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## American Irish Newsletter - May 2001

American Ireland Education Foundation - PEC

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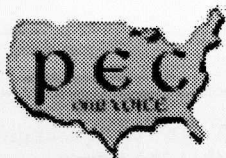
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# AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

*Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation*

Volume 26, Number 5

May 2001

## PEC Members Urge Political Leaders to Keep Promises and Keep the Peace Process Alive

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *PEC members submitted the following letters to the PEC. We publish them here to encourage all members and Newsletter recipients to encourage elected officials to insist on peace in Ireland. Don't let our elected officials walk away from their promises.*

### History Repeats Itself

President Woodrow Wilson talked sublime good sense at the end of the First World War. Had the belligerents listened to his 14 points and implemented them, there would not have been a second world war. Nobody listened. The bulldog instinct was to keep tearing up the spoils and robbing every other contender. There was no search for justice or clemency. Fair play was not an option.

Three years ago in Ireland there was the equivalent of Woodrow Wilson in **George Mitchell**, who talked sense and produced a peace settlement that Britain will not implement. The result will be the same as it was after World War I, warfare. Though the Mitchell Agreement outlines the conditions for peace, unionists, by way of Britain, have gutted that document so that

what exists now bears no resemblance to his settlement proposals.

Be assured, if Ireland and Britain set aside the Mitchell Agreement, there will be another outbreak of mutual suicide on European territory and possibly beyond. The behavior of UUP leader **David Trimble** harks back to the one-party fascism that ignited the Second World War.

PEC member **M. McGinn**, London

*PEC Maryland State Director **Jack O'Brien** encourages newly-elected Vice-president **Richard Cheney** to take responsibility for continuing a meaningful peace process in Northern Ireland (see Action Requests, Page 8).*

### Help Bush Keep His Promises

I encourage you, as our new Vice-president and as close adviser to the President, to follow up on President George Bush's recent pledges and commitments to support the Irish peace process and make it a foreign policy priority for this Administration. The President's recent comments have been encouraging to those of us who have been working for peace in the north of Ireland.

This nation has achieved significant success as a peacemaker so far in the fragile peace process. I believe continued active involvement of our government could play a key role in seeing the peace process to its conclusion. Further, the Prime Minister of Ireland, the leaders of communities in the north of Ireland, and the Irish people have made it clear that the White House has played a pivotal role in the past, and they are counting on this nation's continuing help.

Please continue American involvement in the peace process and encourage President Bush to do the same. Based on his campaign promises on this matter, many American Irish people worked for the President's campaign and for your campaign.

## Navy Honors Churchill

THE US NAVY has commissioned a new destroyer in Maine, and the ship's name is the USS Winston Churchill, PEC member **Coinneach MacNamara** reports.

The 513-foot AEGIS guided missile destroyer is the most technologically advanced fighting ship afloat. The \$1 billion Churchill, built at the Bath Iron Works in Maine, put to sea with a crew of 350 on Feb. 7. The Churchill was formally commissioned March 10 in her home port of Norfolk, Va.

"We have a name that carries some baggage with it, if you will, but that's

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## **Our View: *How is the Peace Process Like a Green Sweater?***

*IF YOU HAVE one, you're in the club. The universal symbol of "he must be Irish" no longer hangs alone in the American Irish closet. Alongside it on a wire hanger is the Irish peace process.*

*Take a look at PEC Colorado State Director Terry Deem-Reilly's article on Page 6 to see what we mean. Habitat for Humanity, a fine humanitarian organization when it minds its own business, is now implicated in the peace process by providing hammers and nails to visiting Northern Catholics and Protestants running around with the wives of this democracy's leading political muckety-mucks. Relevance to the full implementation of the Mitchell Agreement? None. Effect on the full implementation of the Mitchell Agreement? None. Point? There is one. The ladies involved will feel like they did something nice for Ireland; they can talk about the peace process with an affectation of authority. Indeed, the peace process in this situation is a political do-gooder fashion accessory and no more. This is not what President Bill Clinton and George Mitchell and Clinton's staff worked for from this side of the Atlantic. This is not what the Irish people want.*

*President George Bush had a St. Patrick's Day party and received his bowl of shamrocks. He talked about the "peace process" ("conflict" does not come out of the mouths of well-upholstered politicians who want to feel good about what they say rather than do) with Irish political leaders from the North and South on that day, too. Surely, it was the right thing to talk about on that day, and we have no doubt more than a few American Irish people who learned our leader talked about the peace process were reassured that something was being done. He must care about Ireland; he said "peace process." Then he changed his sweater.*

## **Peace Process Update**

**March 10**

SINN Fein leader **Gerry Adams** says that the peace process could fail if the British do not honor the Mitchell Agreement by removing IRA decommissioning as a precondition to its implementation.

**March 12**

Sinn Fein party chairman **Mitchell McLaughlin**, who will contest SDLP leader **John Hume's** parliamentary seat in the Westminster elections, says Sinn Fein will wait to see amending legislation before it will decide whether it can endorse a new police service. Britain acknowledges this week that its policing reform legislation is inadequate, and amending legislation is expected.

**March 15**

President **George Bush** nominates State Department policy planning director **Richard Haass** to coordinate policy on Northern Ireland. Haass will be an ambassador at large. The move comes as part of a reassignment of priorities within the Bush Administration, including moving responsibility for Northern Ireland from the White House to the State Department. Meanwhile, First Minister **David Trimble** and Deputy First Minister **Seamus Mallon** meet with Secretary of State **Colin Powell** for the first time.

**March 16**

The leaders of Northern Ireland's main political parties meet with Bush and Irish premier **Bertie Ahern** for talks about the peace process. Cabinet members present at Bush's St. Patrick's Day reception include Vice-president **Dick Cheney**; Secretary of State **Colin Powell**, Environmental Protection Agency head **Christine Todd Whitman**, Human Resources Secretary **Tommy Thompson**, and Interior Secretary **Gale Norton**. Congressmen present include **Peter King**, **Jim Moran**, **Stephen Brady**, **John Sweeney**, **John Cunningham**, **Jim Walsh**, **Tom Davis**, and **Joe Crowley**. Senator **Ted**

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## **From the North: *Tentative Election Dates Weaken the Peace Process***

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

THE FOOT-and-mouth disease rampaging through the British countryside has caused Prime Minister **Tony Blair** to move the date of the Westminster general election from May to June. According to many pundits, even June is not certain. The date will likely depend on when the disease outbreak is overcome. The effect of this indefinite scheduling could play havoc with what remains of the peace process.

Similarly, the district council elections in the North have been long-fingered. Some observers say that Northern First Minister and UUP leader **David Trimble's** wing of unionism will have been given more time to get its act together and stem the electoral threat from the anti-Agreement rejectionists who wish to topple it.

At the moment, evidence suggests that Trimble is striving to defeat his opponents by out-rejecting them and thereby putting the whole peace process into jeopardy. In essence, this is what he has been doing all along by frustrating the *implementation* of the three-year-old Mitchell accord. Only the cruder elements of unionism have been too dumb to understand his *tactical* version of rejection.

They remain in need of reassurance about Trimble's rejectionist intentions even though he has told them that his aim in remaining inside the process had been to reshape it closer to Orange unionist designs.

The postponing of the elections will provide time for the *tactical* rejectionists of the Mitchell Agreement, in their competition for unionist votes, to portray themselves as having overcome the damage the

Mitchell Agreement has done to unionism. Essentially, these tactical rejectionists will argue if reforms ("concessions" to nationalists) cannot be avoided, then they can be held up, rolled back, and watered down. These Trimble rejectionists will spell out that this is the only *realistic* and *pragmatic* way to proceed.

They will have plenty of evidence to back up these arguments. They will have the British government and its various proconsuls over the past three years to thank for the strength of their case. Nonetheless, this argument might not wash with the pig-headed Orange rejectionists who distrust the British government every bit as much as any republican or nationalist.

Even if the Trimble wing of the UUP appears to have won Downing Street's support for delaying and curtailing the Mitchell Agreement reforms *up until now*, this is insignificant in its book. That's what Britain's power-elite believe in—gradualism. Members of this elite want to get to their nefarious goal of a united Ireland without too much hassle from the staunch "Protestant people Ulster," and they are merely being duplicitous, trying to creep up on the turned backs of the Billy boys. Vintage Paisley. Of course, they are merely being paranoid, and Trimble's cronies will have a very big job to get through to these unionists for votes.

The latest blow-in proconsul from London, **John Reid**, has been doing his best to lend support to his surrogates in the UUP. A short while ago, Reid took up an unqualified pro-UUP stance on the reason the implementation of the Mitchell Agreement had been brought to yet another grinding halt. It was all the

fault of the republicans and the IRA, who had failed to deliver on decommissioning weaponry, according to Reid, courtesy of the UUP brain trust.

Reid and company discussed a June deadline for IRA decommissioning and implied that unless the IRA delivered arms, further progress implementing Mitchell was unlikely. Trimble's role in *illegally* disrupting important cross-border bodies did not win the UUP a scolding from Reid. This was a case of helping Trimble's election prospects at the possible cost of bringing down the whole Mitchell accord. When Sinn Fein demanded that Reid explain if he were reverting to the British Tory position (personified by long-lost proconsul **Patrick Mayhew**) that IRA decommissioning of weaponry was a *precondition*, not an *objective*, of the Mitchell-dependent peace process, Reid backtracked.

He placed it in a context that included some of the other outstanding non-implemented matters: the Patten reforms of policing and the continuity and stability of the devolved institutions—specifically, the cross-border bodies, which are vulnerable to being brought down with British connivance when the UUP unilaterally decides to do so. Then there is the British government's failure to deliver on its own demilitarization undertakings, which it reached with the IRA at Hillsborough in May, 2000.

Reid did not refer to the on-going failure to make a reality of the commitment to parity of esteem—equal treatment—for nationalists and unionists that was also supposed to be

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## Newsbits

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BRITISH Prime Minister **Tony Blair** is becoming totally isolated in his attempts to ignore the international demand for justice for Pat Finucane, according to the brother of the assassinated Belfast lawyer. **Martin Finucane** was speaking after further revelations confirming that a covert British army intelligence unit, the FRU, was directly involved in the 1989 UDA killing. A Sunday newspaper revealed that the FRU targeted Finucane by "scouting the routes in and out of North Belfast where the Finucane family lived." The article also revealed that the FRU handler of UDA double-agent **Brian Nelson** "gave Finucane's photograph to Nelson, who then passed it to the hit squad." Martin Finucane said that information concerning his brother's death was now being made public on a weekly basis, detailing the involvement of crown force personnel in the killing.... Last week, Congress endorsed for a second time the Finucane family's call for an independent inquiry. Next week, a number of UN Special Rapporteurs will raise the matter in the United Nations.... Calling for issues raised by investigative journalists and whistle-blowers to be examined in public, Martin Finucane said: "There is nothing more urgent or of public importance, than unrefuted allegations that the state's own authorities murdered one of its lawyers because that lawyer successfully sought the protection of the law for the state's own citizens." (RM Dist. 3/30/01)

The Orange Order does not have an absolute right to march under European law. The message came in a Human Rights Commission report that examined the guidance to be drawn from international standards in the parades issue. The Commission said the conclusion of Parades, Protests, and Policing was that the freedom of

assembly included the right to parade but that it had to be balanced against the rights and freedom of others....

The report came ahead of the resumption of the Drumcree Orangemen's regular Sunday protest against being blocked from marching down the nationalist Garvaghy Road in Portadown. Report coauthor **Dominic Bryan** said: "Unless we develop a toleration [sic] of each other's political beliefs, there will remain a significant public order problem at many events, and this will threaten the rights to freedom of assembly for all communities in Northern Ireland and inevitably make political developments more difficult."... The report said assembly could be reasonably restricted if there was a fear of public disorder. (IAIS 3/30/01)

**Mary Robinson**, the "fearless" Irishwoman who has confronted governments with their human rights failures, said she is leaving the United Nations because she doesn't have enough money to do the job right. Robinson, the UN high commissioner for human rights, said she believes she can do more to defend people elsewhere. "Many staff work under unfair pressure," said Robinson, announcing her intention to step down in Sept. without seeking a second four-year term. Robinson said her office receives only \$20 million from the UN's billion-dollar annual budget—not enough to cover the increasing workload of the office that investigates human rights abuses around the globe. Robinson has visited 60 countries, including Sierra Leone, Kosovo and East Timor, but it was her visit to the breakaway Russian province of Chechnya a year ago that captured most attention. Her report to last year's Human Rights Commission led to Russia's becoming the only one of the five permanent members of the

UN Security Council ever to be censured for its rights record. (AP 3/20/01)

The British army's decision to retain the two soldiers convicted of murdering Peter McBride was described as "outrageous" and "racist" in the high court in Belfast. "The decision is so outrageous in its defiance of logic or accepted moral standards that no sensible person could have arrived at it," lawyer **Seamus Treacy** said. He was opening a second application for judicial review of the army's decision last Nov. not to discharge Scots Guardsmen **James Fisher** and **Mark Wright**. The victim's mother, **Jean McBride**, has brought the case. Accompanying her were a representative of the Irish government; **Patricia McKenna**, Green Party Member of the European Parliament for Dublin; **Paul O'Connor** of the Pat Finucane Center; and representatives of British Irish Rights Watch and the Committee on the Administration of Justice. Pointing to the unreasonable nature of the decision, Treacy said the recruitment criteria for the new Police Service for Northern Ireland barred anyone convicted of any crime resulting in imprisonment. "It would even stop you from getting a licence to drive a taxi," he said, adding: "It is also fundamentally...racist in character. It is clear beyond argument that the army treats the loss of Northern Irish lives less seriously than it treats the loss of other lives—or indeed, that they regard it as even less important than other much less serious matters, such as possession of drugs, which carry automatic discharge." More than 2,002 soldiers have been discharged from the army in the past 10 years for lesser crimes than murder. (RM Dist. 4/2/01)

## **American Irish History: The Irish Help Shape Modern Mexico**

By Prof. John Flannery (*Reprinted from The American Irish, published by AIEF, Inc.*)

IRISH names crop up in the histories of the Spanish American colonies because they were prominent in the history of Spain. The story of the area known as New Spain (present-day Mexico and the lands north and northeast, including Texas) is no exception.

In 1698, the Spanish king, fearful of the loss of Florida to the French, dispatched Captain Juan Jordan to occupy the Pensacola Bay area. Jordan, with 50 men, arrived just ahead of a French fleet and took possession of the area in the name of the Spanish king.

The Indians of the Texas Plains came to respect a man they knew as "Captain Colorado" because of his red hair. He was a Spanish soldier, Sergeant Major Don Hugo Oconor (O'Connor), who came to Texas in 1767; reorganized the garrison at San Antonio; checked the Indian raids on the settlements; and brought order to that frontier of Spain. He rapidly rose in rank in the Spanish service, and six years after his arrival, with the rank of colonel, became Commandant Inspector of Presidios and the Provinces, a military position ranking next to that of viceroy.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, France transferred its colonial province of Louisiana to Spain. French colonists at New Orleans were not happy with the change of sovereigns and incited revolt against Spain. In 1769, Spain sent General Alejandro O'Reilly to suppress the rebellion and claim the area. He extinguished the rebellion, and the Spanish flag flew over Louisiana for the next 34 years.

Meanwhile, Fray Juan Agustin Morfi (Murphy) was compiling his *Viaje de Indios*. Historians of the southwestern US are indebted to these observations of daily life in New Spain.

The political problems in Spain, stemming from the

Napoleonic Wars, Enlightenment ideas, and the American and French revolutions, were effecting Spain's colonies. Colonial deputies to the Spanish Cortes, or parliament, were openly discussing independence in 1821. Among the 49 deputies from New Spain was one Tomas Murphy. This Mexican delegation favored Spanish recognition of Spanish-American independence and asked for Spain's help in reorganizing their governments on a solid basis. The delegation requested that General Juan O'Donoju (O'Donohue), known for his liberal inclinations, be Spain's representative in Mexico. O'Donoju received the appointment and in 1821 signed the Treaty of Cordoba, which recognized Mexico as an independent state.

Mexico had opened the Texas settlement to non-Mexicans in 1821 and favored Irish empresarios (land settlers). John Power, J.W. Chambers, John McMullin, and James McGloin received land grants in the late 1820s.

The Mexican-American War of 1846 saw the organization of the San Patricio Battalion. From this American battalion, whose leader conceded the San Patricios were his best soldiers, 250 Irishmen deserted to the Mexican side after watching US soldiers committing atrocities against Mexican civilians and desecrating churches. Mexico later raised a memorial in Mexico City to honor these men.

Other Irish people and the descendants of Irish immigrants took part in the subsequent travails of Mexico as that nation sought national unity and stability. Among them was Fr. John J. Burke, whose efforts helped to end the Christero Revolt of the 1920s and to bring to Mexico the internal peace necessary for national development. Burke's efforts laid the groundwork for the agreement of June 27, 1929 that reopened Mexico's churches.

## **Irish Issues Campaign Goes to Washington**

THE IRISH American Unity Conference conducted its annual "Irish Issues Advocacy Campaign" in Washington, DC, March 5-7.

"We addressed two priority issues: support for all elements of the Mitchell Agreement and permanent residency for the Irish people involved in the controversial deportation situation," said IAUC President **Jim Gallagher**.

Teams of IAUC members and

participants from other organizations visited the White House, offices in the Senate and Congress, State Department and National Security Council, Irish Embassy, Democratic and Republican national committees, and the US Chamber of Commerce.

**Stuart Ross** and **Shane Curry** of the Pat Finucane Center, **Erin DeLorea** of the Rosemary Nelson Campaign, and **Terry Ryan** of the

Children of Ireland Group also participated.

The IAUC provided an assessment of the status of the Mitchell Agreement and position papers on specific issues.

The campaign received a positive response. Gallagher said, "We were assured that, while leadership styles may change, the government will continue to play the role of honest broker in the pursuit of real democracy in the North."



## Colorado's Habitat Attempts to Build Peace in Northern Ireland?

By Terry Deem-Reilly, *PEC Colorado State Director*

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *PEC Colorado state director Terry Deem-Reilly writes in response to news that the first lady will host an effort in May to build five Habitat for Humanity homes in seven days in the Montbello suburb of Denver. Also participating will be actress Bo Derek; first ladies Columba Bush of Florida, Cathy Keating of Oklahoma, and Janet Huckabee of Arkansas; and 17 women from Belfast, Northern Ireland.*

"Habitat for Humanity is not just building homes, but trying to build peace, and I think that's fabulous," a spokeswoman for the humanitarian organization said.

Well, surprise, surprise. Denial is not only a river in Egypt but also a Colorado fantasy. Many otherwise rational people who understand that the sun rises in the east, touching a hot stove causes burns, and people sailing west will not fall off the edge of the earth lose all common sense at the mention of Northern Ireland.

The assertion that "building peace" in that area will be promoted by exporting people to Denver, Colorado, to pound nails and paint walls is so laughable that it merits rebuttal.

Let's look at the reality of Northern Ireland. The current conflict began over Britain's denial of equal access to jobs, housing, and the vote to the Catholic minority. Britain denied Catholics these rights to sustain the one-party state it created when it partitioned Ireland in 1921.

The unionist-controlled Northern government of the time, Stormont, met with violence a peaceful civil rights movement seeking to eliminate these injustices. The British dispatched troops and touched off a guerilla war by acts such as the shooting of unarmed civil rights marchers and the

internment and torture of Catholics. The British considered internment and torture necessary to "build peace."

Currently, nationalists (read Catholics) continue to receive the short stick in employment and political arrangements; Catholics are still twice as likely to be unemployed as Protestants, and Britain has implemented almost none of the reforms envisioned in the Mitchell Agreement—especially reform of the sectarian police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary. It's worth noting that the head of the devolved government, Ulster Unionist Party leader **David Trimble**, opined last year that Catholics needed to be "housebroken" before being allowed in government.

So far this year, loyalists have made more than 50 pipe-bomb attacks against Catholics. Mysteriously, the tens of thousands of securocrats, military personnel, and police who have had no problem over the last 35 years with "controlling" the Catholic population through mass imprisonment, no-jury trials, and extra-judicial executions cannot bring these loyalist paramilitaries under control.

Further, official British tolerance of, and likely collusion with, loyalist harassment and murder of nationalists has been well-documented by the United Nations, most prominent human rights organizations, Congress, and even the British press.

None of this is going to change because of a house-building project, even if Habitat were to import the entire population of the North to Colorado and rebuild every dwelling between Limon and Grand Junction.

Given the above, how would an otherwise sensible and reputable organization and several prominent political figures get sucked into such a

pointless, offensive exercise? They must accept the idea that Irish people are inclined to violence, that Irish culture promotes violence, and that violence in Ireland can be ended only by removing Irish people from their native surroundings and educating them to superior (that is, American) ways of existence.

This idea, of course, is blatantly racist and would elicit howls of outrage from American intelligentsia and media, were it applied to any other group in the universe. What rational person would suggest that Orthodox Serbs would stop killing Muslims and raping their wives and daughters, or that black South Africans might have learned "building peace" with Afrikaners, if they simply got to know one another while finishing a construction job in Colorado? What other national group is expected to leave its country for reeducation by outsiders to discover some solution to its problems?

We can combat such prejudices with information. Searching a library or the Internet will reveal the richness of Irish/Celtic culture (3,000 years' old and tending against violence—Ireland has not engaged in offensive warfare in 1,500 years), the panorama of Irish history (St. Patrick wrote the earliest condemnation of the slave trade), and hard facts about Irish politics (Ireland was for most of the 20th century the one country where a revolutionary party took power without pogroms, confiscating property, or mass imprisonment of the former rulers). What we learn we can share with each other and with our elected officials.

Telling the truth, not acting from sentimental notions of American superiority, will help the people of Northern Ireland.

*(continued from Page 3)*

an essential part of the Mitchell Agreement. Unionists have been flouting this with impunity and, indeed, help at every opportunity Britain gives them. (Consider former Northern Secretary **Peter Mandelson's** law for the display of the Union Flag.)

On the other hand, nationalist emblems have the same effect on the British establishment in Ireland as a red flag before a bull. At press time, news has come in of the RUC's attacking nationalists in Ballymena for celebrating a football win in Scotland by displaying the Irish national flag. Unionists have attempted to prevent a display of Easter lilies, a cherished republican emblem, at Stormont. These unionists have failed, although not because of any British government intervention. The required cross-community support for their motion was lacking.

Perhaps the most grievous abnegation of the equal respect obligation is the Parades Commission's about-face concerning the supremacist Orange Order and other loyalist marches. The Parades Commission is the highly political body behind which Britain hides when it comes to the Orange marching issue. The Commission, in a blatant gesture to enhance Trimble's electoral chances, has reversed its rulings of previous years and permitted the Apprentice Boys to march through the Lower Ormeau Road, where most residents are nationalist and vehemently opposed to these deliberately provocative displays of unionist triumphalism.

The Lower Ormeau Concerned Residents' Committee is being forced to seek a judicial review of the decision (a process in which it has little confidence) and is preparing a public

protest, despite the Parades Commission's having warned them off these types of action. The Committee fears this Commission decision in favor of the Apprentice Boys is a precursor to one that will allow the Orange Order to march down the Garvaghy Road in July, though these bullies have also refused to talk directly to the residents and have spurned the Parades Commission and conciliator **Brian Currin** from South Africa.

These developments show how Britain's attempts to save Trimble might cost the Irish people the Mitchell Agreement. Clearly, these decisions will influence the outcome of the elections. Either way, all rejectionists will have ample opportunity to make hay with what they have portrayed as a faltering Mitchell plan that could not square the circle of conflicting unionist and nationalist aspirations.

*(continued from Page 2)*

**Kennedy** is also present. Unionist hard-liner **Ian Paisley** makes his first appearance at the White House for St. Patrick's Day but does not attend the reception.

### March 17

Ulster Unionists should match the IRA's substantial engagement with the disarmament commission by lifting sanctions against Sinn Fein, Northern Ireland Secretary **John Reid** says. He says: "I think if we get to the stage where it is more substantial, where they are discussing not whether but how the IRA actually decommission, that is the context that I think it is reasonable to expect a positive response from David Trimble. To be fair to David Trimble, he has had a great deal of moral courage over the last few years." Reid denies claims that he supports the sanctions. Trimble

says: "When we have reached the point of being satisfied that there is substantial progress, yes, then we will look at the issue of North-South meetings. Of course, if that progress isn't sustained, we will look at the issue again. So people mustn't think it is a matter of how little will it take for the ban to be lifted. It is an entirely flexible matter. What we will focus on is: is real progress being made?" The Belfast High Court ruled in Jan. that Trimble's sanctions against Sinn Fein ministers are illegal.

### March 22

The decommissioning body says in a report to the Irish and British governments that it considers the IRA's re-engagement with it to be in good faith and to form the basis for future meetings.

### March 23

The SDLP rejects the prospect of a

10-year electoral strategy pact with Sinn Fein that could have represented an effective countdown to a united Ireland, according to Sinn Fein chairman Mitchel McLaughlin. "We put to them a very ambitious 10-year project that would have covered three Westminster elections, including a border poll referendum during that period. With demographic changes, this plan would be an effective countdown to a united Ireland," he says. The proposed Sinn Fein-SDLP pact had the potential to overturn the decades-old unofficial pact between the DUP and the UUP that has secured 13 of the 18 Westminster seats for unionist politicians.

### April 2

Blair postpones Britain's local elections from May until June 7, when he will almost certainly hold a general election, also.



## ***To Join or to Renew Your Membership in the AIEF-PEC***

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## **Action Requests**

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

**Contact: President George Bush**, The White House, Washington, DC 20500; tele. 202-456-1111; fax 202-456-2461; email [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)

**Message:** I encourage you to follow up on your pledge to support the Irish peace process. Please continue American involvement.

**Contact: Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell**, US Department of State, Washington, DC 20520; fax 202-261-8577; email [secretary@state.gov](mailto:secretary@state.gov)

**Message:** I urge you to follow up on President George Bush's campaign promise to support the Irish peace process by making that process a foreign policy priority. The US has achieved significant successes thus far in that fragile process, and our continued involvement could see it to a conclusion.

**Contact: Donald H. Rumsfeld**, Secretary of Defense, 1000 Defense Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301-1000; tele. 703-697-5737; Web address <http://www.defenselink.mil>

**Message:** I am deeply offended by the Navy's decision to name a destroyer after Winston Churchill. There are countless brave Americans who have served in our Navy and deserve this honor. I urge you to ensure that ship naming does not become a political game and that it remain a coveted honor for Americans only.

*(continued from Page 1)*

all positive," said Cmdr. **Michael Franken**, the Churchill's skipper in a Feb. 26 interview with the *Boston Herald*. "He's said to be the greatest man of the century."

MacNamara, a veteran of the US Navy, disputes this and encourages readers to do the same. "Do people forget that Churchill fought in South Africa against the Boers and Irish volunteers, including John MacBride, a leader of Ireland's Easter Rising?" MacNamara said, adding, "Churchill fought for British imperialism; he was not the democrat some would have us believe. He was also an anti-Irish bigot."

The Feb. 7 *Herald* article reported that "the ship is unlike any other in the American fleet for some very British reasons. She is the only active Navy vessel named for a foreigner and in an effort to honor the bond between the American and British navies, a Royal Navy officer will always be assigned to the Churchill's crew."

"Only *this country's* bravest men and women deserve to be honored in the way this British prime minister has been by the US Navy--especially considering all the US military people who sacrificed their all for our country and who likely will never see their names and sacrifices honored in this way," MacNamara said (*See Action Request, this page*).

**Exercise your freedom  
Write these letters and  
Make Peace in Ireland  
a Priority in 2001**