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American Irish Newsletter - January 1997

American Ireland Education Foundation - PEC

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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 22, Number 1

January 1997

Letter Writing: The Heart of Irish American Activism

In November's issue of the *American Irish Newsletter*, the Offensive Situations column on page 2 informed members that, once again, **Hallmark Cards** was producing offensive anti-Irish cards in its St. Patrick's Day line. Members were asked to write letters to Hallmark expressing their outrage that Hallmark was once again depicting the Irish as silly drunken fools.

Soon after, Hallmark contacted the PEC complaining that, because of the PEC, they were receiving a lot of mail attacking them for the offensive St. Patrick's Day cards. At first, they tried to deny the charge but, when faced with incontrovertible evidence from the PEC, they stopped their denials.

The deluge of mail and the quick response that the PEC received from Hallmark are perfect examples of how important organized letter writing and phone calls through the PEC Action Network is. This is how you, the individual, can make a difference and influence national leaders, companies etc.

An even better example of how effective the PEC network is the fact that, several months prior to the PEC's letter writing campaign to Hallmark, the same report of anti-Irish cards appeared in a prominent Irish-American newspaper. When this was reported, there was no deluge of letters to Hallmark. **There was no action taken by Hallmark. Why?**

The answer is simple. Newspapers generate news and often discussion. They do not generate significant action. This is the specialty of the PEC. The PEC's action network of letter writers and phone call makers is the most important weapon in all of Irish American activism. That's right. The vast majority of mail generated over the years has been done through the PEC action network. It makes sense as the PEC was the initiator of the organized letter writing campaign formula that has been put to use by the Irish American community. This means that **YOU**, the letter writer and phone call maker, are the centerpiece of every success that we have enjoyed over the years. That's quite an honor.

So keep up the good work. Respond to the action requests in the American Irish Newsletter and use the PEC Telephone Hotline (914) 429-7849. The power is in your hands.

Newsbits by Kathy Regan

BBC Northern Ireland issued a directive which said that, during the entire week leading up to November 11, the news could only be given by newscasters who wear a poppy, a symbol of the British-loyalist tradition. This flies in the face of everything the Nationalist people have been striving to achieve in terms of parity of esteem and also flies in the face of a moral absolute which dictates that no one tradition should force its symbols upon another. Even worse, the BBC in London said that there is no written policy on this matter. The directive is something that BBC Northern Ireland dreamed up and is not officially part of a wider policy. That means that BBC Northern Ireland presenters are the only ones in that huge corporation to whom this stricture applies. Since many of them are on six month or one year contracts, nationalist newscasters are forced to wear a unionist symbol if they wish to keep their jobs. (It is paramount to asking Mr. Paisley to wear a shamrock in his pulpit. What an uproar that would cause. It seems that the decision to force newscasters to wear poppies was made in response to unionist assertions that BBC Northern Ireland was a hotbed of republicanism. What better way of diminishing their ire than by parading

cont. on page 4

PLEASE BE GENEROUS

The PEC still needs your generous financial support. Soon, you will be receiving our fund-raising appeal. Please give generously when you receive our appeal.

INSIDE

From the North	3
President Andrew Jackson . . .	4
Sectarianism in Ireland . . R&D	
British Dirty Tricks . . . R&D	
Irish Government Tour	5
Roisin McAliskey	6

OUR VIEW

"An apology demanded is an apology diminished." That is what Irish Government Minister of State, Avril Doyle TD, stated when asked to endorse the PEC campaign to get the British government to apologize to the Irish people for its role in causing the catastrophic results of the Great Hunger.

It is Ms. Doyle's contention that for the Irish government to demand an apology from the British government would be demeaning to the modern Irish state. She described Ireland as a proud nation that stands at the forefront of Europe and it would be beneath the Irish to ask for an apology.

We respectfully disagree. While all Irish people are proud of the gains that Ireland has made both politically and economically this century, in order to heal the wounds of history in her relations with Great Britain, an apology for Britain's role in Ireland's greatest tragedy is necessary and there is no shame in demanding one.

In recent times many nations have apologized to others for past misdeeds. Does this diminish the status of the recipients of the apologies? Not at all. For example, the United States has long demanded that Japan acknowledge its wartime atrocities and apologize for them. The Japanese Prime Minister did last year. Does this apology diminish the prestige of the United States? Hardly. The British government recently apologized to the Czechs and Slovaks for Britain's allowing of Hitler's aggression against them to go unchecked. Does this diminish the standing of the modern nations of the Czech and Slovak republics? The French government has apologized to the Jews for wartime collaboration during the Holocaust. Israel diminished? No.

The PEC will continue to campaign for a British apology. The Irish people and the diaspora deserve it. Hopefully, the Irish government will see the light and join with us. (See Irish Government's US Tour-Page 5)

Offensive Situations

by Paul Newman, *New York*

Thanks to California PEC member Roger McGrath, we have been made aware that, once again, another company is trying to make a few bucks by slandering Irish people as alcoholics.

The **Wireless Mail Corporation**, which puts out a catalog of merchandise and is aligned with National Public Radio recently advertised an "authentic Irishman sign." The sign reads, "Irishman for hire, for singing, dancing and carrying on---experienced drinking companion."

This is a slur on Irish people. Not only does it contain the usual drinking attacks, but the Irish are also portrayed as clowns. We must not tolerate this. No other ethnic group would be portrayed in this manner.

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Please Respond to the Action
Requests on Page 6

Please write the following letter in your own words or as is to:
Wireless Mail Inc., PO Box 64422, St. Paul, MN 55164-0428

To whom this may concern:

I am outraged by your advertising for sale of a wall sign portraying the Irish as alcoholics. I will not tolerate your trying to make a profit by racist stereotypes of the Irish as drunkards. Would you portray other "authentic" ethnic groups in this manner? I doubt it. I was informed by the American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC of your actions.

Sincerely,

Send Offensive Situations to: Paul Newman,
9 Deltic Road, New City, NY 10956

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From the North: The true face of Major

by Robert Heatley, *co-founder of the Campaign for Democracy, a predominantly Protestant organization that supports a united Ireland*

In these columns we have written about the two main reasons why John Major and his government have sabotaged the Irish peace process: The British Tory Party's innate and inexorable Unionism (namely, addiction to colonialism) and its present wafer-thin hold on governmental office. One other reason is that it has not been possible, as of yet, to bring sufficient pressure on it from within Britain, Labour being deficient in this respect, or from the international community within which the USA is taking the lead.

In a few months time Major's discredited government might not be there and, in the future, it may yet be possible to step up these kinds of pressures on any British government which might replace it. The Tory party is in a state of chaos and near hysteria; It's familiar old world collapsed many years ago, but it is only just now that reality is getting through to it. The Empire has gone, the Western European Federation (EU) is bearing down on them and in this dangerous and unfamiliar territory, the Scottish are intent upon changing the UK's colonialist constitution. A growing number of Scots want self-rule.

Any American readers of this piece who are of a Republican inclination and regard themselves as Conservatives need not indulge in undue sympathy for the hapless British Tories. As Mary Ellen Synon points out in a recent issue of Ireland's *Sunday Business Post*, British conservatism is not the same thing as the American brand, although many Americans, especially some in high office, appear to think so. In crucial ways it is antithetical to the American variety which is more akin to that of the Irish in its anti-colonialist manifestation.

Space prohibits me from elaborating on Mary Ellen's intriguing analysis, but interested conservatives can look at it for themselves. Some on the NSC and in the State

Department might well do so.

To clarify the position somewhat, let's look at some of the people and influences with whom Major chooses to identify himself - the Orange Order, for instance. This body is a component part of the Ulster Unionist Council (the Unionist party in other words) and it, along with the medieval arch-bigot Ian Paisley, plays a strong part in determining that party's policies and actions. These, in turn, over the past two years have been given, under Major, the British Tory Party's full support and sanction. This fact caused the previous IRA ceasefire to fail. Given Major's rejection of the renewed Hume/Adams initiative, he has caused the one in prospect to be aborted.

The Orange Order was responsible for the summer's sectarian mayhem at Drumcree, dragging Major's friends Trimble, certain Loyalist paramilitaries and Paisley along in its wake. It is now convoluting realities in order to "justify" the violent picketing of a Catholic church at Harryville, Antrim; although, now that this action has backfired, some of its leading spokesmen are attempting to distance themselves from it - as too is Paisley who always does so while dropping his credulous followers in it.

A spurious analogy is being drawn between ordinary men, women and children going quietly, separately and peaceably to their place of worship and an organized political body of unionists (dressed in Orange regalia) which wants to parade through the village of Dunloy where the inhabitants regard such a march as triumphalist and threatening. They are not necessarily opposed to it. They just want to be consulted as to its terms.

Even one prominent unionist has felt it politically correct to dissociate himself from what is going on. The Rev. Martin Smyth, Westminster MP and lately the Order's Grand Master, has resigned under pressure. In its

search for a replacement, the Order has gone, you might say, somewhat 'down market' and it has chosen an obscure accountant Robert Saulters. According to him Labour party leader Tony Blair has "already sold his birthright by marrying a Romanist. He is not loyal to his religion. He is a turncoat."

It is with the politics of such people that Mr. Major has identified over the past two years. No wonder the peace process has withered and needs to be revived? But there is a method in Mr. Major's madness. People like Mr. Saulters and his fellow Orange member David Trimble, no matter how much he might in secret abhor them, are necessary to Mr. Major for the purpose of British strategy. The threat to the UK's constitution has to be stemmed at time when Scottish separatism is on the upsurge and the EU is in flux.

This is particularly so given the relative success of the Irish economy after kicking the British out. It is now predicted to surpass the UK in GDP per head in the early years of the next millennium. The leader of the Scottish National Party, Alex Salmon, has noticed Ireland's progress and has referred to it as an example for his country. Is it pique in this respect too which has made it impossible for Major and his British Tories to empathize with the most accommodating Irish government that they are likely to have to deal with? His renegeing on the inter-governmental approach and humiliation of the Irish government with his public binning of the Hume/Adams proposals was as good as saying: I still regard you as my colonized minions.

But maybe not! He is inclined to treat the Germans and the French in a similar manner inside the EU.

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Newsbits *cont. from page 1*
before them the same uppity journalists who had provoked their wrath in the first place, suitably chastened and bedecked with a bright symbol of their repentance. "Poppy that Croppy."
(Andersonstown News, 11/9/96)

The RUC has begun a series of raids on offices of community groups and educational centers in West Belfast. Additionally, their volunteers are being assaulted. Computers and floppy disk files of the physically handicapped, of socio-economic distress, of personal, family and marital problems are among the intelligence material captured by the RUC. Among the offices raided in the intelligence trawling activity are the Upper Springfield Resource Center and Upper Springfield Development Trust.
(Andersonstown News 11/23/96)

Relations between Catholic and Protestant workers in the Montupet plant have deteriorated since Drumcree. Sectarian graffiti has sprung up on the walls of toilets and cars of Catholic employees have been sprayed with paint. A Catholic worker was even warned to stop wearing a Notre Dame football t-shirt. However, no one has said anything about Protestant workers who have sectarian tattoos attacking the Pope, the Catholic Church, etc. on their arms. These tattoos cause considerable offense to Catholics, yet no attempt is made to even cover them up.
(Andersonstown News 11/2/96)

When the first pints are pulled at the new Ulster Rangers (Loyalist) Supporters Club, the beer might leave a sour taste in fans' mouths. A band of West Belfast Celtic fans hatched a plot designed to make every true blue turn red with anger. When the workmen's backs were turned, they threw holy medals and scapulars once blessed by Catholic priests into the foundation and watched the concrete being poured over them. One Celtic fan said, "We're going to enjoy the match in the knowledge that the latest Rangers club has had a good Catholic blessing. Maybe it will lead to a new era of friendship and cooperation between the teams and supporters."
(Andersonstown News, 11/16/96)

President Andrew Jackson Proud To Be An Irishman

by Bob West, *Illinois*

Andrew Jackson, twice President of the United States, was born in South Carolina of Irish immigrant parents from Carrickfergus, County Antrim, who came to America in 1765. Two of Andrew's brothers, John and Hugh were born in Ireland. Andrew and another brother, Robert, were taken prisoner by the British after Tarleton's massacre of Beauford's regiment at the Waxhaws area of the Carolinas. Both boys were severely wounded by the sabre of a British officer whose boots they refused to clean. Robert died soon after from the effects of the cut while Andrew bore the mark of the Englishman's sword to his grave. But he paid back the deep debt at New Orleans. Dr. Bigger, eminent Irish antiquarian, traced the Jackson family in Ireland back to mid-16th century and expresses his belief they were descended from Shane O'Neill known in Irish history as "Shane the Proud". Michael O'Brien, in his *A Hidden Phase of American History*, details numerous similar changes in Irish family names resulting from the Penal Laws. One of County Antrim's Jacksons, Rev. William Jackson, was hanged by the English as a "rebel" in 1798. About 70 years ago when visiting Jackson's home, The Hermitage, near Nashville, TN, Michael O'Brien found among the Jackson papers his original certificate dated March 23, 1819, as a member of "The Hibernian Society of the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland", in Philadelphia. Jackson gloried in the fact that he was Irish and that God enabled him to be the means of England's humiliation and defeat at New Orleans. About 70 years ago, Mr. John D. Crimmons showed Michael O'Brien several original letters from Jackson, all of which disposed effectively of the absurdity of calling Jackson anything but Irish. For example, in reply to a letter from Dr. W. J. MacNeven, president of "The Shamrock Friendly Association of New York", dated February 1, 1819, Jackson said: "The name of your society awakens the liveliest emotions. It brings to view a gallant nation, ceaselessly but vainly struggling against oppression, and presents in the same picture our own hospitable land, the asylum for the oppressed from whatever shores they may come." Jackson's letter to James Gowan of Philadelphia, dated Hermitage, July 22, 1830, called attention to the fact that "it is known my parents were Irish."

"If we judge from his qualities," says Dr. C.T. Brady in "The True Andrew Jackson", Jackson was distinctly Irish. He never recognized or admitted any other blood in his veins. He joined the Hibernian Society of Philadelphia in 1819. He did not hesitate to describe himself as of Irish origin on several occasions. On June 22, 1833, Jackson attended a banquet of the Charitable Irish Society at Boston and, in his address, said: "I feel much gratified at this testimony of respect shown me by the Charitable Irish Society of this city. It is with great pleasure that I see so many of the countrymen of my father assembled on this occasion. I have always been proud of my ancestry and of being descended from that noble race, and rejoice that I am so nearly allied to a country which has so much to recommend it to the good wishes of the world. Would to God, sir, that Irishmen on the other side of the great water enjoyed the contentment, happiness and liberty that they enjoy here. I am well aware, sir, that Irishmen have never been backward in giving their support to the cause of liberty. They have fought, sir, for this country valiantly, and I have no doubt, would fight again if necessary, but I hope it will be long before the institutions of our country need support of that kind." Andrew Jackson was a true Irish American.

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Sectarianism in Ireland

by Captain James Kelly, *Dublin, Ireland*

Sectarian politics have been the curse of Ireland for centuries. Its latest manifestation is the attacks on church-going Catholics in Ballymena, Co. Antrim.

As the *Irish Times* described it, "For the last three months, loyalist thugs have waylaid local Catholics on their way to Mass at the weekend in Ballymena, on the pretext that they are administering a quid pro quo for the opposition of Catholics in Dunloy (a small village also in Antrim) to Orange parades. It is a typical piece of perverted logic to justify bullying and blood-lust."

What is the Orange Order, which promotes sectarianism as a means of maintaining British power in Northern Ireland. It has roots in British militarism. As General Kitson, the British counter-insurgency guru who initiated war in Ireland in 1970, put it, "The British regular army was first raised in the seventeenth century. Suppression of the Irish was coupled with the defense of the Protestant religion as one of the main reasons for its existence."

The Orange Order exists for essentially the same reasons, now translated as defense of the Union with Britain in conjunction with the defense of Protestantism, which finds expression in the vicious anti-Catholicism shown at Ballymena.

British responsibility for this malignant influence on the body politic in Ireland is clear. When, in the 1880's, it seemed that Ireland might gain Home Rule by democratic means, the British Conservative reaction was to revive a discredited Orange Order to block its passage through parliament. Randolph Churchill was the man selected to do the job. He did it as

Lord Cushendun, the official biographer of the Orange Order, states, *The Loyal Orange Institution...had fallen into not unmerited disrepute prior to 1886. Few men of education or standing belonged to it. But its system of local lodges supplied the ready-made framework of an effective organization. A number of country gentlemen, clergymen of all Protestant denominations, business and professional men, farmers and the better class of artisans in Belfast and other towns joined the lodges. Instead of being a somewhat disreputable and obsolete survival, it became a highly respectable as well as an exceedingly powerful political organization.*

By coming to Ulster Hill in Belfast and waving the flag of Empire, Churchill succeeded in breathing life into a dormant dinosaur of the past and used it as a sectarian vehicle to thwart the political will of the majority of the Irish people. That remains the position to the present day in Northern Ireland, with the sectarian Orange Order, through intimidation and threat, still a dominating factor in the political process.

Nowhere was this better illustrated than at Drumcree, Co. Armagh this year, where the forces of the Crown, British Army and RUC were openly defied when they attempted to put a halt to a major display of provocative Orange supremacy. In the end, the forces of alleged law and order surrendered to anarchic Orangeism.

During the confrontation, the Unionist leaders, David Trimble and Ian Paisley, strutted and postured, one attempting to outdo the other, thundering and blustering, in support of the politics of intimidation, threat and, indeed, assassination, to which the

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death of an innocent taxi driver at the hands of loyalists, testified.

In the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the less sophisticated supporters of the Orange philosophy, described by the *Irish Times*, should follow the lead of their mentors, Trimble and Paisley, and take upon themselves to teach Catholics a lesson in Ballymena. Apart from harassing people on the way to religious services, Catholic churches and schools have been the subject of arson attacks and people have been driven from their homes in recent days.

In many ways, the actions and the tactics of the Orange Order parallel those of the Ku Klux Klan. The USA found it necessary to stand up to the Klan and undermine it as a force for political evil. Equally, it is the responsibility of the British government to take on the Orange Order and create a situation where formalized sectarianism and indeed, racism, is removed from the political stage in Northern Ireland.

America, especially through Bill Clinton, has contributed much to the Irish peace process. Perhaps it is now necessary that someone with his power and sense of justice should remind Britain that the sinister Orange Order must be brought to heel. Vice-President Al Gore might take the issue on board also, assured that he would win the hearts of fair-minded Irish people everywhere, if he helped remove the cancer of sectarianism as a political weapon from the Irish scene.

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British Dirty Tricks Exposed

by Sean Kane, *Director of Operations*

Will wonders never cease? We may be used to papers owned by Rupert Murdoch engaging as a willing participant in British dirty tricks/smear campaigns, but the role of a Murdoch paper exposing a British smear campaign is a new one.

It all began when a British tabloid, the *Mail on Sunday*, reported that British intelligence had warned President Clinton and Prime Minister Major that Senator George Mitchell's top aide, Martha Pope, had been engaged in an ongoing romantic relationship with Sinn Fein leader and IRA legend Gerard Kelly. British intelligence reported that the two had "sneaked away for weekend trysts" that were monitored by MI5.

Usually stories from the notorious British tabloids don't go very far (unless they're about Princess Di's love life or Fergie's waistline). But one of the top reporters for the *New York Post* (Murdoch's New York paper and a very anti-Irish nationalist publication) happened to be in London and Ireland when the story broke. Deborah Orin, the *Post* Washington Correspondent thought she had a juicy exclusive that had not made the American papers and dutifully called the story in. The *Post* jumped all over it. On December 2, 1996, the front page of the *New York Post* exclaimed, **SEX SCANDAL PERILS IRA TRUCE**. Inside the paper the *Post* reported the story directly from the *Mail*. In the story, Congressman Peter King was the first to raise the possibility of British dirty tricks, noting that the story broke in the middle of Mitchell's run for Secretary of State and days after the British rejected Sinn Fein proposals that would lead to a renewal of the ceasefire.

Mitchell angrily denied the charge. Pope stated that she had never even met Kelly. Kelly called it rubbish. Even Northern Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew had to admit the story was false. With the British admitting that

the story was untrue, they obviously hoped that the story would wither on the vine, as reports of our supposed greatest ally smearing top US officials and interfering in internal US matters caused alarm in Washington. But it seems that the *New York Post* was none too pleased about getting an exclusive load of nonsense and they decided that a little payback was due.

First on December 3, the *Post* reported that "sources close to the peace process believe that British intelligence planted the story to destroy Mitchell's chances to become Secretary of State." Then the story outlined British fears about Mitchell at the State Department making Northern Ireland a priority and how Britain doesn't appreciate American involvement in Northern Ireland. Then the story detailed Major's rejection of the Mitchell principles in January and how this led to the ending of the IRA ceasefire. Too bad the *Post* never deemed it fit to report this matter when the actual event occurred. Readers of the *Post* are used to the paper never faulting the British government for its handling of the process and usually blaming the IRA for everything that is wrong in Ireland including the weather. Readers familiar with *Post* reporting on Irish matters, after reading the *Post* attacks on the Brits, could be excused for having heart attacks or falling out of their chairs.

But wait it gets even better. The *Post*, obviously still fuming at Mother England, then did an expose in its Monday edition (12/9/96) on the history of British dirty tricks in Northern Ireland. The expose, written by John O'Mahoney (always a voice of reason at the *Post*), detailed British smear campaigns and the working of British intelligence in Northern Ireland for more than twenty years. It contained interviews with former British Intelligence agents Colin Wallace and Fred Holyrod. Both agents detailed their work in British dirty tricks

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campaigns in the 1970's which included smearing John Hume in an attempt to suggest that he was misusing charitable contributions for his own personal use, attempting to link the republican movement and the IRA to the Soviets and the communist bloc etc... The story continued to claim that the British were out to get Mitchell and now they were showing that this is nothing new and the Brits have been doing this for decades. Holy Cow! It was an excellent expose that must have shaken the foundations in merry ole England.

We should not take this new development at Murdoch's *New York Post* as pointing to new nationalist sympathies at the *Post*. What it does show is that, when you cross Murdoch, he unleashes his venom in a full scale attack on you. Lucky for us, those guilty of crossing the Murdoch empire were our old friends in the British government. And what's even luckier for us is that, when you want to attack the Brits, all you need is the truth as your weapon. If Murdoch holds a long grudge, we may be able to look forward to some good reporting on the conflict in the North from the most unlikely of sources. Don't hold your breath. Pretty soon the Irish will be thugs and terrorists and the British will be the good guys once again according to the *Post*. Ah it was fun while it lasted. For a week, we got some good reporting on the realities behind the role of the British government in Northern Ireland. Thanks for the memories Rupert.

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Irish Government's US Tour

by Albert Doyle, *Vice-President*

As part of the wind-up of Famine anniversary activities, the Irish government is sponsoring a nationwide U.S. speaking tour under the direction of Avril Doyle, TD, Minister of State. On Dec. 8th, PEC National President John Finucane, Vice-President Albert Doyle and Director of Operations Sean Kane attended the New York session at New York University. There Minister Doyle presided over presentations by Professors Kevin Whelan of Notre Dame, Luke Gibbons of Dublin City University and Robert Scally of N.Y.U.. Highlights and some comments follow:

All of the speakers were at pains to distance themselves from "revisionist" opinion about the famine, that is from those who downplay the suffering of the famine and British responsibility for it. Doyle opened her remarks by laying blame for the deaths during the Great Hunger on the "wholly inadequate response to the failure of the potato crop by the British government." This was a welcome surprise to many because of the previous statements by Doyle where she has minimized the role of the then British government in the tragedy.

The Professors gave interesting lectures touching on the famine and its impacts on the Irish people at home and in their diaspora. Whelan gave a fine presentation on the cultural impacts on the Irish people as a result of the famine. Professor Gibbons also did an excellent presentation on the political impact of the Great Hunger. Professor Scally was critical of the recently enacted New York State legislation mandating the teaching of the Irish famine as part of public school curriculum, as is the Jewish Holocaust. Prof. Scally suggested that the whole idea should be put on hold while a congress of scholars tries to reach an agreement on exactly what to teach, a task he seemed to believe was nearly impossible. It is noteworthy that all other members of the panel, including the Irish Minister, said that they supported the New York State

legislation to teach the Great Hunger in schools. Minister Doyle exhorted the audience not to compare the Great Hunger with the Jewish "Holocaust." From the audience James Mullin pointed out that New Jersey had no trouble coming up with an "Irish Holocaust" curriculum, which he exhibited.

In response to PEC President John Finucane's suggestion that the Irish Government should now join in the campaign to demand a British apology for the wrongs committed against the Irish people in British handling of the famine (as the British have done in the case of the Maori people of New Zealand and in the case of the Czech and Slovak people for Britain's appeasement of Hitler), Minister Doyle responded that "an apology requested is an apology diminished", that it would be demeaning for Ireland to suggest such a thing, and that it is up to the British to render an apology without being asked. The implication was that the Irish Government would deign to accept such an apology if it were given - but she didn't say this quite so clearly and we're not sure they would!

In her concluding remarks Minister Doyle expressed the view that the highest priority of the present government of Ireland was to get Sinn

Fein to the "peace process" negotiating table. She highly praised John Hume but then made the ridiculous assertion that the English government is doing everything in its power to get Sinn Fein to the talks. It was noteworthy that the US representatives of Sinn Fein were apparently not invited to the meeting. Nor did the Minister express a view as to what is expected if Sinn Fein were admitted to the talks.

There was no mention of the big "rock concert" finale for the Famine Commemoration scheduled for June 1997 at Millstreet, Co. Cork. The PEC has vociferously opposed this event as being more of a cheap commercialized tourist promotion than a dignified serious commemoration of the Great Hunger. Too controversial?

The Minister also said that the Commemoration was being brought to a close in 1997 so as to allow time to prepare for the 200th anniversary commemoration or the United Irishmen revolt of 1798. We expressed the view to the Minister that, since the Irish Government has repeatedly told us that they are concerned that the Famine Anniversary not become "a weapon in modern cultural wars," meaning of course in the struggle for a united, democratic- Ireland, then they must be extremely concerned about the 1798 Commemoration. "Not at all" was the response. We'll see.

Turn to action request #2 on page 6

Grand Marshal to Promote Britain's Role in Great Hunger

On December 10, the New York St. Patrick's Day parade committee announced that John Lahey, President of Quinnipiac College in Connecticut, will be the Grand Marshal for this year's New York St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Lahey has vowed to use his position as Grand Marshal to draw attention to Britain's role in causing the deaths of well over a million people during the Great Hunger. The theme of this year's parade is the commemoration of the Great Hunger and Lahey seems to be an appropriate choice to lead the march.

The PEC, which has been the leading promoter in Irish America of the Great Hunger since 1982, would like to congratulate John Lahey on his selection as Grand Marshal. We are glad to hear that he intends to use his position to promote awareness of the Great Hunger.

Action Requests

Write the letters below (or call), preferably in your own words, or a/s. Have friends, business associates, etc., do the same.

Mention in your letters that you are a member of the American Irish PEC.

1. Hon. Trent Lott
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
Ph# (202) 224-3135
Fax# (202) 224-2262

Message: Please use your good office to keep the pressure on the British government to allow Sinn Fein into peace talks as soon as the IRA calls a new ceasefire.

2. Irish Ambassador
2234 Massachusetts Ave.
Washington, DC 20008
Ph# (202) 462-3939
Fax# (202) 232-5993

Message: Please advise the Irish government to join the campaign demanding that the British government issue an apology to the Irish people for its role in causing the deaths of over one million people during the Great Hunger. Other countries have apologized for their past misdeeds. It would be demeaning to the Irish people if the British didn't apologize.

Outrage: Britain's Treatment of Roisin McAliskey

The British government has come under fire from human and civil rights groups in Ireland, Britain and the United States for its treatment of the daughter of Irish civil rights activist Bernadette McAliskey.

McAliskey was arrested by the RUC on November 20, 1996. She was held in Castlereagh for seven days and then shipped to Holloway Prison in England because she was wanted under a German extradition warrant. German authorities are demanding McAliskey's extradition in regards to an IRA attack on a British base in Germany last February.

Civil and human rights activists are appalled at what happened next. On the morning of November 30, McAliskey was transferred to Belmarsh prison, an all-male prison that has never had a woman inmate in its history. The situation was even more egregious due to the fact that McAliskey was almost five months pregnant at the time. Belmarsh prison lacks even the basic facilities for the treatment of female prisoners, not to mention pregnant ones. Furthermore, the prison doctor in Belmarsh informed McAliskey that, if she did not receive proper medical attention, she was in grave danger of miscarriage.

The American Irish Political Education Committee (PEC) immediately joined in the campaign to see that the human and civil rights of McAliskey were respected and that she and her unborn child received the proper medical attention. The PEC raised the plight of Ms. McAliskey with the British, Irish, American and German governments.

McAliskey was denied bail by a British judge and returned to Belmarsh on December 6. Because of the mounting pressure on the British government from around the globe, McAliskey was transferred back to Holloway women's prison where she could receive proper medical attention. She is still imprisoned under the German extradition warrant.

Campaigners continue to appeal to the German government to rescind its request for McAliskey's extradition. Bernadette McAliskey has stated that, not only has her daughter not even been to Germany, but the composite photo of the women in question looks nothing like her daughter.

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