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POLITICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

NEWSLETTER

Nov.-Dec.—1980

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In cooperation with the Emerald Society, Fire Department, N.Y.C.

SPECIAL THANKS TO DIVISION 1, SAN DIEGO, CALIF. A.O.H. AND THE KEVIN BARRY IRISH CLUB, POUGHKEEPSIE, N.Y.. THE PEC ACKNOWLEDGES THEIR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE PUBLICATION OF THIS ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER.

NEWS BITS

JOHN J. FINUCANE

HUNGER STRIKE TO THE END IS ON

(See *Blanket Protestors Hunger Strike Set*)

"Until the British Government gives a declaration that they are going to pull out, they are going to have more prisoners in the H-Blocks. We have brought down Stormont and have shown the RUC and the British army that they will never beat a risen people." said Mr. Sean Keenan, a prominent member of the Derry Sinn Fein, speaking at a H-Block demonstration in Letterkenny (Derry Journal 8/22)...**MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CITES BLANKET MEN** Fra McCann and Liam Carlin in recognition of "their heroic stand in suffering over 3 years of *torture and degradation* at the British controlled H-Block of Long Kesh prison for the cause of civil rights for all the people of Ireland (Mass. State House 9/23). The blanket protestors' campaign in America has been so successful that Britain is sending a special envoy, diplomat Cyril Gray, to America to help *deceive* the American public.

Loyalist para-militaries fire bomb Catholic home in Belfast-3 children severely burned (Irish Echo 9/13)... United Auto Workers, one of America's largest trade unions, condemns the British role in Ireland (Irish Echo 9/6)... Ciaran Nugent, the original blanket man, in America campaigning against H-Block, was arrested by immigration officers and deported (Irish Echo 9/6). Former blanket protestors advise there will be a continuous flow of protestors to the US to continue educating the American public.

Edinburgh - Is violence the only way of achieving democracy? The message from England is: Yes, try it! America, Ireland (still half free), India, Israel, Kenya, and several other former English colonies have won their independence this way. Patriots were jailed, including some who became the first presidents of their nations: de Valera, Kenyatta, Nehru, Makarios (NY Times 9/18). Today's patriots (freedom fighters) in north east Ireland, who are termed "terrorists", will soon be prominent leaders in a united 32 county Ireland. Unionist MP attacked the British government for failing to tackle the problem of segregated education - a crucial issue (Irish Echo 9/20)... **Governor Hugh Carey vetoes** resolution providing that Sept. 13 be the annual commemoration of Commodore John Barry. The resolution was unanimously passed by both houses of the New York State Legislature (Irish Echo 9/20). Is this the same Governor Carey who calls himself an Irish-American leader?... Talks between Cardinal Tomas O'Fiaich, Bishop Daly and Britain's No. Ireland Secretary of State Humphrey Atkins, to end the H-Block blanket protest, collapse. The collapse increases the likelihood of a mass hunger strike (Irish People 10/4).

THE BRITISH INFLUENCE IN IRELAND

SEAN HOGAN
Manchester, England

In the July/August edition our Dublin correspondent reported, "I have witnessed many times when members of Ireland's Sinn Fein Party, while distributing material on H-Block, were physically attacked and arrested by the Irish Republic police force." The PEC contacted Prime Minister Charles Haughey's office in reference to these charges. The response from the Prime Minister's Office is as follows:

"...As regards to allegations that persons distributing material on H-Block have been attacked and arrested by gardai, (Irish Republic police), I wish to state categorically that there is no truth in any suggestion that the gardai harass people engaged in legitimate activities."

The following statement which appeared in Ireland's Civil Rights Guardian, 9/80, cast a shadow of doubt on the truthfulness of the official response from the Prime Minister's office:

"I, Brid Smith, being a member of the Central Dublin H-Block Committee, together with 18 other people, was about to leave Dublin for the National H-Block Conference in Belfast on 6/14/80 when we were all arrested by Special Branch Detectives (Irish police) and taken to the Bridewell. I was placed in a cell by myself. Shortly afterwards a policewoman entered the cell, and informed me that she had instructions to strip-search me, and asked me to remove all my clothes. I refused, but told her that I had no objection to being frisked with my clothes on. She said this would not do, and again ordered me to get my clothes off. I refused. At this stage two more policewomen entered the cell. One of them caught my jumper and started pulling it off. I resisted but was frightened at this stage. They told me that they had men they could call on if I gave any more trouble. By now I was really frightened, and thought about the male warders beating the girls in Armagh Jail. I took off all my clothes. They left me standing naked for 15 minutes, while they fingered everything I had on. I never felt so degraded in all my life as I did at this time. I am sorry I allowed fear to overcome me, because I now know that fear is not as bad as being degraded. On release without charge, or without ever being told why I was arrested, I discovered that the other girl among those arrested was similarly treated, and was made walk up and down her cell in the nude. She was from Scotland, and had asked our party for a lift to Armagh where she was going to visit friends. She was only a child, and appeared to me to be about 16 years. When I met her outside the Bridewell she told me she didn't even know what H-Block was. She was shaking all over. Signed. Brid Smith

LETTER TO AMERICA

FR. DENIS FAUL
FR. RAYMOND MURRAY

The authors are two of the most highly respected Human Rights activists in Northern Ireland.

On Wednesday night, July 23, at about 10:15 p.m. the RUC shot dead a 16 year old Catholic boy, Michael McCartan in the Ormeau Road district of Belfast where there is a small Catholic enclave that has suffered heavily from sectarian assassinations. There has been almost no comment on this case outside Belfast; in the South of Ireland it rated hardly a mention; in England a line or two. That is why we appeal to you who have been so helpful to the Catholics of Northern Ireland in the exposure of torture in RUC interrogation centers, Diplock biased courts and ill treatment of prisoners in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh and in Armagh.

The Catholics of Northern Ireland do not have an effective voice to expose systematically and continuously the daily violations of their human rights contrary to law. Most of the spectators outside the six county area are preoccupied with placating the British and their Unionist allies and any attempt to expose the non stop ill treatment of the Catholics is branded as "aiding and abetting the IRA" and many men have succumbed to this blackmail. We appeal to you precisely because we know you are against violence, and that you are working for human rights and for the unification of Ireland. We appreciated your help against Castlereagh and your interest in the case of the Birmingham Six. We know you will work for this individual. Please join with our friends in France and Germany to defend the Catholic youth from this latest peril.

Michael McCartan was alleged to have been one of a group of youths painting slogans in the district that was completely quiet on the night in question. As the local representative said, "Painting slogans is not a capital crime". From the age and stature of the 16 year olds it was obvious that they were not carrying guns. Why did the RUC shoot him? It seems clear that the younger elements in the RUC are being allowed to take a paramilitary approach to the Catholic districts; inspired by the speeches of ranting Unionist leaders, the courts recently released RUC members convicted of kidnapping, bombing and shooting, while off duty. No RUC member has been jailed since 1968 for murder or brutality while on duty;

Please ensure that the RUC will not obtain guns from the USA to shoot down Catholics. I know you are opposed to illegal groups obtaining guns from the USA or Canada for activities in Ireland,

Our people who have no effective voice in Ireland, need the unwearying efforts of genuine Irishmen of Christian compassion in the USA who will prevent more innocents being killed or tortured or deprived of jobs, houses, or basic human rights in their own land.

OUR READERS RESPOND

The PEC welcomes comments from our readers, Below is one of the many comments we have received.

"I have taken the liberty of making copies of the PEC Newsletter and have distributed them to friends in England and Ireland. It is an excellent production and cleverly condenses an enormous amount of vital information. The PEC is to be congratulated on the splendid work it has undertaken of behalf of the tragic situation in N.E. Ireland.

K. Griffin
London, England

THE CANDIDATES

BOB FRAZIER

(Chairman PEC Suffolk Co., N.Y., A.O.H.)

The following candidates for election (reelection) that have worked closely with the PEC have been very helpful in publicizing the injustices of the British occupation of north east Ireland. It is important that the Irish-American community be aware of their candidates positions.

In the U.S. Congress: Mario Biaggi, Benjamin Gilman, Hamilton Fish, Jr., Lester Wolff, Leo Zefferitti, Benjamin Rosenthal, Peter Rodino, Robert Roe, Norman Lent, Gary Lee, Silvio Conte and Babara Mikulski.

United States Senator Ed Conroy. A very outspoken candidate for the U.S Senate from N.Y. Alphonse D'Amato.

New York State Senator Linda Winikow.

New York State Assemblyman Sean Patrick Walsh (82 AD-Bronx). Candidates Owen "Ted" Rogan (84 AD-Kingsbridge-Riverdale), James Trainor a member of the PEC (95 AD) and Thomas Morahan (96 AD).

IRISH AMERICAN UNITY

JOHN B. REYNOLDS

PEC Chula Vista, Calif. Chapter

The following excerpt from the periodical Federal Probation published by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts is an *outstanding* example of what can happen to Irish-Americans because we are not united:

"Besides the war and the tax protestors, that volatile period (1960s) saw the development of a coterie expressing strong dissatisfaction with this country's (United States) foreign policy toward certain national independence movements, such as those citizens who held strong allegiance with the separatists in Northern Ireland. One such supporter of that cause, upon his conviction of running firearms to the Irish Republic, received 2 years' probation with the following special conditions:

1. That he not participate in any American Irish Republican movement;
2. That he belong to no Irish organizations, cultural or otherwise;
3. That he not belong or participate in any Irish Catholic organizations or groups;
4. That he not visit any Irish pubs;
5. That he accept no employment that directly or indirectly associates him with any Irish organization or movement." Such harsh conditions have only once before been applied by the U.S. Court system.

Recently, the N.Y. Gannett Newspaper *Today*, in reporting on an alleged gang murder, reported that the gunman was a member of the Westies "a group of notorious Irish-American gunmen." When did any newspaper report that the "hero" of an incident was an Irish American? The PEC offers a program whereby the Irish in America can fight such injustices and degradations without interfering with the existing structure of an organization. Why not form a PEC in your organization?

THINK IRISH UNITY

TALK IRISH UNITY

LIVE IRISH UNITY

CANDIDATE REAGAN'S POSITION

DAN KELLY
(chairman PEC Maryland State A.O.H.)

The PEC has been working hard to bring about a change in candidate Ronald Reagan's Northern Ireland position. It was learned from Reagan-Bush National Headquarters that, as of October 13, 1980, a new position was in formulation and that this is due in large part to the Action Letter response and a meeting between PEC members and Reagan-Bush people. Just what the new position is if any, if its just for Irish-American consumption and its sincerity remains to be seen. Remember President Carter's promise of October, 1976.

The above is testimony to the effectiveness of the Action Letter. To increase the effectiveness of the action letter we must increase the readership of the newsletter. We invite each of you (our readers) to send us the name and address, with zip code, of a *responsible* individual you feel will be helpful.

ACTION LETTER

JOHN J. FINUCANE

One of the primary obstacles preventing the *reunification* of Ireland continues to be the leaders of the government of the Irish Republic. Since 1969, successive governments have intentionally failed to pursue the reunification of Ireland. They have chosen to maintain the status quo which protects personal interest that would be in jeopardy under a united Ireland. Let's take advantage of this election period and the ensuing change over of elected officials and make our feelings known to Prime Minister Charles Haughey of the Republic. Below is a sample letter that you may use as a guide or simply *rewrite* as your letter on your own stationery. Please reproduce this action letter for distribution to your family, friends, relatives, etc.

address _____

date _____

Honorable Charles Haughey
Prime Minister
Irish Republic
Dublin 1, Ireland

Dear Sir:

As a concerned Irish-American, I respectfully urge you and the leaders of your government to support the demands of the political prisoners now on hunger strike and their brother political prisoners in the H-Blocks. Please bear in mind that Amnesty International and the Bennett Commission concluded that many of these young Irishmen are possibly innocent.

I further urge that your government take a strong position calling for: the reunification of Ireland; a British declaration of intent to withdraw from Ireland; an end to British human rights violations; and supporting the right of *all* the people of *all* Ireland to self-determination.

Sincerely,
signature

This is an air mail letter with a 31 cent stamp.

PLEASE DO YOUR SHARE

TO HAVE THE BI-MONTHLY PEC NEWSLETTER SENT TO YOUR HOME (FREE), PLEASE FORWARD YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS TO THE POLITICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE, P.O. BOX 16, GARNERVILLE, N.Y. 10923, ATTENTION: CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT.