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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 22, Number 12

December 1997

Send PEC A Christmas Donation!

Dear friends of PEC,

Please don't forget us this Christmas! Like other **active** organization, PEC continuously needs its members financial support. Remember, we are **constantly spending** in order to carrying out work. Your support will assure that PEC remains financially strong able to carry out its ongoing public relations work. Our work and your support are necessary to advance the nationalist/republican agenda in the Irish peace process.

Even though talks are underway, **there is no guarantee** that a democratic solution will be achieved that will lead to a united Ireland. That is why PEC's work must continue unabated. We must rally the American people behind the nationalist agenda. We must constantly be contacting by mail many thousands of concerned Americans across the United States. We need to keep a constant flow of communications going to the White House, Congress, etc. We must constantly demonstrate unity and support for the nationalist agenda. **The struggle for democracy is far from over!**

We must also continue to reach out to concerned Americans, so that we can intensify the pressure on the US Postal Service to issue a Great Hunger commemorative stamp. You know how effective PEC can be when it is well supported. Thanks to PEC Britain, **for the first time ever**, has acknowledged its responsibility for much of the death and suffering of the Great Hunger.

Campaigning for the commemorative stamp will create Irish American awareness in the United States at the right time -- during the peace talks. Such awareness will generate support for a united Ireland. **(To order FREE postcards that support the commemorative stamp call 1 800 777-6807.)**

PEC and its members **make the issues** by generating the bulk of necessary letters, phone calls, post-cards, etc., to the President and other people important to the peace process.

Do not be misled into thinking that all Irish American organizations and newspapers are action networks: **NOT AT ALL!** As a matter of fact the opposite is true in many cases. Most Irish American organizations don't even discuss the issues. The Irish American newspapers discuss the issues, **but they do not organize and direct action.** That is the specialty of the PEC. In other words, without PEC network involvement, there would be very few significant letter-writing and phone-call campaigns. Just think of what would happen if PEC was not supported by its members.

Please take the following steps:

1. **Send the PEC a donation of whatever you can afford.** To charge a donation call (800) 777-6807 (VISA/MC only). Make your donation payable to American Ireland Education Foundation and mail to: AIEF-PEC, 54 South Liberty Drive, Stony Point, NY 10980. **DONATIONS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE.**
2. **Write the letters requested in the Action Requests column on page six.** These letters are very important in furthering the issues we are currently pursuing.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year,
John J. Finucane
National President

OUR VIEW

When Tony Blair was elected Britain's new Prime Minister, we assumed he would quickly get genuine negotiations started, once an IRA ceasefire was in place. We still believe this is the case, even though after almost 6 months substantive negotiations have not yet begun. We also understand why Blair and his Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam have to be careful how they handle the Ulster Unionist Party talks team. But we also expect him to be sensitive in dealing with the nationalist/republican negotiators, who are cooperating.

What we don't understand is why Prime Minister Blair has not yet given the UUP an ultimatum to begin ongoing substantive talks. If he coddles the UUP for too long, the peace could breakdown. He would then have to bear the responsibility. He also has an obligation to the nationalist/republican people. We hope that he too is not afraid to confront the unionists. As President Clinton said, everybody must take risks for peace, and that includes Tony Blair.

By now everybody knows that it is the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) leadership that is preventing progress in the peace process. They simply refuse to discuss the core issues. They will continue to do so as long as the British government is on their side. The British government must treat everybody as equals; must make the UUP negotiate in good faith; and be prepared to work with the Irish government to find a just solution that will lead to a united Ireland. That solution, of course, must be approved by all-Ireland and not just a less than 20% unionist minority residing in the north.

If the British government does not take the appropriate steps to pressure the UUP, one can only assume that the Blair government is colluding with the unionists. Most unionist politicians want the talks to collapse. Talks mean compromise and they are not willing to do that.

Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year
from the PEC officers and staff

Senator Al D'Amato Slurs the Irish

by John J. Finucane, *National President*

New York's *Village Voice* reported on November 11 that the US Senator from New York, Al D'Amato publicly degraded the Irish. His comments were made on October 25 at a reception in Washington, DC sponsored by the National Italian American Foundation. According to the *Village Voice* he said, "Conclusive proof that the explorer [Christopher Columbus] was Italian, the junior senator explained, could be found in the ship logs for the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria. Those records....reflected no stockpile of alcohol aboard the ships. Therefore, no one could rightfully conclude than an Irishman could have lasted six months without liquor."

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Instead of degrading his Irish American constituents, he should be out front, in public, promoting our issues. Why is he not using the mainstream news media to promote Ireland's reunification? He is out front for other ethnic groups, why not the Irish? What ever happened to the MacBride Principles bill he introduced many years ago?

COURSE OF ACTION: Call, write, etc.: Honorable Al D'Amato, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20500, Phone# 202 224-4451, E-mail# senator_al@damato.senate.gov

Dear Mr. D'Amato:

I am very disturbed by your October 25th stereotyping of the American Irish community. Your behavior is disgraceful and insulting. Instead of degrading us you should be out front via the mainstream news media promoting a united Ireland.

Sincerely,
signature

Please Respond
To The Action Requests on Page 6

From the North: Building Bridges Works Both Ways

by Robert Heatley, *Belfast (co-founder of the Campaign for Democracy, a predominantly Protestant organization based in Northern Ireland)*

Ireland's neo-unionists, pro-partionists, and fifth columnists considered Ireland's recent presidential campaign a great opportunity. The event was the candidacy of the Northern nationalist Professor Mary McAleese. Not having done anything to help secure peace during the Hume-Adams-Reynolds initiative, they had been discredited and had fallen on bad times. They could control most sections of the press, especially that press owned by Tony O'Reilly. Likewise they have many friends in RTE television, but nothing could protect their kind of pro-British politics from becoming ultimately discredited.

Spin doctoring and dirty tricks could not obscure what they really were about -- throwing a lifeline to Britain and the Unionists which, for many of them, was a well-paid and ego-enhancing career path. Availing of leaked documents from Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs, they set out on a smear campaign to try to present the nationalist from Belfast as a supporter of the IRA kind. How could such a person, they opined, possibly be a 'bridge builder' to the Unionists? As a northern nationalist, McAleese was detested by the unionists.

Pleased with themselves, they thought they had a sure win with this one. McAleese is an unapologetic Irish nationalist, of course, and it was not long before a core principle of that kind of politics, especially of its Republican variety, was to come out. She had a record of striving to be a peace-maker and, as such, a bridge builder. Several prominent churchmen from a variety of Protestant churches wrote to the Irish press to express their appreciation of her past efforts. The neo-unionists cannot differentiate -- in a Northern context -- between Unionism and Protestantism.

Since the British imposed partition, unionism and Protestantism have been lumped together. That was not always the case. A present reminder of this fact is the program of activities planned for 1998 throughout the North, involving Protestants and Catholics, commemorat-

ing the bi-centenary of the United Irishmen and their rebellion against British colonialism in 1798. The present divisions are not forever, and the inclusive, secular and pluralist principles of the United Irishmen, underpinning the emerging new Ireland, are what will overcome the divisions sowed by British colonialism.

To this sort of program, **real bridge building**, the neo-colonial apologists for the British occupation have nothing whatsoever to contribute. The Irish electorate within the 26 county State realize this much and they voted in the Northern nationalist overwhelmingly. But the John Brutons, Eoghan Harrises, Conor Cruise O'Briens and Ruth Dudley Edwards etc., have not gone away. They seem to have a strong grip on Ireland's radio and TV (Radio Telefis Eireann (RTE) especially. RTE policy makers seem to think that building bridges to the Unionists means that Irish democrats (nationalists and republicans) must act like dependents seeking the approbation of its Master. Whatever you do, don't dare attempt to analyze just what Unionism is. As Tim Pat Coogan (scholar, editor, author) has written, it is time for RTE to challenge the unionists. Why don't RTE interviewers ask their favorite "moderate" Unionist, Ken Maginnes of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP): just what are you doing to build bridges to your fellow Irish countrymen and women?

The answer would be short. Unionists did not appreciate Mary Robinson quitting the Irish Labour Party because of its part in negotiating the Anglo-Irish Agreement which unionists detest. Instead, a unionist mob demonstrated against her when she visited a Women's Center in the North. Unionist leaders Trimble and Taylor went to Dublin to lodge a protest at her **too many** visits to the North. Did they like Dick Spring who last month attempted to build a bridge to them by advocating that Ireland give up its claim to the North? Not at all. Instead, they consider him Northern Ireland's most detested man.

Anyone who has studied these matters over the years will know that there is absolutely nothing Irish nationalists/republicans can do to build a bridge that will not be blown up at the other end by the unionists. Even if Irish nationalists and republicans were to overthrow their own political outlook and become unionists, the unionists would not only not trust them, they would not like them. What would **Northern Ireland Unionism** be unless it had an underdog over which to preside? It is this which defines it. Any bridges which have to be built have to be built to the Protestant community which is not, as has already been stated, necessarily synonymous with Unionism. In the recent past, leading Protestant churchmen themselves have stated this much.

The fact that Northern Ireland Unionism is largely unfavorable to peace and its process is clearly demonstrated by what has been going on at the talks. Several months into the talks Trimble has managed to prevent completely any discussion of substantive issues. There is no guarantee that he will ever engage in genuine talks. Britain is responsible for Trimble's behavior. The question must be asked: what are they up to?

This lack of progress in the talks due to the unionists, and the failure of the British government to introduce the democratic changes and reforms into Northern Ireland, is already threatening the fairly comprehensive peace. The defections from Sinn Fein and the IRA by disgruntled members, who had very little faith in political processes to begin with, is one case in point. **Is this what the British government and the unionists are really angling for -- a split in the Provisionals?** If they think that the resultant renewed violence would be on a scale with which they could cope, they could be making a big mistake. And that is no way for the British government and unionists to build bridges.

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**American Ireland Education
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54 South Liberty Drive
Stony Point, NY 10980
Phone# 1 800-777-6807

Newsbits by Kathy Regan

It is now acknowledged that one of the rocks upon which the 1994 cease-fire foundered was the issue of republican prisoners, particularly those Irish prisoners in English jails. Days after the first cease-fire, Michael Howard, the then Home Secretary in Britain, declared there would be no more transfers to Ireland for republican prisoners ... Then, conditions worsened dramatically. Prisoners were wakened on the hour every hour through the night, lights in cells were never switched off, the exercise yard (12' x 12') was so covered in layers of wire mesh that no daylight crept in and open visits were curtailed. Some of the men were diagnosed as suffering from the bone thinning disease osteomalacia (rickets) due to prolonged denial of natural light. An English medical doctor wrote, "The conditions are those of a caged animal kept permanently indoors under artificial light and with insufficient room to exercise its muscles. A civilized society condemns conditions like these for animals in a zoo. It should condemn them for the containment of a human being Of 20 sentenced prisoners, 19 have applied for transfer to Ireland. In July, the NIO [Northern Ireland Office] [Northern Ireland Office] stated that the matter would be dealt with "shortly" and within "weeks". However, what movement there has been is very slow. The prisoners believe that the government has made a decision not to give on the issue for fear of irritating unionism... There is no logical or legal impediment preventing the repatriation of prisoners. Reciprocal mechanisms between Dublin and London have been in place for over two years ... The prisoners are not demanding amnesty, they are asking for their rights under existing legislation - the same rights available to any prisoner regardless of the nature of their offense. It is difficult to believe the Home Secretary does not realize further denial of these rights could threaten the peace, (*Sunday Business Post*, 11/9/97)

Congress Joins Hunger Stamp Campaign

On November 7, 1997, 88 members of the US Congress signed a letter addressed to the United States Postmaster General, Marvin T. Runyon, requesting that the Postal Service issue a commemorative stamp "honoring the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Irish immigrants to America during the Irish Potato Famine." The letters were initiated by US Senator Richard Durbin and Representative William Lipinski, both of Illinois. If you would like a copy of the letter, send PEC a self-addressed envelope with a 32 cents postage stamp affixed.

PEC National President John Finucane was very grateful to both Senator Durbin and Rep. Lipinski for their significant contribution to the campaign, and their assistants respectively, David Bernstein and Jason Tai, for their cooperation. Finucane was also happy that some PEC members had the opportunity to help get some members of Congress on board. Finucane acknowledged that the Congressional letter will increase the pressure on the Postal Service, but we ourselves must continue the pressure, if we plan to succeed."

If your US Senators and Representative's names do not appear below, find out why. Call them **TOLL FREE** at 800 972-3524 (**SAVE THIS NUMBER FOR FUTURE USE**) and ask for them by name. We are advised that they all were invited to sign. PEC is embarrassed, but not surprised, that its home state Senator Al D'Amato did not sign on.

Write to the Postmaster General. (See Action Request #2 on page six.)

We have plenty of postcards to the US Postal Service available free of charge.

United States Senate

Richard J. Durbin (D-IL)
 Carol Mosely Braun (D-IL)
 Joseph E. Lieberman (D-CT)
 Connie Mack (R-FL)
 Daniel K. Inouye (D-HA)
 Mary L. Landrieu (D-LA)
 Olympia O. Snowe (R-ME)
 John F. Kerry (D-MA)
 Joseph R. Biden (D-DE)
 Harry Reid (D-NV)
 Christopher Dodd (D-CT)
 Patty Murray (D-WA)
 Jack Reed (D-RI)
 Paul Wellstone (D-MN)
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 Mike DeWine (R-OH)
 Patrick J. Leahy (D-VT)
 Daniel P. Moynihan (D-NY)
 Kent Conrad (D-ND)
 Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA)
 Barbara Boxer (D-CA)
 Barbara A. Mikulski (D-MD)

House of Representatives

William O. Lipinski (D-IL) Mike Doyle (D-PA)
 Jay Johnson (D-WI) David Bonior (L-MI)
 Thomas Manton (D-NY) Dennis Kucinich (D-OH)
 Rod Blagoievich (D-IL) Bob Underwood (D-Guam)
 Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) Chris Smith (R-NJ)
 Glenn Poshard (I-IL) Luis Gutierrez (D-IL)
 Donald Payne (D-NJ) John Moakley (D-MA)
 J.C. Watts (R-OK) Jon Fox (R-PA)
 Richard Neal (L-MA) Benjamin Gilman (R-NY)
 Tim Holden (D-PA) Neil Abercrombie (D-HI)
 Jack Quinn (R-NY) Barney Frank (D-MA)
 Michael Forbes (R-NY) William Delahunt (D-MA)
 John Olver (D-MA) Henry Waxman (D-CA)
 Bart Gordon (D-TN) Ron Dellums (D-CA)
 Robert Borski (D-PA) Joseph Kennedy (D-MA)
 Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) Jim McDermott (D-WA)
 Tom Davis (R-VA) Bart Stupak (D-MI)
 Melvin Watt (D-NC) Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)
 Michael McNulty (D-NY) Sam Geidenson (D-CT)
 Matthew Martinez (D-CA) Pete DeFazio (D-OH)
 Martin Frost (I-TX) Robert Menezes (D-NJ)
 James McGovern (D-MA) Max Sandlin (D-TX)
 Carolyn Kilpatrick (D-MI) Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ)
 Frank Palione (D-NJ) John LaFalce (D-NY)
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 Eliot Engel (D-NY) Henry Hyde (R-IL)
 Edward Markey (D-MA) Steven Rothman (D-NJ)
 John Tierney (D-MA) Mark Foley (R-FL)
 Jim Moran (D-VA) Jerry Costello (D-IL)
 John Conyers (D-MI) Carolyn Maloney (D-NY)
 Peter King (R-NY) Danny Davis (D-IL)
 Gary Ackerman (D-NY) Marge Roukema (R-NJ)
 Sue Kelly (R-NY) Rick Lazio (R-NY)

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Bigotry Rampant in the British Media

By Kevin P. Murphy, *Massachusetts*

The controversy over the trial of British Nanny Louise Woodward in Cambridge, Massachusetts has brought out the worst in the British media. The British attacks on Irish ethnicity and the American system are an outrage.

The British tabloid press have made insulting comments that Ms. Woodward didn't get a fair trial because of the large Irish influence in the area. It is also apparent that the Middlesex County District Attorney, Thomas Reilly, has been attacked by the British media because of his Irish heritage. **In fact, the judge and most of the jurors are not American Irish.**

Pickets of DA Reilly's office in Cambridge claimed that U.S. justice is inferior to that of Britain. Even an Irish born woman organized a picket of Mr. Reilly. Woodward had high-priced New York and Boston lawyers, rights to appeal and a jury. In British occupied Northern Ireland people are interned for long periods of time without charges. They face special courts where their rights to a jury or appeal are denied. Remember the cases of the

Birmingham Six, Maguire Seven, Guildford Four, etc., and think of British justice.

The British rule of force rules in Northern Ireland, just as it did in Britain's other colonial outposts. Unwilling subjects in Ireland, India, Africa and elsewhere had no rights in the face of the rifles of the British forces.

Letters from Britain have labeled Massachusetts a "haven for Irish terrorists," a place that "denies British people justice" and a state that, "has no concept of the true British form of law". Fortunately, our colonial day forefathers experienced British injustice, fought against it and won America her freedom and a fair judiciary. From Belfast to New Delhi, the British form of justice was based on fear and state terrorism which continues today in Northern Ireland, and is rarely criticized by cowardly American news media and politicians.

For a nation such as Britain to complain about justice is the **ultimate in hypocrisy.**

Casement Accused Update by Jim Kelly, *Belfast*

On Friday 31, 1997 Sean Kelly and Michael Timmons commenced their **long walk to freedom**. After serving almost 8 years of an unjust life sentence, the two men have had their cases referred to the Judiciary for consideration toward release. The referral entitles the men to alternate weekend release beginning October 31, 1997. Kane had his conviction and sentence overturned by the Appeal Court this past June.

The earlier referral was the result of a long **and continuing** grassroots campaign that made an issue of the convictions. Britain's "Law Lords" (the equivalent of our U.S. Supreme Court) began considering the case of a Phillip English, who was convicted when the courts used the controversial "Principle of Common Purpose" (guilty of murder because you were near the scene of the murder).

Kelly, Kane and Timmons were all convicted via the application of "Common Purpose." It is hoped that a favorable decision in the case of Phillip English against "Common Purpose" could form the basis of a new appeal for the two men.

The judgement appears to reflect all the old arguments concerning the "Principle of Common Purpose" as applied to murder. The Casement Cases could stand on their own merit. We believe these cases are unique in that all the other cases used as precedents started off as criminal enterprises, whereas the Casement Accused got caught up in events outside their control. For example, they were innocent mourners or onlookers at a funeral which appeared to come under attack. These cases should be reheard by the appeal court regardless of the Law Lords judgement. Their lawyers believe there are several important points in the judgement that can be used

Congratulations

President McAleese

by Albert Doyle, *Vice President*

Mary McAleese's election as President of Ireland is significant for everyone who supports a united, democratic Ireland. Not just because she is from the north, nor just because she refused to abandon her basically nationalist position although pressured to do so, but also because she did not apologize for her belief in her religion, increasingly unacceptable with a clique of provincial Dublin "intellectuals."

Her election signalled that the Irish people rejected the forces arrayed against her and accepted what she stood for -- and by an unprecedented margin in an Ireland election.

The anti-national powers in Irish politics tried their utmost to smear her late in the campaign with what they considered to be the fatal defect for one running for office in the "new Ireland," that is "being a closet supporter of Sinn Fein" (which she clearly was not).

We are delighted that the Irish people seem to have seen through this bunch of "nasty little people" with a verdict which we read roughly as follows: "We like someone who stands for traditional Irish patriotism, someone who is modern but not ashamed of her religion, and who speaks the words (if not in their accents) we understand."

The PEC salutes Ireland's new President, Mary McAleese, and we wish her the best in her upcoming term of office. We think she is an ideal person to "bridge the gap".

in their case. The newly formed Criminal Case Review Commission are also studying the judgement. We await their verdict.

Sean Kelly, Michael Timmons and Pat Kane, and their families, extend their sincere appreciation to all members, and everyone else, who participated in this campaign.

A Family Struggles to Green an Irish Mountain

Sandy Carlson, *Connecticut*

Ireland's four green fields might not be as lush as they were before timber harvesting began in earnest in the 15th century, but a part of them has grown more verdant over the past two years.

A family in County Kerry have undertaken the monumental task of returning one barren, rocky mountain into the thriving wonderland full of flora and fauna that it was long ago. They welcome visitors to the mountain year round.

For Caroline and Harry Cornelissen and their 10 year-old son, Christopher, growing trees and other plants on a 150-acre mountain outside Kenmare, County Kerry, is an expression of their love for Ireland. It is also evidence of their passionate love for the diverse plant and animal life they would like to see thrive on the island once again.

The family sold the 500-year-old farm they had restored and replanted in Ballylanders, County Limerick, to begin a nature preserve on a bare, rocky mountain called Peakeen (Little Peak). Peakeen is near Killarney National Park--a tourist spot famous for its magnificent views.

The Cornelissens bought the mountain in the hope of fulfilling a dream. In a recent interview, Harry Cornelissen, a native of Holland who moved to Ireland 14 years ago, explained this dream.

"I was brought up in a beautiful village called Oisterwijk in the south of Holland. Forests and little lakes were everywhere. As a child, I played often in a wonderful forest of oak and beech trees. One day, I heard chain saws and ran to where the sound came from. To my horror, I saw that nearly all of the forest was cut down. The destruction haunted my dreams over and over. Until the present day, it is clear in my mind. I vowed then to create a nature preserve," Mr. Cornelissen said.

The Cornelissens decided to put all their resources into this dream because similar environmental destruction was

taking place in County Limerick. Mr. Cornelissen explained, "The neighboring farmers started to cut down all the beautiful whitethorn hedges. On top of that, a neighboring farmer bought an earth mover. In one day, about 60 acres that 'had been a haven for wildlife were changed into an open, empty field. I cried my eyes out, and then we decided to find a larger place for wildlife."

"With all of this happening around us, it was time to move on and create our own piece-of nature reserve."

Since the Cornelissens bought the mountain in October, 1995, they have worked from eight to 10 hours every day and planted more than 2,100 native trees, including oak, ash, holly, hazel, willow and chestnut trees. They have also planted beech, sycamore, American tulip trees, Scots pines, black elder and red copper trees.

The mountain, three quarters of which is in the Natural Heritage Area, is also the home of orchids, bog cotton, heather, wild grasses, forget-me-nots and Irish spurge.

Deer, rabbits, hedgehogs, stoat, fox, minks, falcons, pheasants and bats have also returned to the mountain.

Limited resources have required the Cornelissens to look in unlikely places for stock for their nature sanctuary. Construction sites where small trees will be excavated and destroyed are treasure troves. The couple load the trees into their station wagon and give them a second chance to mature on Peakeen. Parks also provide seeds, nuts, and saplings which have sprouted in drive-ways or other unsuitable spots. The Cornelissens keep their overhead costs low by using hand tools and a wheelbarrow to complete their planting and stonewall-restoration projects.

Over the past year, the couple have received some financial assistance from friends and from the Irish government through the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS).

The Cornelissens are pursuing their dream with moral, but not material, support from neighbors. Family, friends, and local farmers greeted news of their project with skepticism.

"Some friends and family sent us good wishes, but several thought we were crazy and absolutely mad to sell our beautifully restored home and buy a bare mountain with no house or electricity and no money left over from the sale of our farm to purchase these things. It was an incredibly big gamble, and we have paid a high price--more than anyone will ever really know," Mrs. Cornelissen said. "The local farmers think we are only wasting good ground and should have 200 sheep or cattle grazing," she added.

The Irish government does not yet officially recognize the status of Peakeen as a nature preserve, although the Cornelissens hope it will in the future. Mr. Cornelissen said, "After we are no longer eligible for REPS funds, we will look for a way to, perhaps, hand over most of the land to the government to include it in the national park of Killarney or to have some environmental organization become involved in running and maintaining the mountain."

Mrs. Cornelissen noted that, ironically, other countries appreciate the beauty of Ireland's environment as well as its value as a natural resource, even if the Irish themselves are slow to recognize the importance of conservation.

For example, she said, "the Dutch people bought some of our blanket bogs and handed them back to the Irish government because they do not want-us Irish to destroy and mismanage what is so rich and will never come back again."

Her family believes their work on Peakeen is vital, Mrs. Cornelisse said, because "once it's gone, it's gone."

The Cornelissens welcome visitors. Write to them at Kilcurrane West, Kenmare, Co. Kerry, Ireland.

Educate Someone

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American Irish Newsletter

Harryville: An Example of Loyalist Bigotry

by Barbara McCabe

(The author is a member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition)

For over a year, loyalist protesters have picketed the congregation of the Catholic church in Harryville in Northern Ireland. Situated in Ian Paisley's district, his Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) was implicated in instigating the protest, by linking the picket to the situation in nearby Dunloy where [during this year's Orange marching season] Orangemen had been prevented by police from marching to their Orange Hall in the predominantly nationalist village. Indeed these actions by the police have been linked to the kicking to death of an off-duty policeman [by loyalists] this summer.

To mark International Women's Day (March 8), the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and other women's groups visited Harryville. During stone throwing by loyalists as Mass ended, Woman's Coalition co-chair, Monica McWilliams, was hit on the shoulder by a rock. She insisted that it had not been directed at her but was thrown at random and could have hit anyone, including the elderly parishioner she was talking to at the time. Though uninjured, she drew parallels with the various references to stoning contained in the Bible.

Both Protestant and Catholic members of the Coalition were adamant about supporting the parishioners of Harryville, who bore the brunt of sectarian, anti-Catholic abuse. Founded on the principles of inclusion, equality and human rights, the Women's Coalition stands clearly in support of rights for all in contrast to for example, the recent development of a "Protestant" civil rights movement.

They were not the first to make such a gesture, the local unionist mayor, loyalist politicians, leading members of the main Protestant churches in Northern Ireland and even the leader of the Orange Order itself, had done likewise. A local women's peace group maintained a presence every week.

Condemnation had come from almost every political party, including in the end the DUP. Ian Paisley Jr. had called on the protesters to stop as their actions were, by then, counter-productive. Now, when Paisley Sr. states that his "views on Harryville are well known" the ambiguity allows for various interpretations -- does he mean that the protesters have a point in linking Harryville with Dunloy or does he refer to his party's belated condemnation? (Clarification is rarely offered.)

The church picket had ceased during the summer with the suspension of Saturday evening Mass. The planned resumption in early September was deferred for one week when it coincided with the funeral of Princess Diana -- a strange mark of respect from "loyal" citizens for a woman whose mother and brother had converted to Catholicism and was, herself, reported to be considering a similar move.

The heady mix of Saturday afternoon drinking and the teatime lull before recommencing in the evening creates a space into which people can be more easily drawn. Some hold the

view that they are not picketing a place of worship because Catholics and their churches are idolatrous and not Christian in the first place.

This Fall the protest appears to have lost much of its ferocity and aggression. Most recently an attempt to extend the action to other Catholic churches failed.

The elderly parish priest who not only endured the wrath of the protesters but had previously survived arson attacks on his home and car during disturbances associated with the Drumcree 1996 crisis has now moved on to a more tranquil retirement.

As winter evenings draw in, it remains to be seen whether the protest will re-energize under cover of darkness or whether it really is running out of steam, as recently suggested. This autumn the protest is attracting little coverage from local media. This contrasts with last winter when ugly scenes of stone-throwing, verbal abuse and the singing of sectarian songs shown on the broadcast media was believed by some to be fuelling the situation. (Ed note: This ongoing disgrace to the British government received very little news coverage in the US. Of course, if the nationalists were the bad guys, it would have been all over the media.)

A Proper Memorial

Congratulations are in order for the Bergen County Council of Irish Associations in New Jersey.

On November 15, 1997 the Council conducted its third annual "Great Hunger Commemoration Service." The ceremony took place on the steps of the Bergen County Courthouse in Hackensack, New Jersey.

The committee responsible for the erection of the Great Hunger Monument consisted of: Dr. Frank Holt, Jeremiah O'Connor and Jim Whelan.

The monument is prominently displayed alongside the Armenian Massacre and Jewish Holocaust

Monuments at the Courthouse. The inscription reads:

*The Great Hunger
1845-1849*

In memory of the millions of Irish people lost to imposed starvation, death and forced emigration by the English government.

We congratulate the Council and committee for assuring that England's responsibility for this mass extermination was noted on the plaque. To have excluded England's responsibility would be an unacceptable dishonor to the victims of Ireland's Great Hunger.

Action Requests

Write, call, etc. the messages below, in your own words, or as is. Be courteous. Have friends, business associates, etc., do the same.

Mention that you are a member of the American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC.

1. President Bill Clinton

The White House
Washington, DC 20500
Ph# 202 456-1111
Fax# 202 456-2461
president@whitehouse.gov

Message: Please help prevent the collapse of the Irish peace talks. The ceasefire is almost 6 months old and still the unionist representatives refuse to address the core issues. Please urge the British government to make the unionists begin talking. Don't let the unionists bring down the talks.

2. Marvin T. Runyon

Postmaster General
U.S. Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20260

Message: Please direct the U.S. Postal Service to issue a commemorative stamp honoring the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Irish Potato Famine immigrants to America.

CEARTA

A Charter For Change In Northern Ireland

Irish people living in the North of Ireland are entitled to the same full National and Democratic rights of Irish Citizenship as Irish people living elsewhere in Ireland.

All people living in the North of Ireland are entitled to receive full parity of esteem and equality of treatment with one another. Delivering these fundamental rights is a prerequisite to, and is not dependent upon, any negotiated settlement. This requires that the British government should act to ensure that these rights are embodied in specific measures of legislation administration. As an absolute minimum, the following need to be addressed immediately:

- . An end to all emergency legislation.
- . Root and branch reform of all aspects of the legal system, to include reform of the civil and criminal law, the judiciary, the conduct of the courts prison service.
- . The establishment of an unarmed, accountable and representative police service that is acceptable to both nationalists and unionists.
- . An end to all forms of discrimination and the introduction of explicit, timebounded measures to redress existing inequalities.
- . Equality for the Irish language and culture.
- . The release of all political prisoners.

There can be no internal solution and no return to Stormont with its inbuilt unionist domination and denial of democracy and civil rights.

For as long as Irish people are governed without their consent within the UK they are entitled to significant all- Ireland institutions with co-operative, harmonizing, executive and advisory powers. Specifically, the Irish government must be guaranteed a role in all legislative and executive decisions affecting the lives of people living in the North of Ireland. The all-Ireland institutions should encourage the coming together of North and South and bring about practical co-operation in all sphere.

The British and Irish governments should encourage the coming together of the people of Ireland and should actively promote the early ending of partition.

To Join Or Renew Your Membership PEC-AIEF

- [] New Membership \$25 [] Membership Renewal \$25
- [] Senior Citizen \$20 [] Student \$10
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- [] Donation Only \$ _____ Total \$ _____

Members receive the monthly *American Irish Newsletter*.

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Name of your Congressman/woman _____

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

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