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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 25, Number 4

April 2000

From the North: Agreement Remains as Pie in the Sky

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

DOWNING Street's new proconsul, wonder-boy spin-doctor Peter Mandelson, has taken only two months to calcify—if not destroy—the Mitchell Agreement. His pretext is his inability to dissuade the Ulster Unionist Party from doing so with another one of their walkouts.

People suspect that he is merely using them to pressure republicans and that his ploy has backfired badly. He is now running about blaming the "two tribes" while, in the same breath, scolding everyone to desist from the "blame game." To give a spurious justification to illegally and unilaterally abolishing with one stroke the devolved institutions for which an overwhelming majority of the Irish people voted, he had to concoct a lie. This is that "everything else" in the Agreement has been delivered except one thing: IRA decommissioning. Since the day on which the Mitchell Agreement was signed, the British government has focused unflinchingly with tunnel vision on this topic.

This claim is patently not the case. In taking 18 months before it allowed the institutions to be implemented, the

sole breacher of the Agreement has been the UUP. Now it has breached it again on the basis of an unjustifiable demand that took the decommissioning task out of the hands of the international body that had been authorized to deal with it. Far from everything else having been delivered, most of it remains, as yet, as mere pie in the sky.

For the sake of brevity, we give only a few examples:

Orange Parades. Provisions in the Agreement impinge on these without specifically dealing with them. Nationalists and republicans suspect that there is dirty work afoot with a Downing Street intention to prioritize selectively aspects of the European Convention on Human rights that it has undertaken to introduce to the North. These are to do with a right of assembly, which the UUP has already interpreted as a right to march. The matter of interpretation is likely to end up in the law courts, but the judiciary is largely pro-unionist, and residents' groups are anything but sanguine as to what could happen if this is carried through. Additionally, the residents groups are seeking a judicial review of the compo-

sition of the newly appointed Parades Commission. No recognized representative from the nationalist community has been appointed to it.

Parity of Esteem. Two barristers have been denied advancement because of their refusal to take an oath of allegiance to the British Queen on the grounds that they are Irish nationalists. They have had to take this matter into court, where the matter is still awaiting resolution.

Criminal Justice Review. The promised report is still incubating amid speculation that a rearguard action is being put up by legal nabobs who are determined to minimize any projected reforms.

Patten. The proposed legislation for the implementation of the Patten Report on the reform of the RUC is still in abeyance. The UUP has announced that it is going to waylay it during its passage through the House of Commons at Westminster and water it down to unionism's satisfaction. They have a track record of being able to do such things. The SDLP has already met the chief constable of the RUC on this subject and, after a "tough meeting," it has come away perturbed. It would seem that the British government is taking a hands-off approach and allowing the RUC itself to take control of implementing the Patten reforms.

Decommissioning. No discernable pressure is being applied to the loyalist paramilitaries on this issue. Furthermore, legislation that was introduced in the rest of the UK to restrict and monitor the keeping of guns by private

INSIDE

Peace Process Update	2
Adams: Is This a new Phase for the Peace Process?	3
Newsbits	4
American Irish History	5
Al Gore Scores High on Ireland, Peace Process	6
South Armagh is "Test of British Intentions in Ireland"	7
Action Requests	8

(continued on Page 5)

Our View: Britain Giveth, Taketh Away

NORTHERN Secretary Peter Mandelson delivered a speech in Dublin March 9 in which he said he wanted to see the political structures in the North reestablished as soon as possible. Devolution, he said, is key to economic progress in the North: "Northern Ireland stands on the verge of joining the first rank of dynamic, European economies. But time and again businessmen and women tell us that the one factor that would make all the difference is devolution. We cannot stand alone. And we cannot afford to stand still."

Mandelson said that the British and Irish governments "share an unselfish commitment" to keeping local government on its feet in the North.

There's that word again. In 1994, Britain said in the Downing Street Declaration that it had no "selfish strategic or economic interest" in the North. Britain never quite defines selfish or unselfish when it makes these grand, patronizing statements on why it is involved in the North.

Britain, which has a passion for playing God with Northern Ireland, tends to down play its control over the North's economy at the same time it lauds its generosity of spirit in helping, as Mandelson said March 9, bringing unionists and nationalists "to their senses." So long as unionists feel insecure about working with nationalists and so long as Britain deems the parties to be senseless or insensible, Britain reserves the right to pluck its gift of devolution from the people of the North.

An important aspect of unionist insecurity is, of course, that it is useful to Britain's "unselfish" economic and military control of the North. Perish the thought of all that economic development and no British government to tax it. Mandelson forgot to mention in his speech (available at the PEC's Web site) that the British still control the North's purse and its security. How unselfish is that?

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Peace Process Update

February 9

SINN FEIN leader Gerry Adams says he will reconsider his role in the peace process if the British suspend the Executive and Assembly. Bishop of Derry Dr. Seamus Hegarty offers to accept IRA arms in a bid to prevent the suspension of the Executive and Assembly. The House of Commons votes 352 to 11 in favor of a return to direct rule.

February 10

Britain's House of Lords passes emergency legislation to suspend the Executive and Assembly; the queen grants her royal assent, and the bill becomes law. Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern says the suspension is out of line with the Agreement. Northern Secretary Peter Mandelson must trigger a commencement order to reverse devolution. Meeting with Sinn Fein chairman Mitchell McLaughlin, the Ad Hoc Congressional Committee on Irish Affairs chairs issued a statement calling upon "both the Irish and British governments, as well as all the parties in the North of Ireland, to stay the course and continue the power-sharing executive and assembly according to the terms of the Good Friday accord." Congressmen **Ben Gilman, Peter King, Richard Neal, and Joseph Crowley**, who chair the committee, say "it would be a mistake to turn the clock back and be bound by artificial deadlines on the arms decommissioning issue that has long prevented progress in the North."

February 11

As the Continuity IRA bombs a Fermanagh hotel and threatens to intensify its campaign of violence, Mandelson calls for a second review of the Agreement. Meanwhile, sources say a deal to break the deadlock in the peace process could include a scaling down of the British military presence, a 12-month extension of the remit of the decommissioning body, and an IRA commitment to make a gesture on decommissioning before May. The decommissioning commission issues its second report, which states that a

(continued on Page 5)

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Is This a new Phase in the Peace Process?

By Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams

Excerpt from March 9, 2000 *RM Distribution*

I FEEL very strongly that what [Northern Secretary] Peter Mandelson did on Feb. 11 was to give British government support of the closure of one phase of the [peace] process. Of course, it may not be the end if he moves speedily to restore the institutions. However, I see no sign of that. Based on my discussions with the British government and its officials, it is my view that they don't know how they are going to proceed from here. I have no doubt that they want the institutions back in place and that the political leadership is concerned about a lengthy vacuum. Having suspended the institutions and caused the vacuum, London thus far has no real notion of where the process is to go from here.

For its part, the Irish government, which stood against the suspension of the institutions, is also in difficulties. It is faced with a British government that has behaved illegally, but with which it enjoys good relations and with which it wants to restore those relations as soon as possible, for reasons I understand and support.

Dublin also faces the possibility that it might have to introduce legislation to amend the British/Irish Agreement Act 1999 and the related British/Irish Agreement (Amendment) Act to remedy the defective legal basis of the southern leg of the all-Ireland institutions. This would be seen as a huge international rift. Dublin is also, for obvious reasons, gravely concerned about the consequences of a vacuum.

How can the process be saved? Some parties are calling for round-table talks chaired by the two governments. Sinn Fein is not opposed to this, but changes in the format of meetings will not on their own save the process. A change of mind-set and a return to the Mitchell Agreement is required.

Because there is no sign of that from the unionists, it is difficult to see how any variations of meetings can succeed.

The only way we can get an answer to how the process is to be saved is by establishing the reason it is in jeopardy. The process was always in jeopardy, as any process of change will be, because unionism is against change. It is in jeopardy at this time because the decommissioning section of the Mitchell Agreement was turned on its head and allowed to become an obstacle to progress as opposed to an objective of a peace process.

The arms issue became an issue of tactical political management. That was the downfall of the process.

It might be worthwhile to briefly recap some of the things that we know about decommissioning:

- * It is not a security issue;
- * Silenced weapons are not a threat;
- * Decommissioning was no part of the cessations;
- * None of the armed groups are committed to decommissioning;
- * There will be no decommissioning in the absence of political progress;
- * There seems to be no possibility that any armed group will decommission by May 22;
- * Decommissioning is not a precondition in the Mitchell Agreement;
- * No political party can be held in default over the failure or refusal of any armed group to decommission;
- * The decommissioning issue has been deliberately abused and it has bogged the process down since the Mitchell Agreement almost two years ago; and
- * The arms issue can be resolved in an acceptable way if it is dealt with as an objective of a peace process.

The British government might have a different view. The Ulster Unionist

Party obviously wants to continue as it has until now, and it probably feels strengthened by London's support. Indeed, for a week or so some elements of unionism might have felt that they had a victory of sorts. If they had, it was a pyrrhic victory.

It is my view that this is the phase of the process that has come to an end. Of course, I can only speak for Sinn Fein, and I have made it clear that I see no merit in our chasing our tails again on this issue. If that has become clear and if an acceptance that tactical short-term gesture politics is not the way to deal with this issue, then that can become the one powerful positive in an otherwise bleak situation. In that context, the issue can be dealt with strategically. Sinn Fein remains committed to taking all guns out of Irish politics.

The unionists will have lots of reasons to deal with the arms issue on a tactical basis. Remember the UUP, including the then-First Minister David Trimble, voted against Patten's recommendations for police reforms in the North in the British House of Commons. This is a battle they intend to return to. They also will obviously oppose the long-overdue report of the Review of the Criminal Justice System.

The Orange parades are again an issue, and the UUP and DUP have set their faces against demilitarization and the equality agenda. We can't blame them if they see merit in tactically using and abusing the decommissioning issue for their own narrow ends. We have to dissuade them from this course, but the big challenge, as always, of bringing about change in this part of Ireland is for the British government.

Is it prepared to think strategically? Is it prepared to abandon the short-term tactical approach it has adopted thus far on the arms issue? Is it prepared to restore the institutions, to assert the primacy of politics and uphold the section in the Mitchell Agreement on decommissioning?

Newsbits

AS OF FEB. 26, a total of 51 people have been killed in Northern Ireland since the Mitchell Agreement, according to the British government. An additional 2,422 people have been injured as a result of paramilitary attacks between April 10, 1998 and Feb. 10 this year. Loyalists are responsible for 253 casualties as a result of paramilitary-style attacks, including 81 shootings and 172 assaults. Republicans are responsible for 134 attacks, including 46 shootings and 88 assaults. Gunshot wounds (including 127 paramilitary-style shootings): 157; explosions: 456; other means (such as punishment beatings, public disorder): 1,811; attacks on police: 2,901. (*Irish News* and other sources)

On one side [of peace lines] in nationalist areas [of north Belfast], priority waiting lists have rocketed, with many families finding it literally impossible to find homes. On the other, Protestant areas have seen a steady decline in population as people move to the city's suburbs in search of work and better conditions. Repeated calls for the peace lines to be gradually moved back have been met with hostility from unionists, and have repeatedly been refused by the authorities. A draft report by the Housing Executive... should serve as the basis for a new strategy to finally tackle the imbalance, and put right a problem which has existed for decades....The report describes the Ardoyne area of north Belfast as an area of "high demand and low turnover."...The figures for 1999 show there are 271 applicants on the waiting list, with over 70 per cent of them families. Only one house in the area has been left empty. Across the peace line in Lower Oldpark, there are only 15 applicants on the waiting list. By comparison, 96 houses are lying empty....Demand and allocation of

houses to single people is also "much higher than average," with only 5 percent of the houses going to families. The pattern is repeated in other areas of north Belfast....Sinn Fein believe that the current allocation of housing in the area is in breach of the executive's guiding principles - "a points system based on social need." (*Irish News* 2/11/00)

A British army whistleblower has offered to give evidence to the new inquiry into the 1972 Bloody Sunday massacre in which British soldiers killed 14 civilians at a civil rights protest in Derry, if he is allowed to testify anonymously. Known as Martin Ingram, the man was a former member of the covert British Military Intelligence unit, FRU. In an interview published by the *Sunday Times* last year, Ingram claimed to have seen intelligence files relating to Bloody Sunday that showed that the IRA had been ordered not to open fire. This contradicts the British army's claim that it expected to be attacked. Since publishing the interview, the *Sunday Times* has been subject to a gagging order banning further publication of revelations concerning the FRU. Ingram's revelations last Nov. confirmed that the offices of the official Stevens inquiry into RUC police collusion with loyalist death-squads was deliberately set on fire by a covert British army unit. (*RM Dist.* 2/8/00)

The Ministry of Defense (MoD) has destroyed two of the five remaining Bloody Sunday rifles, despite instructions to safeguard the vital evidence. Defence Minister Geoffrey Hoon confirmed a police inquiry has been launched into the destruction of the weapons. British Labor back bencher Kevin McNamara was told yesterday the weapons were destroyed on Jan. 26 and 27, three months after the MoD gave an undertaking to preserve the guns.... The rifles were originally

submitted to the Widgery inquiry for forensic testing and afterwards stored by the MoD....The destruction of the rifles used on Bloody Sunday started just three days before Prime Minister Tony Blair announced a new inquiry. Last Sept., Lord Saville's inquiry discovered 14 of the 29 rifles were destroyed and a further 10 were sold to private firms. (*Irish News* 2/11/00)

Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble has dismissed...claims he was a member of a loyalist paramilitary group in the early 1970s. A biography to be published this week is said to claim Trimble was a member of the Vanguard Service Corps (VSC), a uniformed guard formed to protect members of the Ulster Vanguard movement during a series of protest rallies in 1972 and 1973. Henry McDonald's book *Trimble* is also said to allege Trimble acted as a political and legal adviser to the Ulster Defence Association and Ulster Volunteer Force. In the *Sunday Times* yesterday, Trimble denied the claims. "I was aware of talk of such a group, but that was before I became involved with Vanguard in May 1973," he said. "I was never a member of the VSC." The book alleges Trimble held regular meetings with UDA leaders Andy Tyrie and John McMichael and gave advice during the Ulster workers' strike in 1974 and after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. McDonald claims the purpose of the meetings was to encourage the terrorist group to abandon violence and that the contacts continued until 1987. Trimble told the *Sunday Times* that he may have briefly encountered Tyrie once and McMichael a few times, but not regularly. "It is simply not true to say I acted as a political and legal adviser to loyalist paramilitaries," he said. "Any contact there may have been was of a casual nature." (*Irish News* 2/28/00)

American Irish History: *Immigrants Support Freedom, Better Life in US*

By Kevin P. Murphy, Massachusetts

JAMES Prendergast and Patrick Henry O'Donnell worked to improve life in the US and in Ireland.

The Fenian James Prendergast spent his life supporting the struggle for Irish freedom and improving public school education in his adopted home of Harrison, New Jersey.

Born on July 11, 1854 in Limerick, he became a champion of Irish freedom when he was young and participated in the Fenian revolt of 1867. He fled from Ireland after the British put a bounty on his life.

Landing in New York City in 1868, Prendergast put himself through college. After graduation, he moved to Harrison, New Jersey, where he became a schoolteacher in 1877. Eventually, he became the principal of his school. Prendergast would spend

49 years as an employee of the Harrison public school system and would be credited for improving education levels and facilities there.

At the same time, he devoted much of his time to advocating Irish freedom in the Clan na Gael, the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, and other organizations. He died in 1926.

Patrick Henry O'Donnell, whose parents fled British persecution in Ireland, was born in Carroll County, Indiana, in 1863. He, like Prendergast, supported Irish independence at the same time he sought to improve the quality of life for many Americans.

O'Donnell supported his family after his father died and studied law at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. In 1902, O'Donnell and William Dillon, son of a Young Irelander,

formed a law firm in Chicago.

O'Donnell, who was proficient in many languages, soon found he had a gift for public speaking that benefited his law career as well as American Irish support for Irish freedom.

The son of Irish immigrants applied his talents to local causes, also. In Illinois, he led a crusade against the Ku Klux Klan. He was an advisor to Chicago's Chinese community. He built a Catholic Church for his native Carroll County. He compiled a text of the Eskimo people's language. He obtained pensions for Civil War widows.

He financially supported the US effort in Europe during World War I. He led a crusade against corrupt politics in Chicago that led to city government reform charters that are still in effect. O'Donnell died in 1927.

Great Hunger Memorial is Erected

A BASKET of potatoes transformed into human skulls is a feature of a memorial to the Great Hunger erected March 21 in Macy Park in Ardsley, New York.

The principal feature of Irish sculptor Eamonn O'Doherty's work is an emaciated family leaving Ireland, as 2 million did in the mid-1840s, when the potato crops failed. Two million other Irish people starved to death as a result of the British government's failure to avert this catastrophe.

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(continued from Page 1)

individuals has not been applied to the North of Ireland. Why? Because 90 percent of these guns legitimized by the authorities are in the hands of the unionist population. They amount to more than 100,000 weapons.

Human Rights. Nationalists and republicans have misgivings as to the British government's seriousness in respect of this matter. The new Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission is being treated with the

same disregard as was its forerunner, the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights. It was regarded as a decoration, and the funding for the new body is regarded to be derisory.

Thus, far from everything having been delivered, everything—now including the institutions—is still in the sphere of aspiration. The one bright picture could lie in a new direction that the Irish government seems to be being taking. It says it no longer regards decommissioning as the

immediate issue outstanding for a resolution of the present hiatus. It is reported that the Taoiseach now accepts that, in present circumstances, arms will not be given up. His government wants the institutions for which the Irish people voted reinstated, moves on British demilitarization of the North, and the matters to which this article has referred handled in such a way as to instill confidence that real (democratic) change is underway.

Back to you, Mandelson.

Al Gore Scores High on Ireland, Peace Process

Excerpt from a March 7 analysis published by the San Francisco, California-based Northern Ireland Alert. Visit the PEC's Web site at <http://aipec.homestead.com> for a more detailed version of this document.

NORTHERN IRELAND ALERT'S (NIA) March 7 analysis of the presidential candidates' positions on Northern Ireland issues reveals that Vice-president Al Gore has a strong record of support for the Irish peace process. On the other hand, Republican George W. Bush, governor of Texas shows a clear disinterest in Ireland. The NIA's findings are below.

DEMOCRAT

VICE-PRESIDENT AL GORE

1984—voted in support of a House resolution applauding the peace efforts of the New Ireland Forum, a conference of four Irish parties hoping to work out an agreed approach to a Northern Ireland settlement. During his Senate career, Gore and about 35 other senators signed onto several of the Friends of Ireland St. Patrick's Day Statements;

1986—cosponsored a Senate resolution lauding the achievements of the Ireland Fund;

1988—attended the Irish American Presidential Forum in New York, where he said he would appoint an envoy to the North if he felt it would help resolve the conflict. Although this came after Bradley's senatorial embrace of the issue, it was the first time that a presidential candidate had made such a pledge, beating candidate Clinton to the punch by four years. Gore attended a similar forum in 1996; 1992—co-sponsored a Senate resolution expressing that the President should urge Britain to address Northern Ireland's "continuing human rights violations." While researching and writing *Earth in the Balance*, his 1992

environmental call-to-arms, Gore immersed himself in Great Hunger research. He concluded that "a combination of blind devotion to laissez-faire economics, cold indifference to suffering, anti-Irish racism, and anti-Catholic bigotry contributed to the United Kingdom's tragic failure to respond humanely."

1994—played a key role in the decision to end a 20-year ban on official US contact with Irish republicans; attended a Washington-based Northern Ireland investment conference in May; and 1995—along with President Clinton, met with David Trimble in the first-ever meeting between a US President and a leader of the Ulster Unionist Party.

Throughout the peace process, Gore has conferred with a range of British and Irish leaders and visited England and Ireland to meet with political leaders regarding Northern Ireland issues.

Gore's Irish activities have shown a persistence that has overcome strenuous objections from some circles, including the State Department. He, along with others in the Administration, has been open to meeting anyone on the Northern Ireland issue, providing that those persons or parties do not advocate or conduct violence as a means of achieving their political ends. working for a just and lasting peace with human rights.

REPUBLICAN

GEORGE W. BUSH

1995—signing Texas Senate Bill 59, Bush stipulated that the "treasurer may not use state funds to invest in or purchase obligations of a private corporation or other private business entity doing business in Northern Ireland unless the corporation or entity (1) adheres to fair employment prac-

tices; and (2) does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or disability."

Apart from this action, NIA has found no other action on Irish affairs traceable to Bush and have encountered no commentary by him regarding any of the Clinton Administration's Northern Ireland foreign policy over the past eight years. One positive action was recorded in the April 10, 1999 Irish Times, which reported that Irish Ambassador Sean O hUiginn traveled to Austin to brief the governor on Northern Ireland.

There could be a tactical ploy behind Bush's lack of reference to Northern Ireland. The Nov. 15, 1999 *Financial Times* (London) quotes advisors to the Bush campaign suggesting that the governor was keen to place China, Russia, and India—which he refers to as "the big ones"—in an "over-arching policy framework" in an "implicit criticism of a 'fragmented' approach to world affairs under President Clinton." Indeed, Bush's speeches and remarks have failed to address Northern Ireland in any meaningful, insightful fashion. Last fall, according to the *Irish Echo*, Bush stated, "I hope that Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland find a way to overcome the remaining obstacles and finally achieve a lasting peace. The United States should do everything it can to help make this happen."

NIA does not find this analysis meaningful or insightful, although Bush's support for US involvement on this issue is, as noted by the *Irish Echo*, an ideological shift from the "hands off" Northern Ireland policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations. Given Bush's lack of a foreign policy agenda on Ireland, NIA finds little to indicate that Bush would be a proactive president regarding the North.

South Armagh is the "Test of British Intentions in Ireland"

ON RECENT fact-finding missions to Northern Ireland, Supreme Court Justice **Patrick Henry** and California Senator **Tom Hayden** expressed their concern about the heavy British army presence in South Armagh.

Henry said he was "appalled" by the levels of troop activity in South Armagh and its effect on farmers.

The Lawyers Alliance for Justice Group visited South Armagh Feb. 12. There, Henry and his colleagues attended a public meeting in Camlough. More than 70 people attended the public meeting where the delegation heard submissions from people identified in security files discovered in an Orange Hall last year.

Henry pledged to make public details of "the never-ending harassment" of residents. He said: "We don't understand why there are such high levels of

army activity in South Armagh and nowhere else in Northern Ireland. It is disappointing to think citizens are being treated in this way."

Chairman of the South Armagh Residents at Risk group Jim McAllister said the meeting was a welcome boost: "The judge seemed genuinely shocked by what he heard and people believe he will take their concerns to the highest authorities."

A British army spokesman dismissed the fact-finding mission as "unworthy of serious consideration" because he said the delegates "failed to obtain a balanced picture of the situation." He added, however, that the army's presence in South Armagh has remained higher than elsewhere in the North.

Also in Feb., California Senator Tom Hayden visited South Armagh on a fact-finding mission at the invitation

of the South Armagh Farmers and Residents Committee. The senator was shocked at the ongoing remilitarization of the area.

Hayden said: "Because South Armagh is more and more the test of British intentions in Ireland, the question should be asked of the British military, is the war over? From the look of the heavy military occupation in South Armagh, it appears that the British Army is here to stay permanently, and the implications for the peace process are serious regarding this.

"How can the British and unionist campaign for IRA decommissioning be anything but a public relations exercise, when they are strengthening the fortifications and continuing to patrol all over South Armagh?" He promised to publicize his findings in the US and within highest levels of US government.

(continued from Page 2)

representative of the IRA indicated to the commission today the context in which the IRA would initiate a comprehensive process to put arms beyond use in a manner as to ensure maximum public confidence. The commission says it believes the IRA's commitment will further the peace process.

February 14

The NIO decides to honor, rather than overturn, decisions that the Executive and Assembly took during their three months' work.

February 15

The IRA withdraws its interlocutor from talks with the decommissioning body.

February 18

The British deny the Irish government's claims that they received a letter from the IRA last Friday.

February 20

Ireland on Sunday claims that, hours before the British suspended devolution, the IRA told the decommissioning body chairman it would state the war was over within three months, it would take part in a day of national reconciliation, and it would put its weapons beyond use. This was to happen in synchronization with a British commitment to demilitarize within 18 months.

February 22

Of 2,220 people Queen's University and the University of Ulster surveyed from mid-Oct. last year to Jan., 94 percent of Protestant respondents and 74 percent of Catholic respondents want to see some form of decommissioning. Trimble, in Washington to meet with national security adviser Sandy Berger for talks on the decommissioning deadlock, says the IRA must disarm to resolve the political crisis

February 23

The IRA says all its previous proposals to the decommissioning body are off the table and it will not accept a link between decommissioning and demilitarization.

February 24

SDLP leader John Hume calls on the British government to reestablish the devolved government in the North.

February 25

Sen. Tom Hayden of California reminds Mandelson and the unionists to consider the economic impact of the return to direct rule, cautioning them to consider the potential loss of investment the political impasse could create. The SDLP rejects UUP deputy leader John Taylor's proposal that it join with the UUP in a new executive without Sinn Fein if there is no decommissioning by May 22.

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Action Requests

Please make the telephone calls or write the letters below. Mention that you are a PEC member.

Does George W. Bush Support Irish Peace Process?

Write: **Texas Gov. George Bush**, P.O. Box 1902,
Austin, TX 78767; Tele. 512-637-2000; Web site
www.georgewbush.com

Message: As a voter in the 2000 presidential election and a member of the American Irish PEC, I will look closely at your position on the Irish peace process. I would appreciate your stating your position on US involvement in the peace process, visas for Sinn Fein members, the Walsh visas, and human rights and equality legislation in Northern Ireland.

Britain Must Uphold Terms of Mitchell Agreement

Write: **President Bill Clinton**, The White House,
Washington, DC 20500, tele. 202-456-1111, email
president@whitehouse.gov

Message: I urge you to insist that Britain honor the terms of the Mitchell Agreement and reestablish Northern Ireland's devolved government. On behalf of the American people, your Administration has invested considerable US resources in the Irish peace process. Please protect that investment by insisting that the British uphold the rule of law in this matter. Thank you for your steadfast commitment to peace in Ireland.

Al Gore Must Continue Supporting Irish Peace Process

Write: **Vice-president Al Gore**, P.O. Box 18237,
Washington, DC 20036; Tele. 202-263-6000; Web
site www.algore2000.com

Message: As a voter in the 2000 presidential election and a member of the American Irish PEC, I will look closely at your position on the Irish peace process. I appreciate your commitment to the peace process thus far and your statement that you would continue the current Administration's policy of involvement in that process.

Minnesota MacBride in Peril

REP. **James Rhodes** has co-authored bill HF 3597 that would repeal the state's 1988 MacBride Principles legislation (11A.241, "Investment in Northern Ireland).

The PEC urges Minnesota residents to contact Rhodes (tele. 218/327-4460) to express your opposition to this bill. Visit Minnesota's Web site, <http://www.state.mn.us/>, for more information about the bill.

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