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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 23, Number 07

July 1998

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The Newsletter went to press after deadline this month so that we could provide you with the results of and commentary on the Assembly elections. We will return to our normal schedule with the August issue.)

Will Democracy Come To The North?

Although the North's pro-Mitchell Agreement parties won the majority of seats in the June 25 elections to the new Northern Ireland Assembly, the potential success of the legislative body to run Northern Ireland democratically is not yet secure. It remains to be seen whether the British government will allow the body to function effectively as an executive authority and whether the anti-agreement politicians elected to the body will participate in it or obstruct its functioning.

Voters returned enough members of anti-agreement parties to wreak havoc on the functioning of the Assembly. Anti-agreement parties account for 28 seats--two fewer than the number pundits had predicted would give them the power to obstruct the Assembly's functioning. Parties that oppose the agreement--including the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)--say they fear it will bring them closer to the Republic of Ireland and will do all they can to prevent this from happening. The pro-agreement parties won the other 80 seats to the 108-member Assembly.

The Assembly is intended to return local government to the North after 27 years of direct rule from Britain. The body will have authority to "exercise full legislative executive authority in respect of those matters currently within the responsibility of the six Northern Ireland Government Departments," according to the agreement. It will also play a role in the British-Irish Council and a North/South Ministerial Council that the British and Irish governments are to establish. The councils are intended to strengthen bilateral cooperation on areas of "mutual interest."

Westminster's power to make legislation for the North will remain unaffected, and a Secretary of State will continue to report to Westminster on non-devolved matters. The northern secretary will represent Northern interests in the UK cabinet.

Nevertheless, the British government must get its house in order to ensure the democratic powers of the Assembly. It must incorporate the European Court of Human Rights into British legislation, demolish the repressive and excessive emergency legislation currently in effect in the north, restructure the north's policing and criminal justice systems, and enact effective fair employment legislation.

These reforms and others would show that the British are prepared to return the good faith of the pro-agreement political parties and remove undemocratic language from its Northern Ireland vocabulary. Only then can the Assembly run a democratic show. Until then, we cannot be sure that the Celtic Tiger will not be transformed into a paper one that actually serves anti-agreement interests.

Newsbits by Kathy Regan

Over the last few weeks, nationalists in the Newington area of North Belfast have been subjected to verbal abuse and assault from loyalists in nearby Tiger's Bay. The trouble centers on the loyalist end of Halliday's Road, where there is only a narrow entry separating the area from Newington. It has become a nightly occurrence for loyalist youths to climb on to the backyard walls and hurl bricks and bottles into the yards and through the windows of the homes of nationalists. The RUC have been called numerous times by residents but have refused to do anything about the situation. (RM Distribution, 5/19/98)

The drugs war which has claimed four lives [in the north] so far this year is set to continue. Insiders on the drug scene claimed the murder of Frank Turley, shot dead on a railway embankment outside Belfast on Friday, would not be the last as dealers battle for power and settle old scores. With Ecstasy now freely available, the drugs market has become highly lucrative....Hundreds of 'tabs' like Mitsubishi are sold nightly at dance clubs where huge sums of money change hands. With so much cash up for grabs, it was only a matter of time before dealers began to crowd each other out and invade their

cont. on page 4

INSIDE

From the North 3
PeaceNeedsHumanRights. 2
Peace Timeline 5
Summer Parades . . R&D
Paisleyism Threat . . R&D

OUR VIEW

The Orange Order accepted the Parade Commission's rerouting of Orange marches through nationalist areas in North Belfast—reluctantly and just as tensions in the area were mounting. Nevertheless, the order continues in its refusal to meet with representatives of these nationalist areas to defuse tension about the controversial Tour of the North marches that have led to violence in previous years.

At the same time, nationalists, including Sinn Fein MP for North, Belfast Gerry Kelly, have urged the order to meet with them to discuss the issue. Nationalists prefer to meet face-to-face with loyalists rather than participate in dialogue through the ineffective, distant Parades Commission.

It is sadly ironic that the same loyalists who would march through nationalist areas in a show of foolish bravado refuse to talk to the people who live on those streets. It is doubly ironic that their show of color and machismo, even if it were contained in loyalist areas, will not be lost on the nationalists whose neighborhoods abut those loyalist areas. Belfast is a small town.

The parades situation is, in many ways, a microcosm of the past 30 years: as nationalists push for progressive democratic change, loyalists attempt to stem the tide of change through mindless gestures that promise violence.

It is essential, then, that the British government establish meaningful investigative and reform bodies staffed with visionary, flexible men and women who understand the need for change and are brave enough to see it take place.

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CAJ Says Peace Needs Human Rights

The issue of human rights as an essential part of Ireland's ongoing peace process received a boost in June when the Belfast-based Committee on the Administration of Justice received a European award for its work.

Human rights must be interwoven into any peace settlement in Northern Ireland, the CAJ said after the 40-nation Council of Europe selected it as one of three winners of the European Human Rights prize.

The award, proposed by MPs from the national parliaments of the council's member states, is designed "to uphold the merits of a person, group of persons, institution or non-governmental organization which has been active in promoting or protecting human rights in accordance with the principles of individual freedom, political liberty and the rule of law."

CAJ spokesman Martin O'Brien said CAJ is delighted to receive the prize "at such a crucial time for the protection of human rights in Northern Ireland."

He added that while the Mitchell deal contained "strong language" and mechanisms to protect human rights, the task ahead is to "translate this into reality."

Mr. O'Brien said the award signals the continuing importance Europe attaches to the human rights aspects of the peace process.

Irish Foreign Minister David Andrews congratulated the group for

receiving the award, saying, "Since its foundation, the CAJ has worked impartially to defend the human rights of all in Northern Ireland.

"The CAJ has consistently argued that human rights must be at the heart of any effective peace process. Indeed, the protection of human rights is at the core of the Good Friday agreement on Northern Ireland," added Mr. Andrews.

The CAJ was set up in 1980 to monitor British government compliance with human rights. The citation praises CAJ's consistent and impartial defense of the human rights of all communities in the north. It reads: "The CAJ believes that issues of justice and fairness lie at the heart of the conflict and that addressing and resolving human rights abuses is both intrinsically important and also essential to the resolution of the conflict."

From the North

by Robert W. Heatley, Belfast, *co-founder of the Campaign for Democracy, a predominantly Protestant organization headquartered in Northern Ireland*

The Northern Ireland Assembly elections are over and the results are unique. The nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party is the largest party in terms of first preference votes, but this is artificial. It is due to the "shredding" of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) vote caused by current divisions within unionism.

Sinn Fein is now the largest party west of the Bann River which bisects the six-counties from North to South. Nevertheless, when it comes to the number of seats won in the Assembly, David Trimble's Ulster Unionist Party, the north's largest political party, ends up with the largest number. The English-imposed border and transfer voting under the proportional representation system is responsible for that.

The overall election result in seats won is: UUP 28, SDLP 24, Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) 20, Sinn Fein (SF) 18 and Others 18. The Others are overwhelmingly unionist, with at least 8 of them against the Agreement. That means the unionists who are opposed to the agreement got 28 seats.

The critical figure needed for them to be able to stymie the workings of the Assembly is 80. The fact that, nominally, the NO voters did not reach that figure has sent the tame media in Britain and Ireland, into a tizzy of euphoria. What the news media is ignoring is the many more NO voters lurking in the bowels of Trimble's UUP who, when it comes to Assembly showdowns over issues accommodating to nationalism, are likely to gang up with the other 28 hard-liners.

Perhaps Mr. Trimble will be among them.

However, even in his absence, an insufficiency of unionist consensus for proposals such as the setting-up of politically meaningful cross-border bodies, the implementation of an equality agenda, etc. is still on the cards. Failures in these areas would bring about the collapse of the Assembly and it would be back to square one. These are the realities behind the current media hype, much of which is purveying the notion that this Agreement magically transforms politics in Northern Ireland.

The division now, we are told, is not between unionists and nationalists, it is between the two camps of pro and anti agreement voters, with the latter now the new minority. The current divisions within unionism are not about principle--the Croppies (the Irish nationalists) still have to lie down! The schism (which the Assembly might help them patch up, rather than exacerbate) is between pragmatists and fundamentalists.

The British wish to quiet down their Northern Ireland running sore.

Nationalists and republicans now constitute over 40% of the population. They have to be given some of their entitlements without the ultimate national democratic right to belong to a reunited self-governing Ireland. Trimble has had this fact spelled out to him during his many summoned visits with Prime Minister Tony Blair in the weeks prior to the Agreement. He knows that he must

not try Britain's patience too much.

The fundamentalists, on the other hand, do not accept the realities that have come about. They want to preserve the Orange unionist complexion of the UK state in Ireland. They resist what they consider Britain's bad faith every step of the way. However, Trimble accepts that this is not 1912 when Carson, with the full backing of Britain's most powerful establishment circles, was able to mount a revolt against the UK constitution.

The newly elected Assembly, however long it lasts, is likely to become the arena in which these intra-unionist squabbles will be fought out over how the Agreement's accommodation of nationalism is to be counteracted. The outcome will depend, as is usual, on what the British government does. Will it keep Trimble under pressure from extremists inside and outside his own party? Unionists still believe the latter because they assess that they are still important to the British government's colonialist project. This involves the devolutionary reshaping of the UK in which Northern Ireland can be a model for what is wanted in respect to Scotland and Wales.

**Did You
Renew
Your
Membership
in
PEC?**

Newsbits *cont. from page 1*

neighbors' territory... Not only do the dealers have to contend with their associates. Over the years, at least nine men alleged to be big-time drug dealers have been killed by Republicans using the title Direct Action Against Drugs. (*Irish News*, 6/16/98)

An Irish eyewitness to the World Cup riots involving English football hooligans has spoken of the fear gripping the southern French city. Colette Mangan, who manages O'Malley's Irish pub in the port city, said English fans were singing anti-German and anti-IRA chants before the trouble flared with Tunisian supporters on Sunday night... As the violence spun out of control, French riot police used tear gas as they fought running battles with English and Tunisian hooligans... Meanwhile, in a bid to prevent further clashes between English and Tunisian fans, French police last night banned the sale of alcohol in bars and restaurants in Marseille. All bars and eateries were ordered to close at 11pm—five hours before normal closing time—as police attempted to ensure fans were kept under control. The sale of alcohol was banned in the town from 4:30 pm in an attempt to prevent fans creating stores before England's next match. (*Irish News* 6/16/98)

Representative Ben Gilman, chairman of the House International Relations Committee, and a close friend of the PEC, will keep a close watch on the situation in Northern Ireland. Gilman stated, "The people need to ensure that the Good Friday accord becomes a reality. There needs to be concrete change in the old unsatisfactory status quo of unionist domination of the nationalist minority, that reflects a clear equality of esteem, economic justice, as well as Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) policing reform. Gilman plans to conduct full Committee hearings on the implementation of the Good Friday accord early next year. (AIN-PEC 6/98)

Charles A. Lindbergh's Irishness

by Kevin P. Murphy, *Massachusetts*

Charles A. Lindbergh's crossing of the Atlantic Ocean in May 1927 catapulted the American pilot into instant fame. Lindbergh's solo flight paved the way for American advancement in aviation and world air travel. In many ways, this Irish-American's fame surpassed that of the politicians, athletes, and movie stars of his time.

In a May 31, 1927 letter to the American Irish Historical Society of New York City, Lindbergh's mother wrote from Detroit about her son's Irish roots. Evangeline Lindbergh proudly wrote that her grandmother and family were born in County Tipperary, Ireland. The family, whose name was Kissane, emigrated to New York City during the Great Hunger and eventually settled in San Francisco, Calif.

Evangeline was very proud of her American-Irish heritage, and she was, perhaps, the greatest influence on Charles' youth, too. In the flight log of his historic New York-to-Paris trip, he wrote, while flying over Ireland, that "Ireland is the most beautiful country I've ever seen."

Lindbergh became a controversial figure in the US when he traveled across the nation in 1939 opposing any US help for Britain as WWII was getting underway. Lindbergh's speeches strongly criticized Britain's policies in its colonies.

However, when the US entered World War II, Lindbergh became a consultant with the US Army Air Corps. He never received a command because of his speeches against Britain. Nevertheless, in the Pacific theater, consultant Lindbergh was credited with the shooting down of several enemy aircraft. (*Source: Library of Edward Kelley, Dorchester, MA*)

**IT IS IMPORTANT
THAT YOU WRITE THE LETTER REQUESTED
IN ACTION REQUEST #1 ON PAGE SIX.**

Oklahoma House to New Northern Assembly: Protect Human Rights

The Oklahoma House of Representatives has passed a resolution urging the new Northern Ireland Assembly to take immediate legislative action to protect human and civil rights in the north.

Such action immediately following the June 25 Assembly elections would "build confidence in the peace process by taking immediate action to change past abusive human rights policies," the resolution said.

The resolution, which passed in the Oklahoma House on May 19, recognizes that most Americans, whether or not of Irish descent, want to see a permanent, meaningful peace in the North and believe that human rights are an essential part of such a settlement.

Introduced by Rep. Gary Bastin, the resolution also praises and commends the political leaders of the north—in particular David Trimble of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and Gerry Adams of Sinn Féin—for supporting a policy of "peaceful change."

PEC Oklahoma State Director, Hal Cousins, requested that Bastin introduce the resolution.

Parades in the North: The Beat Goes On

by Sandy Carlson

The summer parades that create tension and often lead to violence throughout the north are no less an issue in this year of the Good Friday agreement than in previous years. Representative wars over territory continue, despite the vaunted potential of the agreement to create the conditions for peace.

What has changed, however, is the call from community groups and political parties for loyalist parades groups to stop fomenting conflict and confrontation by parading through nationalist areas. Though Sinn Féin and the Ulster Unionist Party are united in their call for dialogue between communities on this issue, loyalist marchers continue in their intransigent belief in their right to march where they please.

In their desire to preserve the old routes and defy the Parades Commission, Orangemen on April 25 attempted to proceed with a banned parade up the nationalist lower Ormeau Road in the area's first Orange march of the season. After finding their route blocked, the 50 Orangemen and two bands held a service on the bridge.

Conversely, on May 20, community groups representing west Belfast nationalists and unionists appealed for all sides in the parades dispute to sit down together and hammer out a resolution to prevent a repetition of the violence of previous years.

Sean McMahon of Lenadoon Community Forum and Bo Dyer of Suffolk Strategy Group said last year's violence in the area following the Drumcree stand off had undermined efforts to build trust between the two communities. The spokesmen appealed for talks on contentious parades. Nothing would be lost through dialogue, and accommodation was a distinct possibility, they said. The community groups also objected to the violence the RUC inflicted on them following Drumcree. "More than 500 plastic baton rounds were fired, seriously injuring a number of people, and local people had vehicles hijacked and set alight. The Suffolk Family Centre was damaged and relations between both communities were placed under severe strain," the representatives said.

Meanwhile, northern Secretary of State Mo Mowlam applauded an Apprentice Boys church parade in Dunloy in late May for proceeding peacefully. The parade, which the Parades Commission had rerouted away from the village center, went ahead without incident after residents in the mainly nationalist County Antrim village agreed to set aside opposition to the march. President of Dunloy Apprentice Boys club, John Finlay, said the group accepted the rerouting because the group's primary objective was to parade to worship in Dunloy. He said: "The fact that

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the residents' group have accepted this parade shows that they have committed themselves to saying that the loyal orders have a right to walk in Dunloy and have a right to walk without talking. This acceptance goes well for future loyal order events in Dunloy."

Even some hard-line loyalists who had insisted on preserving traditional triumphalist parade routes through nationalist areas decided to call off their picket and campaign of violence and harassment in Harryville in late May because nationalists had called off a picket at Dunloy, and that unionist marches had proceeded without incident.

Recent calls for cross-community dialogue come at the tail end of a controversy that embroiled the Parades Commission. In April, British Prime Minister Tony Blair shelved the commission's proposal to ban the Drumcree march this summer—a contentious march that has led to widespread violence involving the British armed forces. The document also had recommended that a number of the summer's most controversial parades be rerouted away from nationalist areas. Included among these was the parade down the Garvaghy Road in Portadown, where for the past two years stand offs ending in brutal attacks on the nationalist residents have taken place amid widespread civil upheaval.

The commission will not now publish any preliminary views and will instead make its decision on each parade public the statutory five days beforehand. The ineffectual Parades Commission has left residents concerned about their safety during the remainder of the marching season. Two community groups met Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern in Dublin May 27 to urge Mr. Ahern to take action to head off possible violence by British forces to push parades through their communities.

Orangemen in Drumcree March Threat

Orangemen stepped up their threat of a violent 'Drumcree 4' after making an application to the RUC to march down the Garvaghy Road this summer. The 32 Portadown lodges voted unanimously to make the application to march their usual routes to and from Drumcree Church of Ireland church on the first Sunday in July. The Orange Order has criticized the Parades Commission over the delay in revealing its decision over whether it will allow this year's Garvaghy Road parade. An Orange Order spokesman said: "The commission's decision to call off an announcement on its attitudes to loyal order parades this summer at the behest of Prime Minister Tony Blair, under pressure from Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble, has seriously undermined the independence and integrity of this now discredited unelected quangos."

He said the Portadown district lodge had expressed its "indifference" at the commission's delay in making its decision public. A lodge spokesman said: "We don't recognize the Parades Commission, we have had no contacts with the commission, and we are ignoring what they have to say. As far as we are concerned, we are walking the traditional route home from Drumcree parish church along the Garvaghy Road." The 32 Portadown lodges agreed at their meeting May 20 to apply to the RUC for the usual routes to and from Drumcree parish church on the first Sunday in July. *Based on an Irish News report.*

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No-voters: Paisleyism Is the Real Threat to Stable Society

by Brian Feeney

Extracted from the *Irish News* (May 27, 1998)

The Greeks had a word for them, of course—the no voters, that is. In classical Greek the word was *idiotes*. It meant the people outside the metropolis whose world view was so narrow and whose isolation from society was so great they didn't know what was going on in the real world.

They were not at the races. It didn't mean they were *eejits*. They could be quite clever and still be *idiotes*. Not all *idiotes* are *eejits*, but all *eejits* are *idiotes*.

So who are the people who make up the 274,872 who voted *no* [in the May 22 referendum]?

Thanks to the raft of opinion polls various agencies carried out last week, we have a pretty good idea. Unionists will argue about how many of them were UUP who will or will not return to the fold; but no one seems to contest the fact that, overwhelmingly, they were unionist voters.

What else about them?

They were predominantly rural voters. The best evidence suggests about six unionists out of 10 in Greater Belfast voted *yes* while this support was reversed in rural areas with nearly 60 percent of unionists voting *no*.

Not only was there an urban/rural split, but also there was a sharp class divide among unionists. Those classed as ABC1—that's to say professional, managerial, technical, and skilled people—voted *yes*; while C2, D and E—that is, semi-skilled, unskilled and unemployed people—either voted *no* or didn't vote.

There was an age difference, too. The no-voters were more likely to be over 30. Blair's team and the NIO were obviously aware of both the age and class divide when they not only went for the young vote but also shamelessly selected certain young people. The U2 concert was for an invited audience and it was by and large an audience of first-time voting offspring of ABC1s, though no one knows how many kids sold their (free) tickets to less-desirable young people because they didn't like U2 or wanted some cash.

The U2 concert had a class function, too. It was to separate the *idiotes* from unionists who glimpsed a chance to be part of the real world for the first time perhaps in their lives. If U2, Bill Clinton, Tony Blair and the rest of the western world were making overtures to them, these unionists wanted to reciprocate. That's why they shouted "You're a disgrace" at Bob McCartney. What they really meant was "You're disgracing us." Furthermore, they implied, "You're disgracing us in front of the world's press."

The burghers of Holywood emphatically did not want the world to see them as *idiotes*. So from the information available, the no-voters, apart from being unionist, tended to be rural, older, poor, uneducated, unskilled, and men. There's one important exception to this picture, and that's those deprived urban unionists the PUP and UDP educated politically in the last five years and brought out to vote *yes*. They used to be members of the *idiotes* Paisley marched around the north as extras in his pantomime. Now they realize what dupes they were, they hate him. That's why they were so vindictive in their victory over him at the King's Hall.

So how can David Trimble learn from these details to avoid a repeat of his failed referendum campaign? The NIO supplied him with opinion poll and focus group findings which he and his party clearly either didn't know how to use or, less likely, chose not to use. With a flick of his electioneering muscle, Tony Blair showed what could be done with the information and saved Trimble's bacon.

The chief lesson for Trimble is to stop competing for the votes of the *idiotes*. They support Paisley and will

not switch. What Trimble has to do is try to retain as many as he can of the 160,000 new voters who came out last Friday and who voted *yes* by a huge majority. Of course, many of them will be first time nationalist voters because the figures show the nationalist vote will continue to increase for some years yet. Many of them, however, are unionist, and many would not have been new voters. Rather, they were people who opted out of politics in the north, but who at last saw a chance to free themselves of the stigma attached to unionism for over a generation, as a political creed mired in the past, impossible to defend rationally and led by people they have been ashamed of and who did not represent them.

These people did not vote for David Trimble. They voted *yes* last Friday as a chance to dish Paisley and McCartney and demonstrate comprehensively that they do not represent unionism. To this extent, they agree with the description of the PUP that Paisley and McCartney are the leaders of "stupid unionism," which has made unionism the butt of comedy on TV and in clubs for decades.

To retain the support of these people, Trimble cannot compete with Paisley in being the hammer of republicanism. That's stupid unionism. After all, he's going to sit down with Gerry Adams. All the people from Bill Clinton to Tony Blair who praised Trimble last week will be pressing Trimble to do so. It's a tremendous leap for Trimble to take, but he needs to prepare his supporters for it.

First he needs to cop on, as modern unionists among the 160,000 already have, that, amazing as it may seem, the real threat to a prosperous, stable society in the north comes not from republicans, but from Paisleyism.

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PEACE TIMELINE

May 14 - British Prime Minister Tony Blair pledges to incorporate into legislation safeguards against "allies" of paramilitary groups abusing the accord. Blair says paramilitary groups must give "a clear and unequivocal commitment that there is an end to violence for good." In addition, he says, they must cooperate with an independent commission on the decommissioning of paramilitary arms and explosives, and no other organizations must be used as proxies for violence.

Loyalists declare the "war is over" as Ulster Freedom Fighter killer Michael Stone is cheered at an Ulster Democratic Party (UDP) "yes vote" rally in the Ulster Hall. Stone, jailed for killing three mourners and injuring others at the funeral of the Gibraltar three in Belfast in 1988, joined jubilant loyalists in a UDP rally organized in support of the Mitchell deal.

May 15 - The Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) announces a cease-fire, claiming it will allow "a proper climate" for polling. The LVF have murdered up to 12 Catholics since the INLA killed LVF leader Billy Wright last December in Long Kesh. The LVF is anxious to take advantage of the prisoner release program suggested in the terms of the Good Friday Agreement. Early release of prisoners is conditional upon their respective paramilitary groups' being on cease-fire.

May 17 - Britain and the US step up their support for the peace agreement at the weekend, securing the backing of world leaders at the G8 summit.

May 20 - As Blair prepares to visit Ireland, Irish tourist offices worldwide are put on bomb alert after an explosive device is delivered in the mail to the headquarters of the Irish Tourist Board. No group immediately claims responsibility, but there are clear signs of a loyalist paramilitary link.

May 20 - The IRA's weapons have been taken out of commission and put into dumps, according to Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams.

The Relatives for Justice (RJF) group rejects the report of Kenneth Bloomfield,

the British-government appointed Commissioner for Victims. Relatives of people killed or maimed by the British forces expressed their disappointment at his report 'We Will Remember Them' and the appointment of Britain's Minister for Security in the north, Adam Ingram, as Minister for Victims. Relatives claim that the two paragraphs entitled Truth and Justice, which deal with state killings, have the title in parentheses, thus diluting the legitimacy of the issue. Also, the RFJ claims they had to fight to get a meeting with Bloomfield during his consultation process while relatives of members of the crown forces killed in the war were accorded the privilege of 'house calls.'

May 22 - More than 80% of the northern electorate vote in the referendum, and 71.12% of voters back the Good Friday talks agreement. In the south, 94.4% of voters back the constitutional changes mandated by the agreement. Only 56.6% of voters in the south voted.

May 25 - Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern warns that people should not expect the IRA to decommission their weapons in the near future without progress on a number of other issues, such as RUC reform and the setting up of a human rights commission.

Adams says republicans would cooperate with the decommissioning body headed up by the Canadian General John De Chastelain.

The British and Irish governments hope to have decommissioning plans in place by the end of June.

The SDLP rejects Sinn Fein's formal offer of a nationalist pact for next month's elections to a Northern Ireland Assembly. Sinn Fein says it wants a pact with the SDLP to strengthen the nationalist vote for the proportional representation election to the 108-seat Assembly.

June 1 - In Belfast, Sinn Fein is denied access to the council's top posts, despite being the city's largest party. Unionists win Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor positions with the support of the SDLP.

June 2 - Former Hong Kong governor Chris Patten will head a commission that will review the role of Northern Ireland's 93% Protestant police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). Joining Patten are: Sir John Smith, former deputy commissioner in the Metropolitan Police; Kathleen O'Toole, a former Boston policewoman who is now Secretary for Public Safety in Massachusetts; Peter Smith QC, a leading Northern Ireland lawyer; Dr. Maurice Hayes, a former Northern Ireland ombudsman and a former senior civil servant; Professor Clifford Shearing, director of the Centre of Criminology at the University of Toronto; Dr. Gerald Lynch, president of John Jay College, New York; and Lucy Woods, chief executive of British Telecom in Northern Ireland. Ahern expresses disappointment that the British did not appoint more of the Irish government's nominees. Lynch is the only Irish-government nominee in the group.

June 3 - Sinn Fein will monitor new Derry mayor Joe Miller's performance after the DUP councilor pledges to ignore his new Sinn Fein deputy, Lynn Fleming.

June 4 - A bipartisan congressional delegation calls for a 25% increase in US aid to Ireland. Senator Torricelli (D-NJ) asks the Appropriations Committee to increase funding for the International Fund for Ireland by \$4.9 million to a total of \$24.5 million a year.

Sinn Fein warns that the Mitchell deal could collapse if the RUC is not disbanded.

June 9 - Britain paves the way for a police probe into a damaging leak of official details about Northern Irish peace efforts. The leak, which indicated that the British government railroaded the decision on the final composition of an advisory commission on reform of the north's RUC, was the second such incident in three months.

June 11 - The Police Commission meets for the first time. The group has until next summer to carry out a review of all aspects of the RUC and make recommendations for its reform.

June 15 - The British government defeats a Tory- and UUP-tabled amendment to link the release of paramilitary prisoners to the handing over of arms. The Tories warn that they will vote against the Bill at its Third Reading.

Action Requests

Write the letters below (or call), preferably in your own words, or as is. Be courteous. Have friends, organizations, business associates, etc., do the same. Mention your membership in PEC.

1. Judith A. Principe, Government Relations Representative USPS Stamp Committee, 475 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W. Washington, DC 20260

Message: The USPS has advised the American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC that it is considering issuing a St. Patrick's Day commemorative stamp next year. The PEC and its members have been urging the Stamp Committee since 1995 to issue a stamp to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Ireland's Great Hunger, a watershed event that led to massive emigration from Ireland to the US. These new Americans and their descendants did much to help build America. Therefore, I ask that the St. Patrick's Day stamp honor the contributions of these new Americans to the development of this nation. I suggest that the stamp pay tribute to the role of the Great Hunger victims in the cause of the Union. Indeed, much has been written on this topic, and Irish-American soldiers have been honored with monuments at Gettysburg and Antietam battlefields. Please contact the PEC if you require more information on this topic 914 947-2726.

PEC Great Hunger Stamp Campaign Produces Results

Members' efforts to get the United States Postal Service (USPS) to issue a stamp to commemorate Irish Americans' contributions to the development of this nation has produced results. USPS representative Earlene Fleming advised the PEC in late May that it is planning to issue a commemorative stamp for St. Patrick's Day next year. Ms. Fleming said that the USPS does not believe there is sufficient interest or cause to issue a Great Hunger commemorative, specifically.

The PEC has campaigned since 1995 for the USPS to issue a Great Hunger commemorative. The many Irish people who emigrated to the US 150 years ago seeking a better life fled Ireland at a time a fungus devastated the staple crop of the native population and the British government deliberately allowed people to die or leave the country. Those Irish people who came to the US risked their lives in the hope of something better on these shores. Many of those new Americans rose to prominence as politicians, industrialists, settlers of the West, and soldiers. Indeed, the contributions of Irish soldiers to the cause of the Union has been commemorated with statues at Gettysburg and Antietam.

The PEC urges you to continue your good work to get the USPS to honor the contributions of Irish Americans with the St. Patrick's Day stamp. Write to the Stamp Committee and urge them to consider a stamp design that honors the efforts of Irish Americans to build America since the arrival of so many Irish to this country during the Great Hunger. *See Action request on this page.*

Join the National Telephone Chain

Our National Telephone Chain (NTC) enables us to quickly contact participating members across the US, via telephone, to get them to call an important person such as the President of the US, concerning an issue of importance to the Irish American community. We have an automated system by which you receive a pre-recorded telephone message from PEC. The message provides you the name and phone number of the person to call and a sample message. It will also repeat the message. To join you must have an answering machine. Become part of the NTC by calling 800-777-6807. Leave your name, address, and a phone number that is connected to an answering machine.

To Join Or Renew Your Membership PEC-AIEF

- [] New Membership \$25 [] Membership Renewal \$25
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Members receive the monthly *American Irish Newsletter*.

Name _____

Address _____

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Phone number () _____

Name of your Congressman/woman _____

Make checks payable to AIEF. Mail to 54 South Liberty Drive, Stony Point, NY 10980. To change your membership or renewal, or for information, call (800) 777-6807 (Visa/MasterCard only).

American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC
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