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American Irish Newsletter - July 1999

American Ireland Education Foundation - PEC

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Sinn Fein's Electoral Success is a Vote of Confidence in the Peace Process

SINN Fein almost doubled the number of council seats it holds in the Republic following local elections last month. The party now has a foothold in most Irish counties, though it failed to take any of the Republic's 15 European seats.

The local elections also marked a success for Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and Fianna Fail. The success of Fianna Fail and Sinn Fein was largely seen as voters' general approval for the peace process, despite ongoing difficulties.

Though the UUP won the third seat in the European elections on the same day last month, the unionist party suffered its worst electoral performance in 30 years, leaving leader David Trimble little room to maneuver on peace process issues such as decommissioning and the Executive. DUP leader Ian Paisely, the poll topper, and SDLP leader John Hume won the first two European seats.

The election showed that 70 percent of voters back the peace process, but the DUP can now claim that 60 percent of unionists are now in the No Camp.

Sinn Fein defied the odds, opinion surveys, and experts' forecasts to establish itself in local government politics for the first time and record creditable figures in all four Irish European Parliament constituencies. (PEC president **John Finucane** canvassed for the party during his trip to Belfast last month.)

Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams declared, "Our gains indicate an increasing support for our radical republican labor policies, and I am confident this is only the start of greater progress in the time ahead." Political observers in Dublin attributed Sinn Fein's progress largely to a well-run campaign nationwide.

Government Minister Noel Dempsey, the Fianna Fail director of elections, told Irish television that Sinn Fein's performance was "a very significant feature of the election". He said it showed that Sinn Fein was "becoming a constitutional party. That can only be good for everybody, and I welcome it."

Florida Lawyer Apologizes for Insulting the Irish

Orlando lawyer **John Stemberger** has apologized for attempting to make a case against a man based on anti-Irish stereotypes.

On behalf of Carmel Elizabeth Cunningham's family, Stemberger had claimed that Dollar Rent-a-Car should have known the driver was likely to drink because of his Irish heritage. The driver, Sean McGrath, was drunk at the time of the accident. Cunningham's family is suing the car company and McGrath for her wrongful death.

The *Miami Herald* reported the story on May 19. PEC member **Michael McCay** first alerted the PEC to the incident.

"I deeply regret the offense that I have created and wish to express my heartfelt apology to all those affected by my comments," Stemberger said in his reply to the PEC's June 10 letter to his office.

In "An Open Letter to Irish People Everywhere," Stemberger says, "My comments were ignorant, intemperate, and condemnable. Please forgive me. I made some false assumptions about Irish people and pubs and then inartfully used them in over-zealously advocating my client's case. It was not my intent to stereotype the Irish nor disparage their proud heritage in any way."

The attorney said his issue with Dollar is that it did not provide the driver adequate information for him to safely drive in the US. Stemberger said he is advocating for the safety of Irish tourists as well as Central Florida motorists.

**The PEC has a new Web address:
<http://aipec.freesevers.com>**

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Our View:

Orangemen's Mental Illness Torments North

Psychiatrist David Shainberg said that mental illness occurs when images of the self become rigid and closed, restricting an open, creative response to the world. This is the problem among the wannabe Orange despots at Drumcree.

As Christine Kinealy points out in this issue, Orangemen have changed their routes to better annoy more Catholics than their traditional, historically relevant, routes would have allowed. Clearly, Orange/loyalist identity depends on Catholic opposition and Catholic suffering. There is no Orang/loyalist identity without Catholic opposition. Founded on opposition to Catholics, the Order and loyalism exist only in opposition to Catholics.

Should Catholics in the North, and especially in Portadown, therefore ignore Orange Order and loyalist activity? Should they allow the fancy-dress party of racist buffoons to make its way down their roads? That's a tall order when a loyalist pipe bomb is sitting in your home. It's a tall order when loyalists are killing your family.

Nevertheless, by refusing to agree with the Order/loyalists that Orangeism deserves to be center stage, Catholics and nationalists could force Orangeism/loyalism to rethink, recreate, and rehabilitate itself and rejoin the community in the worthwhile endeavor of recreating the North. Such a strategy might even force the British government to pay serious attention to the North.

American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC

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Peace Process Update

May 14

The Pat Finucane Center reports that there has been one loyalist attack against Catholics every four days this year.

May 16

Ulster Unionists seek clarification of a formula aimed at unblocking the peace process impasse. Sinn Fein and the SDLP have accepted the plan, which would allow the Assembly to set up its first cabinet. The British government sets a June 30 deadline for the formation of the Executive. Orangemen involved in the Drumcree standoff say if the dispute is not settled by June 30, they will sever contact with the British government, political parties, and the RUC.

May 17

The LVF says it will end its cease-fire because it disapproves of Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams's saying Sinn Fein believes the loyalist group had breached its cease-fire.

May 18

The UUP rejects the latest formula for breaking the impasse, saying decommissioning must begin before the Executive starts.

May 20

The British government says the Executive will be powerless until all outstanding matters, including decommissioning, are resolved. The decommissioning body will be given a wider brief and will meet with IRA leaders to discuss the arms issue. A Downing Street spokesman says the June 30 deadline for resolving the decommissioning row is absolute.

May 24

UDP leader Gary McMichael claims the UFF's cease-fire is intact, despite the RUC's claiming the UFF was behind a weekend murder bid on Frank Petticrew. Petticrew claims the RUC had earlier threatened his life if he refused to inform on north Belfast republicans.

May 26

Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern defers changes to articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution for up to 12 months but denies the move means Mitchell Agreement has failed.

May 27

UUP leader David Trimble says he believes political violence is over and that the paramilitaries have failed.

(continued on Page 8)

INSIST ON PEACE

and be part of the process.

BY RENEWING your membership in the American Irish Political Education Committee, you continue to play a vital part in the ongoing peace process in Northern Ireland.

WITH MEMBERSHIP comes the monthly *American Irish Newsletter*, which provides you the opportunity to participate in letter-writing campaigns (such as the ones on Page 8 to US political leaders and opinion makers who play a central role in the peace process. Your support also helps the PEC maintain its web site at <http://aipec.freesevers.com>, issue press releases to the American Irish media, and pursue other outreach strategies so that we can reach more people around the world.

IN THIS WAY, you insist on peace and are part of the process.

Already, your support has:

- Placed the US in the role of peace broker in Ireland;
- Won the President's promise to provide visas to further peace in border areas;
- Improved the quality of life in the North through fair employment legislation similar to such laws in the US;
- Played a key role in ending the violence that has destroyed or damaged so many lives throughout Ireland....

Nevertheless, your support is key to peace in Ireland. Considerable work remains:

- Sectarian tensions continue to threaten, and take, lives;
- Unionist politicians continue to threaten to destroy nascent democratic structures by refusing to work with Sinn Fein;
- Repressive legislation in the North remains on British statutes;
- Policing in the North is still overwhelmingly Protestant and, therefore, unrepresentative of the community....

PLEASE RENEW your membership now at \$25 for one year (\$20 for senior citizens) with the coupon on Page 8 so that peace in Ireland will become a reality and letters such as this one will become unnecessary.

INSIST ON PEACE and become part of the process.

Sincerely,

John J. Finucane
National President

Newsbits

A CLAIM by former RUC chief constable Sir John Hermon that murdered solicitor Pat Finucane was "associated with the IRA" was bluntly contradicted by the official RUC view given at his inquest nine years ago. Sir John...sparked outrage...when he claimed Finucane was linked to the IRA. In an interview with the *Daily Telegraph*, the former police chief alleged: "He used his position as a lawyer to act as a contact between suspects in custody and republicans on the outside." His statement is at odds with the official RUC view delivered at the inquest into Finucane's murder in Sept. 1990. Senior officer Detective Superintendent Simpson...told the inquest: "The police refute the claim that Finucane was a member of the IRA. He was just another law abiding citizen going about his professional duties in a professional manner." (*Irish News* 5/11/99)

US lawyers acting for Sean McPhilemy, author of *The Committee*, will begin legal action next week to compel UUP leader David Trimble to answer questions under oath....*The Committee: Political Assassination in Northern Ireland* details a conspiracy of RUC members, businessmen, Unionists, a clergyman, solicitors, locally-recruited British soldiers and loyalist paramilitaries formed to murder Catholics and nationalists between 1989 and 1996.... Lawyers acting for McPhilemy are seeking replies from Trimble after he made...statements in the House of Commons and in a letter to McPhilemy's publisher, Roberts Rinehart. Russell Smith, the publisher's senior attorney, said the company would be seeking to put Trimble under oath to answer questions about his criticisms of *The Committee*.... "He has openly

defended individuals named as members of the Committee in the book, including known terrorists and evidently has relevant information about them." Trimble has stated he has information that those named in [the book] have no connection to loyalist killings, said Smith. (*RM Dist.* 5/11/99)

A unionist who retracted anonymous testimony given to the makers of a documentary into allegations of collusion in the murder of Catholics has now claimed the RUC put him under pressure to change his story. Jim Sands, whose testimony had been key to the 1991...documentary *The Committee*, discredited the program and left unanswered many questions about collusion after he withdrew his testimony....According to a report in yesterday's *Sunday Business Post*, Sands claims pressure was put on him to retract his story while he was with the RUC in "protective custody." Among the allegations made by Sands were that senior RUC officers, unionist politicians, and well-known businessmen formed a committee to decide on targets for loyalist paramilitaries. A political and community activist, Sands claims he was present at a number of meetings as "a token of the Ulster Unionist Party." But after he spoke to program makers he claims he was told, tactfully, that it would be "helpful" to him if he were willing to say the program was nothing but fabricated stories and lies, the report claims. (*Irish News* 5/17/99)

The Orange Order has confirmed the existence of an Ulster land fund, designed to stop Protestant property falling into the hands of Catholics, especially in border areas. According to an internal report on the fund,... "to date the fund has given assistance in the

purchase of seven properties across the province and has purchased outright a key border property"...Its operation, which is unashamedly sectarian, may contravene the province's legislation on religious discrimination, which was strengthened last year. According to a spokesman for the Fair Employment Commission, "firms providing financial services cannot refuse to deal with a person, or treat them differently, because of religion or political opinion"...The law also prohibits estate agents from taking political or religious viewpoints into account when selling property. (*London Sunday Times* 5/9/99)

The families of the Bloody Sunday dead have won a major battle in their fight to uncover the truth behind the 1972 killings in Derry. In a dramatic ruling last night, Lord Saville of Newdigate—the law lord charged with heading a new inquiry into the deaths—ruled that the soldiers present on Bloody Sunday would not be allowed to remain anonymous. He also ruled that three police officers—one of whom is serving undercover in a town near Derry—would have their names published, although they could give evidence from behind a screen. (*Irish News* 5/7/99)

The RUC said last night that the personal details of more than 150 people have been found in a suspected loyalist "hit-list." A row erupted after police admitted that it found the dossier two months ago—and is only now warning people that they were named on it. A police spokesman said last night: "The extensive list had to be fully researched in terms of its currency and accuracy....The research having been completed, the people accurately named in the list were then informed as a precaution." (*Irish News* 5/19/99)

American Irish History: *McGarrity Fights From the US for Irish Freedom*

By Seamus Metress, *Ohio*

Joseph McGarrity, born in County Tyrone in 1874, participated in the cause of Irish freedom throughout his life, though he emigrated to the US when he was 17. The son of a farmer and tailor, McGarrity grew up when Ireland's national expectations were on the rise with the issues of home rule, agrarian reform, and Fenianism.

When McGarrity emigrated to the US in Jan. 1892, he settled in Philadelphia. There, he worked as a general helper at a small hotel, a stone cutter's helper, a locomotive worker, an innkeeper, and a tavern owner. Eventually, he made his mark in the wine and spirits trade. At the same time, McGarrity became involved in Irish nationalist activity. He was presented to the Ancient Order of Hibernians for initiation, but at the first meeting there was no mention of Irish

freedom, so he gave up on that group. A few months later, he was initiated into Clan na Gael, in which group he became a national executive committee member.

As a member of Clan na Gael, McGarrity raised money for the Gaelic League, *Fianna na hEireann*, *Irish Freedom* (the monthly publication of the Irish Republican Brotherhood), and, later, the IRA. He helped to raise \$8.5 million for the Irish struggle.

McGarrity's belief that Ireland should be a 32-county Republic caused him to break with John Devoy and to reorganize Clan na Gael. He broke with Eamon deValera when deValera entered the Irish parliament in 1927.

In the 1930s, McGarrity masterminded a bombing campaign in England that he hoped would cause chaos

by crippling the electric power grid, factories, and communication. It failed shortly before he died in Aug. 1940.

McGarrity collected a library of more than 10,000 volumes on American Irish literature, which is now at Villanova University. He was also the author of a volume of poetry, *Celtic Moods and Memories*, which revealed his deep feelings for Ireland.

Sean T. Kelly, president of Ireland when McGarrity died, said, "No man that I have met ever worked harder to win for Ireland her independence, or gave more generously of his substance as well as his great talent in service to his motherland."

The poet Padraic Colum referred to as a "Donegal gallowglass ready to swing a battle ax with his long arm."

Radio Host Dr. Laura Slams the Irish

While on the air April 7, radio personality Dr. Laura Schlessinger urged her staff to think of the many derogatory names for Irish immigrants, PEC member **Kay Kelly** reports.

"She said, 'Let us say the Irish are drunks,' three times," Kelly said, adding, "She made the statement while giving a refresher course on the ugly names the early [immigrants] gave other [immigrant groups] at the turn of the century."

Kelly points out that the talk show host did not discuss the insulting names for African Americans, Italians, or Jews. Clearly, these other groups have made it clear that insulting names have no place in today's culture. PEC members should make it clear to Schlessinger that insulting them, even for discussion's sake, is not acceptable. (See *Action Request*, Page 8)

Walsh: Clinton has yet to Fund Peace Visas

Congressman Jim Walsh said May 13 he is disappointed that President Clinton has not kept his commitment to fund a visa program associated with the Mitchell Agreement and that he appears unwilling to provide the relatively small amount of money needed to enact the legislation he signed last year.

Walsh, who is Chairman of the Friends of Ireland and co-chair of the US-Irish Inter-parliamentary Caucus, said the bill passed Congress and Clinton signed it late last year. It was not passed in time for the needed \$800,000 to be included in the 1999 fiscal year appropriations, however.

The congressman said he had hoped that the White

House would ask the Office of Management and Budget to find a way to fund the visa for this year, as he has done when assisting other countries. The President has requested more than \$7.6 billion in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriation for Central America and Columbia, Jordan, East Timor, Kosovo and Albania, and the Middle East.

The law would allow up to 4,000 Protestants and Catholics from Northern Ireland and the border counties in the Republic to come to the US to learn a trade from private sector employers and then return to Ireland.

(See *Action Requests*, Page 8.)

History's Long March Resists a Change of Course

By Christine Kinealy, author of *A Death Dealing Famine, the Great Hunger in Ireland; The Great Calamity:*

With the annual Drumcree flash point threatening to reduce Northern Ireland to a standstill and to wreck the peace process, the Orange Order insists that the sectarian tensions and violence that the marching season engenders are a recent phenomenon.

History suggests otherwise. The pattern of rerouted marches, sectarian divisions, and the Order's violent resistance to government bans has been all too familiar in the two centuries since the Order's foundation. Until at least 1997, whenever the Order has defied a government marching ban, it has ultimately triumphed. The Drumcree standoff is no isolated incident.

The Order was founded in 1795 in Armagh after a sectarian confrontation known at the Battle of the Diamond, in which 30 Catholics were killed. The violence followed a period of deep Protestant insecurity at the gradual restoration of civil rights to Catholics and against a background of heightened sectarian animosity and economic and political insecurity.

From its outset, the Orange Order has been an exclusively Protestant body dedicated to sustaining the "glorious and immortal memory" of William of Orange, who, in the 18th century, had become a Protestant icon. Increasingly, he was remembered for

his two important victories—at the Boyne and at Aughrim—over Catholic King James II. As the 19th century progressed, the Boyne legend and annual July 12 commemoration became a key signifier of Protestant ascendancy. By the 1890s, it was the key anniversary on the Orange calendar.

The Order's influence quickly spread, and lodges were opened in other parts of Ireland, though mostly in the eastern counties of Ulster, where the population was mostly Protestant.

As July 12 increasingly became an occasion of sectarian conflict, the British government tried to curb the worst excesses. In the 1820s, it passed an Unlawful Society Act aimed at limiting the activities of popular societies of all denominations in Ireland. In Ulster, the law was ignored.

As a result, the British passed an Anti-Processions Act in 1832. It succeeded in limiting the July 12 parades, although the Order continued to hold commemoration dinners and ring bells throughout the day. In 1835, a British inquiry into the Order's activities reported that members had successfully infiltrated the yeomanry and army and that Protestant landlords, merchants, and members of the judiciary were assisting the Order's success.

In 1845, the year that the potato blight triggered the Great Hunger, the British removed Anti-Processions Act, resulting in an immediate increase in July 12 parades. Despite the backdrop of starvation and mass mortality, the marches again became occasions of sectarian conflict. Four years later, this would have tragic consequences.

In 1848, a small and easily suppressed nationalist uprising provided the Order with an opportunity to portray itself as a defender of the British state. It called on "loyal Protestants" to arm themselves against the Catholic threat. The Orange Lodge in Castlewellan, County Down, informed the British government it had 80 "steady, able, determined men ready and willing to take the field at any time to die, if need be, for their beloved queen and constitution."

The situation came to a head on July 12, 1849, when the local Order decided to march through a Catholic area in Dolly's Brae, near Castlewellan. Local magistrates asked leaders of the Orange Order to avoid this route because they were afraid the demonstration would result in violence. The request was refused. Lodge Grand Master Lord Roden provided the marchers with refreshments, including alcohol, and urged them to do their

Marches are a Diversion From Progress

"WE HAVE been told too often that marching feet are more important than working hands and heads. It is a terrible indictment of inefficient government that more time is spent discussing the right to march than the right to work and create wealth. We have to change all that. One of the

most effective ways of changing it is to make this area what it should be, an area of superb, vital, innovative development which others will be glad to acknowledge and even imitate."

—Fr. Des Wilson, West Belfast,
*The Sixth Annual Frank Cahill
Memorial Lecture*

You Can Order Christine Kinealy's Books

TO ORDER *A Death Dealing Famine, the Great Hunger in Ireland; The Great Calamity: the Irish Famine, 1845-52; and A Disunited Kingdom? England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales 1800-1945*, contact: Irish Books & Media, 1433 East Franklin Avenue Minneapolis, MN 55404-2135, (800) 229-3505. Mention that yours is a PEC order.

the Irish Famine, 1845-52; and A Disunited Kingdom? England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, 1800-1945

duty as loyal Protestants. They did. By the end of the day, during which they had defiantly marched through the prohibited area, they killed 30 Catholics. This day would be absorbed into Orange folklore as a triumph over Catholicism.

The fiasco at Dolly's Brae led to the passing of another act in 1850 banning processions in Ireland. In Liverpool in 1851, the largest-ever July 12 march in England took place. Despite attacks on local Catholics, calls to ban the march were denounced as an infringement on the civil liberties of loyal Protestant subjects, an argument that resonates today.

The Party Emblems Act of 1860 strengthened the 1850 Act; nevertheless, the Order openly defied such restrictions. When William Johnston led Orangemen in a July 12 march in 1867, he was arrested. He emerged from prison a hero; as MP for Belfast in 1872, he got the Processions Act repealed.

The growth of Irish nationalism in the final decades of the 19th century saw an even more militant form of unionism emerge. Also, the playing of the "Orange Card" would become a familiar threat. In the 1880s, the Orange Order became linked with the

new Unionist Party, which used its leverage in the British parliament to maintain its control in Ireland and in the North, after partition in 1921.

The parades increased in significance after 1921. In 1925, the new Northern government decided that July 12 would be a bank holiday, clearly demonstrating the new administration's Orange sympathies. Ulster politicians would use the day to emphasize the Orange nature of the North. In 1932, Northern Prime Minister James Craig declared at the Orange celebrations that "Ours is a Protestant government, and I am an Orangeman."

Though the parades were now being portrayed as expressions of the distinct Protestant culture of the North, rather than as sectarian displays, they continued to create religious conflict. In 1935, the Northern government, alarmed by the growth in sectarian confrontations, banned all summer parades. Following the Order's determined show of strength, the government lifted the ban. The July 12 parade took place, accompanied by six weeks of rioting and 13 murders.

In 1952, the Northern Ireland government again attempted to avoid the potential dangers of the Twelfth by

forcing a rerouting away from Catholic areas. Again, the government backed down in the face of the Orange Order's resistance. In fact, its members continued to ignore population changes and would sometimes change their traditional routes in favor of marching through Catholic areas.

With the beginning of the Troubles in 1969, the political atmosphere in the North became even more charged, and the march routes remained a major source of contention. Repeatedly, the Orange Order successfully defied or ignored government rerouting attempts.

Since 1998, the eyes of the world have been focused on a small, remote village in County Armagh as the vexed question of the July 12 march again threatens the stability of the country. The Order claims its traditional right to march from Drumcree church through a largely Catholic area. The ban on this march, it says, threatens its civil and religious liberties.

Those people who reflect on Dolly's Brae 150 years ago and the horrible catalogue of conflict that has surrounded the July 12 marches since their inception might wonder how civil and religious liberty figures into the argument at all.

Orangeman Predicts Possible Civil War

PORTADOWN Orangeman David Jones told the *Boston Herald* June 2 that civil war could erupt in the North if the Drumcree parade is again rerouted. The annual parade is due to take place on July 4, but security sources have said they will block it if no local accommodation is reached.

Jones said, "If we're not down by the fourth of July, then we're into a

very dangerous situation...because then we're on a slippery slope toward something possibly as serious as civil war"

Jones suggested that, if the British Army again blocks Orangemen from the Garvaghy Road, "the problem won't be at Drumcree, it will be throughout the country."

Garvaghy residents' spokesman Breandan Mac Cionnaith responded

angrily to Jones's outburst, saying, "For the past 11 months the Orange Order have been making these threats against the nationalist community in Portadown. It is time the British government caught on to the fact that this is primarily a battle between the anti-agreement people and the British government....[T]he people that are going to suffer most are the nationalist community in Portadown."

Action Requests

Please write these letters or make the telephone calls. Mention that you are a PEC member.

Write: **President Bill Clinton**, the White House, Washington, DC, 20500; tele. (202) 456-1111; fax (202) 456-2461; email preident@whitehouse.gov

Message: I urge you to include the visa program associated with the Mitchell Agreement this year. I understand from Congressman Jim Walsh that you have requested almost \$8 billion in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriation for other troubled parts of the world. The Irish peace process can benefit greatly from continued, practical US involvement. Please make good on your promise.

Write: **Dr. Laura Schlessinger**, Premiere Radio Networks, Suite 500, 15260 Ventura Boulevard, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403; tele. 800-375-2872; fax (213) 487-6678

Message: I am deeply offended by you April 7 radio program, during which you claimed that "the Irish are drunks" three times while you were discussing the insulting names that immigrant groups called other immigrant groups at the turn of the century in the US. I note that you were not explicit about the insults hurled at African Americans, Italians, or Jews. Insulting any ethnic group is unacceptable, even for discussion's sake. I urge you to apologize on your program for insulting the American Irish.

(continued from Page 2)

May 28

The BBC reports that it has evidence that the LVF killed lawyer Rosemary Nelson in March. The Red Hand Defenders had claimed responsibility for the murder.

May 29

Thirteen RUC officers and several protesters are injured after violent clashes erupt between loyalists and nationalists following a junior Orange Order parade in Portadown. Trouble starts when the RUC tries to prevent other loyalists from following the march down the nationalist Garvaghy road.

June 1

A Catholic family leaves its home in Larne after suffering loyalist beatings.

June 3

To break the peace process logjam, Trimble proposes a sequence of events beginning with the initial procedural steps towards creating an Executive. Paramilitaries would then demonstrate that they have left violence behind. The executive would be formed and power devolved.

June 4

In what is seen as a step down from the proposal he made yesterday, Trimble insists he will not share power with Sinn Féin unless the IRA begins to disarm.

June 5

The LVF is suspected of killing a grandmother in her Portadown home. Loyalists attack several other Catholics in the Portadown area on the same day.

June 8

Fourteen pipe bombs are defused at loyalist housing estate.

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