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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 25, Number 3

March 2000

Decommissioning Body: IRA Commitment “Holds Out Real Prospect of Agreement”

Excerpts from Feb. 11, 2000 Decommissioning Commission Report

THE IRA'S declaration of support for the process leading to a permanent peace in Ireland, the contribution made by the cease-fires, and the statement that the IRA provides no threat to that process are recognized. We believe these are ...issues of considerable significance for peace and stability in [the North]....

Since Dec. 1999, the IRA has engaged frankly and hopefully with the Commission, and we note their intention to do so. We also note the IRA assessment that the question of British forces and loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland must be addressed. While the future of British troops is outside our remit, the elimination of the threat posed by loyalist paramilitary arms is clearly within the Commission's remit. We have been advised by loyalist representatives of their commitment to address the issue of their arms in the context of similar action taken by the IRA....

We welcome the IRA's belief that the “state of perpetual crisis” can be averted and that the issue of arms can be resolved. We find particularly significant, and view as valuable progress, the assertion made to us by the IRA representative that the IRA will consider how to put arms and explosives beyond use, in the context of full implementation of the [Mitchell] Agreement, and in the context of the removal of the causes of conflict.

The Commission welcomes the IRA's recognition that the issue of arms needs to be dealt with in an acceptable way and that is a necessary objective of a genuine peace process and its statement that for those reasons it is engaged with us.

The Commission further welcomes the IRA's commitment to sustain and enhance its contribution to a durable peace and its statement that it has supported and will continue to support efforts to secure the resolution of the arms issue.

The representatives indicated to us today the context in which the IRA will initiate a comprehensive process to put arms beyond use, in a manner as to ensure maximum public confidence. The Commission believes that this commitment, on the basis described above, holds out the real prospect of an agreement that would enable it to fulfil the substance of its mandate.

Catholic Church Does RUC's Bidding

AT THE SAME time the Catholic Church has endorsed the Patten Commission's wide-ranging recommendations for police reform, it has been helping the RUC improve its image among nationalists.

Some parish priests throughout the North—including the vocal Sinn Féin opponent Fr. Denis Faul—have helped the RUC attempt to ingratiate itself with the people by helping them get into schools, youth clubs, and other local organizations through police liaison groups. There are about 200 of these groups in the North now.

Human rights campaigner Fr. Des. Wilson of West Belfast says the role of the church with these groups is unacceptable because it undermines democracy. “All of this undermines the right of people to have their affairs regulated by their own elected representatives,” Wilson and colleagues Noelle Ryan and Fr. Joe McVeigh have said in an open letter to the people of Carrickmore. Carrickmore, a strong republican area, is the town where Fr. Faul is parish priest.

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Links to the
Rosemary Nelson
Campaign
and the
Pat Finucane Center
<http://aipec.homestead.com>

Our View: Moving Through Circles

NORTHERN Secretary Peter Mandelson said in a Feb. 5 speech that the only alternative to the Mitchell Agreement would be the Mitchell Agreement. That is, if the sectarian, violent status quo returned to the North, then the British and Irish governments would have to spend a generation recreating the conditions for the same sort of agreement as the 1998 deal.

Mandelson's speech suggested that the British government all along has been working toward a devolved Northern government, in concert with other devolved regional UK governments. Since Sunningdale, a failed attempt at devolution in 1974, Mandelson suggested, the British government has had a plan for the North. London has merely been waiting for the unruly Irish to settle down a bit so it could implement the plan.

We know better, of course. The succession of British governments and their halfhearted NIO regimes have had no plan beyond counter-insurgency for the past 30 years. Indeed, the British turned counter-insurgency to an economic virtue, creating a workhouse economy that thrived on the business of suppressing the locals. Bigotry precluded even the idea of a plan.

Though Mandelson insisted in his speech that "every provision, every word, [of the Mitchell Agreement] is there for a reason," we know better. The parties themselves admit that they put the decommissioning issue on hold to meet a deadline for agreement. The symbolic date and Mitchell's desire to be done with negotiations and go home were at once more important than comprehensive solutions and, mysteriously, some overarching British plan to save the Irish from themselves. Here we go again.

Peace Process Update

January 5

THE IRA says it will continue working with the decommissioning body and blasts unionists for imposing a Feb. deadline for decommissioning.

January 7

The Director of Public Prosecutions decides not to prosecute RUC officers accused of threatening lawyer Rosemary Nelson, whom loyalists murdered last March.

January 8

The Loyalist Freedom Fighters forms, claiming the UDA and UVF have "betrayed Ulster."

January 10

Northern Secretary Peter Mandelson says he will demilitarize the North on the word of the RUC. Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams says this strategy violates the Mitchell Agreement, which prescribes the British government's making a political decision on demilitarization. The Loyalist Volunteer Force murders UVF leader Richard Jameson.

January 12

Adams and party colleague Martin McGuinness, Minister for Education, meet with President Clinton in Washington, DC.

January 13

Mandelson sends a letter to Northern MPs asking them how they feel about Sinn Fein's using facilities in Westminster as the British government prepares a motion to grant access to these things to Sinn Fein MPs. Adams tells US supporters there could be a united Ireland by 2016 and that the logic of the peace process will lead to unification.

January 17

The UUP backs the DUP's call during an Assembly meeting for the immediate handing over of paramilitary arms. UUP members threaten to bring down the Assembly and other Mitchell Agreement political structures if decommissioning fails to occur by the end of the month.

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Decommissioning: Test, Principle, or Silly Idea?

Excerpt from the Feb. 21, 2000 Belfast-based *Irish News*

Editor's Note: At press time, Northern Secretary Peter Mandelson suspended the Executive and Assembly even as the IRA were negotiating a breakthrough on the arms impasse with the decommissioning commission. Below, the Irish News traces the evolution of decommissioning.

WHEN Peter Mandelson suspended Northern Ireland's fledgling executive yesterday, it was the latest act in a decommissioning issue that has perplexed British and Irish governments for more than five years.

Indeed, the matter was first discussed during a joint framework document summit meeting between premieres John Major and Albert Reynolds in Oct. 1994. "It was the first experience we had of the British obsession with decommissioning arms," recalled Fergus Finlay, adviser to former Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring. Following that meeting, a small group of officials from both governments was established to examine the problem.

Finlay said: "Later assertions that the Fianna Fail and Labor government never got involved in decommissioning were essentially untrue. It was an issue from the beginning, and we always knew it was going to be a difficult one to resolve."

Six months later, in March 1995, then-Northern secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew upped the stakes during a speech in Washington. He outlined three "tests" by which republicans could demonstrate their goodwill to the peace process. Washington Three, as it became known, was the decommissioning of IRA weapons. As Finlay pointed out in his memoirs, *Snakes and Ladders*: "Public demands for it would be seen as tantamount to demanding surrender. An undefeated IRA had committed itself to peace to

secure the entry of Sinn Fein to a negotiating process. Demanding decommissioning as a precondition of entry could only have disastrous consequences."

Significantly, comments made by Taoiseach John Bruton and Spring after Sir Patrick's speech, in Finlay's view, turned the "test" into a "principle." During St. Patrick's Day celebrations in the White House, Bruton demanded concrete steps toward decommissioning. In the Dail, Spring made similar utterances that had a telling effect on how a weapons hand-over was viewed. "Dick was forced to admit that decommissioning meant handing over weapons," Finlay recalled. After this, Finlay said, decommissioning became the primary obstacle barring Sinn Fein's path into talks with the other political parties. "It was an entirely hypocritical stance because ministers and unionist leaders argued that Sinn Fein could come in once a token had been offered. In other words, they couldn't negotiate with 100 percent of their arms intact—but 99 percent would be okay," he said.

The issue led to an impasse that threatened to derail the process. Shortly before the Anglo-Irish summit of June, Spring sent a letter to the Bruton proposing the establishment of an International Body on Decommissioning. The idea was accepted by British premier John Major.

As the debate over Sinn Fein's entry into all-party talks ahead of decommissioning rumbled on, the British proposed a further summit for Sept. 1995. This was rejected by the Irish government on the grounds that the Tories' expected hard-line approach would destabilize the delicate peace process.

Finlay outlined the pressure Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams was under at

the time to avoid splitting the IRA army council by seeking the required two-thirds majority to declare its cease-fire permanent. Indeed, while Adams was seen to be cajoling the hard-liners agitating for round-table talks without decommissioning, the Irish government feared he would jump with them rather than risk splintering the organization. "It meant that the issue of decommissioning is not some 'macho' test between Sinn Fein and the British, but rather a test of wills between different elements of the IRA. In any such case, we have to help Adams to win," Finlay said.

When Mitchell's report was published in Jan. 1996, it stated that decommissioning would not take place ahead of all-party talks. Instead, its authors advocated the so-called "twin-track" approach that would see decommissioning take place alongside negotiations. Major's response, when he opted to call forum elections instead of implementing the recommendations, has been blamed for ending the IRA's first cease-fire after 18 months.

It would not be until the IRA's guns went silent again following Labor's landslide election victory of May 1997 that the D-word was realistically back on the agenda.

Unionists were coaxed into political negotiations ahead of decommissioning through assurances given by Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The resulting 1998 Mitchell Agreement established a two-year deadline, and all parties were urged to meet the decommissioning body. Since then, progress has been slow. Following Sen. Mitchell's review of the Agreement last fall, the IRA, like the main loyalist groups, has appointed a high-ranking member to discuss the issue.

Unfortunately, with UUP leader David Trimble's crunch Ulster Unionist council meeting looming, time finally ran out yesterday.

Newsbits

THE LAST...annual report of the Northern Ireland Police Authority omitted a graph showing how much the Authority shelled out in compensation dealing with claims against the RUC, the CAJ reports. The Authority said the omission "was simply a proofreading error. The graph would have told us that the Chief Constable paid out a cool million in public funds in settling claims that, as the Police Authority put it, were from members of the public "alleging ill treatment or an infringement of their legal rights." Complaints against the police in 1998/99 numbered 4,222. Five complaints made by members of the public were upheld.... The Chief Constable paid out 400,000 pounds, 440,000 pounds, and 700,000 pounds in compensation in 1995, 96, and 97, respectively, resulting from 640, 860, and 980 claims, respectively. The amount of compensation paid is not directly related to the number of complaints in those years, but it is remarkable to note that the number of substantiated complaints from members of the public in those years was 8, 5, and 1, respectively. (*Just News* 12/99)

The Police Authority [—four of the eight of whom are UUP councillors and one of whom is an Alliance councillor—] was in the spotlight recently for another matter. In the Authority's response to the Patten report, the chair commented that the Authority looked forward to its future "in its new guise as the Policing Board." This hope stood at odds with the Patten recommendation that "an entirely new Policing Board be created to replace the present Police Authority." When asked to explain this, the Authority rather bizarrely said its remark was a reference to "its transitional role in any period of change." Indeed. (*Just News* 12/99)

The GAA last night declared it was not prepared to scrap the controversial Rule 21, despite plans for major reform in Northern Ireland's police service. The sporting body's president, Joe McDonagh, welcomed Secretary of State Peter Mandelson's decision to implement the bulk of the Patten Report...but reiterated the GAA's policy on Rule 21, which prevents members of the British security forces from playing Gaelic games. He said that at its May 1998 special congress, the association "pledged its intent to delete Rule 21 from the GAA's rule book when effective steps were taken to implement the amended structures and policing arrangements envisaged in the Good Friday agreement."

McDonagh affirmed that this commitment was in place, saying the association would "closely monitor the situation."...Eilish McCabe, whose brother, Aughnacloy club member Aidan McAnespie, was killed by a British soldier in 1988, said McDonagh had clearly "judged the nationalist community's feeling on the issue on the ground...." McCabe... campaigned against axing Rule 21 in 1998....Alliance Party leader Sean Neeson has led calls for the rule to be scrapped...."The Patten report in many ways can encourage people in the nationalist community to join the new policing service," he said. (*Irish News* 1/20/00)

A report commissioned by the Bloody Sunday Trust and compiled by the Limerick University-based Prof. Dermot Walsh was released to the public by Bishop Edward Daly on Wed. in the Bloody Sunday Center in Derry. The report, titled "The Bloody Sunday Tribunal of Inquiry—A Resounding Defeat for Truth, Justice and the Rule of Law,"...examines in detail the conduct of the Widgery Tribunal....Focusing particularly on the discrepancies contained in the statements made by British soldiers in the immediate aftermath of Bloody Sunday

and their subsequent evidence to the Widgery Tribunal, Walsh uncovers evidence of systematic alterations of statements to ensure that criminal prosecutions would be avoided and concludes: "The Tribunal was unduly concerned to protect the Army against harsh criticism" and that, together with the appearance of bias, "is more than sufficient totally to destroy any prospects of the Tribunal satisfying the very high standards required of a Tribunal of Inquiry." A spokesperson for the Bloody Sunday Trust commented that with the opening of the second Bloody Sunday Inquiry in March 2000, it is vital that people take an active interest in the conduct of the Inquiry. (*RM Dist.* 1/7/00)

The Irish government was under pressure last night to launch an inquiry into the disappearance of files relating to the 1969 arms crisis that led to the...trial of [former taoiseach] Charles Haughey. Former taoiseach John Bruton wants detectives to investigate how and why the files, which were supposed to be released to the public under the 30 year rule on New Year's Day, were instead declared missing. Two key documents...contain departmental briefings to the cabinet at the height of the crisis, when there were calls for the Irish army to cross the border to defend beleaguered Catholics in Derry's Bogside. Historians believe they contain valuable information on the plot to smuggle arms into Northern Ireland. Premier Jack Lynch sacked Haughey, then a cabinet minister, after the plot was uncovered, but Haughey was later acquitted after a trial in relation to the plot. Bruton said: "The destruction of key state papers for Aug. 1969 from the taoiseach's office prior to their scheduled hand over to the National Archives is a criminal offence. If it happened, someone was trying to rewrite history and cover something up." (*Irish News* 1/4/00)

American Irish History: *Edward Hines, Others, Capitalize on Opportunity*

By Kevin P. Murphy, *Massachusetts*

EDWARD Hines, one of the most influential and charitable businessmen who ever resided in the state of Illinois, proved the idea that the American West was the land of opportunity. He drew his wealth from the land and gave much back to the land his parents adopted after leaving Ireland in the late 19th century.

Hines's parents, Peter and Rose, emigrated from counties Louth and Meath, respectively. Born on July 28, 1863, Edward received only a grade-school education and then went to work in a Chicago grocery store for \$8 per week. Eventually, he became a laborer in a lumberyard and worked his way up to the position of bookkeeper.

With the skill and experience he gained, he took a risk and started his own lumber company. Within a few years, it grew from a one-man operation to one of the largest corporations in the American West. The Edward Hines Lumber Company owned huge tracts of land from Chicago to the Gulf of Mexico and into the California and Oregon regions. Hines's lumber company founded many towns in the West and built several large mills. Hines even owned a couple of railroads.

Despite this wealth, Hines never forgot others, however. He donated millions of dollars to Yale University's school of forestry, the medical school of the University of Chicago, and the huge St. Mary's of the Lake chapel in Mundelein, Illinois. After his son, Edward, Jr., died in battle in France while serving in the US Army during WWI, Hines gave the US government 320 acres of land in Broadview, Illinois, and \$3 million to build the Edward Hines, Jr., Memorial Hospital for Veterans.

The entrepreneur and philanthropist is credited, also, with developing conservation methods for America's forests long before environmentalism became a concept. He died in 1831 at his estate in Evanston, Illinois.

AT THE BEGINNING of 2000, a New York-based Irish-oriented publication listed the men and women it considered to be the leading American Irish citizens of the 20th century. From President John F. Kennedy to Boys Town founder Fr. Edward Flanagan, the list contains many worthy people, but it left out many American Irish notables whose influence outside the world of politics

nonetheless played a central role in American culture. We list some of these men and women here.

- Judge Daniel Cohalan and John Devoy, who worked for an independent Irish republic through the American Irish network;
- The McCormick family of Chicago, whose influential newspapers editorialized in favor of Irish freedom in the 1920s;
- Henry Ford, the son of immigrants from Cork, who developed the modern automobile;
- Aviator Charles Lindbergh;
- Home-run king Mark McGuire;
- Playwright Eugene O'Neill;
- Television pioneer Ed Sullivan, who introduced America to Elvis and the Beatles;
- Lucille Ball, who paved the way for women on TV;
- William Donovan, who developed the US intelligence network that broke the codes of the Axis powers during WWII; and
- George M. Cohan, whose patriotic songs continue to inspire this nation.

(continued from Page 1)

Wilson, Ryan, and McVeigh point out that the Northern state has a history of usurping democracy by "bypassing elected representatives and enticing persons and groups favoring minimal or no change to press on us solutions favorable to the government."

Concerned by Faul's and others' attempt to restore the RUC in the eye of the people, local nationalist activist Barry McIlduff led a group of Carrickmore residents to a

secret meeting between the priest and the RUC and demanded the minutes of previous meetings.

Later, a public meeting of about 500 people demanded the resignation of Faul as parish priest. Church officials denied the request, instead requesting that the people meet with Faul and another priest.

Meanwhile, Wilson and other remain concerned about the church's role with police liaison groups. "Those who insist it is for

our elected representatives in consultation with us to shape a future police [force] are correct. Church officials as such have no function in this except to facilitate open debate," according to Wilson and his colleagues.

They add: "The policing problem is too serious to be taken over by individuals or small groups who thereby show little confidence in the ability and integrity of their own fellow citizens." (See *Action Request*, Page 8)

North Awaits Reformed Justice System

By Sandy Carlson, *Editor*

LAWYERS and human rights groups alike are raising questions about the criminal justice review and the significance of reforms to a court system some say is pro-unionist—and therefore anti-nationalist—in the post-Mitchell Agreement North.

“The legal system in the North will have to adjust to the reality of post-Agreement life,” says Dr. Colin Harvey, a lecturer in the School of Law at Queen’s University, Belfast, in a Jan. 9 *Irish News* article. “This will include giving full recognition to Irish identity in its culture and practice,”

By requiring all lawyers to declare an oath of loyalty to the Queen of England, the legal system continues to fail to do just that, Harvey argues. “The content of the declaration demonstrates the extent to which British nationalism still pervades the culture and practice of the legal system,” according to Harvey.

A result of this is that the desire to express one’s Irish identity in the North is still seen as subversive by many in the North, adds the law lecturer. “This is hardly in keeping with these so-called new times,” he says, noting that “the symbols of British nationalism continue to saturate so many aspects of public life in the North that one would be forgiven for thinking that some have a rather too relaxed attitude to the agreement and its principles.”

“The problems become even more stark when we consider the neglect of serious judicial reform in the debate on transition. There are powerful vested interests in keeping things as they are and not rocking the boat. However, it would be astonishing, given the changes in other areas, if the legal

system was not to undergo a radical transformation,” Harvey warns.

The law lecturer points out that “many of the disputes which arise within the new complex, constitutional context may be settled finally by the courts. The much-discussed transition to a human rights culture will simply not occur if the Agreement’s principles and values do not infuse legal culture and practice. This will require more than a few lectures on human rights for the judges.

“What this judicial review action is highlighting is the lack of accountability and transparency within the judiciary. If this was any other public body we would rightly be concerned,” Harvey said.

The Belfast-based Committee on the Administration of Justice shares Harvey’s views. In its Dec. 1999 issue of *Just News*, the CAJ reported that “the core problem is that the criminal justice system here, as with so many of the other official institutions of a society in conflict, has been perceived as part of the problem.” The CAJ adds that many people in the North perceive the criminal justice system as “replicating and, indeed, institutionalizing some of the worst problems of this society.”

Post-Agreement society must have a court system that is independent from the government, the human rights group argues. British administrations “have made such inroads into the safeguards normally associated with a criminal justice system that the system has effectively lost [that independence],” the CAJ said.

The organization says a new judiciary must be independent of the government as well as representative

of the community. Likewise, the CAJ recommends that there be a new Office of the Independent Prosecutor responsible for all prosecutions in the North. “Police and army have been directly responsible for at least 10 percent of deaths during the troubles, and so few prosecutions have resulted that CAJ believes the review, to properly inquire into the present prosecution system and plan for the future, must address its unsatisfactory past.”

The CAJ adds: “The challenge for the Criminal Justice Review is to ensure by its recommendations that in future a mechanism exists to call the DPP to account for [its] decisions...and to ensure that it addresses legitimate concerns....”

Other areas of the judicial system in the North also cause the CAJ grave concern. One is the issue of victims’ rights in the criminal process. For instance, what is the potential for the airing of the views of victims of crime at an appropriate stage of criminal proceedings?

The CAJ also recommends “a gender and politically neutral basis for the [criminal justice] system to be the proper way forward,” the abolition of wigs and gowns for barristers, and handicap access to buildings and courtrooms.

The CAJ has raised questions about Britain’s so-called emergency legislation, though such questions are outside the remit of the criminal justice review. “The new UK-wide Terrorism Bill is now making its way through Parliament. Our view is that the criminal justice system here is so contaminated with the injustices of the emergency regime that the review must consider its impact and that that legacy must inform the recommendations.”

Cease-Fire Holds Peace Process Together

Excerpt from the Jan. 30, 2000, Dublin-based *Sunday Business Post*

SOME of those postulating that IRA decommissioning of weapons is essential to the continuation of the present political process might reflect for a moment on how this is to be brought about.

Nobody wants "an armed peace," as Taoiseach Bertie Ahern put it recently. Everyone, including the republican movement, accepts that paramilitarism has had its day. How is this politically and practically to be brought about? Most of those who are demanding decommissioning at this time are either seeking to inflict a symbolic surrender on the IRA for political purposes or genuinely do not understand the nature of the problem it poses.

In the first instance, the republican movement is in a delicate, yet discernible, process of fundamental change. Over the last decade and largely as a result of the electoral achievement of the hunger strikers, the potential of politically achieving their ambitions has become more realistic.

Bit by bit, they have moved away from paramilitarism. Critically, this process has been one of self-discovery for them; they are only prepared to move when they feel a particular task is achievable within the particular nature of their organization.

From the outset, they have been determined to move at their own pace—one they calculate will not split their organization. They are aware that at least four times in the last century when one part of the wider republican family felt the drift from paramilitarism to politics was necessary, another part refused to follow.

This happened at the inception of Fianna Fail in the 1920s, again with Clann na Poblacht in the late 1940s, and yet again in the early 1970s when the IRA split into Official and

Provisional groups. Bad as these divisions were for the country as a whole, they proved to be disastrous for the republican cause. Each split left behind the seeds of another violent generation, and each time the forces of change were subsequently accused of treason by the forces of tradition. Each time, the republican movement was left with one hand tied behind its back in the face of its enemies.

It is correct to argue that the republican movement now finds itself as part of a political status quo that a decade ago seemed unimaginable. That fact is testament to the ability of the republican movement itself to manage and to consolidate change. Take unionist demands some years ago for IRA decommissioning in advance of the Mitchell Agreement. Can anyone now seriously argue that, if its political leadership had attempted to impose decommissioning then, we would six years later still have a cease-fire? Or that the Sinn Fein leadership of McGuinness and Adams would still have the authority and control that it now exercises?

Of course, this situation is completely different to any we have had before in contemporary Irish politics, but is there not a singular argument that it is so different for the simple reason that the republican movement has not fragmented? And, above all, that the unity in its political approach is precisely because its having used the fact of its "cease-fired," but not decommissioned, guns as the weapon that holds all this difficult political experiment together?

The IRA's decision to keep its arsenal for the present has been the secret of republican success in bringing about universal political change within its movement. The IRA's refusal to decommission has made the peace process work for

them up to now, not the opposite. It has allowed the most traditional in the movement to take risks that would be impossible otherwise, and it is the weapon with which its political constituency has succeeded in managing its paramilitary constituency. The IRA is in the business of utilizing a cease-fire tactic to create a new political alternative, not a decommissioning tactic.

The Sinn Fein leadership is most concerned about maintaining the unity and effectiveness of its political progression, and if that means a return to direct rule, then so be it. Ending the current political status quo and reimposing direct rule will merely reopen the central question about British intentions in Ireland.

Apart from delivering to the IRA an unheard-of veto over any form of devolved government in Northern Ireland, it will also wreck the prospect of devolved government for the immediate future.

Ultimately, that will deliver a much greater blow to the long-term intentions of London and Dublin for the North than for Sinn Fein's. From the outset, republicans had no desire to see any version of Stormont re-erected; if the unionists walk away and pull this one down, is anyone seriously suggesting that another can be erected without Sinn Fein's compliance? Would that be forthcoming?

Unionists have been huffing and puffing for years, and London has been pointing the finger in response. Now that unionists have finally put a date for next month on their mass political suicide pact, watch carefully as the lifeboats will be slipped into the water.

Make no mistake about it: what London wants above everything else is a continuing IRA cease-fire, and they will do whatever is necessary to ensure that.

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

Write: **Archbishop Sean Brady**, Armagh BT61 7QY, Northern Ireland

Message: In light of the church's role in police liaison groups in the North, I would appreciate your clarifying the church's view of the RUC. Does the church continue to endorse the Patten Commission's recommendations for police reform in the North? Please assure me there will be complete openness in all meetings between church officials and government-sponsored bodies. I am concerned that the church's role with police liaison groups in the North undermines the quality of democracy there by bypassing the need for direct contact between government and the people through their elected officials.

Write: **Sen. John McCain**, 735 N. St. Asaph Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, Tele. 703-837-2000, www.mccain2000.com

Message: Kindly provide me with a statement of your position on the Irish peace process. Please make it your presidential campaign position to endorse that process and promote continued US involvement in it.

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January 18

RUC officers are concerned about a name change to the police force but are willing to accept early retirement for many members as part of Britain's implementing the Patten recommendations.

January 19

Mandelson announces the British government will implement the Patten proposals without major changes. The recruitment of Catholics will be a priority, the force will receive a new name and new emblems, and a new nationalist-unionist oversight body will replace the Police Authority. The British government does not unveil a plan for implementing all recommended reforms.

January 22

Trimble claims devolution could end if the IRA does not disarm by the end of the month.

January 24

The Northern Ireland Assembly and call on Mandelson not to go ahead with reforms of the RUC. The DUP proposes a motion urging Mandelson to reject the proposals they claim "reward and elevate terrorists" while demoralizing and destroying the RUC.

January 26

Britain's House of Commons votes almost two-to-one in favor of allowing Irish parliamentarians to become British MPs. Irish TDs can now stand for election in the North's Assembly.

February 1

As the UUP withdraws from the Executive and the Report on Decommissioning concludes that no paramilitary groups have decommissioned, the IRA issues a statement saying its "cessation, which is now entering its fifth year, is evidence that the IRA's guns are silent and that there is no threat to the peace process from the IRA."

February 2

Trimble says a suspension of the political institutions is "regrettable, but inevitable" because his party cannot continue in government without a symbolic act of decommissioning from the IRA.