



Sacred Heart
UNIVERSITY

Sacred Heart University
DigitalCommons@SHU

American Irish Newsletter

The Irish American Community Collections

11-2000

American Irish Newsletter - November 2000

American Ireland Education Foundation - PEC

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/irish_ainews



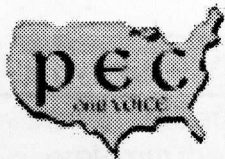
Part of the [European Languages and Societies Commons](#), [Other American Studies Commons](#), and the [Political Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

American Ireland Education Foundation - PEC, "American Irish Newsletter - November 2000" (2000). *American Irish Newsletter*. Paper 10.

http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/irish_ainews/10

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the The Irish American Community Collections at DigitalCommons@SHU. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Irish Newsletter by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@SHU. For more information, please contact ferribyp@sacredheart.edu.



AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 25, Number 11

November 2000

'Those Things We've Achieved so far are Amazing'

PEC NATIONAL President John J. Finucane reflects on the role of grass roots American Irish activism on Irish history over the 25 years that have passed since he founded the PEC.

What prompted you, a fire fighter and father, to invest your time in developing a democratic, nonviolent American Irish political organization?

In 1975 the conflict in the North of Ireland was well underway, but I was frustrated because we had no networks for those who cared to take some practical steps to show support for the nationalist community. I compared our situation to that of Jewish activists. They were organized, they distributed information, and so on. The Irish had nothing. How were we going to influence the people who make things happen in our government to get involved?

That's when I started getting information to the public—unions, politicians, the media. We started letter writing.

I gave up a lot. I made lieutenant in the fire department, but I gave up studying for advancements to carry on with promoting an awareness of the

Irish conflict. At the time, the news media didn't care what was going on. Reporters, editors, and the rest simply adopted pro-British attitude.

How did the PEC take shape as an organization?

We started locally, with information tables at various events. We were in the City and around the state—festivals, concerts, things like that. As we grew we attended events out of state, and we started to develop a body of members who would volunteer to help us send information out. Since the beginning, the PEC has focused on informing the public about the conflict, about American Irish history—whatever issue we have taken on along the road to our larger goal of seeing Ireland reunited. It's all about educating people.

One of our first educational pieces was about the Diplock courts. Prof. **David Lowry** wrote it, and that gave us credibility. Congressman **Ben Gilman** entered it into the Congressional Record. That gave us an official heading, and we sent it to Representatives, the media, labor leaders, educators. Then the House of Representatives investigated British troops' violating human rights in the North.

We had a lot of well known people writing with us, including **Mario Biaggi**, **Sean Patrick Walsh**, **Marie Howe** (Mass.), **Ben Gilman**, and **Hamilton Fish**. Biaggi, Walsh and Howe spoke out publicly, and we allied ourselves with them. We enjoyed mutual respect because they liked what we were doing. We had the *Newsletter*, and we were advertising our information packets on the Hunger Strikes and other issues in magazines such as *The Nation* and *Mother Jones*.

At this time, the PEC began letter writing in the American Irish community. People started looking for us. We would go to rallies and put out tables with information. People came running to get it.

Talk about some of the PEC's political victories.

Take the US extradition treaty with Britain, which was the linchpin of the **Joe Doherty** campaign. As the governments debated the treaty, the PEC started organizing the people to write letters, and we made an issue of it. Doherty was eventually extradited, and people said we lost, but I argued we won a big battle. For the first time, the American Irish organized across the country. That was an achievement because, before then, we were always running in different directions.

In 1984 the MacBride Principles of Fair Employment in Northern Ireland campaign got underway. We were working on a state level, and there was grass roots involvement. **Pat Doherty** of the New York City comptroller's

(continued on Page 6)

INSIDE

Peace Process Update	2
From the North	3
Newsbits	4
US Pressure for Police Reform Mounts	5
Tapes, Forensic Evidence Show Soldiers Shot to Kill	6
Forgotten Victims of Great Hunger are Laid to Rest	7
Action Requests	8

Our View:

Reality Leaves Unionism in the Dust

COOPERATING with nationalists will be disconcerting to unionists until they realize that nationalists will be the only partners they have in the new and improved Ireland of the Mitchell Agreement.

As IRA decommissioning was becoming the nonevent of the Mitchell Agreement and the idea of it became even less interesting than the tedious republican "no government, no guns" and unionist "no guns no government" rhetoric, London sought Dublin's cooperation in breaking the impasse. The solution? Implement the Agreement to get the arms. Where were the unionists in that decision-making process?

Now that the Patten policing reforms are flailing about like a fish out of water, the British and Irish prime ministers are again meeting to solve the problem of achieving reform and making political progress. The unionists have their ears to the keyhole--as the nationalists have for the past 80 years.

It would seem, then, that London is ruling the North with the help and cooperation of Dublin. It would also seem, then, that Britain is weaning itself of its dependence on the unionist oligarchy of cave men. At the same time Trimble must sell the Agreement to the No-men to save his political hide, the No-men are subject to the terms of the Agreement. Ironically and absurdly, the UUP leader is tutoring unionist hard-liners on how to accept political reality and stay alive in a new political system--one that does not require unionist approval to survive.

The Irish and British prime ministers like to point out there is no alternative to the terms of the Mitchell Agreement. Perhaps they mean that they will govern the North, whether the unionists like it or not.

Peace Process Update

September 11

TALKS to end the loyalist feud end without results as arson attacks continue in Belfast. Twenty loyalist women, including **Gina Adair**, wife of jailed Shankill UDA commander **Johnny "Mad Dog" Adair**, shout abuse at members of the UVF-aligned Progressive Unionist Party. They demand that the party be expelled from the Assembly because of the UVF's murder of two men during the feud.

September 13

First Minister **David Trimble** and Deputy First Minister **Seamus Mallon** meet with President **Bill Clinton** to urge him to continue US involvement in the peace process and to discuss the steps necessary to complete the implementation of the Mitchell Agreement.

September 14

A series of loyalist bomb and gun attacks on the Shankill road mark the escalation in the loyalist feud.

September 18

Sinn Fein and SDLP leaders express concerns for the peace process in the face of Northern Secretary **Peter Mandelson**'s support for the Policing Bill. Loyalists blame British dirty tricks for the continuing feud. PUP leader **Billy Hutchinson**, whose party represents the UVF, says drugs, personalities, and political differences are factors in the violence. The *Sunday Times* reports that UDA leader Johnny Adair attempted to buy arms imported to the North from South Africa in the 1980s. The IRA halts the international observers' inspection of its arms dumps until the British fully implement Patten's recommendations.

September 19

Dissident republicans launch a bomb attack on M16 headquarters in London. The Police Authority slams Mandelson's policing bill, saying that without significant changes to its provisions on financial accountability, policy planning, and powers on reports and inquiries, the legislation

(continued on Page 5)

American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC

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

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

Newsletter Mailing Address:

Five Woods Way, Woodbury, CT 06798

PEC & Newsletter Email Address: aipec@homestead.com

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>

Supported in part by the Emerald Society,
NYC Fire Department

STATE DIRECTORS: Jack O'Brien, 11109 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, 7607-8th Ave. NW, #201, Seattle, WASHINGTON 98117-(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 Shalimar Dr., Del City, OKLAHOMA 73115-(405) 677-3623; Elizabeth McElligott, 7747 E. Dale Ln., Scottsdale, ARIZONA 85262-(602)585-3602; Robert J. Fuhrei, 1901 Rio Canyon Ct. #202, Las Vegas, NEVADA 89128-(702) 255-9619; Mary Holford, 6555 Tam O'Shanter Dr., San Jose, CALIFORNIA, 95120-(408) 268-4548
GREAT HUNGER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR: Frank Morris, Jr., 821 Briarwood Ln, Camp Hill, PA 17011-(717) 737-7013
NATIONAL ORGANIZER: Pete Foley, 3615 Greystone Ave., Bronx, NY 10463-(718) 884-2220

From the North: *Political Expediency Threatens Mitchell Agreement*

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

A CONSTANT wail has gone up from the unionist camp complaining that it has had to suffer the major pain entailed in the Mitchell Agreement's provisions over the past two years.

Unionists pretend they have made a succession of one-way "concessions" to Irish nationalism. This is despite the Ulster Unionist Party's putting its signature to the Agreement and a slight majority of unionist voters' approving it in a referendum.

However, after more than two years of shilly-shallying and outright obstruction, UUP leader **David Trimble** has at last admitted that, despite all that bluster, there is much in the Agreement for unionists.

He has had to do so for this reason. In May when **Peter Mandelson**, the new proconsul, was striving to extricate himself from his first major blunder and restart the devolved Stormont institutions, the British had appeared to accept the IRA could not be bludgeoned into decommissioning arms the way Britain had demanded.

Their change of tack, involving an understanding with both the IRA and Dublin, accepted that decommissioning would go in hand with implementing the Agreement. This enabled everyone to set the peace process in train again. Trimble received his orders to go out and sell the Agreement to the No-men of unionism both inside and outside his UUP. This he had never done before.

Trimble, along with Mandelson, has been making a colossal mess of this task. Fixated on the demands of the No-men, Trimble has come up with the idea of selling the Agreement by pandering to the No-men. Mandelson's great inspiration is to pander to Trimble. Trimble, in his most recent attempt to fend off his critics at a

meeting of the UUP's executive, explained that he had remained with the Agreement to be inside the peace process, where he could be most effective in furthering unionist interests. "This is the time to tell it like it is," he told the UUP executive.

This is what he told them:

- "The Provos' armed struggle is over." So it has been for six years.
- "There will be no united Ireland. All the republicans have left is rhetoric about the inevitability of Irish unity." That is not in either the letter or the spirit of the Mitchell Agreement, which is to provide a peaceful political method by which nationalists might strive to attain a united Ireland.
- "On the Constitution, we got what unionists have always wanted." He is referring to the removal of the South's claim to Northern Ireland in the amended form of its constitution and to the consent section of the Agreement that requires a majority of the people in the North to sanction a united Ireland. Here he is spinning to do his master's bidding and sell the Agreement. Britain's Government of Ireland Act, 1920, has also gone and, if a section of the Protestant population of the North can be convinced of the value of a united Ireland, then the British are committed to let them have that, provided the rest of Ireland agrees.
- "The North/South ministerial council is answerable to the Stormont Assembly. The cross-border cooperation takes up just 0.1 percent of our budget." Unionism, by being "in," has rendered the council trivial.
- "We have a veto. The party was right to run with the Agreement," is Trimble's conclusion on the basis of this partial account of his wrecking activity

from the inside. None of this managed to secure his hold on the UUP. At least 30 percent of those attending his meeting remained unconsoled, and the requisite 60 names for a recall of the Ulster Unionist Council, the real decision-making body for the UUP, is to be held in the next few weeks.

There his policies, if not his person, will be challenged. He is pandering to his No-people and apparently failing. What is Mandelson doing about this ridiculous situation? He is pandering to Trimble, who is pandering to the wreckers, and he says he is doing this to save the Agreement.

Trimble has a shopping list for Mandelson. The UUP leader complains that, in addition to the benefits for unionism that he outlined above, as a result of his influence on the Agreement, he is being denied a more unionist-friendly destruction of the Patten Report on policing. Also, the provisions of the Agreement about the display of flags and emblems is hurtful to unionist sensitivities. Furthermore, the IRA has not yet decommissioned its weaponry. Trimble seems to think that the British and unionist approach to the implementation of the Agreement has been the best encouragement for it to do so—to say nothing of the ongoing warfare between loyalists, which could spill over into the Catholic community.

Thus, he wants flags, Patten, and IRA guns in his hold-all. Mandelson is putting pressure on Taoiseach **Bertie Ahern** to let petulant Orange David have his way to save the peace process. Does he think that killing off the SDLP is the best way to do this? Deaf to pleas from Congress and the Senate on the Patten policing reforms, has he learned nothing from former British Prime Minister **Margaret Thatcher's** colossal blunders in her time?

Newsbits

IRISH nationalist icon Charles Stewart Parnell was the target of a dirty tricks campaign by Britain more than a century ago, according to new evidence from the Public Records Office. The newly-released files show government agents collected material on the nationalist leader to smear him in a bid to split his Irish Home Rule movement and discredit his parliamentary party. The documents reveal that the then-Irish secretary, Arthur Balfour, secretly undermined Parnell through Nicholas Goslyn, a special agent who ran a web of paid informers to gain information and smear the nationalist leader. Parnell came to prominence in the 1880s during a conflict between Irish tenant farmers and their English landlords. (*Irish News* 8/30/00)

Britain's *Sunday People* newspaper said today it had been gagged by the British government and security services—and it was not allowed to say why. British Defense Secretary **Geoff Hoon** went to the High Court during the week after the paper ran a story in its Northern Ireland edition last Sunday alleging a top British army officer had ordered the murder of an innocent Catholic pensioner to protect an IRA informer. The story also alleged a number of officers at the highest level were currently under investigation for “orchestrating dozens of other loyalist killings.” British Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir **John Stevens** has been conducting a long-running investigation into allegations of security force collusion in murder by loyalist paramilitaries. Condemning the British government move, the *Sunday People* said: “Earlier this week and without notice, the British Secretary of State for Defence, at the behest of the security services, tried to silence us by taking us to the High Court in London. He won.” On Friday, the paper applied to

the same judge to change the order. A statement from the *People* said “incredibly” it was not allowed to say anything about his latest judgment. Editor **Neil Wallis** said: “I cannot believe that I can’t tell my readers what happened in court yesterday. The article published last week clearly contains matters of enormous public interest. This is the most ludicrous decision since the last government’s failed attempt to stop the *Spycatcher* book.”...The paper said it would publish “new allegations in tomorrow’s edition concerning the murder of West Belfast pensioner Francisco Notorantonio, shot by the Ulster Freedom Fighters in Oct. 1987. “We will allege that his murder was set up by rogue elements in the army’s undercover Force Research Unit to protect an agent inside the Provisional IRA.” (*IAIS* 9/23/00)

The British Army has increased surveillance of community activists in south Armagh this week. South Armagh Farmers and Residents Committee chairman **Declan Fearon** is seeking legal advice after British Army patrols stopped six of his committee members at different times in the past week. SAFRC members were told to present personal documents to British army officers at Crossmaglen base. Committee spokeswoman **Toni Carragher** said she was aware of joint RUC and British Army checkpoints in the past two months, but added it was “far too coincidental” that six SAFRC members were summoned to the army base in the past week.... An RUC spokesman claimed the surveillance was part of a “routine police operation.” (*RM Dist.* 9/19/00)

A member of the Patten Commission testifying before Congress today said it was crucial that the recommendations of the Patten Report “not be cherry-

picked but be implemented in a cohesive and constructive manner.” **Gerald Lynch**, president of John Jay College, said the people of Northern Ireland “deserved no less than this new beginning for policing. Any significant modifications will deprive them of this long-awaited police service capable of sustaining support from the community as a whole,” he said. Lynch addressed the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe’s hearings on “Protecting Human Rights and Securing Peace in Northern Ireland: The Vital Role of Police Reform.” (*IAIS* 9/22/00)

Lawyers for the families of two unarmed IRA men gunned down by the RUC say a BBC documentary proves the men were the victims of a shoot-to-kill policy. It has been revealed that the recent *Brits* series by journalist **Peter Taylor** has been submitted as evidence of such operations to the European Court of Human Rights. Gervaise McKerr, whose death formed part of the Stalker/Sampson investigation into the alleged shoot-to-kill policy by the RUC, was shot dead near Lurgan in 1982. Pearse Jordan was shot dead by the RUC in disputed circumstances in west Belfast in 1992....*Brits* reveals that the Stalker/Sampson report recommended that MI5 officers be prosecuted for perverting the course of justice after a crucial tape on a shoot-to-kill death was destroyed. Last night the **McKerr** family said in a statement: “The fact that the European court is now no longer in a position of persuasive value and human rights legislation now applies on a more local level only goes to strengthen our case for an independent, judicial, and public inquiry. Maybe then the British government will take action on those parties guilty of breaking the very laws they are meant to uphold.” (*RM Dist.* 10/5/00)

US Pressure for Police Reform Mounts

AS VICE-PRESIDENT **Al Gore** issued a statement in Sept. urging Britain "to fully and expeditiously implement [the Patten Commission's] recommendations [on police reform in the North]," the House of Representatives unanimously approved a resolution likewise calling on the British government "to fully and faithfully" implement Patten Report.

A similar resolution is before the Senate, tabled by senators **Edward Kennedy** and **Christopher Dodd**. The statements in support of the Patten Report come at the same time Britain is attempting to water down these recommendations.

The vote in the House is the culmination of months of work of the Ad-

Hoc Committee on Irish Affairs, which included a series of hearings on the Patten Commission report. **Chris Patten** testified to a committee a year ago and warned against "cherry-picking" the recommendations. Members of human rights bodies have told hearings of RUC links to the murders of Northern civil rights lawyers.

Chairman of the International Relations Committee **Ben Gilman** called the vote in the House an "important and unmistakable message to the British government that it needs to live up to the terms of the [Mitchell Agreement]. He said: "The British government cannot put aside the promised change and terms of the [Mitchell Agreement] for any temporary or political gains, for whatever reason."

Gore's statement followed a meeting between the vice-president's National Security Advisor, **Leon Feurth**, and American Irish leaders. During the meeting, the American Irish expressed their anger at the weak nature of the Irish plank within the Democratic Party's election platform.

Following the meeting, Gore clarified his position on the Mitchell Agreement, extradition, and Ireland as a foreign policy issue. These matters are part of the Campaign 2000 questionnaire that the IAUC has distributed to candidates this year (See the Oct. *Newsletter* or visit <http://aipec.homestead.com> for more information.).

Gore also called for the full implementation of the Agreement. "I will continue to support full implementation

(continued on Page 8)

(continued from Page 2)

will render the new policing board worse off than the current Police Authority. The Authority fears the legislation places too much control with the northern secretary and too little with the Policing Board, set to replace the Authority.

September 23

After the UUP loses a by-election to an anti-Agreement DUP candidate, Trimble says that the Mitchell Agreement is at risk over police reforms. The UUP leader says the Patten recommendations on police reform don't "stick to the Agreement." He adds, "That has caused deep, deep offence within the unionist community. That puts the Agreement on the line. I think the government and the Irish nationalists and republicans have got to ask themselves very seriously what they are going to do. It is about time some other people carried the weight instead of carelessly and needlessly throwing burdens on us." Trimble also suggests the party modernize itself by curbing the voting power of

the Orange Order within the party by reducing its voting rights on the Ulster Unionist Council.

September 26

Anti-Agreement Ulster Unionist MP **Jeffrey Donaldson** claims his party is preparing to return to its "no guns, no government" policy but plays down reports he might challenge Trimble's leadership. Sources close to Trimble say that in the absence of unionist gains on IRA decommissioning and/or RUC reform, the No camp will press for a hardening of party policy. Congressman **Richard Neal**'s resolution calling upon the British government "to fully and faithfully implement the recommendations contained in the...Patten Commission report on policing," passes unanimously. Vice-president **Al Gore** issues a statement strongly urging the British government "to fully and expeditiously implement" the recommendations of the Patten Report.

September 29

The remaining four prisoners in Long Kesh move to other prisons in the

North as Britain clears the way to close the gaol.

October 2

The European Convention on Human Rights becomes part of British law. Now, people who feel that their human rights have been violated no longer have to apply to the human rights court in Strasbourg. Instead of having to wait about seven years before their cases come to fruition, they can call the state to account within the British legal system. Meanwhile, in the Assembly, the DUP tables a motion of no confidence in Trimble's leadership.

October 4

Sen. **Edward Kennedy** accuses Britain of diluting the Patten Report.

October 5

Trimble's leadership of the UUP is in jeopardy as party hard-liners call for a meeting of the UUP's ruling council.

October 8

Trimble tells the UUP's annual conference he won't be walking away from the Executive yet, but he casts doubts on his party's continued participation in North-South bodies.

(continued from Page 1)

office wrote them up at former Comptroller **Harrison Goldman's** request. Doherty modeled them after the Sullivan Principles. Then we were off to the races. Organizations were contacted in 1985 to get involved in statewide campaigns. Legislation passed at local and state levels. Employment discrimination against Catholics in the North remains a problem, but this campaign took the issue of the Northern conflict into the civil rights realm. That really created a problem for a lot of media and politicians who wanted to argue in favor of the status quo on the grounds that the whole conflict was the result of the IRA campaign.

MacBride forced leaders across the board to look at the conflict in a new light. Now you see a lot of American opinion makers seeing that once the problem of inequality is solved, there's a lot of room for prosperity and investment in the North. This campaign won't be over until US leaders recognize what we have been saying for 25 years—that the British won't deliver equality to Irish nationalists and the problem won't be solved until the British leave Ireland (see *Action Requests*, Page 8).

Our most recent campaign has been promoting awareness of the Great Hunger and demanding that the British apologize for allowing the Irish to

suffer and die during that time. That has been a great campaign because the media has responded, there have been TV documentaries about it. British Prime Minister **Tony Blair** gave the Irish actor **Gabriel Byrne** a statement acknowledging Britain's responsibility for the Great Hunger.

What are some of the difficulties the PEC has faced?

The rising and falling interest of the American Irish community. People rally around the big issue and then they disappear. We would have 40 to 60 people at hunger strike meetings, but attendance fell when the strikes were over. You also get a lot of little egos involved. I started the Council of Presidents of Major American Irish Organizations in 1985 to try to get us all working together, but the egos and side issues meant that it was not effective for long. People get hung up about who gets to be the big guy.

Another problem has always been media diversions. We want to talk about the causes of conflict—Britain's continued presence in Ireland—but the media always want to talk about the IRA. The PEC didn't want to get involved in IRA talk. We didn't want to get diverted from justice issues, and we never allowed the media to divert us.

Yet another challenge we have faced is that we have had to learn everything. We knew editors, writers,

etc., would never come forward to help, so we had to learn everything—editing, writing, layout, design, marketing, fund-raising.

Do you see a future role for American Irish activism?

Absolutely—with the necessary financial support. We should be more active than ever, putting pressure on representatives and senators and candidates and the President. You can't leave it to elected officials to do the right thing. When the pressure's on them and they're being watched, they'll do a better job. We have to continue fighting tooth and nail to achieve our goal of an independent, united Ireland.

Let's face it, the goal is to get the Brits out. Those things we've achieved so far are amazing, given British resources. Given Britain's propaganda machine and the fact that the majority of American Irish people have never done anything because they're uncaring about their heritage. (That's also the success of British propaganda and the continued confusing of real issues with the issue of violence.)

Once, after the Mitchell Agreement was signed, a magazine editor called me to talk about the conflict in the North. I told him, "You're the terrorist. You are directly responsible. You could have told the story 15 or 20 years ago. You didn't. You turned your back." He said, "You're right."

Tapes, Forensic Evidence Show Bloody Sunday Soldiers Shot to Kill

EVIDENCE has emerged to support the belief that the British army planned its attack on unarmed civil rights protesters on Bloody Sunday, 1972.

A tape recording the IRA released in Sept. contains bugged conversations among British army personnel on Bloody Sunday, when British soldiers killed 14 unarmed civil rights protesters. The tape includes conversations among army officers and telephone

calls between soldiers and journalists. The recording carries the voices of British army personnel admitting they did not shoot the people they intended to shoot during the massacre.

Channel 4 News, which broadcast the tape in late Sept., said it had obtained the tape from republican sources who claimed an IRA bug placed in the army's communications unit in Derry had recorded the voices.

On the tape, one soldier tells his colleague something has gone "badly wrong" and the people admitted to hospital after the shootings are "the wrong people." He says: "There's about nine and 15 killed by the Parachute Regiment in the Rossville area.... They're all women, children, f*** knows what, and they're still going up there."

(continued next page)

Forgotten Victims of Great Hunger are Laid to Rest

By Steven McCaffery

(Excerpt from the Sept. 18 *Irish News*)

AFTER a wait of 150 years, the Great Hunger dead of a forgotten mass grave in County Fermanagh have been laid to rest. Clergy from the four main churches gathered yesterday to hold a poignant service at a mass grave believed to hold the remains of up to 200 victims of the 1845-50 Great Hunger.

Before restoration work got underway the grave was an unkempt trench of sunken ground running through the Church of Ireland's historic St. Mary's church at the townland of Ardess near Kesh.

The ground collapsed as the bodies buried without ceremony beneath it decomposed. Known locally as the "Famine Pit," the 120-foot-long and 14-foot-wide trench runs through the cemetery of the 600-year-old church but remained unmarked until now.

Restoration work funded by Fermanagh district council, Fermanagh Charitable Trust, the National Famine Commemoration Committee in Dublin, and the Community Relations Council has transformed the site.

The sides of the sunken grave are now supported with stone walls. A footbridge allows visitors to the cemetery to avoid walking through the Famine Pit, while a stone vaulted tomb has been rebuilt. A plaque notes: "Within this famine pit lieth the unknown dead 1845-1850."

A similar tribute near the entrance to the graveyard records the site of an ash tree—the "hanging tree"—where members of the local Protestant community were hanged during the 1641 rebellion.

Community services officer with Fermanagh district council **Jim Ledwith** worked with local enthusiasts and the coalition of fund-raising groups to mark this solemn chapter in the area's local history.

"At a time when people are working out plans to celebrate the new millennium, we wanted to also bring things down to earth," he said of the cross-community project. We thought it was important to mark our history at this time. Now at least the paupers who were left here without so much as a Christian burial have been remembered in this ecumenical service."

The service was conducted by **Canon Eric McGirr**, rector of St. Mary's; **Fr. John Havlin**, parish priest of St. Joseph's in Ederney; Presbyterian minister the **Rev. Brian Hunt**; and a representative of the Methodist circuit.

After the event, the group launched a pamphlet covering the history of the site. The research for this gathered fresh details on the area and confirmed elements of local folklore. The Great Hunger dead were carried

to Ardess on makeshift stretchers from the workhouse six miles away at Irvinestown.

It is believed the roughly hewn stretcher poles were never used twice but were left to pile up at the cemetery—a symbol of the rising death toll.

It is also believed the dead were carried in reusable "slip coffins" normally used for burial at sea. The coffin would be tipped up, its false bottom allowing the corpse to slide uncovered into the pit.

Research has also shown that details of the 1641 killings carried out at the hanging tree were recorded by the wife of an incoming landlord who heard soldiers at Rory Maguire's Crevenish Castle boasting of the murders.

The cross-community team that raised the estimated £5,000 to pay for the project will now campaign for funds to buy signposts guiding visitors to the site.

Ledwith said it was important the history of the potato blight be recalled: "This was a famine in name, but just 20 miles from where these people died, pigs, eggs, and other produce were exported at Ballyshannon."

The ceremony was accompanied by pipe music and a poem that Ledwith wrote to honor the ground where "200 souls silently weep."

(continued from Page 6)

Also in Sept., scientist **Luke Haag**, one of the world's leading criminologists and firearms examiners, discovered that 20 of the 22 SLR rifles that British army paratroopers used on Bloody Sunday had their gas regulators set "right back" to ensure spent cartridges were not automatically

ejected after firing. Soldiers could then collect spent cartridges and thereby conceal the number of shots they fired.

Lawyers for the Bloody Sunday dead say this new information raises questions about Gen. **Robert Ford**'s claim that paratroopers were engaged in a "fire-fight" situation and were returning fire. In such a situation, they

argue, "putting your [rifle] in a manual mode of operation is the last thing you would want to do."

The lawyers have asked forensic and ballistic experts for the Saville Inquiry into Bloody Sunday to examine Haag's discovery and why these matters were not considered in 1972.

(continued on Page 8)

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

[] New Membership \$25 [] **Membership Renewal** \$25
[] Senior Citizen \$20 [] Student \$10
[] Additional Tax-deductible Donation \$ _____
[] **Tax-deductible Donation Only** \$ _____ **Total** \$ _____

Members receive the monthly *American Irish Newsletter*.

Name _____

Address _____

Town/State/Zip _____

Phone Number () _____

Email Address _____

Make checks payable to AIEF-PEC

Mail to P.O. Box 102, Blauvelt, New York 10913-9915,

For information, call (800) 777-6807

American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC
P.O. Box 102
Blauvelt, NY 10913-9915

Non-Profit Organ.
US Postage Paid
Leesburg, FL
Permit No. 1040

Address Correction Requested

Action Requests

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

Contact: **Your Representative**, 2244 Rayburn
Office Building, Washington, DC, 20515-3010

Contact: **The President**, The White House,
Washington, DC 20500, tele. 202-456-1111; fax
202-456-2461; email president@whitehouse.gov

Message: I request that you to state your position on the following issues concerning America's relationship with Ireland. Do you support the Administration's continuing President Clinton's policy of involvement with the Irish peace process? Do you support the MacBride Principles of Fair Employment in Northern Ireland? Do you support the full implementation of the Patten Report's proposals on policing reform in Northern Ireland? Do you support calls for independent investigations into official human rights abuses in the North? Do you support the closure of the INS cases against former Irish political prisoners now living in the US? Will you pay an official visit to Ireland in support of the above matters? Will you support US-Ireland visa programs? I hope that your answers to these questions will open up a dialogue between you and concerned, organized Americans eager to see the US continue to play an active role in the Irish peace process and, particularly, the protection of human rights in that country.

(continued from Page 7)

"If soldiers wished to shoot people who were not in a position to shoot back," they have asked, "and did not wish to leave any evidence, would putting the gas regulator 'right back' allow you to pick off your victims and subsequently collect each of your cartridge cases?"

Of 29 rifles examined by the Widgery tribunal, only three remain. Most were disposed of in highly controversial circumstances days before the announcement of the new Saville Inquiry and upon its establishment.

The tribunal is scheduled to reopen in the Guildhall in Derry this month.

**Thankful for the Peace Process?
Renew Membership in the AIEF-PEC,
and Keep it Alive.**

(continued from Page 5)

of the [Mitchell] Agreement, and I look forward to the day when the decommissioning of all illegally-held paramilitary arms is achieved."

Gore also addressed the ongoing deportee and extraditee issues. Promising to look at the issues in the context of the Mitchell Agreement, Gore said he was "committed to finding a solution to the problem of deportees and extraditions."

Gore promised that Northern Ireland would remain high on his foreign policy agenda if he were elected president. "No Administration has done more to advance the cause of peace in Northern Ireland than the current Administration, and **Joe Lieberman** and I promise to continue on that path" he said.