted in the new year honors list of nearly 1,000 names, in which Tony Blair singled out for commendation many of those who strove night and day to bring peace to Ireland.

Individuals in the nationalist community who were offered honors declined them. A Downing Street spokesman said: "We completely understand that." He refused to say how many were involved or to which parties they belonged.

Attention Washington State Members: Orange Parades to be put in the Spotlight in Seattle

Craigavon Councilor and Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition spokesperson **Breandan MacCoinnnaith** and California Senator **Tom Hayden** will speak about Orange parades in the North at the Snoqualmie Room at the Seattle Center in Seattle at 7 PM Sunday, March 14. Admission is \$10. The PEC in Seattle will host the event.

Gerry Adams: The Executive Must be set up

Excerpt from the January 8, 1999 *Irish News*

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The Mitchell Agreement was the best deal that the participants to the negotiations could reach....We sought to tackle honestly and openly all the issues that have given rise to conflict, as well as those matters that are symptoms and a legacy of that conflict....

[T]he next steps in the implementation of the Mitchell Agreement are clearly visible. The executive must be setup and the all-Ireland ministerial council established....The Mitchell Agreement is clear on both the time frame and the chronology for the establishment of these institutions.

Under Executive Authority in Strand 1 it is stated: "....Following the election of the first minister and deputy first minister, the posts of ministers will be allocated to parties on the basis of the d'Hondt system by reference to the number of seats each party has in the assembly."

David Trimble and Seamus Mallon were elected [last June] to their positions. Unionist tactical delays have stretched the meaning of the word "following" out of all recognition, both to their discredit and the erosion of confidence in the process.

This...section of the agreement goes on to state: "....The assembly will meet first for the purpose of organization, without legislative or executive powers, to resolve its standing orders and working practices and make preparations for the effective functioning of the assembly, the British-Irish council and the north/south ministerial council and associated implementation bodies.

"In this transitional period, those members of the assembly serving as shadow ministers shall affirm their commitment to nonviolence and exclusively peaceful and democratic means and their opposition to any use or threat of force by others for any political purpose; to work in good faith to bring the new arrangements into being; and to observe the spirit of the pledge of office applying to appointed ministers."

The unionists have successfully resisted establishing the shadow bodies and have succeeded in forcing the governments to negotiate the all-Ireland policy and implementation bodies outside the structure outlined in the Agreement.

Paragraph 7 under Strand 2 The North-South Ministerial Council sets out most clearly the timetable: "As soon as practically possible after elections to the Northern Ireland assembly, inaugural meetings will take place of the assembly, the British-Irish council and the north-south ministerial council in their transitional forms.

"All three institutions will meet regularly and frequently on this basis during the period between the elections to the assembly, and the transfer of powers to the assembly, in order to establish their *modus operandi*."

None of this has happened because of the UUP's obstructive tactics. His use of the decommissioning issue is...the most obvious example. Nothing in the Agreement requires the IRA to decommission before Sinn Fein, or the other parties with the required mandate, can take up the ministerial positions....

All of the participants to the Agreement accepted that the "resolution of the decommissioning issue is an indispensable part of the process of negotiation." We noted the progress made by the Independent International Commission and confirmed our intention "to continue to work constructively and in good faith with the independent commission and to use any influence we may have, to achieve the decommissioning of all paramilitary arms within the two years following endorsement in referendums north and south of the agreement and in the context of the implementation of the overall settlement."

[Decommissioning] is not a precondition or an obstacle to progress on the establishment of the institutions, nor is it linked with progress on the release of prisoners, the creation of a new policing

service, or the British government's commitment to publish an "overall strategy" dealing with demilitarization.

Trimble is using this issue...to...prevent movement toward an inclusive, democratic peace settlement....Indeed, there is an increasing number of republicans and nationalists coming round to the view that he is seeking the collapse of the Agreement. They believe Trimble wants to create a new negotiation process that would produce a different agreement, to the liking of unionists, that would exclude Sinn Fein.

Regrettably, the leadership of all of the unionist parties still see the peace process in terms of victories and defeats. They are frightened by the prospect of fundamental change in the fabric of our daily lives and in the institutions which will govern this island....This was best articulated by Jim Molyneaux, who described the IRA cessation in 1994 as probably the most destabilizing development in 70 years. There is a sense that there are those among the unionist parties who would favor a return to the apparent certainties of conflict rather than pursue a process full of new and unpredictable challenges and change.

They must not be allowed to dictate the agenda or stand in the way of the momentum for peace which has developed over the past five years....

....It is our responsibility to vigorously and unrelentingly pursue the goal of peace. Sinn Fein is totally committed to the full implementation of all aspects of the Mitchell Agreement. That means the urgent establishment of the executive and the all-Ireland ministerial council....

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A New Northern Police Force Is Within Reach

By Charles P. Mullaney, *Professor, Legal Studies,
Western Connecticut State University, Danbury, Connecticut*

When the influential nationalist Fr. Desmond Wilson said at a Police Commission hearing in nationalist West Belfast, "(A)s long as even one member of the RUC is a member of a new police force, that force will not be acceptable," he was expressing the view of many Catholics that the RUC is the enemy oppressor. However, Fr. Wilson knows that 13,000 constables will not be dismissed to go on the dole.

The independent commission set up under the Mitchell Agreement is on circuit in the North, seeking input from the public. Audiences packed with anti-RUC nationalists or pro-RUC unionists dominate these meetings, offering little in the way of constructive problem solving. Presiding over some loud public hearings, the commission has heard an earful and has had its hands full.

The British have already acknowledged that Northern Ireland is a de facto police state by agreeing to "a new beginning to policing" and that police should be representative of the community. Human rights organizations have regularly accused the RUC of unrestrained abuses against the Catholic population as well as against some Protestants. The force is three times larger than any other European police force in an area with a comparable population. Meanwhile, defenders of the RUC claim that it is unfairly maligned and that it is the glue that held the North together during the Troubles.

Nevertheless, the RUC has made exhaustive efforts to clean house. The RUC public relations machine grinds out four-color booklets entitled, "Everyone's Police: a Partnership for Change" and "Listening to the Community: Working with the RUC."

Beyond the polemics, three issues require attention: Draconian security laws, the anti-Catholic bias of the

RUC, and the lack of Catholics on the police force.

The British have the power to resolve the first issue by eliminating security laws as soon as the ink dries on the Commission's report, which is due this summer.

The RUC enjoy exceptional legal powers of summary arrest, coercive interrogation, and warrantless search and seizure—all of which they have exercised disproportionately against Catholics—under the Emergency Provisions Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act. These laws consume 80 percent of police time and eat up a substantial portion of the RUC's astonishing one-billion-pound budget. Because the British are already on record in the Mitchell Agreement as countenancing a "normalization" of security arrangements and a "removal of emergency powers" in the North, a Police Commission recommendation to that end should prompt Westminster to eliminate the emergency statutes forthwith, so long as the paramilitaries cooperate.

The thorny issue of police reform relates to RUC culture. Many of their senior officers and administrators came up through the Orange Order, and the force is 93 percent Protestant, drenched in unionism and seemingly insensitive to 43 percent of the population. Transformation of the *Zeitgeist* takes time, a long time. Consider Alabama, Mississippi, and California after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The maintenance of public order and public safety in civil societies mandates a quasi-military structure whose mission is to preserve the public peace, protect life and property, prevent crime, and enforce all laws and ordinances within the ambit of the policing authority. Cops in the US, Korea, Brazil, and Nigeria, for in-

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stance, carry weapons, regularly confront potentially dangerous situations, make split-second decisions, and go home at night with bad stories to tell. A cop is unavoidably authoritarian, persistently suspicious, socially isolated, and has a strong tendency to hang out with other cops. The job is perilous. Even as the Commission seeks to change policing in the North, the working personality of the cop, Catholic or Protestant, republican or loyalist, will remain the same. Police reformers should not expect cops to be social workers. Consistent with the civil liberties of citizens, however, police officers should keep the peace and fight crime on behalf of all citizens.

Police reform in the North is not an impossible task. There are able people on the Commission, including Gerry Lynch, who knows cops. President of John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, Lynch trains cops in the US and abroad. His biannual international conferences attract law enforcement operatives from around the world. He understands police organization, management, personnel issues and, most important, the cop's psyche. His input should be invaluable.

In the final analysis, Westminster will decide what to do with the RUC because policing of the North is not a devolved power. By signing the Mitchell Agreement, however, the British have acknowledged that policing arrangements "should be based on principles of human rights and professional integrity and should be unambiguously accepted by the entire community." Such assurances bode well for the profound changes necessary for peacetime policing in the North.

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Ex-soldier: Bloody Sunday was Murder

A former British soldier who served in Derry has described Bloody Sunday as "murder" and has claimed the Paratroop Regiment "lost it."

The soldier, known only as Peter of the Cheshire Regiment, is one of a number of soldiers who relate their memories of serving in the north in a new book published by Derry's Guildhall Press.

Brits Speak Out, compiled by John Lindsay, is a collection of interviews with 14 former soldiers without any censorship by the Ministry of Defense.

Peter, who joined the British army in 1973, served in Ballymurphy with the Cheshire Regiment before moving to Creggan in Derry in 1976. In Dec. 1982, he was injured when an INLA bomb ripped through Ballykelly's Droppin' Well Bar, killing 17 people.

In an extraordinary interview, the former soldier bluntly states, "Bloody Sunday was murder."

"The paras lost it and there's been one massive cover-up....The people of the

Bogside and Derry should not give up. When justice comes for the paras, it'll be like the Clegg case I suppose," he comments. He is equally scathing in his criticism of unionists, claiming they caused all the trouble in the North.

He details vivid memories of the moment in 1982 when he was injured in the Ballykelly bombing while five of his closest friends died. But he claims that some of those convicted in connection with the attack were "fitted up."

"I also believe people were fitted up for incidents, I don't care what people say, I won't change my mind until I die. The Droppin' Well bomb springs to mind. When I was in hospital, detectives took statements about it, and within 24 hours two women had been arrested and charged. I think that they got seven years each," he says.

He describes his joy with recent political developments, claiming Secretary of State Mo Mowlam is approaching the problem properly. "She isn't out for personal rewards like Major and Thatcher were. I hope she

can succeed where others have failed," he says.

The book describes in graphic detail operations where British soldiers were told to treat Catholics differently from Protestants. It also claims that British soldiers regularly beat people up and broke the law in other ways. Relating to the 1970s, it details softer treatment in Protestant estates and a tougher approach to nationalist areas.

Most of the former soldiers interviewed claim they received no counseling, no matter how harrowing the experience they had been through.

A spokesman for the British army said soldiers who served in Northern Ireland since the mid-1980s were offered full counseling.

He also said the British army operated within the rule of law and said that if the former soldiers interviewed in the book had evidence of illegal activities, they should report them to the police.

Source: *Irish News*

(continued from Page 2)

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams expresses disappointment that a planned Department of Equality is dropped after rival nationalists in the SDLP and Ulster Unionists join to block its creation.

Trimble again insists that there should be no shadow executive set up without an IRA weapons hand over. He is speaking after the LVF "decommissions" nine guns and two pipe-bombs in a display at a workshop in East Belfast. No last forensic tests are carried out on the guns, which were shredded by cutting equipment under the supervision of Canadian General John de Chastelain, the head of the international body on decommissioning and in the presence of an LVF go-

between and the international media. It appears that, unless some formula can be worked out on decommissioning, the transfer of powers to departments could face a considerable delay.

January 2

Orangemen pledge to keep up their campaign to overturn a ban on their walking down the nationalist Garvaghy Road outside the town of Portadown in Northern Ireland after their latest demonstration passes off without violence. Trimble calls on the British government to scrap the Parades Commission.

January 4

The British and Irish prepare a new policy aimed at removing many of the huge security measures from the streets of Northern Ireland in a bid to

encourage a more normal way of life. Under the terms of a "normalization paper," it is understood security at police stations and other military establishments is to be downgraded.

January 5

A bricklayer is injured after the Orange Volunteers cause an explosion at a GAA club in Magherafelt, County Derry. The terrorist group issues a statement, saying: "The wider nationalist community now have everything to fear; now the siege of Ulster continues, with the British government abandoning the loyalist people and the Irish government standing up for republicans, the Orange Volunteers are ready to defend our people." The blast was the Orange Volunteers' third attack within a month.

Action Request

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: Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee, United States Postal Service, Room 4474E, 475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Washington, DC 20260-2437

Message: I am deeply disappointed that the USPS's commemorative honoring Irish Immigration fails to depict the role Irish immigrants to the US have played in the development of this nation. Although your press release acknowledges that the Great Hunger of 1845-50 played a significant role in causing many Irish to flee Ireland, the stamp fails to capture the impact these immigrants had on this nation. As a member of the American Irish PEC, I will not purchase this stamp and will discourage others to do so until the USPS issues a design that accurately honors the contributions of the American Irish to this country.

USPS Announces *Irish Immigration* Stamp

Editor's Note: Announcing the upcoming release of its commemorative stamp in honor of Irish Immigration to the US, the USPS issued the following press release. The information, a time line of when the Irish came to North America, fails to recognize the role Irish immigrants played in the development of the US.

Please contact the USPS and express your disappointment in the stamp (see *Action Request, this page*) and refuse to purchase the stamp.

"The first emigrants from Ireland to the New World arrived in the 17th century. Most of these 50,000 or more emigrants fled Ireland to escape severe economic, social, and political problems.

"From the early 18th century to the early 19th century, between a quarter-million and a half-million additional immigrants arrived and settled primarily in the middle and southern colonies.

"Many left for North America to avoid competition for land, depressions in the linen industry, and religious and political disturbances.

"Between 1815 and 1844 (the eve of the Great Famine), as many as one million Irish immigrants arrived in North America, and for the next 10 years, during the famine in Ireland, about 1.8 million more came to North America, primarily to the United States.

Living conditions and work opportunities were generally poor, and thousands died of diseases brought from Ireland. After the Great Famine, from 1856 to 1929, about 3.25 million people emigrated from Ireland to the United States.

"According to the 1990 US Census, Americans of Irish heritage are the second largest ancestral group in the country, accounting for 15.6 percent of our total population. More than 40 million Americans claim to be of Irish descent."

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