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## American Irish Newsletter - June 1997

American Ireland Education Foundation - PEC

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# AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 22, Number 6

June 1997

## New Labour - New Opportunity

On May 1, British voters dealt a crushing blow to the ruling British Conservative Party. John Major's party was wiped out of government, losing more than half its seats in Parliament. The British Labour Party was swept into office with its biggest majority in history. The Tories won't be missed by supporters of peace with justice in Ireland.

When it comes to Ireland, John Major will go down in history as an utter failure. He himself termed the opportunity given to him by the peace process and the IRA cessation as "the best opportunity for peace in 75 years." Mr. Major's record is well documented. Instead of seizing that opportunity, Mr. Major squandered it by placing constant roadblocks in the path to peace.

The election of the new Labour government, with a huge majority, presents an excellent opportunity for the restart of the peace process. Hopefully, Labour will seize upon the promise of courage and bold imagination promised by the Major government but never delivered.

The PEC has already noticed some promising aspects of the new government. The first was the appointment of Dr. Marjorie "Mo" Mowlam, as the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Within hours of her appointment she was touring Belfast, promising to implement policing reforms, strengthening fair-employment statutes, as well as the recent proposed reforms regarding Orange parades through nationalist areas.

During the election campaign, Mowlam promised that, if the IRA called a ceasefire, Sinn Fein would be admitted to the talks when they resume on June 3rd. Mowlam reiterated this in Belfast on May 3rd.

This is the first test for the new government. Assuming a ceasefire, will they keep their word? John Major used to make statements like, "it is the mission of my government to see Sinn Fein in these talks." He never meant it, let's hope Mo Mowlam and Tony Blair do.

The other welcome aspect to the British general election is the size of the Labour majority. Since Mr. Major was forced to rely on the 9 votes of the Ulster Unionists, to stay in power, he refused to make genuine commitments to the process that David Trimble would object to. With his huge majority, Mr. Blair will not have to rely on the unionists for support. His hands are freed to make a renewed and vigorous effort to restart the peace process.

We hope he is up to the task.

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The PEC needs your support. Our annual raffle is a crucial factor in our financial stability. Please send in the books as soon as you can.

## Newsbits by Kathy Regan

People like McGuinness (Martin) are no pushover. They are not motivated by the desire for fame, fortune or political recognition. They are a lot more resolute, more capable of keeping their eyes on the big picture and a lot less corruptible than most constitutional politicians.

*(Sunday Times of London 5/4/97)*

The voters have put their faith in Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness' commitment to furthering the peace process.

*(Irish News Editorial 5/3/97)*

Shut up. You are an out and out Irish Republican.

*(Rev. Ian Paisley, barking at David Alderdice of the liberal unionist Alliance Party, when Alderdice asked Paisley to show a bit of decorum during the announcement of the results of the vote in Paisley's North Antrim constituency.)*

The historic victories by the Republican leadership in Mid-Ulster and West Belfast have dramatically changed Northern Ireland's political map. The onward march of Sinn Fein marks an historic turning point in the battle for hearts and minds within nationalism.

*(Irish News, 5/3/97)*

Why don't they just let them march? That is the question asked by many

*cont. on page 4*

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## OUR VIEW

*One last chance for the present peace process. That is our judgement on the future of the present peace process in Northern Ireland.*

*Last month's elections in Britain and in Northern Ireland gave the peace process a new lease on life. The new Labour administration in Britain has a massive majority. They will not need the support of the Ulster Unionists to remain in power thus freeing its hand and denying the UUP the veto over progress which they had in the last Parliament. If Prime Minister Blair has the courage and imagination to seriously move the process forward to inclusive negotiations with all parties and within an allotted time frame, then the process may still have a chance.*

*The elections in Northern Ireland produced many important results. The Ulster Unionists and the SDLP increased their votes and Sinn Fein scored a massive breakthrough.*

*This is the last chance for the parties in Northern Ireland to determine their own future. For the Ulster Unionists, they must show that they are ready to compromise with nationalists and negotiate a solution. For Sinn Fein the reality is that they will not be allowed into the talks without an IRA ceasefire. They must do everything in their power to convince the IRA to call one. Labour has already made positive comments on Sinn Fein participation in the talks and Mo Mowlam has also made positive statements regarding decommissioning not becoming an obstacle to talks. Hopefully the IRA will give us a chance to see if Labour intends to keep their promises by calling a ceasefire. It is the only way.*

*If the all party process continues down the road to failure, then the two governments must come together and make a deal between themselves. For the all party process, it's now or never.*

## Urgent: Increase the Pressure on the Stamp Committee

The US Postal Service recently issued a commemorative stamp honoring Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved as many as 100,000 Jews from Hitler and the concentration camps.

The honor for Wallenberg is well deserved, but more importantly is the fact that it took a massive five-year letter writing, phone call and lobbying campaign, to get the postal service to agree to issue the stamp honoring Wallenberg.

It will take the same commitment and effort from the American Irish community to see that the Postal Service issues a stamp for the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Ireland's Great Hunger. It will take a massive amount of letters, phone calls and grass-roots action if we are to succeed.

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Write the following letter in your own words or as is to both: Mr. Tirso Deljunco, Chairman, Board of Governors and Mr. James Tolbert, Stamp Manager, at US Postal Service, 475 L'Enfant Plaza, Washington, DC 20260.

Dear Sir:

Please advise the Board of Governors of the US Postal Service to overturn its decision not to issue a stamp commemorating the 150th anniversary of Ireland's Great Hunger. The Great Hunger was an important event in the history of this country. A commemorative stamp would be a fitting and proper tribute.

Sincerely,

**Send Offensive Situations to: Paul Newman,  
9 Deltic Road, New City, NY 10956**

## **From the North: The Election Results**

by Robert Heatley, *co-founder of the Campaign for Democracy, a predominantly Protestant organization that supports a united Ireland.*

The outcome of the General Election in Northern Ireland consolidated the advances made by Sinn Fein in the 1996 Forum elections. It moved ahead of Paisley's DUP with 16.1% as opposed to 13.6% to become the third largest party. Sinn Fein got 126,921 of the nationalist vote as opposed to 150,408 for the SDLP thereby maintaining the narrowed gap between the two. At one time, the SDLP was the much larger nationalist party. Sinn Fein and the DUP now have two MP's each, the DUP having lost one and Sinn Fein gaining two. The 'Ulster' Unionist Party remains the largest party with 10 of the 18 seats, but it can thank the opposition for this margin.

The failure of the SDLP to agree to an electoral pact with Sinn Fein, thereby splitting the nationalist vote, presented gifts to unionism such as West Tyrone and, possibly, in Fermanagh/South Tyrone where disillusionment at the lack of a pact may have affected nationalist voters' turnout. The sole effect of the Alliance Party's intervention in the election was to ensure the return of two candidates from the more extreme and bigoted parties of unionism in North Down and in East Belfast, if such a differentiation can be made. The Alliance is a self-proclaimed anti-sectarian party, although pro-unionist as well. Tactical voting from its supporters could have

been used to further its professed anti-sectarianism position, but this did not happen.

As a result of these diffencies on the part of the opposition, the Ulster Unionist Party ended up with a greater lead and representation than it ought to have had although, given the scale of new Labour's victory at Westminster, this should now no longer be of any pragmatic importance for the governing party. The fact that ought not to be obscured is that over 40% of the electorate in Northern Ireland voted in favor of the dismantlement of the Orange/Unionist system and in favor of Ireland's reunification. This is the reality with which new Labour and its emissary, Dr. Marjorie "Mo" Mowlam, the new Secretary of State, will have to come to terms if it is sincere in wanting to end the Anglo-Irish conflict.

It will not be able to avoid having to face down the Northern Ireland unionists. Significant elements of them are not prepared to countenance ANY tampering with the status quo (be it even internal democratic reform) because they perceive steps such as that to be a British government 'conspiracy' (regardless of its political color) to ease them gradually out of the UK. This is mere paranoia of course but despite what they say it signifies that they are not British. Could you imagine any British

government easing Yorkshire out of the UK? As soon as Labour's astounding victory was declared, they started to rattle their sabers in conditioned reflex manner so as to try to intimidate Dr. Mowlam.

For all unionists, any restarted talks which are scheduled for June have to conclude with one outcome: an UNCHANGED constitutional status quo. But, as has been noted, over 40% of the community in Northern Ireland will not accept this on any account. So it is now up to Prime Minister Blair to show what he is made of. Without wishing to pre-judge, the signs are not too good. Trimble thinks he has 'all the right instincts.' In response to the IRA's pre-election disruption in England, Tony Blair said that he would not allow it to deflect attention away from the 'real issues' confronting the British electorate. He was sticking to his bi-partisanship with Major.

Nevertheless, this might have been electioneering talk and it remains to be seen how he behaves now that he is in office. Democratically minded people were heartened when President Clinton told him that Northern Ireland was a top priority issue.

For further information contact:

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### Newsbits *cont. from page 1*

political and church leaders when it comes to the issue of contentious parades. Why not indeed! Maybe the experience of residents living in the County Tyrone town of Newtonstewart on Friday May 2, will help these people understand some of the reasons why sectarian parades aren't welcome in nationalist areas. Crowds of men were drinking, urinating and vomiting against walls and chanting sectarian slogans as they milled around waiting for members of the 26 bands that traveled into the West Tyrone village for the band parade to form up. The RUC closed the main road linking Omagh to Derry from 7 o'clock and townspeople were forced to make diversions as they went about their business. Then at around 9 o'clock the Orangemen, led by the Newtownstewart Red Hand Defenders, marched off. They marched through the town, not to a church service but to the nationalist area of Mourneview in an act of pure triumphalism. They played their drums and flutes, stopping only to attack property and hurl sectarian abuse at residents.

*(AP/RN 5/8/97)*

The parents of a Portadown Catholic are to sue the RUC for damages after they refused to intervene when their son was beaten to death by a loyalist gang two weeks ago. Robert Hamill died on May 8 from injuries sustained on April 25 after he and a cousin were set upon by loyalists. Two women relatives begged in vain for RUC officers present to stop the attack, but were forced to throw themselves on top of the men until an ambulance arrived. Mo Mowlam yesterday rejected calls for an independent inquiry into Mr. Hamill's death. Derry human rights group, The Pat Finucane Center, accused police of misinforming the public with claims that 'rival factions' had clashed and that they had 'moved in to separate the group'. "With the death of Mr. Hamill, it has become clear that the RUC witnessed the entire incident, there were no rival factions, they did not intervene," said a spokesman for the Center.

*(Irlnet 5/10/97)*

## George Washington Parke Custis

by Kevin P. Murphy, *Massachusetts*

The roots of American interest in Irish independence are very deep in the family tree of the United States. One of the first non-Irish Catholic leaders in the American movement for Irish freedom was President George Washington's stepson, George Washington Parke Custis.

Mr. Custis was born in 1781 in Virginia. He was the son of John Parke Custis, who was Martha Washington's son through her first marriage. When John Custis died of swamp fever, President and Mrs. Washington took in the 6 month old George. Mr. Custis was raised at Mt. Vernon and also in the Presidential Mansions in New York and Philadelphia. At a young age, Custis became interested in the Irish as people like Commodore Barry, the founder of the U.S. Navy, and Gen. John Sullivan of Bunker Hill fame visited the Washingtons. He was especially fascinated with the story of American soldier John Byrne who was born in Ireland and who was tortured by the British at a prison ship at the Charlestown area of Boston.

Custis was educated at Princeton and Annapolis. He bought a 100 acre tract of land and built a huge mansion at what is now Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. He married Mary Fitzhugh of Chatham, VA. Their daughter Mary, would grow up to marry Gen. Robert E. Lee of Civil War fame. The mansion played host to Andrew Jackson, Daniel Webster, Sam Houston and Lafayette.

Throughout Virginia and Washington D.C., Custis spoke for Irish freedom. He organized a large rally at Washington City Hall to show support for Daniel O'Connell's emancipation efforts in Ireland.

His orations advocated freedom for Ireland at a time when Irish people were widely looked upon as a threat or of a lower class by many Americans. Custis also led rallies against slavery when it was a dangerous thing to do in the south. He advocated liberty for the Irish and African-Americans of his era.

During the Great Hunger of the 1840's when the Irish came to America in huge numbers, Custis organized relief efforts to help feed the starving refugees of Britain's cruelty. **When anti-Irish feeling soared, Custis gave speeches reminding Americans that so many Irish fought with his step father to start the United States.**

Every St. Patrick's Day Custis would lead a barge up the Potomac to Washington D.C. to begin a parade on 14th Street led by the United States Marine Corps band playing Irish tunes. His last request before passing away in 1857 was that the Irish remember him on St. Patrick's Day. For a century the legacy of Mr. Custis was forgotten by the American Irish until 1956 when U.S. Park's Service Historian Murray H. Nelligan researched Mr. Custis and his Irish interests. Irish groups in the D.C. area commemorate Custis on St. Patrick's Day.

In this era, when many American Irish political and business leaders turn a blind eye to the injustice of British rule in Ireland, it is interesting to learn that the founding family of our great nation cared about the Irish when no one else did.

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# Northern Ireland: The Way Forward

by Gerry Adams M.P., *President of Sinn Fein*

The recent Westminster elections once again brought attention to political leaders. One thing is for sure, the focus on Ireland will at least continue over the next couple of months. In combination with the elections, the shadow of Drumcree, now only weeks down the road, will ensure that attention.

The election results and the public apprehensions about the loyalist marching season, resulting from the actions last year by the unionists, the loyal orders, the British government, the British Army, the RUC and loyalist paramilitaries, will maintain the media focus through to midsummer. The timing of all these serious events occurring so close together underpins the urgency of the present situation and exposes the wide gaps between the conflicting parties. On one hand, there is a clear need for change of all kinds - political, economic, cultural and constitutional. On the other hand, we have the continued obdurate intransigence of the unionists, working in active opposition to change of any kind. And perhaps in a way symbolic of the political success of the latter agenda, the multi-party talks resume at Castle Buildings on June 3rd. That is almost a year to the day from the start of the talks on June 10, 1996. They will resume without having moved off first base. Almost four years since the public emergence of the Irish peace initiative in 1993 and not a single word of negotiation on the substantive issues at the core of the conflict has been spoken. More than two years since the launch by the two governments of the Joint Framework Document - ditto.

Sinn Fein's participation in the Westminster elections and in the two sets of elections yet to be conducted is about seeking to promote and develop a momentum to move the entire situation away from this failed recipe for stagnation and political regression.

We stood on a platform of creating: a new opportunity for peace, a future as equals and a program of change

We stood on a platform of seeking to rebuild the peace process on the basis of a real commitment to a negotiated settlement. Our resolve to move the situation in that direction is absolute. And we, of course, stood on the basis of our republican analysis. Central to that is the need to promote and create a culture of change.

The handling of the peace process by the last British government was disastrous. This is widely acknowledged. Sinn Fein has

no wish to be involved with recriminations but to move the situation forward, we all need to recognize the mistakes of the past so as to rectify them. Indeed, that has been the chief focus of Sinn Fein's attention since the peace process broke down. It is largely in this area that my engagement with others has been contained for some considerable time now.

It is of critical importance that the democratic rights of the Sinn Fein electorate are recognized. There can be no equality and no inclusive process if all publicly elected representatives are not accorded equal treatment.

It is obvious that the prospect for success in a real and inclusive process of negotiations is greatest if they are conducted in a peaceful environment.

There can be no preconditions, particularly in a negotiations process which is conducted on the principle that 'nothing is finally agreed, until everything is agreed.' Given that preconditions to negotiations caused the collapse of the peace process last February, preconditions need to be removed. The removal of the gun from the political equation in Ireland is a clear objective of a lasting peace settlement. Given the importance of this, the approach should be the one which is most likely to succeed. The issue of disarmament needs to be resolved but without blocking the negotiations.

The need for a time frame to generate and sustain momentum in the negotiations is obvious. The two governments clearly need to take a lead on this crucial issue, a point which our party has made consistently over the past two years since our first public meeting with British government officials in December 1994.

The two governments should, therefore, agree and then propose to the participants a concentrated time frame.

Sinn Fein believes that an unequivocal restoration of the IRA cessation would represent the most important confidence building initiative of the IRA.

For its part, the British government should outline the substance of a programmatic approach on issues which will generate confidence.

The issues which should be addressed by the British government immediately are: A. The issues which fall into the equality and democratic rights agenda. These can and must be addressed immediately. They

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include the principles of equality of treatment, equality of opportunity and parity of esteem should apply across the political, cultural, economic, social, legal and security spectrum.

B. Both governments also need to urgently address a demilitarization agenda dealing with issues such as political prisoners, emergency legislation and policing.

Sinn Fein will approach the negotiations on the sole basis of our democratic mandate. We are totally committed to peaceful and democratic means of resolving political problems. Sinn Fein has the democratic right to be involved in negotiations and to represent our electorate on the basis of our established electoral mandate.

Sinn Fein believes that any restoration by the IRA of its cessation of August 1994 will be genuinely unequivocal, containing a clear and unambiguous commitment to enhance a genuine peace process.

Sinn Fein already publicly made clear our commitment to the Mitchell Principles and we will do so formally when we enter negotiations. Sinn Fein is not the IRA. But we recognize and acknowledge the IRA's stated intention of enhancing the democratic peace process and the IRA's definitive commitment to its success. Sinn Fein is wholly committed to democratic negotiations and to a democratic outcome to those negotiations. I firmly believe that, if clear assurances are given by the British government, the peace process can be restored and that the opportunity to finally resolve the conflict can then be brought to a successful conclusion.

In the post Westminster elections situation, the opportunity to rebuild the peace process clearly exists. Sinn Fein is wholly committed to playing our role in this. The litmus test for this is, in the words of the Mitchell Report, to demonstrate that, "a real and inclusive process of negotiation is genuinely on offer," that a level playing field has been provided with no obstacle deliberately erected to obstruct play, inclusive of all the players, and with a time frame.

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# Bloody Sunday Justice

by The Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign, *Derry, Ireland*

In February 1997, Dr Raymond Mc Clean, a former RAF medic who attended some of the victims on Bloody Sunday and was present at the postmortems (as the representative of Cardinal Conway), states that he wrote a detailed submission to the Widgery Tribunal, but was told that his evidence would not be required. He has produced a report concerning his knowledge and conclusions regarding some of the deaths.

He states: "It is clearly evident that the facts surrounding the deaths of Jim Wray and Gerald Mc Kinney were not investigated with regard to due process of law, which would have been standard practice in law. My evidence concerning attendance at the incidents in Glenfada Park, the forensic evidence supplied by the postmortem examinations, allied to the clear statements supplied by eye-witness accounts, would have supplied the Inquiry conclusive evidence concerning the deaths of Jim Wray and Gerald Mc Kinney. I was not offered the opportunity to present this evidence".

20th February 1997 ---- At a meeting with John Bruton and Dick Spring, the Irish Government gave an overview of their work in compiling an assessment of relative material for transmission to the British.

The Taoiseach stated, "I have made it clear on a number of occasions that I regard the victims in question as entirely innocent. I believe they have been the victims of an injustice. I believe they deserve an apology for that injustice. Their case deserves to be put in the strongest and most effective fashion possible for full vindication."

On February 27, 1997 the leaders of the 4 main churches in Ireland, Catholic Archbishop Sean Brady, Protestant Archbishop Robin Eames, Presbyterian Moderator Rt. Rev Harry Allen and Methodist President Rev. Ken Best issued a statement: "The leaders of the four main churches welcome the fact that the Government has agreed to examine any new

evidence concerning the events of Bloody Sunday and express the hope that such an examination will be carried out expeditiously."

The Friends of Ireland Executive Committee consisting of members of the American Government within the Senate and the House of Representatives issued a statement:

"Basic issues of equal justice and Human Rights are at the heart of the conflict in Northern Ireland and they must be central to any realistic resolution of the conflict. Peace without justice is not sustainable. It is only likely to flourish when all sides feel that their basic rights are respected and protected.

Accordingly, we urge prompt action to remedy outstanding miscarriages of justice... In light of the compelling new evidence surrounding Bloody Sunday, we add our voice to the calls for a new inquiry into this tragedy".

This statement was signed by Senators Edward Kennedy, Daniel Moynihan, Christopher Dodd and Representatives Newt Gingrich, Richard Gephardt and James Walsh.

Evidence given by "John," apparently a former member of the Paras, on BBC Ireland Radio Programme "Talkback" includes, "I am inclined to think that the preconceived view of what the troops had expected to encounter and what the

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briefings had led them to believe certainly contributed to what occurred. I can merely report what I saw myself and I certainly did not think there was justification. The deaths and injuries that occurred were an entirely inappropriate response to whatever threat was being offered."

The *Sunday Business Post* story by another former Para reveals a number of extremely serious allegations. He states that they were instructed, on the eve of Bloody Sunday, by an officer to "Let's teach these buggers a lesson - we want some kills tomorrow" -He alleges three other Paras fired upon people who were unarmed. He asserts that a number of Paras continued to fire after receiving an order to cease firing. He maintains that Paras killed four people after the order to cease firing had been made and when the crowd were standing still, facing the soldiers, with their hands in surrender. He states that he made a truthful statement to the treasury solicitor prior to Widgery but that this was torn up and replaced by another statement written by someone else. He also names the individuals involved but these have not been printed by the newspaper.

The Breglio report has also shattered Widgery's statement that there was no shooting from the Derry Walls.

Many civil/human rights groups including Amnesty International have come forward to support the campaign for the repudiation of Widgery and for an international inquiry into Bloody Sunday.

## Eyewitness Bloody Sunday

Get the truth about what really happened on Bloody Sunday by ordering the explosive new book, *Eyewitness Bloody Sunday*, by Don Mullan, from the AIEF-PEC.

Mullan's book contains evidence and eyewitness accounts that have long been ignored by the British government and the Widgery Tribunal. Evidence uncovered in Mullan's book has become the basis for the calls for a new investigation.. *Eyewitness Bloody Sunday*, Paperback 288 pages.....\$17.95

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# The Great Starvation-An Irish Holocaust

by Dr. Seamus Metress and Richard A. Rajner  
(Excerpts from the Introduction)

The British call it "The Great Famine." The scarcity of food was blamed on the weather, the potato fungus, God's wrath and perhaps, most of all, on Malthusian notions of over-population. The Irish had overbred and there wasn't enough food to feed them all given the crop failure. However, as Frank O'Connor observed, "Famine is a useful word when you do not wish to use words like 'genocide' and 'extermination'."

These latter terms are philosophically embodied in "The Great Starvation," which we feel is a more accurate portrayal of the time period when Irish peasants starved in the midst of plenty. Wheat, oats, barley, butter, eggs, beef and pork were exported from Ireland in large quantities during the so-called "famine." In fact, during the worst year of the disaster, 1847, in August eight ships left Ireland daily carrying these many basic foodstuffs. The causes of widespread starvation among the Irish peasants were rooted in a colonial system that made them dependent on the potato in the first place. Racist insensitivity toward the plight of the starving masses also played a major role in the death and large scale emigration which marked this period and the colonial power in Great Britain. The British failed to take swift and comprehensive action in the face of Ireland's disaster.

In recent years there has been an effort to rewrite the history of the Irish Starvation, in order to soften the trauma of the period and downplay the role of the British. This revision is especially evident in the tendency to reduce the estimates of the number of deaths related to the starvation. Some have suggested that there were far fewer than a million deaths, while other estimates go as low as 250,000, or one out of every forty persons. Even these incorrect estimates are appalling given

that they occurred only a short distance from the heart of the most powerful and wealthy empire the world has ever known. We suppose that such an approach is an attempt to lessen the blame that should be placed upon the British or in some sense to veil the magnitude of the tragedy. But as Patrick Campbell concludes in his study of Templecrone in Donegal:

The horror of the Irish famine is not in the numbers, but in the way they died, because as Francis Forster stated in 1847 when describing death in Templecrone, death by hunger is the most terrible of all deaths: 'So slow yet so certain'. That slow agonizing death of men, women and little children is the real horror and this should be the focus of any study of the Famine.

The revisionist writers contend that there was nothing that any government could have done to ameliorate the situation. They put forth a theory that the British tried to provide relief, but were overwhelmed by the logistics of the operation. In the revisionists view the starvation was the inevitable outcome of demography and the prevalent economic theory of the day. At the same time, especially since renewed hostilities in the Northeast of Ireland, there has been great emphasis on the discontinuity between past and present in Irish history. For writers such as Roy Foster and others of his ilk,

there is nothing in the Irish past that has relevance today. It is as if accurately documenting past injustices, will somehow be used as a weapon by the men and women who espouse the Irish nationalist cause in the current era. Finally, in the opinion of a considerable number of revisionists, the period of the Great Starvation was not a significant watershed in the history of Ireland. It was simply an inevitable, but in many ways useful, paroxysm in the overall scheme of Irish history.

This short work will be an attempt to analyze "The Great Starvation" from a biological or holistic perspective. We will examine the interaction of the biophysical, historical, social, political and economic factors that resulted in the death and forced emigration of so many Irish people. We place the blame squarely upon the shoulders of Britain and its history of oppressive rule in Ireland. The Great Starvation was an ugly and tragic historical event. It is a massive indictment of British imperialism and a challenge to the moral integrity of British society and culture.

The Great Starvation is difficult to study objectively since the details of the story are so offensive that it cuts to the very soul. Starving people should not become objects simply for study or promoting careers. Those who chronicle or analyze the period must be allowed to show compassion and accept its personal challenge to our humanity.

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## Action Requests

Write the letters below (or call), preferably in your own words, or as is. Be courteous. Have friends, organizations, business associates, etc., do the same.

Mention in your letters that you are a member of the American Irish PEC

1. Hon. Bill Clinton  
President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500  
Ph# (202) 456-1111  
Fax# (202) 456-2461

**Message:** Please step up your administration's efforts to achieve a lasting peace in Ireland. Your applying pressure to the new British government to commence genuine all-party talks is essential if the peace process is to succeed.

2. Hon. Richard Gephardt  
Minority Leader  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

**Message:** In light of your intentions to run for President, it is imperative that you support genuine all-party talks and the peace process in Ireland. This is a crucial issue for Irish-Americans and taking a strong position would greatly enhance your standing.

## INS Appeals Pearson Decision

On April 25, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) decided to appeal the decision by Judge Philip Williams granting Brian Pearson political asylum.

The PEC has already expressed its outrage to the White House and other government officials in Washington. We will continue to support Mr. Pearson in his fight to remain with his family in this country.

Judge Williams made his decision (profiled in last month's *American Irish Newsletter*) on March 27. The INS had thirty days to decide whether or not to appeal the decision. During this period, the PEC, other Irish American groups and members of the public lobbied intensely asking President Clinton to advise the INS not to appeal. On April 25, the INS answered with a slap in the face to the American Irish community and to the interests of justice.

The White House has been quick to distance themselves from the decision to appeal. A White House spokesman stated that the decision to appeal was taken by INS General Counsel David Martin, and that the President, the NSC and the Attorney General had nothing to do with it.

President Clinton must be held responsible for this action. Not only was he lobbied by members of the public, but Congressman Ben Gilman personally met with Clinton and asked him to advise the INS not to appeal. He was asked to intervene and to keep his now broken promise of "no more Joe Dohertys." President Clinton had said that he was going to let the court decide the matter. Now, when the court decided the Pearson matter in Mr. Pearson's favor, the executive branch once again refuses to recognize the outcome. In reality, the policy of this administration in regards to Irish Americans and the legal system is no better than under previous administrations.

Because of the positive changes in the Clinton Administration's Irish policy and its support for the Irish peace process, many Irish American organizations, including the PEC have been unwilling to openly criticize the administration. But, in light of these continuing injustices, it is impossible for the American Irish to keep silent.

Pearson's appeal will take place in Immigration Appeals Court outside of Washington, DC. The Appeals process could take as long as two years. The PEC and other Irish American organizations will continue to increase political pressure on the powers that be to bring this case as well as the deportation cases of the other Six families that are currently underway.

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