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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 24, Number 11

November 1999



Phoenix Dedicates Great Hunger Memorial

PHOENIX, Ariz. dedicated a memorial to the Great Hunger in its Margaret T. Hance Park on Sept. 25. Arizona descendants of the Irish people who emigrated to the US during the Great Hunger built the monument. PEC National President **John J. Finucane**, Arizona state director **Elizabeth McElligot**, PEC member **Chuck Collins**, and PEC director **Al O'Brien** played key roles in establishing the memorial. The PEC members participated in the memorial dedication in Sept.

(continued on Page 5)

Adams and Trimble Should Step Into Each Other's Shoes

By Charles P. Mullaney, *Professor, Legal Studies, Western Connecticut State University, Danbury, Connecticut*

WHEN President Bill Clinton lost his temper recently at the failure of Northern Ireland's politicians to reach an accord in the peace process, he was expressing the frustration of many people who are weary of the bitterly adversarial Belfast talk-a-thon.

Since last May, when 71 percent of people in the North voted for peace, nothing has been accomplished. The Assembly doesn't convene, the Executive is in cold storage, and North-South bodies are a memory. PUP leader David Ervine observes the parties "have no agenda; they lurch from crisis to crisis." Indeed, Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness says the process could collapse within weeks.

Unionist activists say they won't work with Sinn Fein. Even Mitchell warns that the Agreement could fail. At the same time, players agree there is no alternative to the Agreement.

Early in this year, the transfer of powers from Westminster to the new institutions led the agenda. Decommissioning, drafted as a side issue and left unresolved, had been a matter of text interpretation. Now, decommissioning—particularly of the IRA's weapons stash—is the only issue, and the line of demarcation between republicans and unionists is bright.

Meanwhile the North's pro-Agreement parties move out of town to a

secret location outside London, ostensibly to force the issue and break the impasse. Getting out of town might be a tried and true negotiating ploy, but it might get the parties to agreement.

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and UUP leader David Trimble could rescue this deal by getting out of Belfast. They should head to Lucerne, Switzerland. There, they, like South Africa's former arch enemies de Klerk and Mandela, could lock themselves in a room, step into the other's shoes, and work to get the institutions of government up and running. This might be a long shot, but few prospects remain to realize the promise of the Mitchell Agreement.

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Nolan Clan to Gather in Carlow

PEC Member **John T. Nolan** announces the third clan gathering in Carlow, Ireland, July 14-16, 2000. Contact Nolan at 22 Court Street, Iowa City, IA 52240, or **Sean Nolan Ardattin**, Carlow, Ireland for further information.

Our View:

Clinton's Frustration is Justified

PRESIDENT Clinton's remark in Oct. that the North's politicians are like "a couple of drunks" who can't bring themselves to leave the bar was offensive because it relied on the stereotype of the Irish as drunkards to convey his frustration with the stalled peace process. Clinton's frustration--borne of the inability of the parties to step into a future free of the bugaboos of history and hate-driven identity--is understandable. Nevertheless, he should know better than to denigrate a nation with racist stereotypes. At the same time, Northern politicians should see how foolish is their refusal to promote peace and prosperity.

Great Hunger Campaign Awareness Director Frank Morris points out that Delaware remains a key state in the MacBride Principles campaign because many states incorporate there. "Delaware offers corporations incentives to incorporate there, and many do even if their headquarters are in other states. MacBride campaigners should focus their energy on Delaware," Morris said recently. The PEC encourages Delaware members to push for MacBride there. California adopted MacBride legislation in Sept.

The PEC encourages all members to take part in the Great Hunger Curriculum campaign by pressuring your local school boards and your states to make the Great Hunger a part of the curriculum (see Page 5).

Peace Process Update

August 23

IRISH Foreign Minister David Andrews insists the IRA cease-fire is intact and says the absence of Sinn Fein from the talks would deprive the talks of meaning. UUP leader David Trimble suggests that the Mitchell Agreement would "not work as well as it could without Sinn Fein."

August 24

Victims Commissioner Kenneth Bloomfield says he believes that elements of the agreement that do not require the participation of local political parties will likely go ahead if these parties do not resolve the decommissioning issue.

August 26

Northern Secretary Mo Mowlam says she believes the IRA cease-fire is intact and that Britain will not halt the release of republican prisoners. RUC chief Ronnie Flanagan says he believes the IRA killed police informer Charles Bennett.

August 29

Trimble says the IRA's ordering four youths to leave Ireland has diminished chances of reviving the peace process. Loyalists carry out an arson attack on a GAA hall in County Antrim and other attacks in Larne and Belfast.

American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC

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August 31

The LVF promises a second weapons hand-over and says the IRA should begin turning in weapons. UUP deputy leader John Taylor says he wants the peace process review postponed to allow his party time to legally challenge Mowlam's decision that the IRA has kept its cease-fire.

September 6

The peace process review begins as former Senator George Mitchell meets with the British and Irish governments and the SDLP to discuss the sticking points around failure to set up the Executive and decommissioning. He expects the review to last about a month and deal with three key issues: an inclusive Executive exercising devolved power; decommissioning of all paramilitary arms by May 2000; and decommissioning to be carried out in a manner determined by the international commission.

September 10

The Patten Commission releases its report into policing in Northern Ireland and recommends a change in name from Taylor says that the Patten report will lead to a terrorist-led bloody revolution.

(continued on Page 7)

From the North

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

DESPITE all of the denials, Mo Mowlam's abrupt removal as Britain's Northern Ireland secretary is yet another sop to the UUP. People are speculating as to whether or not her replacement by Peter Mandelson will signify a change in British policy. Superficially, it might look like that.

Trimble first suggested Mandelson for the job when demanding that Mowlam be replaced back in the early summer at a press conference in London. Policy will be changed only if the British prime minister himself, Tony Blair, has revised his ideas, however, and that seems unlikely. Mandelson is said to be even more of a confidant of Blair's than was Mo.

When talking about British policy, though, one has to split it into two components: the strategy (the goal) and the tactics (steps/devices one utilizes to get to the goal). The goal is easy to explain. The topmost element of the British establishment wishes to preserve its colonial foothold in Ireland, and the North is the way in which it can do that. Once that is understood, everything else falls into place.

All the twaddle that comes from the British about their self-sacrifice (in money, blood and reputation) to preserve the "democratic rights" of unionist-minded people in the North (an updated version of the White Man's Burden) is just that—sheer twaddle. There never has been democracy in the North.

The tactics, on the other hand, are a little bit more difficult to divine, though clues abound. One such clue was the alacrity with which the British permitted the Assembly—yet another priority UUP demand—to be set up. That step fitted in neatly with Downing Street's

scheme for devolution in the UK as a whole, not as a means of liberating the Irish, the Scots and the Welsh but as a speculative attempt to stem a drift to independence. That much Blair admits.

Given that the British government's strategy is best served by attaining stability in the North, it has at this stage not gone about its task in a particularly effective way, however. It quite understandably reasons that to get stability it would be nice to take guns (and bombs) out of the hands of those in Ireland who are opposing British rule in a paramilitary way. The demilitarization of the North is a goal most people in Ireland share—particularly in the North and by mainstream republicans.

The British saw the implementation of the Mitchell Agreement, which entailed democratic reforms and a crucial scaling-down of the British military in Ireland as probably the sole way in which this could be done. The spirit of the Mitchell deal was that the paramilitaries would be thereby encouraged by the behavior of the parties to it to give up their arms voluntarily.

The new British government, following on from the Tories—whom they had supported—continued to make a dog's dinner out of decommissioning, however. It held to the tactic of trying to disarm the IRA by pressuring Sinn Fein. It permitted the UUP to deny the latter its rightful seats in the Executive on the basis of a democratic electoral mandate. Blair's pre-referendum letter to the UUP promising them "decommissioning" in a way that lay outside the terms of the Mitchell Agreement was not aimed solely at getting a majority of them to support it. It laid the basis for the subsequent one-directional pressure on Sinn Fein.

When that tactic was proving to be counterproductive to the strategy, Downing Street decided to refine the tactic, not to abandon it. This was done in July with the production of the "Way Forward" proposals, which the UUP threw back in Blair's face. The attempt now, and this might be Mandelson's first ploy, is to revive it.

What are its so-called principles? 1. An inclusive Executive exercising devolved powers; 2. decommissioning of all paramilitary arms by May 2000; and 3. decommissioning to be carried out in a manner determined by General de Chastelain's international commission. These proposals are backed up by unilateral impending legislation at Westminster containing "fail-safe guarantees" for the UUP which, in the words of Sinn Fein, are an attempt to re-write the Mitchell Agreement.

We are not privy to the inner thoughts of the republican movement—particularly not to its military strategists—but we cannot see these British tactics as they now stand opening up the escape route from the present impasse. If the British tactic remains inflexible, then a change of personalities from Mowlam to Mandelson will not resolve the problem. Especially is this so given the fears of the people of the Garvaghy Road that Blair has been engaged in scheming with the Orangemen to resolve the parades problem by permitting them their customary fix of triumphalism. Then there is the Patton Report on Policing. Mandelson's intentions will be tested very soon by the way in which he responds to unionist attempts to prevent its implementation and the efforts of human rights groups, such as the Committee on the Administration of Justice, to fill in some of the report's democracy gaps. Nationalists and republicans are prepared to give Mandelson the benefit of the doubt, but they remain wary.

Newsbits

WITNESSES are expected to be called next week in the Bloody Sunday inquiry for the first time since the new investigation was established last year. The Lord Saville-led inquiry is due to sit at Derry's Guildhall throughout the week to discuss a number of legal issues in advance of full oral hearings next March. Among the issues to be discussed are the location for all future hearings and a request by the Ministry of Defense that blanket anonymity, granted to soldiers who fired live rounds on Bloody Sunday, be extended to all soldiers present in Derry on the day. The hearing is also expected to hear submissions from lawyers representing a number of media outlets, including the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph*, BBC, and ITN. The media companies are expected to submit that they should not have to hand over information about Bloody Sunday to the new inquiry. (*Irish News* 9/25/99)

New tape evidence...acquired by the Bloody Sunday inquiry has served to further enhance the view that the Dublin government of the time was not prepared to stand up to the British over the massacre. The tapes of a 15-minute telephone conversation hours after 13 people were shot dead and 14 others were wounded were recorded by the British and disclose that then-Taoiseach, Jack Lynch was more worried more about the effect the massacre would have on the stability of the Free State than the families of the dead or wounded.... [Then British Prime Minister Ted] Heath...attempts to attach the blame for the murders on the organizers of the march and the failure of the Twenty-six County government to act against Republicans, saying, "If you had dealt with them (Republicans) this would have been over long ago." Lynch tells Heath that the British government should at least take security measures out of the hands of Stormont. Heath replies... that

the problem is not Stormont but "...the people who are challenging the law" and "...the IRA trying to take over the country." Lynch replies, "well, we have no intention of letting them do that...." Lynch...comments, "[I]f this kind of thing is going to have its repercussions south of the border...I can assure you that my role is becoming more and more difficult and I am very, very fearful of what is likely to happen ...I just want to tell you how gravely apprehensive I am...." (*RM Dist.* 9/15/99)

Former members of Britain's notorious Special Air Services...are training American journalists how to survive the rigors of reporting in the world's hot spots. CNN, the Associated Press, and the *New York Times* have all sent reporters, producers or camera operators to special training sessions in Europe...with the idea of cutting back on war-zone casualties. British-based companies staffed by ex-Royal Marine commandos and former members of the SAS have been training journalists for American news-gathering organizations for at least five years.

....Training programs are also sponsored through the Freedom Forum, formerly known as the Gannett Foundation, a company that owns scores of American newspapers, including USA Today. In the mid-1980s, the Freedom Forum erected a memorial to journalists killed covering the news. (*Irish People* 9/18/99)

The Ulster Volunteer Force was responsible for the deaths of three young Catholic brothers murdered in a petrol bomb attack on their home, Belfast crown court heard yesterday. The Quinn boys, Jason (nine), Mark (10), and 11-year-old Richard died at their Ballymoney home last July in the attack which was alleged to have been the result of a feud between their uncle, Colum Quinn, and members of the loyalist terror group. Garfield Gilmour, who denies three counts of murder and other charges at the trial,

told police that although he was not a UVF member, he was threatened and forced by others to ferry them to and from the Quinn's house.... (*Irish News* 9/14/99)

The family of murdered north Belfast teenager Peter McBride made legal history yesterday when they won a judicial review into the army's decision not to dismiss the two soldiers who killed him. After the landmark judgement by Justice Kerr, the McBride family immediately renewed their call for the soldiers to be thrown out of the army. Scots Guards James Fisher and Mark Wright were convicted of murdering the 18-year-old in 1995 after they shot him in the back three years earlier. They were released on license last year after six years in custody and were taken back into their regiment. A meeting of the army board decided that the soldiers should be reinstated, despite their convictions.... (*Irish News* 9/24/99)

Nine-year-old RUC files on a loyalist linked to the Pat Finucane murder inquiry are at the center of renewed claims of a cover-up. Fresh controversy emerged yesterday in the latest round of Belfast-based journalist Ed Moloney's legal battle to withhold interview notes linked to the 1989 murder of the Belfast solicitor. Moloney took his fight to the high court yesterday and later spoke of his concerns over what he described as the "increasingly bizarre affair." He suggested records of RUC interviews with a Finucane murder suspect in 1990 could prove the authorities had solid information on the suspect and did not need Moloney's notes. He added that the office of the director of public prosecutions had now taken steps to prevent Moloney's legal team gaining access to these RUC files-though yesterday the DPP's office was unable to comment. (*Irish News* 9/24/99)

American Irish History: *American Irish, Irish Literary Legacy is Alive and Well*

By Kevin P. Murphy, *Massachusetts*

RECENTLY, scholars, playwrights, theatre critics, professors, and historians around the world completed a list of the top 10 playwrights and plays of the twentieth century. Three among them are of Irish heritage—the Irish-born Samuel Beckett and George Bernard Shaw and the American Irish Eugene O'Neill.

O'Neill is the greatest American playwright. His play "Long Day's Journey Into Night" is the best-written play of the Modern era. When he won the Nobel prize for literature, he commented that his greatest honor was not winning that prize but being Irish. Many of O'Neill's plays reflect his American Irish upbringing in New London, Conn.

Among the top 100 playwrights of this century are Irishmen John Millington Synge, Sean O'Casey, Philip Barry, and Terence McNally. Many of these writers' and other Irish and American Irish writers' works appeared on Broadway in 1999, thus keeping alive the Irish and American Irish literary legacy.

Demand for Great Hunger Curriculum Grows

AS GREAT Hunger Awareness grows, more and more school districts are adopting the Great Hunger as an official part of their curricula. The **National Education Association**, the **Educational Resource Information Center**, and the **Gateway to Educational Materials of Syracuse University** have added Great Hunger curriculum to their databases.

The **New Jersey Holocaust Education Committee** has also approved Great Hunger curriculum, and advanced-placement

students in European history at Cinnaminson High School field tested the curriculum.

Now, Great Hunger Curriculum is available in full text on the Web site of the **Nebraska Department of Education**, <http://www.nde.state.ne.us/SS/ss.html>.

The PEC urges members to visit the PEC site at <http://alpec.freesservers.com> or the Nebraska site and urge their school districts to adopt Great Hunger curricula. This will be the most significant part of our awareness campaign.

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PEC national president **John J. Finucane**, who attended the dedication ceremony, said "the PEC helped inspire this, and we're proud of the City of Phoenix for marking the Great Hunger with a memorial. We must not forget the Great Hunger, the British government's role in it, and the event's effect on this nation."

"The failure of the Irish potato crop compounded by British policies created a tragedy in Ireland affecting millions of people from 1845-1850," **Marie Choppie Camacho** of the City of Phoenix Parks, Recreation, and Library Dept. said. Almost 2 million people died "of starvation or disease and another million and more emigrated from their country."

The memorial, which Arizona artist **Maureen McGuire** designed, joins similar memorials throughout the world marking the memory of this tragic event in the history of Ireland.

A ground breaking ceremony for the Irish Cultural and Learning Center followed the dedication. The center will house programs and activities relating to Irish culture. The **Great Hunger Memorial Committee**, a member of the **Irish Leadership Coalition**, funded the memorial at Hance Park, which is at 1200 North Central Ave. in Phoenix.

Great Hunger Sticker Augments USPS Stamp

IT IS NOW possible to enhance envelopes bearing the Irish Immigration postage stamp with images of the Great Hunger, according to PEC member **Eileen Duffy Hynes**.

Stickers depicting two Irish children digging for potatoes calls "attention to the Famine, which the original stamp does not illustrate," says Hynes.

"Even though we wrote so many letters, the actual theme the PEC was attempting to stress was conveniently covered by a 'generic' sailing ship

which could represent any ethnic group. [However,] as **T.K. O'Doherty** so aptly stated in his recent letter [published in the *Newsletter*], the PEC 'certainly deserves recognition and thanks for its perseverance and dedication to this campaign.'"

[Editor's note: contact the **Irish Famine Curriculum Committee and Education Fund, Inc.**, 757 Paddock Path, Moorestown, NJ 08057, email: JVMullin@AOL.COM for more information about the sticker.)

Southerners Support Irish Unity

By Charles P. Mullaney, *Professor, Legal Studies, Western Connecticut State University, Danbury, Connecticut*

AMIDST a gathering of about 6,000 folks assembled on an Aug. day on a lush field just outside the town of Boyle, county Roscommon, to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the battle of the Curleus, I had the opportunity to chat with about 30 southerners. Most were Catholic Irish men and women from various backgrounds.

I was seeking opinions from ordinary people about the peace process. We seldom hear from such people because the media focus almost exclusively on the sound bite of politicians. I discovered considerable, though subdued, support for Irish unity.

At the outset, I fell in with a contingent of 30-something people, who, in all likelihood, had no meaningful recollection of anything that occurred before 1975—such as, the Dublin-Monaghan bombings of 1974—and who have no political experience with Sinn Fein-style republicanism.

Indeed, I am used to southern attitudes that are outright averse to a 32-county republic. What I heard surprised me. Willie, a banker from Dublin, needed no cheerleading from Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams when he told me, "Secretly, we all want reunification." Then, with typical southern reserve, he added, "Just maybe not now."

On a more extreme note, Brian, an accountant from Tipperary, asked, "Haven't the politicians screwed up enough?" He added, "If I were an activist, I'd rebuild my arsenal."

Southerners, despite their violent history, typically despise the IRA.

This is why Brian, apparent fan of the armed struggle, astonished me. As he described it, the IRA has been the tail wagging the dog all along. The slogan "not one bullet, not one ounce" makes sense to him. When I joked that accountants take up pencils, not arms, he said, "Not in Tipperary." I assumed he was joking, too.

Lorna, just out of law school, thought Adams was a "trail blazer," but she liked David Ervine of the loyalist-linked PUP, too. When I asked her about Ervine's contribution to the process, Lorna opined, "He has a lot of common sense." Though she praised Adams, she did not share his party's socialist vision. As a young barrister, she "hoped to make a lot of money" in capitalist-friendly Dublin.

The roaring Celtic Tiger undoubtedly has an impact on southern sentiment about the North. Charles, a consultant from Dublin, said that economic issues will diminish the civil conflict, especially when the UK adopts the European currency, like most of the rest of the European Union. "You won't even know there's a border," he explained.

[Editor's Note: Recently, business leaders in the North have expressed concern that the delay in devolution there has slowed economic development. They have urged political leaders to put aside archaic political struggles in favor of the economic growth they believe will come with devolution.]

Willie, Brian, Lorna, and Charles claimed that they voted in favor of the Mitchell Agreement but agreed with Willie, who said, "It doesn't

affect us [the South] one bit."

Almost on cue, 6,000 spectators in Boyle were enthusiastically affected as they cheered and the battle reenactment concluded appropriately with Irish Chieftain Red Hugh O'Donnell's simulated beheading of the English Governor of Connaught.

After the festival, I dined with several voluble seniors. Tim, a retired police officer, needed little prompting: "Gerry [Adams] talks too much, and [UUP leader David] Trimble should return his [peace] prize."

He then spoke affectionately about former US Senator George Mitchell, who brokered the peace agreement last year, calling him the "real peace hero."

I asked if the US had any further role in the North. Moya, our host, replied, "Clinton is just grand" but wondered who the "other candidates" were and what they would do. "They're strangers to us," she said.

Other southerners with whom I spoke that day believed a united Ireland was inevitable, some violence was to be expected, and economics would play a role in resolving the conflict. Many voices were glib and a few others, indifferent.

As I left Moya's home, Leo, a merchant from Roscommon, quite forcefully condensed the frustration many people feel about the peace process.

He said: "There won't be any Assembly, there won't be any Executive; there'll be nothing, not for a generation. That's when the Catholics will be in control."

House Grills Patten Over Policing Report

CHAIRMAN of the Independent Commission on Policing **Chris Patten**, addressed Congress's Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights in Washington, DC Sept. 24 Patten faced a series of questions about the recently published Patten Report on the future of policing in Northern Ireland.

Subcommittee chair Rep. **Chris Smith** noted the positive aspects of the report but was highly critical of the "omissions" involving the lack of a vetting process to remove police officers who have committed serious violations of human rights and the failure to address police threats against defense attorneys.

"Thus I am disappointed that while the Commission acknowledged 'that the RUC has had several officers within its ranks over the years who have abused their position,' it nevertheless declined to recommend a vetting

mechanism to rid the force of those who have committed egregious acts of abuse and violence. It's worth noting with regret that the RUC officers who harassed Rosemary Nelson—and perhaps were connected with her assassination—are still on the job today," said Smith.

The representative pressed Patten on the question of vetting, but Patten replied that he feared "witch hunts." Smith commented, "We are all opposed to witch hunts, but every government force given authority and power must have an internal accounting system that ensures the citizenry are not abused. The RUC has been incapable of policing itself in the past. They have to be shown how to weed out those officers who have been behind the beatings and human rights atrocities. Without vetting, it is unlikely that the public will have any renewed faith in the police," said Smith.

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the RUC to the Northern Ireland Police Service, the continued employment of existing personnel, the gradual reduction in the strength of the force, a new badge and oath, an affirmative action program, a new oversight board, no ban on members of secret societies, no change in leadership, a general normalizing of police activity throughout the north, and a human rights-based police service.

September 13

UUP MP William Thompson calls for Trimble's resignation as party leader. He joins former UUP deputy leader John Taylor's camp of No men, who defected from the party following the publication of the Patten report. Most Catholics in the North support the report and most Protestants don't.

September 14

Trimble insists his leadership of the UUP is "rock solid" as his party

rejects the Patten report and forms a committee to suggest alternative police reforms. South Antrim UUP Assembly member Duncan Shipley-Dalton said Sinn Féin should be allowed into a ruling executive without any IRA weapons hand-over. Decommissioning body head Canadian Gen. John de Chastelain says it is possible yet that the paramilitaries will meet the May 2000 weapons hand-over deadline.

September 15

Sinn Féin chief negotiator Martin McGuinness meets with members of the House International Relations committee in Washington. Committee chair **Ben Gilman** organizes the meeting; Congressmen **Donald Payne, Richard Neal, William Delahunt, Chris Smith, Joe Crowley, James Walsh, and Peter King** attend. McGuinness says, "It is essential that the impasse in the peace process and the implementation of the Agreement is broken. The best way

Pennsylvania Union Supports Agreement

THE PENNSYLVANIA Federation of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees passed a resolution in Sept. calling on President Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair to ensure the full implementation of the Mitchell Agreement.

The union passed the resolution when 70 delegates representing 4,000 members met at their quadrennial convention in Atlantic City, NJ.

The resolution calls on the leaders to work for the immediate creation of an inclusive Executive in the North and to work to "strip the unionist parties of veto power over the [Mitchell] Agreement."

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The Patten Report
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Action Requests

to break that impasse is to implement the Agreement that we all signed up to last year. It is vitally important that the international community continue to play a powerful and positive roll in the peace process. McGuinness provides National Security Council advisor Jim Steinberg an update on the peace process. Mowlam says legislation to implement parts of the Patten report could come next year.

September 20

Vice-president Al Gore promises the government's continued support for the peace process.

September 23

Britain's Political Development Minister in Ireland George Howarth says that even if the Mitchell review failed, the Agreement would be the basis for achieving devolution.

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Action Requests

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

Contact: **President Bill Clinton**, The White House, Washington, DC 20500; phone 202-456-1111; fax 202-456-2461; Email president@whitehouse.gov

Message: I share your frustration about the failure of Northern Ireland's politicians to make a go of the Mitchell Agreement. Nevertheless, I urge you to keep the US involved in the process despite the difficulties that continue to beset it. Even George Mitchell has said there is no alternative to the Agreement. Only a continued US presence in the Northern Ireland peace process can prevent a full-scale return to violence there. Please continue the work of countless concerned Americans and your Administration to bring peace to Ireland. Further, urge the contenders for the White House to keep Ireland on our country's foreign policy agenda.

Contact: Likely Democratic presidential contenders **Al Gore** 202-263-6000 and **Bill Bradley** 888-643-9799 and likely Republican presidential contenders **George Bush** 512-637-2000 and **Elizabeth Dole** 703-525-9100

Message: I urge you to place the Northern Ireland peace process at the top of your campaign agenda as you campaign for your party's nomination as the next presidential candidate. Openly support peace and equality in Northern Ireland.

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September 29

The British Conservative party plans to meet with Sinn Fein. Sinn Fein negotiator Martin McGuinness gives a cautious welcome to a proposal on decommissioning from moderate unionists that would aim to see decommissioning soon after the formation of the executive. He says Trimble should endorse the formula that would see the UUP's sharing power in the Executive on the basis that the IRA would begin to decommission within four weeks of the formation of the Executive. Trimble dismisses the idea. The Dublin government says it will begin a new, private investigation into the Dublin-Monaghan bombings of 1974, which left 33 people dead. Families of the dead condemn the plan to conduct the inquiry in private.

October 4

Adams says the Mitchell Agreement is finished if Trimble doesn't take steps to establish the Executive.

October 6

Mitchell says the Agreement could fail but there is no alternative to it. The UUP insists that the IRA hand in weapons before it will sit in government with Sinn Fein.

October 8

Referring in Ottawa, Canada, to the peace process, Clinton says: "[E]very time they make an agreement to do it, they're like a couple of drunks walking out of the bar for the last time. When they get to the swinging door they turn right around and go back in and say 'I just can't quite get there'. It's hard to give up these things." The UUP's Esmond Birnie suggests that his party should enter into government with Sinn Fein, so long as the republicans agree to resign if the IRA fails to disarm.

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