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American Ireland Education Foundation - PEC, "American Irish Newsletter - April 2001" (2001). *American Irish Newsletter*. Paper 15. http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/irish_ainews/15

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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 26, Number 4

April 2001

From the North: Elections Will Make or Break Mitchell Agreement

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

AFTER months of politicians' jaw-jawing and trekking between London, Dublin, and Belfast, the peace process is again at a stalemate. With the possibility of elections for Westminster and the North's 26 district councils in April or May, this is a particularly fraught time for the implementation of the Mitchell Agreement to be in stasis.

Unionist rejectionists are full of glee with this situation. They argue it is proof that the Agreement has failed and that First Minister and UUP leader **David Trimble** has been a fool to lead the unionist people up a blind alley. This line of argument could garner the rejectionists a majority of the votes from that constituency. By pandering to the rejectionists over the past three years and using IRA decommissioning as their pretext, Britain and the UUP are in danger of handing the rejectionists the victory.

The outcome of the recent talks has demonstrated that Britain and the UUP have not learned anything. They are still contorting the Mitchell Agreement to make IRA

decommissioning the up-front *precondition* for any further progress. That is why the contentious issues of decommissioning, demilitarizing, reforming policing, and unionists' dismantling Stormont institutions remain unresolved.

Dublin and London—with the SDLP's backing—are spinning the talks outcome to try to make it appear that advances have been made. They do not want to go into elections without saying something to counter the rejectionists' accusation of failure. Originally, Dublin and London sought to long-finger the remaining obstacles until June, when, they hoped, the elections would have been concluded, but a contagion of animal foot-and-mouth disease has interceded. Under these circumstances, it is possible that British Prime Minister **Tony Blair** will not be able to go to the electorate until the autumn. A stalemate of this length could wreck opportunities for the rejectionists.

The Orangemen of Drumcree, backed up by the Grand Lodge in

Belfast, are threatening to step up their campaign to march down nationalist Garvaghy Road in July. Despite the talks mediator from South Africa's denouncing this campaign, the Orangemen insist on getting a march along the Garvaghy Road on their own terms and without prior agreement. If that's not a supremacist attitude, then what is?

The hapless blow-in Englishman who heads the Parades Commission, to whom the Orangemen do not speak, has been demeaning himself by getting down on his knees to plead with these bigots. He has indicated to them that he "wishes to be able to permit marches, not ban them"—if only the Orangemen would talk to him and engage with the Garvaghy residents, who must respond constructively—a prize piece of British sophistry if ever there was one. Whatever the outcome of these tactics, the people of the North might again be subjected to a summer that will threaten to topple the Agreement.

Should an issue such as this one continue to fester in the wake of an April or May election from which the rejectionists emerge triumphant, then the protagonists of the accord will have a very big task on their hands.

Considerations such as these were the reason a successful outcome to the intergovernmental and pro-Agreement-party talks that have just ended would

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Our View: Whose War of Attrition is it, Anyway?

IN 1998, Britain signed onto the Mitchell Agreement, a document that outlined steps toward an inclusive, devolved democracy for the North and greater involvement between North and South, and Britain and Ireland.

Since then, unionists have held the Agreement hostage to their demand for IRA weapons, all the while apparently oblivious to the loyalist attacks on Catholics and case after case of British miscarriages of justice coming to the light of day. These monomaniacs are simply bent on preserving unionist domination. They don't want to come down from their tree house and play with the kids from the other side of town. They like being king of the hill, marching where they please, and collaborating with the town bullies to keep the kids from the other side from getting too uppity.

Britain hasn't helped. It wants to recruit officers for an unreformed RUC, not a new police force. It continues to take First Minister David Trimble seriously, even though he can't play ball by the rules and sallies forth with his anti-Sinn Fein sanctions despite court rulings that say he acts illegally. Why should anyone endure the leadership of a lawyer politician who flouts the law in the name of politics? Why does he still have a job?

There's also a British-instituted Parades Commission less concerned about equal rights than getting nationalists to put up with just a little sectarian abuse in the name of what the British like to call fairness. The fabled bill of rights for the north just might address the right to be a bigot on any street you want.

When that happens, the North will be back where it started from. The difference will be that a generation of idealistic, driven young people will be old and tired. Maybe they won't want to fight anymore. Who's next?

Peace Process Update

February 9

NORTHERN Ireland First Minister **David Trimble** confirms he will continue sanctions on Northern Sinn Fein ministers. The news comes ahead of a meeting of senior Ulster Unionists to discuss the deadlock over decommissioning, demilitarization, and policing, which deadlock could topple the power-sharing executive. Former Irish Justice Minister **Michael Noonan** becomes leader of Fine Gael. The RUC comes under criticism for inaction following more than 40 sectarian attacks and about 50 pipe bomb attacks on Catholics this year.

February 10

During a meeting of the UUP's 110-member executive in Belfast, Trimble outlines a series of penalties against Sinn Fein that he will implement over the coming weeks in a bid to force further IRA action on decommissioning. These include continuing the ban on Sinn Fein ministers in the power-sharing executive from attending cross-border body meetings with the Irish government. Other measures include banning Sinn Fein ministers from participating in conferences involving the British and Irish governments and UK devolved administrations and excluding Education Minister **Martin McGuinness** and Health Minister **Bairbre de Brun** from office. Deputy First Minister **Seamus Mallon** refuses to support Trimble's strategy.

February 11

PUP leader **David Ervine** says he has no doubt bomb-making materials found in a loyalist section of Belfast belong to the UVF.

February 16

Ulster Unionists acknowledge that the loyalist pipe bomb campaign is undermining unionists' arguments for IRA decommissioning. Trimble says the peace process could be heading for a review.

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American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC

*A non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization
founded 1975*

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Defense Ministry Seeks to Protect Itself from Saville Inquiry Findings

By Catherine McKenna, *British Irish Rights Watch* (Excerpts reprinted from Jan. *Just News*)

TWO ISSUES raised recently have focused attention on the role and conduct of the Ministry of Defense (MOD) at the Bloody Sunday Inquiry.

When the Inquiry resumed after the Christmas recess, lawyers representing the MOD made what they referred to as the MOD's "opening statement," the purpose of which was to answer criticism of the MOD from lawyers acting on behalf of some of the families of the deceased and wounded. Uniquely, the MOD was able to make an opening statement even though it is not formally represented as a party in the Inquiry.

On the same day, **Lord Saville** announced that the Tribunal's decision on the application for public interest immunity (PII) that the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defense made in Dec. would be delayed because of allegations published the previous day in the *Observer*. Former MI5 officer **David Shayler** alleged that the subject matter of the PII application was unreliable. These matters provide an opportunity to examine the MOD's position at the Inquiry.

Legal Representation

Legal representation at the Bloody Sunday Inquiry is different from that at the Widgery Inquiry [the 1973 investigation into Bloody Sunday]. At the Widgery Inquiry, the Army as a whole was represented as a single party. In contrast, the soldiers and military commanders are represented now as individuals, and they have three different teams of lawyers.

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have been prudent. The talks did not succeed, however, and what we have is spin doctoring. The vexatious issues still remain—Northern policing, paramilitary decommissioning, Britain's demilitarizing (Britain prefers to call it normalizing), and Britain's granting the UUP *carte blanche* to dismantle the Stormont institutions of devolved government. Nevertheless, Britain and the unionists (all of them) see only one up-front issue: IRA decommissioning—upon which progress in all other matters is *conditional*.

The problem is that such an attitude is nowhere to be found in the Mitchell Agreement. This is the snag that has tripped up the peace process for the past three years. Even though nationalists, independent observers, and others have spelt this out to Britain and the unionists many times, Britain and the unionists have refused to listen. It has fallen upon Sinn Fein leader **Gerry Adams** to point out to them again that paramilitary decommissioning is an *objective* of the Mitchell Agreement; it applies to all paramilitary groupings, including the

loyalist UDA and the UVF; and *all* the signatories to the Agreement are obligated to use their influence to achieve it. Decommissioning is not, therefore, a *precondition* to implementing the Agreement.

Has the UUP demonstrated that it is using its influence to prevail with the ostensibly pro-Agreement loyalist paramilitaries?

Second, **John Reid**, the latest blow-in proconsul, needs to understand that the people of Northern Ireland are entitled to a police service to which nationalists and republicans can relate. This is not conditional, and it is not a concession. Rather, it is a democratic and civil entitlement. As for British demilitarization, the bogeyman of dissident republicanism does not justify foot-dragging in this matter. The guns of the mainstream IRA have been silent for seven years, and if there was less provocation deriving from the presence in the North of a massive, oppressive British military machine, then perhaps the dissident republicans could be prevailed upon to look to politics for an answer.

Finally, the Stormont institutions are

the property of all the pro-Agreement parties that signed up to Mitchell, and they are the subject of a British-Irish international agreement. They are not the playthings of the UUP to be cast aside when that party flies into a huff.

If the SDLP and Sinn Fein play their cards right in the forthcoming Westminster elections, then they are quite capable of taking their rightful seats in Fermanagh/South Tyrone and in West Tyrone. Indeed, it is possible that they might gain north Belfast as well. Sinn Fein has offered the SDLP an electoral pact that the latter initially rejected but might now reconsider. It would be criminal to make a gift of these seats to the unionists again, and the party that does so will likely pay a high price.

If common sense prevails, then more than three-fifths of the territory of Northern Ireland could pass into the hands of nationalist parties. That is something for the British to think about. In the pre-election period, they will be working with all their power and influence to prevent such a pro-Irish combination from getting off the ground.

Newsbits

BRITISH government statistics show that discrimination against Catholics in the workplace has changed little despite the signing of the Mitchell Agreement. The unemployment rate for Catholics in the North is still almost twice that for Protestants. The British government's Statistics and Research Agency figures show the unemployment rate at 9 percent for Catholics and 5 percent for Protestants in 1999. Ten percent of Catholic men were unemployed, compared to 6 percent of Protestant men; and 7 percent of Catholic women were out of work, compared to 4 percent of Protestant women. The 1999 figures also show that, among the unemployed, a higher proportion of Catholics (55 percent) than Protestants (45 percent) had been unemployed for a year or more. Protestant representation in employment was highest in the clerical and secretarial sectors (64 percent) and sales (64 percent), whereas Catholic representation was highest in personal and protection services occupations (48 percent). Protestant representation was highest in agriculture, hunting, forestry, and finance (68 percent), whereas Catholic representation was highest in the building sector (57 percent). (RM Dist. 3/1/01)

Up to 500 republicans in Northern Ireland are being warned that their lives could be under threat after police seized documents and computer disks belonging to loyalist terrorists, it has been confirmed. Details, including photographs and addresses, were recovered in two searches in north Belfast, when guns and pipe bombs were also found. Royal Ulster Constabulary Assistant Chief Constable **Alan**

McQuillan said: "We are advising them to take appropriate measures for their personal security." It is the biggest seizure of its type for more than two years and is linked to the Ulster Volunteer Force and another small group that is part of that organization, the Red Hand Commando. Police charged a number of people following the searches, but it could be some time before all those named were traced by a team of detectives and warned of the possible threat. Some details are up to 10 years old, but two or three of the entries were made between 1997 and 1999. One package, wrapped in plastic, contained an estimated 150 names, a street map marked with Xs at various addresses and several photographs, including montages similar to others found before, and surveillance photographs....The names of between 30 and 40 loyalists were also discovered. (IAIS 2/27/01)

A group of influential Washington congressmen has sent a letter to Northern Ireland Secretary **John Reid** expressing grave concern at the level of sectarian attacks occurring throughout the North in recent weeks. The letter, signed by representatives **James Walsh, Richard Neal, Ben Gilman, Joseph Crowley, Peter King, and Christopher Smith**, urges Reid to use "all the resources at your disposal" to end the violence and bring the perpetrators before the courts. We hope you will give this matter your most serious consideration and look forward to your response." In a meeting on Capitol Hill yesterday, Walsh reminded British Foreign Secretary **Robin Cook** of Congress's concern over the recent attacks. (IAIS 2/8/01)

The British government is under

pressure tonight to take action against the largest loyalist paramilitary group, the Ulster Defence Association, amid claims that it has broken its cease-fire. With 44 pipe bomb attacks since the start of the year, security chiefs are blaming elements within the UDA for a widening sectarian campaign against Catholic homes. Police believe the attacks are designed to destabilize the peace process and provoke republicans into seeking retaliation. Although security chiefs believe five of the UDA's six battalions have declared their opposition to the Mitchell Agreement, their Oct. 1994 cease-fire is officially still intact. **Gary McMichael**, leader of the UDA-linked Ulster Democratic Party, called on the paramilitary group to clarify whether it is still on cease-fire. He said: "I think that while there is uncertainty around all of this it would be helpful if the UDA were to clarify what its own position was." (IAIS 2/8/01)

Diane Hamill met Prime Minister **Tony Blair** to discuss the murder of her brother, Robert Hamill. She said later she was confident there would eventually be an inquiry into her brother's death. (Just News 2/01)

Sinn Fein Assembly member **Dara O'Hagan** expressed concern at comments made by **Tony Holland**, chairperson of the Parades Commission. This week, Holland raised fears that a game-plan was in the works for forcing a sectarian march through the nationalist Garvaghy Road in Portadown when he said: "We are not in the business of stopping parades but rather of finding ways through difficulties so that parades can take place." (RM Dist. 3/8/01)

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This change could be a strategy to put a distance between any finding of responsibility for Bloody Sunday and the British government—and the MOD in particular. This sidesteps the fact that the MOD was then and is now the government department responsible for the army and, therefore, the soldiers. Also, the soldiers did not act as individuals on Bloody Sunday but as an army. The MOD's opening statement supports this view explicitly. It states: "the [MOD of today has no case to put to, or to advance before, this Tribunal; nor does it have a position to defend.]"

MOD lawyer **Ian Burnett** argued that there would be no benefit in the MOD's having a permanent legal presence at the Inquiry. However, whenever a question arises concerning the MOD, answers arrive through correspondence, thereby causing confusion and delay.

MOD Involvement

The MOD's involvement in aspects of the Inquiry shows that it plays a role more significant than that of government department assisting the Inquiry with relevant information.

The MOD arranged and funded legal representation for the soldiers. Burnett said that this was in accordance with routine arrangements that exist to provide legal assistance to public servants who become involved in inquiries or litigation arising from their service.

The MOD supported the soldiers' application for anonymity. Burnett said that the MOD believed it had a duty to engage in that because, as the employer of all the soldiers who served on Bloody Sunday, it has a continuing obligation to protect the safety of the soldiers and their families. The lawyer added that the interests of the soldiers who still had to be traced should be considered also.

Currently, the MOD has the best of both worlds. It decides when and on what issues to become involved in the Inquiry, recasting its role to a position that suits it best. It can avoid the embarrassment of giving answers to questions at the time they arise during the Inquiry, yet if it wishes to respond to criticism, it applies for and receives permission to make an "opening statement."

As past employers of the Bloody Sunday soldiers, the

MOD arranges and funds legal representation and makes legal submissions on anonymity on the basis that it has a continuing obligation to the soldiers. At the same time, it disassociates itself from the actions of the soldiers, commanders, and politicians by arguing that they are answerable as individuals for their actions.

Public Interest Immunity

Findings of an investigation into Shayler's claim that the subject matter of the PII application is unreliable could shed light on the real position of the MOD. The Tribunal has postponed making its decision on the PII application until such an investigation.

The material in question is from a security service agent code-named **Infliction**. The agent allegedly said in a debriefing in 1984 that Sinn Fein's **Martin McGuinness**, who is the North's Minister for Education, said that he had been the first to open fire on Bloody Sunday. The Home Secretary applied for the documents relating to this debriefing to be redacted and for a tape recording of the debriefing to be withheld.

Shayler said that **Infliction** was known as a "bullshitter." He had come across **Infliction's** intelligence during his time in MI5's counter-IRA section and had been told by other MI5 officers in the same branch that the agent was not trusted. Shayler said that MI5 stopped using **Infliction** as an agent and that his reliability was being "reassessed."

If Shayler's claims are accurate, it will be crucial to know whether the security services alerted the Tribunal that a question mark hung over this intelligence material.

In his opening statement, Burnett spoke with an air of incredulity that one should question the good faith of the MOD and said it was unthinkable that servants of the Crown would try to frustrate the work of the Inquiry. His approach was misplaced, if not insulting. The existence of the Inquiry—the first time Britain has held a second public inquiry into one event—is evidence that the assurances of Government can never be taken at face value. The public has every right to question the involvement and cooperation of the department of state that ultimately had responsibility for the army on Bloody Sunday.

Innovative Aspects of the Saville Inquiry

- * Using technology to recreate the physical locale and to reconstruct actions of people on the ground
- * Lawyers' laying out a wide spread of evidence at the opening of proceedings, thereby putting as much information as possible in the public domain

- * Selecting two non-British judges to sit on the Tribunal
- * Granting family members the right to legal representation throughout the proceedings
- * Considering the needs of observers

Book Review: Sectarianism Influenced the Course of the Great Hunger

The Hidden Famine: Hunger, Poverty, and Sectarianism in Belfast 1840-1850, by Christine Kinealy and Gerard MacAtasney (Review reprinted from Feb. 22 *RM Dist.*)

A COUPLE of weeks ago, the Irish Platform for Peace and Reconciliation published a report entitled *Peace Building in the Republic of Ireland*. The report claims the Republic's culture is one of "general ignorance" of conditions in the North and that the South continues to labor under selective "cultural and historical amnesia."

"This distortion has many manifestations," allowing, the report says, "whole swaths of people to be airbrushed out of history." The most obvious victims of this amnesia are the Irish people who fought on the British side in the world wars and the non-Catholic victims of the Great Hunger.

In the case of the Great Hunger, the selective amnesia extends to unionists. Turn the clock back to 1997, when the DUP's **Sammy Wilson**, opposing a motion before Belfast City Council to erect a stained-glass window in City Hall to commemorate the people of Belfast who died during the Great Hunger, said that such a monument would give Sinn Fein a propaganda victory. "There is no evidence that the Famine played any part in the history of Belfast," Wilson said.

This incident, which **Christine Kinealy** and **Gerard MacAtasney** recount in *The Hidden Famine*, is evidence of such pervasive amnesia and provides a neat summary of the book's thesis. Why should there be this reluctance on the part of Protestants in the North to acknowledge their suffering during the Great Hunger? Kinealy and MacAtasney look at religion and ideology in their account of Belfast during the 1840s.

On arrival in Ireland, Protestants, under the guidance of clergy and British patrons, fought to maintain their view of themselves as separate from,

and superior to, the indigenous population. To be Irish was to be poor, backward, barbaric, idle, and in the thrall of a dark, false religion. Conversely, to be Protestant was to be British, well-off, self-reliant, civilized, and enlightened.

The rise of Belfast as an industrial powerhouse during the first half of the 19th century seemed to provide proof of the righteousness of that belief. The bustling city saw itself as decidedly "un-nationalist," as one contemporary visitor noted.

Despite endemic poverty and appalling living and working conditions, working-class Protestants also subscribed to this view and saw themselves as a "plebeian aristocracy." Thus, when the Great Hunger hit the city, there was a deep reluctance to acknowledge it. As Kinealy and MacAtasney show, the abiding fiction that the Great Hunger did not affect Ulster has its origins in this period.

For example, in April 1846 the nationalist *Belfast Vindicator* attributed city authorities' reluctance to avail of Britain's meager help to the "fine philosophy that would starve the poor for the honor of the rich."

In 1849, wealthy Ulster Protestants who sought to avoid Britain's new taxes resulting from the Great Hunger "depicted themselves as having ridden the Famine with ease. The reasons were generally related to the perceived religious and economic superiority of that portion of Ireland compared with the rest of the country. The hardships of the preceding years were marginalized and...served to create an impression that Ulster was both different from, and superior to, the rest of the country. In Feb., the Belfast

News-Letter cautioned that "[t]he sturdy men of the north will now be compelled to feed the starving masses in whom bad landlordism, disloyal teaching, a false religion, and an inherent laziness have combined the share of canker of their country."

Even once the situation had become too critical to ignore, religion still exerted a malevolent influence. The starving residents of Ballymacarrett, a working-class Protestant suburb of Belfast, made it known that they would accept aid only if it came "through Protestant channels."

The Great Hunger was also regarded in providential terms. It was God's punishment on a population that continued to subscribe to Catholicism. Many Protestants saw widespread starvation as a God-given opportunity to rid the island of the Catholic Church. The Protestant clergy was unashamed in its pursuit of a souls-for-soup policy.

"...[T]he hunger of the poor was used to promote a Protestant crusade in Ireland. The main perpetrators of this campaign were the Church of Ireland and the Presbyterian Church, but it also had the tacit support of some members of the British government....Conversion was also underpinned by political salvation. The motivation of the missionaries was to rescue the people from the darkness of popery and bring them into the pure light of the gospel. In turn, this would make the people peaceful and more open to political integration."

The Hidden Famine explodes enduring myths surrounding the 1840s, revealing that the Great Hunger was not only a class issue but also an urban one, the effects of which politics and religion exacerbated.

Offensive Situations/Letters to the Editor

Western Cemetery is no Place for a Dog's Life

THE CITY council of Portland, Maine unanimously decided in Feb. to ban man's best friend from the 171-year-old Western Cemetery as of June 1, PEC member **Dan Engler** reports (see March *Newsletter* for previous story and action request).

The Western Cemetery is Portland's second oldest cemetery and was Portland's primary burial ground from 1829 until about 1852. Many of the Irish people who came to Maine during Ireland's Great Hunger in the mid-1800s are buried in the Catholic Ground of the Western Cemetery. Two years ago, Division 1 of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Portland dedicated a stone marking the Catholic Ground and remembering the Great Hunger Irish.

The decision to ban all dogs—on leash and off—from the cemetery followed an intensely emotional debate. The council chambers were packed for the council meeting during which the decision was made, and many people carried signs urging councilors to let dogs stay.

Councilors did not merely prohibit dogs from the cemetery. Instead, they accepted Councilor **Karen Geraghty's** plan to form an Off-Leash Area Committee to find other places for dogs to run. "Never has an issue generated this much public debate," Geraghty said.

"Paddy Green" Ties Coats & Clark in Knots

I AM WRITING to notify you of an offensive situation. Over Christmas, my wife crocheted a scarf for me in the colors of the Irish tricolor. I later discovered that Coats & Clark labeled the green yarn as "Paddy Green."

This is a term that has been used over the years to demean people of Irish descent. I heard this term used in a demeaning way numerous times, especially when I spent several days in Portsmouth, England. I would greatly appreciate your attention to this matter (See *Action Request*, Page 8)

PEC member **Timothy Linnins**

The Wizard of Id's Stupidity Speaks for Itself

"DO YOU WANT French, Russian, or Italian dressing on your salad?" the waiter asks the Wizard of Id in a Feb. 12 comic strip, PEC member **Vincent J. Sheehy** reports.

"No Irish dressing?" the Wizard asks.

"You could pour the rest of your drink on it," the waiter suggests (See *Action Request*, Page 8).

HBO Transports Northern Conflicts to Oz

I JUST finished watching the Feb. 11 episode of the HBO program *Oz*. The so-called Irish terrorist character was introduced tonight. The show only spent a few minutes on the character, so there is not much to comment on. HBO correctly represented the troubles Irish nationals living in the US face from certain US agencies, militant Protestants, and the media. Perhaps the work of the PEC and other such groups has made some kind impact on a few people in Hollywood with regard to certain aspects of the conflict in the North.

However, some stereotypes are slow to die. HBO seems to be heading down the same boring old path. In tonight's episode, the Irish militant was arrested while in a pub, and the previews for next week's show have this character blowing up the prison that the show is centered around. I will watch the serial next week and update you on where HBO is heading with this character and this issue.

PEC member **Michael Dwyer**

Fighting Fitzgeralds Step out of Pages of Punch

PEC MEMBERS are concerned about NBC's *The Fighting Fitzgeralds*, a new comedy starring **Brian Dennehy** that premiered March 6. The program title plays on Notre Dame University's nickname, The Fighting Irish—another repugnant image of a porcine, pugnacious Paddy that the PEC continues to oppose.

An NBC press release describes the program thus: "Dennehy stars as the blustery head of the Fitzgerald clan, whose three adult sons can't escape the gravitational pull that frequently places them back at the doorstep of their exasperated father. The senior Fitzgerald, a retired fire captain and widower, dreams of a little privacy but often gets his Irish up [sic] when his beloved castle turns into a bustling boarding house for his rambunctious sons, who include gym teacher Jim, his wife Sophie, and their 6-year-old daughter; layabout bartender Terry; and Patrick, a successful Wall Street whiz and Fitzgerald's pride and joy—until he burns out and returns home to bunk on the sofa."

Previews for the program, which is filling in for *Third Rock* for six weeks, depict a hard-drinking, macho patriarch whose interaction with his family involves grabbing beers and promising to knock them on their backsides.

The PEC urges members to contact NBC (see *Action Request*, Page 8) and urge the network to produce intelligent entertainment based on the American Irish experience rather than to rely on stereotypes.

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

Contact: **Coats & Clark Consumer Services**, PO Box 12229, Greenville, SC 29612-0229; tele. 800-648-1479

Message: I urge you to change the name of the color of your Red Heart Super Saver 368, Paddy Green. Paddy is a derogatory term for Irish people, especially Irish exiles. I urge you to change the name to one that reflects a positive, not a racist, image of Irish green.

Contact: **Brant Parker and Johnny Hart**, <http://www.creators.com/comics/wiz/write>

Message: I am deeply disgusted with the Feb. 12 issue of *The Wizard of Id*. Your equating Irishness with alcoholism is a racist stereotype. Such an idea is especially inappropriate in a comic strip, very often children's first exposure to a newspaper. I urge you to publicly apologize for this edition of the comic strip.

Contact: **Rebecca Marks**, Vice-president, NBC Entertainment Publicity, NBC Enterprises, 15th Floor, 3500 W. Olive Avenue, Burbank, CA 91505; tele. 818-840-3914; via the Web at <http://www.nbcmv.com>

Message: I am offended by NBC's new series, *The Fighting Fitzgeralds*. The program draws on racist images of the American Irish people, perpetuating the stereotype of the oversized hard-drinking, macho leprechaun. I urge NBC to produce intelligent entertainment based on the American Irish experience rather than to rely on racist stereotypes.

(continued from Page 2)

February 23

RUC chief **Ronnie Flanagan** says the North should recruit police officers even though the Policing Bill lacks nationalist support. Sinn Fein refutes Flanagan's claim that the police service needs 13,000 officers on the street. Its policing spokesman, **Gerry Kelly**, says: "The chief constable already has 13,000 people. In a normal situation, he would have 6,000, so the rush for recruitment is a falsehood."

February 25

The US-Ireland Alliance releases a letter urging President **George Bush** to keep Ireland high on his foreign policy agenda. Among the 400 people who sign the letter are senators **Edward Kennedy**, **John Kerry**, **Patrick Leahy**, **Joseph Lieberman**, and **Christopher Dodd** and Rep. **Richard Neal**.

February 28

Fears grow that the political institutions set up under the Mitchell Agreement could be suspended because of London and Dublin's failure to find agreement on decommissioning, demilitarization, and policing. Adams warns Britain against shutting down the process until after the general election.

March 2

Trimble and three other unionists increase sanctions against Sinn Fein by refusing to attend a plenary meeting of the North-South Ministerial Council; the meeting is postponed.

March 6

Northern Secretary **John Reid** warns the SDLP and Sinn Fein that the new police service will be in place by Sept. regardless of whether they nationalist parties support it.

March 8

The IRA announces it will resume discussions with the international decommissioning body.