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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 27, Number 10

October, 2002

Morrison: Governments Must Protect Human Rights

Excerpts from the P.J. McGrory Lecture as published by RM Distribution

THE STORY of human rights is about power. Governments—all governments—abuse their power. Democratic governments abuse their power. It's in the nature of things that people who have power trample over the inconvenience of people who stand between them and their particular objectives, according to **Bruce Morrison**, former congressman and former special advisor on Ireland to President Bill Clinton.

The difficulty is, Morrison said, that very often the tendency of governments to ignore the rights of individuals proves to be popular with the majority. "Human rights is the antidote to that," he said. "It is the thing we fight back with. People have rights that are even more important than the will of the majority.

"That's an easy thing to say, and it is often said with great approval, in theory. But it runs into enormous controversy in real life as majorities don't like to be told that they don't always rule. I think it is very important to think about human rights in that way—as a conflict between what the majority would like and what rights people have in the face of majority power."

Elections, Morrison argued, do not represent the totality of the democratic process. "Democracy is a combination of elections and respect for individual rights, and unless both parts are alive and well, you really don't have a democracy."

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Sinn Fein Chairman: Plan for Unity

By Mitchel McLaughlin, *Sinn Fein Chairman*
Excerpted from Aug. 16 RM Distribution

WE ARE AT AN unparalleled time of enormous challenge and opportunity in our history. Republicans and nationalists convinced that only an inclusive approach could succeed in a conflict resolution process [worked long and hard] to establish common ground on which we could approach the British government. Sinn Fein, with others in the SDLP, Irish government and the US Administration eventually succeeded in creating the conditions for all-party negotiations that in turn resulted in the Mitchell Agreement. The Agreement gives us the opportunity to redress the mistakes of the past and build a new democracy based on the needs and requirements of all the people of Ireland.

The Agreement can be used as the foundation on which to construct the new Ireland of equals. It is recognized even by many unionists that the outworking of the Agreement will lead to the reunification of Ireland. Unionists might differ over when it will happen, but there are very few who would put their hand on their hearts today and say with conviction that it will never happen. That being the case, it is incumbent on all of us to prepare for the eventuality of Irish reunion. This particularly applies to the two governments.

The message should be to prepare for reunification. The majority of people in four of the six counties already vote for those who would claim to be pro-united Ireland candidates--as do the majority of people in Belfast. The numbers voting for pro-united Ireland parties in the other two counties is growing by the day. It is therefore

incumbent on the two governments to have in place plans and mechanisms to ensure the smooth transfer of sovereignty when the time arrives. I am not pointing out these facts to frighten or further destabilize unionist who have genuine fears. I say it because I believe that many unionists also recognize the change that is taking place but are bereft of the

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Our View: Sinn Fein Agenda Outpaces Implementation of Mitchell

WHEN the Mitchell Agreement came into being in 1998, the Newsletter encouraged readers to be cautiously optimistic. We were slow to believe the Agreement was not another move in the British game of doing nothing about Northern Ireland.

The British government lacks the vision and know-how to free itself of the workhouse economy it has created in Northern Ireland. Paying the bills and keeping the noise down seem to be enough. However, this situation is not acceptable to Sinn Fein, which is serving its constituents and pursuing its political goal of a united Ireland despite Britain's--and unionists' and Dublin's--utter failure to embrace the Agreement and implement it fully. Instead, these parties have sought reinterpretations of the Mitchell text that allow them to pay the bills and keep the noise down. Business as usual.

Sinn Fein has become a political phenomenon because it refuses to think of Ireland in the context of a British connection. Thinking outside the box has kept the party sharp. As a result, it hasn't fallen into the trap of politely signing onto things like the Policing Board or endorsing half measures such as the diluted Patten Report--in the name of some vague form of white tie political progress. Sinn Fein has held its own and told Britain to keep its political mess while it moves on.

Britain is paying a minimum balance on the Northern Ireland account. Its debt to democracy isn't getting any smaller in any way. To what extent the North remains a police state we will see when the Stormont elections come about and, for the second time in a century, nationalist politicians win the overwhelming support of the people. That's our bet on the future. Sinn Fein has already made a significant down payment on this goal.

Peace Process Update

August 12

LOYALISTS attack Catholic homes with pipe bombs. Loyalist political representatives meet with the mayor of Belfast, Sinn Fein's **Alex Maskey**, in his attempt to quell the street violence along the city's sectarian interfaces.

August 13

The South Armagh Farmers and Residents' Association slams Britain for building a new spy tower in their area, saying the tower flies in the face of the Mitchell Agreement's call for rolling demilitarization. Nationalist **Chris Whitson** dies from injuries loyalists inflicted on him 10 days earlier in Portrush.

August 14

Sinn Fein chairman **Mitchel McLaughlin** calls for a broad front rejecting sectarianism. McLaughlin rejects loyalist leader **John White's** attempts to blame republicans for the recent surge in sectarian violence.

August 16

Housing Executive figures show that 52 families from the Antrim area have presented themselves as homeless as a result of loyalist violence from the end of May to yesterday. Local activists set up a Web page to document the situation, <http://sinnfeintrim.tripod.com/incident.htm>. Nationalist residents of the Short Strand area of Belfast ask Police Ombudsman **Nuala O'Loan** to investigate the PSNI's handling of rioting in east Belfast.

August 21

Short Strand residents present O'Loan and the British and Irish governments with video evidence that loyalists are responsible for sectarian attacks in the area. Sinn Fein councilors **Margaret McClenaghan** and **Eoin O'Broin** lead a delegation of residents from Alliance Avenue in Ardoyne, north Belfast, to meet with US Consul General

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American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC

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National President..... **John J. Finucane**
Membership/Subscription Coordinator..... **Loretta Fitzgibbons**
Recording Secretary..... **Kathy Regan**
Financial Secretary..... **Tom Sheridan**
Newsletter Editor..... **Sandy Carlson**
Webmaster..... **Edward Dzlitko**

Newsletter Mailing Address:

Five Woods Way, Woodbury, CT 06798

PEC & Newsletter Email Address:

pec-newsletter@worldnet.att.net

National Headquarters

P.O. Box 102, Blauvelt, NY 10913-9915

(845) 947-2726 Fax (845) 947-2599

PEC Web Site Address: <http://aipec.homestead.com>

STATE DIRECTORS: Jack O'Brien, 11108 Belton St., Upper Marlboro, MARYLAND 20772-(301)336-5167; Leah Curtin, Hibernian Life, 790 Cleveland Ave., Ste. 221, St. Paul, MINNESOTA 55116-(612)690-3888; Kathy Regan, 7 Balint Dr., Apt 714, Yonkers, NEW YORK 10710-(914)395-1995; Frank O'Day, 21 Pierce Ln., Madison, CONNECTICUT 06443-(203)245-4739; Bob West, 683 Walnut Rd., Wauconda, ILLINOIS 60084-(847)526-6520; Terry Deem Reilly, 1123 Clarkson, Denver, COLORADO 80218-(303)837-9443; Ned A. Delaney, 1211 El Grande St., Lafayette, INDIANA 47905-(317)474-2546; Larry Doyle, 2036 Calhoun, Bellevue, NEBRASKA 68005-(402)292-5291; Kathy Whitford, 15910 Lucille Dr., Cleveland, OHIO 44111-(216)251-7551; Paul D. McGuigan, 1525 NW 57th St., Unit 407, Seattle, WASHINGTON 98107-(206)782-5567; Nancy Love, 14151/2 Grand Ave., Racine, WISCONSIN 53402-(414)633-4085; Dr. John T. Giesen, 1107 Ironwood Dr., Coeur D'Alene, IDAHO 83814-(208)667-7459; Hal Cousins, 905 Shallmar Dr., Del City, OKLAHOMA 73115-(405)677-3623; Robert J. Fuhrel, 1901 Rio Canyon Ct. #202, Las Vegas, NEVADA 89128-(702)255-9619; Mary Hofford, 6555 Tam O'Shanter Dr., San Jose, CALIFORNIA 95120-(408)268-4548

NATIONAL ORGANIZER: Pete Foley, 3615 Greystone Ave., Bronx, NY 10463-(718)884-2220

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AIIEF-PEC, P.O. Box 102, Blauvelt, New York 10913-9915, <http://aipec.homestead.com>

From the North: Unionists, British Government Conspire to Kill Accord

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

AS WE POINTED out in the Sept. *Newsletter*, the Mitchell Agreement, now into its fifth year, is under threat on several fronts, and from the same parties—rejectionist unionists and the British government.

This crisis stems from the prospect of Assembly elections during which **David Trimble's** UUP and **Ian Paisley's** DUP would be gutting each other for supremacy over the dysfunctional unionist family. The anti-Agreement hard-liners have gained ground, so Trimble is playing to their gallery—the same mistake he and his British government mentors have been making all along.

This strategy has helped them slow down and truncate the implementation of the Mitchell reforms. Unionism cannot stomach Mitchell because it would transform a unionist-dominated sectarian police state into something like a European-style liberal democracy.

Many argue that no such thing is attainable while Britain governs the North as a remnant of its former Irish colony, controlling everybody by playing one side of the community against the other. As the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association maintained three decades ago, while Britain continues its control over the place, it is obligated to govern democratically according to the norms it applies elsewhere. If it cannot enforce such democracy, then it should get out. We are entitled to good government.

For nationalists, placed post-partition in second-class citizenship, the one great benefit of the Agreement is that it can open a political/constitutional highway along which to travel toward the unification of Ireland. That is why nationalists accepted the Agreement.

Unionists fear this outcome, and that is why their opposition to Mitchell is growing. Unionists have been lucky until now because neither the British government nor Dublin is eager for hasty changes in the North that might cause Britain to lose control. In this respect, too, unionists' blocking tactics serve Britain's purposes.

Economically, the North is a basket case dependent on government money to keep it afloat. Despite the decade-long Celtic Tiger economy in the rest of the country, Dublin faces budgetary problems. It is not eager to take on further obligations. It, like Britain, is not averse to gradualism. Economic reasons and a shared desire to pressure the IRA to dissolve under the pretext of decommissioning account for the creeping progress in implementing the Agreement.

Thus, nearly five years since Mitchell, there are still outstanding major human and civil rights problems. Two well-respected members of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (derived from the Mitchell Agreement) have resigned. **Christine Bell**, a law professor at the University of Ulster, fears the Commission's inadequate powers will compromise its independence and effectiveness. **Inez McCormick**, a leading trade union activist, regional secretary of a major union called UNISON, is concerned about the lack of direction in the "strategies, policies, and practices" of the Commission. The women have the support of the remaining members of the NIHR, who share the women's frustration.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions backs the women's stance and is concerned about the Bill of Rights process, also.

Meanwhile SDLP leader **Mark Durkan** is defending his party's decision to prematurely join the new Police Board set up under the flawed legislation of previous proconsul **Peter Mandelson**, who removed the democratizing teeth of the **Patten Commission's** recommendations on policing reform. The SDLP's action split the solid front of nationalists, weakening their bargaining power to have the full Patten delivered.

The Board has an overwhelming majority of unionists and British government appointees on it. This is one of its defects. Another is its inability to bring the chief constable to account for his actions. Chief Constable **Hugh Orde** intends to abort Patten on its recommendations for the future of the Special Branch and the full-time police reserve.

Even loyalists recognize the undemocratic face of the present policing arrangement. **David Wright**, father of slain LVF boss Billy Wright, has repeated his call for all British government officials to be removed from Justice **Peter Cory's** investigation into the loyalist leader's death. Wright argues that the presence of the lord chancellor's staff is unacceptable because it compromises the independence of his investigations.

Many nationalists and loyalists see Cory's project as one more of Britain's devices to defer full public judicial inquiries into a clutch of other human rights abuses involving the collusion of state forces. Among these are the murders of **Rosemary Nelson** and **Pat Finucane**. Whether or not Stormont survives in the months ahead, the pressure for the British government to concede real democracy to the North will not be abated.

Newsbits

THE WEEKEND saw the PSNI police once again accused of collusion with loyalists to mount a serious assault against nationalists while the media's focus was on a contentious sectarian march elsewhere. On the second biggest day of the Protestant marching season, a PSNI propaganda offensive then saw nationalists not involved in any march controversy and enjoying a summer festival blamed for starting the clashes. It was the second time in a month a highly contentious march through nationalist Ardoyne in north Belfast provided cover for an assault on another community, this time the Short Strand enclave in east Belfast. Fourteen residents were injured at the hands of loyalists and riot police, including one woman who received a serious head injury in a PSNI baton assault. The trouble began as loyalists returned from the main march of the Protestant Apprentice Boys in Derry. While a major military operation was underway to force a return feeder march through Ardoyne, a mob had gathered in east Belfast under the eyes of the PSNI. They then began attacking nationalist homes over the peace wall in Clandeboyne Drive. The police chose not to tackle a hail of loyalist missiles. Instead, riot police rushed into the Short Strand, seriously assaulting a group of women and children who had attended a small summer festival. (RM Dist. 8/12/02)

Nationalist living along a north Belfast interface are planning legal action against the chief constable after claims he failed to protect

peoples' homes. Up to 30 Catholic families living along Alliance Avenue in Ardoyne have sought legal advice about suing the police for its failure to build an extended security fence. While security fencing on a part of Alliance Avenue was extended by 250 meters in Feb., around 30 homes were excluded from the scheme. At that time, British Security Minister **Jane Kennedy** had said the increased fencing was being erected to "provide the sense of increased security sought by all residents." Since then, the houses have been continually attacked with petrol, pipe and blast bombs. (RM Dist. 8/12/02)

The gun the UDA used to kill teenager Gerard Lawlor in north Belfast last month has been linked to the UDA killing of Sam Rocket, who had connections with the rival UVF, during the loyalist feud last Aug. Sinn Fein councilor for Newtownabbey **Breige Meehan** is calling on the PSNI to release the forensic history of the weapon to establish "who exactly was behind the killing." Rocket was killed as he visited his girlfriend's Oldpark home during the loyalist feud. The killing was thought to be the UDA's response to the killings of senior UDA man Jackie Coulter. A second loyalist, Bobby Mahood, who ironically had UVF connections, was killed with Coulter. "Everyone knows that the RUC Special Branch runs the Shankill UDA, and it appears they are suppressing information about this gun," said Meehan. "It would be interesting to see what other attacks have been carried out with

this weapon." (RM Dist. 8/19/02)

Sinn Fein spokesperson on the environment **Arthur Morgan**, TD, has accused British Nuclear Fuels Limited of "wantonly endangering the health and safety of Irish people" with its decision to press ahead with the transportation of nuclear materials through the Irish Sea to its Sellafield plant. The County Louth deputy made his comments after reports that the cargo ships en route from Japan were now off the coast of Africa and due in the Irish Sea by the end of the month. (RM Dist. 8/21/02)

Northern Ireland soccer captain **Neil Lennon** has withdrawn from the squad after receiving loyalist death threats. Team manager **Sammy McIlroy** named the Glasgow Celtic midfielder as captain of the team. In the past Lennon, a Catholic from Lurgan, had received death threats from loyalists. Irish Football Association general secretary **David Bowen** said: "I can confirm sadly that Neil has withdrawn for family reasons. Police informed Neil of a threat earlier today. The manager spoke to Neil, and Neil spoke to his family and others, and for family reasons he has told us that he has had to withdraw from tonight's game." Bowen said McIlroy and Lennon's teammates were "devastated" by the death threats. Lennon said: "After consultation with the football authorities and the PSNI, I will not be participating in this evening's international game. I am very disappointed that my desire to play for my country, on my first opportunity to captain my team, has been taken away from me." (IAIS 8/21/02)

Report Calls Republic Responsible for Emigrants

A REPORT on emigration that recommended a sixfold increase in the amount of money Ireland spends on Irish people living abroad has been dismissed as "too innovative" by senior civil servants in the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The report, published in Aug., calls for spending on expatriates to increase from 3 million Euros a year to 18 million. It also recommends social housing for emigrants who cannot afford to return home and says funding should be provided for annual holidays for elderly Irish living abroad.

The Irish-government-appointed task force found, according to the draft, that many emigrants who left Ireland in the 1950s, mainly for Britain, were now nearing retirement and in need of "immediate assistance." Many of them ended up in insecure, manual jobs and were now "unable to cope without support."

The British-based Irish suffered disproportionately from poverty and experienced higher than average levels of mental illness, alcoholism, and social exclusion, the draft report warned.

The Dublin government was urged to put pressure on the British authorities to ensure Irish exiles get a better share of local authority housing, and put "an Irish dimension" into its racial equality policies. Funding for welfare groups should rise to approximately 15 million Euros immediately, it says, while the Department of Foreign Affairs should set up a new body, a 3.5 million-Euro Agency for the Irish Abroad, to control all emigrant issues.

The recommendations would require significant changes in Government policy. This year, the Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment allocated 2.7 million Euros to British-based Irish welfare groups—up 1 million Euros on the 2001 figure.

DeKlerk Says Give Peace Process a Chance

FORMER South African president F.W. de Klerk cited the example of South Africa as a way forward to peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. De Klerk was giving a speech at the Glenree Reconciliation Centre in Enniskerry, County Wicklow mid-Aug.

The former president said "reaching agreements to end conflicts is only the beginning of the process. The challenge then becomes to ensure that conflicts do not flare up again, that newly established relationships are placed on firm foundations, and that agreements are honored."

To achieve this, he said, there are a number of basic requirements: forgiveness, meaningful reconciliation, the acceptance of basic rules of behavior, and guidelines for the maintenance of peace.

He added that justice must be seen to be equal to all and deemed to be fair. He also said

that it was necessary for South Africans to create Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) "to determine the 'truth' about the conflict of our past as a necessary precursor to forgiveness and reconciliation.

"However, we discovered that the search for the truth could itself be highly divisive and could lead to alienation rather than reconciliation," said de Klerk. "The TRC did, indeed, succeed in uncovering some of the truth about our past conflict.

"However, at the end of the day the 'truth' that it presented was the truth of only one of the parties—primarily because the other two main parties to the conflict—the old National Party and the IFP of **Mangosuthu Buthelezi**—were not included in the process.

"It was as though an all-Protestant or all-Catholic commission were to try to write the history of the conflict in Northern Ireland," he added.

(continued from Page 1, right)

courageous and visionary leadership required to guide them into the new dispensation that is evolving.

Their fears must be addressed in a comprehensive manner that will extract the types of assurances and guarantees from the process that will satisfy any misgivings. Unionist fears must be addressed and catered for by republicans as well as unionists.

The type of leadership presently being given to the unionist electorate by [First Minister] **David Trimble** is one of self-fulfilling negativity. Unionists in the Mitchell Agreement referendum very narrowly approved of the Agreement. Now what any other political leader would have done would be to enthusiastically sell the benefits of that Agreement to his/her constituency in order to consolidate and build on support for it. Not Trimble.

Ever since signing the Agreement, he has been a reluctant advocate. He never fully accepted the Agreement and has spent all of his energies attempting to undermine or renegotiate its terms and conditions. By pandering to the demands of the anti-Agreement members of his party and trying to out-Paisley the DUP for electoral purposes, he has left the pro-Agreement unionists virtually leaderless.

The indicators of change are not just the growth of Sinn Fein and the political strength that we continue to develop. There are a growing number of unionists who are politically astute enough to recognize the change that is happening and the direction in which change will inevitably take us. They might not be ready to publicly express such acceptance nor pro-actively hasten its arrival, but they will be willing to make their place in the new Ireland.

Recent studies are helping to inform and influence the thinking of people across the political spectrum. The latest survey, the Life and Times Study, carried out by the University of Ulster and published in early July reveals that for the first time ever, less than 50 percent of the population of the North is in favor of maintaining the link with Britain. This has been an accepted trend for a number of years as shown by opinion polls from sources that could not be accused of a pro-united Ireland bias. For instance, a similar Life and Times survey carried out for the *Belfast Telegraph* in Feb. 2000 showed a 13 percent drop in support for the union since 1986.

This study came just as Trimble renewed his call for a border poll to take place on the same day as the Assembly

elections. He claimed that such a referendum would clear the air and remove the notion of a united Ireland from the political debate here for decades. This latest survey, however, may well give Trimble—and all unionists—serious food for thought. I hope it encourages them to participate in the debate that has to take place.

Republicans and nationalists should not jump up on the tables and start singing “We’re on the One Road” just yet. Surveys—although accepted by most people, as a barometer of political thought and opinion—do not mean that a united Ireland is imminent. The change in attitudes and demographics indicated in these surveys has implications for the administrations in the North, in Britain, and in Dublin.

The administrations must have contingency plans to assure an orderly transfer of sovereignty when conditions dictate such a change. Those planning for the future must consider the truth that, within our lifetime, a majority of voters in the North will vote for a united Ireland.

The next event that will give a scientific indicator will be the publishing of the census figures presently being compiled. The census figures will indicate the extent to which demographic change has occurred. Though being Catholic or Protestant provides no conclusive evidence of political allegiance, it provides a gauge of voting trends. Sinn Fein has asked the Irish government to publish a white paper on plans for Irish unity, and I call on the British government to make similar preparations.

A new constitution will be required that will recognize the diversity of cultures, religions, and ethnicities that will make up the new Ireland. It will also require a bill of rights to underscore the equality under the law of every citizen. There are mechanisms in the Mitchell Agreement that lay out how and when a border referendum might be called. The principle of consent in the Agreement requires that, if a simple majority—50 percent plus one—wished to remain in the UK, then that’s how it would remain. It is ironic then, that the principle of consent is now the very mechanism that they now wish to change. The Mitchell Agreement makes provision for a secretary of state to call a border referendum whenever it appears that such a poll could result in constitutional change. Another referendum might not be called for at least seven years thereafter. The steady trend of changes in voting patterns should [influence the timing of] the secretary of state’s [realization] that a change would be forthcoming.

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After Morrison was elected to Congress in 1982, he turned his attention to Northern Ireland. "I was warned about dangerous people who would talk to me about the situation in Northern Ireland," he explained. "I listened to that for a little while, but what I mostly heard was about the deprivation of rights, about minorities who were discriminated against, denied political opportunity, housing opportunity, employment opportunity."

Morrison has firsthand experience of the way in which human rights were routinely disregarded by the authorities in the North. On his first trip to Ireland in 1987, he was driving around Derry with **Gerry O hEara**, then a Sinn Fein councilor. "We were driving behind a Saracen vehicle and [soldiers] stopped, got out, and sort of dragged us out of the car, and held us at gunpoint for an hour. Now, I didn't know exactly what offence I was committing—apparently it was the offence of being with a Sinn Fein councilor—but it was quite an experience. Most members of Congress do not get held at gunpoint. We do a lot of dumb things and get hauled up by constituents, but that was one step more than I expected.

"While they were holding me, I took out a little piece of paper and started to write down the number on the epaulette of the officer. He came over and grabbed it out of my hand and said, 'You have just committed an offence: collecting information about the security forces.' That was the world into which I was introduced

here, a world in which a perfectly innocent drive around Derry was interrupted.

"What they had in mind I won't speculate, but certainly I think they were trying to send a message and I am afraid that they sent the wrong one to me, which was that there were certain issues here that need to be addressed, and apparently outsiders looking at those issues make them nervous," Morrison said.

With regard to the current state of the peace process, the former congressman said: "There is a dangerous thing going on in the peace process of treating human rights like they are a concession. You have all heard that discussion, and it is one of the most pernicious things that has been an interference in the peace process and in actually implementing various kinds of agreements that are part of the Mitchell Agreement in respect of the creation of human rights institutions and protections."

However, he said, "It doesn't get discussed when considering to have an Assembly or not to have an Assembly; will the Executive survive, will it be collapsed, what will happen in the next election. People saying that these [human rights] parts of the Agreement have to be implemented are often seen as missing the point."

To ignore the fact that human rights are at the core of the whole conflict is to miss the point, Morrison said. "When people look back and think,

'Why didn't this problem get solved before it went into the ditch of the Troubles?' they might just take a step back and remember that people stood up and marched and laid out very moderate sets of human rights, but officials said, 'Later.'"

There was, he said, "a basic failure to recognize that you cannot keep total control with force. You can only work with people through means of respect and dignity, rights and democracy. "No one should forget that history and leap ahead to political institutions in the electoral sense. They are important, they are part of human rights; the right to participate, to vote, to be represented by the people of your choice. But the right to be protected from the abuse of the majority and the state are equally important, as is the right to be treated equally and fairly by the authorities, regardless of who is in power. There will not be a successful end to the peace process if those things are ignored."

Morrison concluded, "The current state of affairs is like a soap opera. For an outsider it is a little hard to understand when you see something that would have to be described as progress and its always in crisis because it seems to be from one view or another to be failing. I am an optimist with respect to the process but I'm not Pollyanna. People can wreck it if they really set out to do that, but it has an inherent sense to it, an inherent justice to it, an inherent positive sum for all communities to it. So it shouldn't fail."

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In developing this great debate about future constitutional change, Sinn Fein will continue to highlight the ludicrous waste in maintaining two political systems, two economies, two transport systems, two health, education, agriculture, fisheries, tourism systems, etc., on an island of [about] 5.5 million people. We will point to

the benefits of one judicial system, one policing service, and one army in one democracy that has no sectional or party political allegiances. We are in the last lap in our journey toward a united Ireland—the final phase of struggle. Many unionists recognize this course of events. The signposts are already there, pointing toward 2016 and the realization of a free and sovereign united Ireland.

My Preference

PLEASE take the following action with my membership dues following the Dec. 31, 2002, phasing out of the AIEF-PEC. (Please note: The AIEF-PEC will retain membership dues to defray the cost of publishing the *Newsletter* if it does not hear from you by Sept. 21, 2002.)

- ☐ Refund my dues that extend beyond Dec. 31, 2002.
- ☐ Convert my membership that extends beyond Dec. 31, 2002, to membership in the IAUC through the term of my AIEF-PEC membership.
- ☐ Retain my membership dues to defray the cost of publishing the *American Irish Newsletter* through Dec. 31, 2002.

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Action Requests

*Please take the actions recommended below.
Mention that you are a PEC member.*

Contact: New York Gov. **George Pataki**,
State Capitol, Albany, NY 12224;
email gov.pataki@chamber.state.ny.us

Message: I am very happy that New York City is home to a Great Hunger Memorial. Thank you for supporting this project. Please urge the project organizers to install a plaque at the memorial that simply explains the Great Hunger of 1845-50 and how British government policy was responsible for the devastation of Ireland. British Prime Minister Tony Blair has acknowledged the responsibility of the British government of the time, and this memorial should do likewise.

Contact: **Richard N. Haass**, Director, State Dept. Policy Planning; Dept. of State; 2201 C Street, NW; Washington, DC 20520; tele. 202-647-4000; fax 202-647-0844; email r.haass@state.gov

Message: Please urge the Bush Administration to be active role in the Northern Ireland peace process. As nationalists work toward democratic government, unionists are working to divide the North. Please use your good offices to make Ireland a model for peace processes around the world.

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Bairbre Stevenson. Sinn Fein requested the meeting to highlight the loyalist campaign targeted against nationalists.

August 26

Irish passport applications are to be available in the North for three months.

August 27

Devolution has come to the North to stay, according to First Minister **David Trimble** of the UUP. After meeting the British Foreign Secretary **Jack Straw** at Stormont with Deputy First Minister **Mark Durkan**, Trimble rounds on political rivals for saying they oppose the Mitchell Agreement although they are involved in the institutions it established. He says, "We operate here, myself and Mark, on the basis that devolution is here and will continue to function. I cannot think, actually, there is any serious doubt about that. There are parties in Northern Ireland who sometimes describe themselves as anti-Agreement, but the truth of the matter is all those parties are fully involved in the operation of the institutions here—even if they have not got the courage to say so, they are fully committed to it. So I am quite confident that devolution is here to stay."

August 28

UUP hard-liners gather the 60 signatures required to call a meeting of the party's ruling council to debate whether the party will continue sharing power with Sinn Fein. **Jeffrey Donaldson** and **David Burnside**, the two most senior anti-Agreement members in the UUP, support the petition, which is the latest in a series of efforts to force the collapse of the Belfast Assembly.