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American Irish Newsletter - December 1995

American Ireland Education Foundation - PEC

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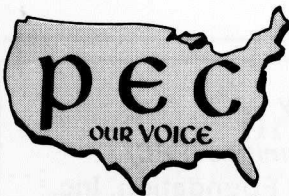


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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 20, Number 12

December 1995

ATTENTION MEDIA

Is Peace Process Euphoria Justified?

Both the Irish American media and the general media have been reporting the peace process doings as a sort of inevitably successful project, bound to work out in the long run. It's time to ask whether this optimism is justified. A good example of this is the headline, "Breakthrough!" which appeared in a leading Irish American newspaper on the basis of a few remarks by the politicians involved, interpreted by the journalists in an excessively broad way, and which were shortly seen to be not justified by the actual events.

The fact is that two years on the peace talks are drifting away. It now seems possible that no substantial changes will come about as a result of this process -- unless, of course, as we warned at the outset, the only real object of the whole exercise was to get an IRA ceasefire, a ceasefire which will be hard to reverse. Lost in the peace process rhetoric are the human and civil rights abuses by the British government and Loyalists that caused the conflict in the first place.

It is possible that after years of agonized groaning the Loyalists will concede to some small, insignificant items of cross-border cooperation, but let's be honest: didn't we really expect more? Of course we did, ranging from a timetable for a united Ireland to at least a melting down of historic antagonisms. None of these seem remotely in the cards at this time.

But this pessimistic scenario does not have to be the final one. It is up to us here in America to get our own government, which has great influence on the British despite their distaste for it, to exert its influence to secure real changes in Northern Ireland. And this means support across the US political spectrum, not just the Clinton Administration since support only by the Administration will make the subject a partisan political issue. That is why we have been seeking support from Republican candidates as well as the President.

Bipartisan support in the US will mean that the British will finally have to confront their embarrassing Loyalist "allies."

Turn to Action Requests on page six

MacBride Introduced In Wisconsin

State Director Nancy Love informed us that on November 7 State Senator **Brian Burke** introduced MacBride in the Wisconsin State Senate. Nancy, with the help of member **Bob Golden**, has worked for more than two years to get the bill introduced. Co-sponsors of the bill are: Senator **Margaret Farrow** and Assembly Representatives **Peter Boch**, **Frank Boyle** and **Gregory Huber**. Nancy also thanks US Senator **Russ Feingold** who helped move the bill.

Wisconsin members are asked to write their State Senator and the following Senate committee members who will be considering the bill: Senators Alberta Darling (chairperson), Joanne Huelsman, Robert Welch, Calvin Potter, Joseph Wineke and Kevin Shibilski. Their address is: State Capitol, PO Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707. Ask that they support bill #407. Get family, friends, etc. to do the same.

Newsbits by Kathy Regan

On October 28, 1995 a testimonial was held in Rockland County, New York to honor the 20th anniversary of the PEC and its founder and National President, **John Finucane**. A special presentation was made to Mr. Finucane by Congressman **Benjamin Gilman**, chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, a long-time friend of PEC.

PEC thanks all who attended or sent donations to support this event. All proceeds will benefit PEC (AIN-PEC-10/28/95).

Despite repeated claims by Shorts that it is reversing anti-Catholic discrimination, only 13% of its 7,000 employees are Catholic. Of 12 apprentices and 12 new employees taken on in recent weeks, only two are Catholics. Its West Belfast plant on the former DeLorean site, set up to appease Irish America opinion, employs only four Catholics among its 54 person workforce. (*Andersonstown News*, 20/18/95).

A senior Sinn Fein member has attacked unionist calls for elections to a new assembly as a stalling device. Party vice president Pat Doherty said in Washington, DC yesterday: "We are not interested in the recreation of an internal settlement of a new Stormont." (*News Letter* 11/2/95)

cont. on page 4

INSIDE

- From the North 3
- St. Patrick's Welcome In Spokane. 4
- You Are Deputized . . . 4
- When Ireland Starved . R&D
- British Apology Update . 5

OUR VIEW

The Clinton Administration is limited in what it can do to pressure the British government to get on with all-party talks, without the public support of the Republican Party's political leaders and Presidential candidates. To date the Republican leadership has not helped the peace process and will continue to avoid it until we bring appropriate pressure to bear. One reason the British are stalling the process, is they are betting that the next US President will be a Republican and that he will return America to a pro-British Irish policy, which would be a disaster for the peace process.

We are happy to advise you that pressure is mounting on the Republican leadership, thanks to our letter-writers and members of our National Telephone Chain. But we still have much to do. Between now and Election Day, we must bring immense pressure to bear on them demanding that the Republican leadership support the peace process, that they demand that the British stop the stalling and that they advise publicly that if a Republican becomes President, he will not return America to a pro-British Irish policy.

Together we will assure that the English-Irish peace process will be an important issue in the 1996 Presidential election to tens of millions of people. Make sure your family members and friends are all registered to vote.

Most Americans of Irish heritage nationwide will not accept a candidate who supports the pro-British Irish policies of past Administrations. Each of us bears the responsibility to make sure concerned Americans, Irish and non-Irish alike, are informed of the candidates' positions before the election.

Concerned organizations will be ready to mount a media blitz of "candidate position advertisements" in major newspapers throughout the country. Your help will be needed to make sure the ads are carried in your local newspapers.

Make it loud and clear to your favorite Presidential candidate that you will not tolerate his ignoring this issue.

Turn To Action Requests On Page Six

PEC National Telephone Chain Activated On November 6

On November 6 PEC activated its National Telephone Chain (NTC). We attempted to call all registered members of the telephone chain throughout the US requesting that they contact the offices of President **Bill Clinton** and Senator **Bob Dole**. The message to both Clinton and Dole was as follows: "Please influence the British government to immediately commence all-party talks without pre-conditions in Northern Ireland. Also ask that they push for amnesty for all Irish nationals imprisoned in the US, or facing deportation, due to this conflict." We provided instructions and appropriate telephone numbers.

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NATIONAL ORGANIZER:Pete Foley, 3177 Villa Ave. #3H, Bronx, NY 10468-(718)933-7196

**Supported in part by the Emerald Society
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*We wish all our members and supporters a Merry
Christmas and Happy, Healthful New Year*

Once again there was great enthusiasm on the part of the chain members. They called other concerned people, not only in their communities, but also in other areas of the US, requesting that they also contact President Clinton and Senator Dole.

Join The National Telephone Chain!

To be a part of the National Telephone Chain send the PEC your name and address and telephone numbers where you can be reached during the day and evenings. The NTC is only used in urgent situations, perhaps two or three times a year.

From the North

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

At the time of this writing, a series of meetings between Lord Angram of the British Northern Ireland Office and Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness had ended without progress. These latest talks failed to break the impasse in the peace process erected by the British. The British are still adhering to their controversial demand for a handing in of IRA weapons before they will allow substantive all-party talks to take place.

Other than some very minor cosmetic gestures towards demilitarizing Northern Ireland society, Britain still has not come to grips with the fundamental Constitutional issue at the heart of the problem. Why has this been so?

In recent months, the fierce pro-Unionist establishment groups have been emboldened to raise their profiles. This has been concomitant with an increase in anti EU-federalism. The groups wish to recreate the past: a compact, highly centralized UK, under English hegemony, which would, once again, have disentangled itself from EU involvements. Politically isolationist, except for treaty obligations, they do, however wish to retain access to the European Common Market.

They also have a longing to undo the gains of the Irish Revolution. In many ways de facto they have never reconciled themselves to most of Ireland's detachment. Sometimes using Northern Ireland Unionists as their mouthpiece, they have articulated this aspiration as a suggestion that Ireland's border problem (partition) could perhaps be resolved in the context of the 26-counties deciding to rejoin the UK. Failing that, perhaps a closer association could be devised (is this what the British would be seeking in the 'third strand' of talks?) in the form of some kind of federated British Isles.

If there exists such a scheme, it would go a long way to explain British strategy since the cease-fires. True, Prime Minister Major has a problem of parliamentary arithmetic at Westminster, but some analysts have pointed out that this explanation is inadequate. There is tripartisanship on the Irish question at Westminster and, while Mr. Major would not wish to aggravate divisions within the

Tory Party in the run up to the General Election, this is not 1912. There is no inevitability of Britons rising up in support of pro-Unionists in opposition to such as the Frameworks for Agreement. Why then do the British grant the Unionists a veto over talks at which such documents would be on the table?

Every device used by the British government to obstruct talks since the cease-fires has been 'justified' on the grounds that the sensitivities of Unionists take priority. And on what grounds? Democracy! Now, as used in this context, this is the most false argument that could be thought up. But, as Goebbels is reputed to have contended: If you are going to tell a lie, tell a big one, the better to be believed.

Because of the manner of its formation and governance by the British since its formation 75 years ago, Northern Ireland is not an entity in which the principle of self-determination can be legitimately or properly exercised. Self-determination for Ireland can be decided only on an all-Ireland basis. **That is democracy!**

Its formation has been reviewed by several academic investigators recently, one of which is Dr. Liam O'Dowd of Queen's University, Belfast. In his pamphlet *Whither the Border -- Sovereignty, Democracy and Economic Integration of Ireland* he writes, "The imperialist credentials of those who imposed the Irish Border can scarcely be questioned. The delimitation of the boundary was not a matter of international negotiation. For example, the representatives of the newly created Dail Eireann were denied access to the Versailles Peace Conference. Nor was Ireland to be allowed a plebiscite on the exact lines of the Border. Such plebiscites were being held in several areas on Germany's border. Britain was presiding over a plebiscite in Schleswig-Holstein between Germany and Denmark at the very same time as it was denying one to Ireland ... Ireland was not to be treated like Silesia, however, where a plebiscite was held and subsequently four neutral countries were brought in to mediate partition when the majority voted for union with Germany

and the minority with Poland ... **The principle of partition was established not by democratic means but by a form of coup d'etat promoted by Ulster Unionist leaders in association with their allies in the British army and the Tory party" (emphasis mine).**

The quotations above should not be misconstrued as an argument for re-partitioning Ireland, provided that it was to be done differently. Any such franchise would now be distorted because of the effects emanating from the methods of the British State's governance in the intervening 75 years. Once the deed had been done, and the structures of Police-Statism and one-party rule had been consolidated, the British then considered it serviceable to permit border polls projected at ten-year intervals.

The matter of consent is sometimes confused with the question of democracy. Everyone accepts that Unionists should have their aspirations catered for in any new all-Ireland arrangements and that what they consider to be those interests deriving from their present **citizenship**, as articulated by them, should be safeguarded in any new Constitutional arrangement. But presumably their success here would depend on what the British were prepared to continue acknowledging. In many areas this would not be a problem because the British already make little differentiation between people from the North and those from the Republic.

Finally, it must be emphasized that democrats in Ireland are not anti-British per se. History, geography, cultural and even ties of kin bind Ireland and Britain together. Nor do Irish democrats adhere, as do most Unionists, to **ethnic** concepts of nationality with all its proclivities towards Naziism, Fascism and Ku Klux Klanism. Irish democrats adhere to the concept of a civic nationalism as propounded by the Society of United Irishmen -- Ireland's first Republicans. If the British government, backed by a Labour Party sham-opposition, wishes to continue prioritizing "Ulster" Unionism and calling it "democratic", then that is a matter for it.

There is a better way: A free association of free peoples (English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh) co-operating for mutual benefit. In the future this struggle will be decided not by the English hegemonists and facilitators alone.

Newsbits *cont. from page 1*

The former Bishop of Salisbury, Dr. Austin Baker, said on November 5 that Britain should apologize for the famine. He said that some political and religious in Britain had apologized in their own capacity. "How good it would be if, in this year, a final word from some more fully representative person were to help us move forward together from that long past." (*Irish Republican Information Service 11/6/95*)

The British government announced that the oath of allegiance required of barristers before they can become Queen's Counsel in Northern Ireland is to be dispensed with, in line with the situation applying in England and Wales where no oath is required. The Catholic lawyer who prompted the move on the grounds that it discriminates against nationalists and Catholics has hailed it as a total victory. (*Irish Times, 10/27/95*)

The Lower Ormeau Concerned Community launched a video on the RUC's handling of Orange and Black marchers through the Lower Ormeau area of Belfast on November 2. The 18 minute video includes footage of RUC attacks on people protesting against loyalist marchers through their area. In one scene RUC members are shown beating a young man with batons as he lies on the ground unconscious and bleeding. In another scene a RUC member is seen hitting a man across the jaw with a baton as he holds his hands in the air. (*Irish Republican Information Service, 11/6/95*)

Memories of Belfast -- Our street was Herzegovina, which ran between Servia Street and Bosnia Street . . . There used to be a working fountain near the Royal Victoria Hospital. Before it was a hospital, it was a workhouse where, to earn their measly crust, the destitute of Belfast were obliged to do hours of repetitive and pointless work. This took the form of walking for hours on end on a big wooden treadmill. It was this treadmill which supplied the force to pump the water to the fountain and provide a pleasant sight for the more well-off Victorian park-goers. (*Andersonstown News, 10/14/95*)

St. Patrick's Welcome in Spokane, Washington

by Andy Kelly, *Washington State Director*

The PEC's Washington State Director, **Andy Kelly**, has been working for the last few years to promote local awareness of Irish immigrants' contribution to American culture. He reports the following.

For the last few years, School District No. 81 has been ignoring all requests to have their marching bands march in the annual parade to honor the Irish contribution to American society. However, they have marched in Spokane's Lilac Festival parade and other local events.

Repeated calls, letters, and so on to the schools' principals proved to be of no avail--until we decided to get the attention of the school district's superintendent.

We had several out-of-state organizations send letters questioning "a possible bias" against the American Irish by the school district.

Mary Holford, a former Spokaneite, now residing in California and now the PEC's California State Director, and PEC National President **John Finucane** were the first to question Dr. Livingston about whether the school district had an established

policy to boycott the parade.

Mary Holford had a number of her friends call the school district offices and ask whether such a policy existed. Dr. Livingston then sent letters to each of his school principals requesting them to contact me directly about how they could help with the St. Patrick's Day parade. To date, we have been assured that we will have two Spokane School District No. 81 bands in our parade.

In addition, I have been able to generate enthusiastic interest in next year's St. Patrick's Day parade among the local labor unions and politicians.

They will have floats, music, and so on. The unions will invite a number of the national labor heads to come and ride in their floats. Also, the Democratic party and local and state figures have written to President Bill Clinton to invite him to be their guest in the parade and to participate in a huge St. Patrick's Day dinner. We sent invitations in one big packet to the White House Chief of Staff, **Leon Panetta**. We've made some progress since the school principals were snubbing us.

YOU ARE DEPUTIZED!

Circulate This Month's Reproduce & Distribute Article And Get More Petitions Signed

Everyone who reads this newsletter is asked to copy and distribute the highly informative brochure on the Great Hunger, *When Ireland Starved: England's Shame-1*. You are also asked to make a special effort to get more British Apology Petitions signed and returned to PEC.

The British Apology Campaign is ongoing. There will be excellent opportunities for soliciting names for the petition during the upcoming St. Patrick's Day festivities. Do not hesitate to solicit names for the petition from the general public. Likewise, make the brochure available to the general public, not just Irish Americans. If you need a fresh copy of the petition contact PEC.

We urge that you use your newsletter copy of the R&D brochure, *When Ireland Starved*, **ONLY FOR MAKING COPIES**. If you don't have access to a 2-sided copier at work or home, go to a local shop that makes copies. By promoting public awareness of the Great Hunger you will help assure that the English-Irish peace process is a success and will lead to a reunited Ireland.

Assert Yourself Fellow Americans!

Seumas MacManus relates that the London *Times*, when the exodus was most pitiful, screamed with delight in an editorial, "They are going! They are going! The Irish are going with a vengeance. Soon a Celt will be as rare in Ireland as a Red Indian on the shores of Manhattan."

The *Times*, uniformly hostile to the Irish, comfortably informed the imperial English world, "Law has ridden through Ireland: it has been taught with bayonets, and interpreted with ruin. Townships leveled with the ground, straggling columns of exiles, workhouses multiplied and still crowded, express the determination of the legislature to rescue Ireland from its slovenly old barbarism, and to plant there the institutions of this more civilized land."

Condon said famine death claimed 300,000 in late 1846; MacManus said far more than 500,000 died in 1847; Condon, Emmet, Curtis, and Mitchell agreed that over 1,500,000 died in Ireland. Men, women, and children died of hunger amidst abundant food supplies. Additionally, the number who perished by the wayside or in ditches and were buried in mass graves (some containing up to 20,000 bodies) is unknown but believed to be very high. Also, authorities estimate 20%-30% of those forced emigres died within a year or two from famine or famine-related illness. Some authorities claim the final death toll from famine was over two million.

Condon said the London *Times* cried out exultingly, "The Celts are gone, gone with a vengeance; the Lord be praised."

Commemorate Ireland's Great Hunger

Commemorate the Great Hunger of the 1840s by joining the campaign to pressure the British government to apologize for the cruel policies that caused the death and exile of millions of Irish people. Write to British Ambassador John Kerr, British Ambassador, British Embassy, 3100 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20008. We suggest your own version, or a copy of, the following letter:

Dear Mr. Kerr:

In commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Ireland's Great Hunger, please urge the British government to issue an apology to the Irish people in acknowledgment of responsibility for this enormous calamity. This apology is an essential part of establishing peace in Ireland.

Sincerely,

For information about the Great Hunger, commemoration events, books, and videos, contact:

**American Ireland
Education Foundation-PEC**
54 South Liberty Drive, Suite 401
Stony Point, New York 10980
(914) 947-2726

The American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC, founded in 1975, is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. AIEF-PEC is a national network of caring people who seek to reunite Ireland through peaceful means.

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When Ireland Starved: England's Shame - I

The 5-year commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Ireland's Great Hunger (1845-1850) began August 20, 1995. It is vital that the truth be told about the causes and conditions of that terrible calamity.

England, a foreign power, had invaded and occupied Ireland for almost 700 years by that time. They pursued by massive military force a policy of extirpation of the Irish from Ireland by: land confiscation; genocide; artificial famines; penal laws; kidnapping, transporting and selling the Irish into slavery; and the destruction of Irish culture and language.

England's failure to exterminate the Irish by the sword is acknowledged in an official report by the English Lord Deputy of Ireland early in the 17th century: "I have often said and written, it is the famine that must consume the Irish, as our swords and other endeavors worked not that speedy effect which is expected. Hunger would be better, because it is a speedier weapon to employ against them

than the sword.”

The potato blight struck in 1845. Other crops were blight free. For centuries the Irish masses were forced to subsist on the potato because other produce and animals had to be sold to pay ever-escalating rent to landlords who were usually in England. Within months, hundreds of thousands of people were starving. The *Times* of London declared: "For our part, we regard the blight as a blessing..."

The blight was much worse in 1846 than in 1847 and 1848. Now millions were dead or dying of starvation or starvation-related diseases. Queen Victoria's Viceroy, Lord Heytesbury, reassured the dying millions; "There is no cause for alarm--the Government is carefully watching the course of events."

The English Parliament often referred to "surplus" Irish, a notion widely upheld by English newspapers. The *Glasgow Herald* most concisely said: "If the country continued to be thinned...we may yet have the power, so much desired, of establishing a British population in Ireland and rendering real the Union of the United Kingdom."

If that view seems cruel, consider this statement by Sir Charles Trevelyan, Permanent Secretary of the English Treasury: "The great evil with which we have to contend is not the physical evil of famine, but the moral evil of the selfish, perverse and turbulent character of the people," meaning the Irish people. The victims had become the culprits.

John Mitchell's *Last Conquest of Ireland* gives a harrowing report of his journey through the fertile center of Ireland: "We saw sights that will never wholly leave the eyes that beheld them, cowering wretches almost naked in the savage weather, prowling in turnip fields, and endeavoring to grub roots which had been left... Groups and families, sitting or wandering on the highroad, with failing steps, and dim patient eyes, gazing hopelessly into infinite darkness and despair.... Sometimes, I could see, in front of the cottages, little children leaning on a fence when the sun shone out--for they could not stand--their limbs fleshless, their bodies half-naked, their faces bloated and wrinkled, and a pale greenish hue--children who would never, it was too plain, grow up to be men and women." Dogs and rats ate the dead and living who were too weak to resist. Lest they too be eaten, the living ate the dogs and rats.

For many centuries, landlords forced Irish tenant farmers to make improvements on the lands without remuneration; then they charged higher rents for the improved, more valuable, lands. As hunger advanced and farmers were unable to pay 'rack rent,' animals, grain, furniture and all belongings were seized. When they had nothing more to be seized, farmers were evicted with their families to perish on the roadsides, and their cabins (usually mud) were completely destroyed by landlords' agents and English soldiers. Massive evictions (English Protestant clergyman Rev. John Urquhart denounced them as "legalized

murder") took place every year--some years in the hundreds of thousands. In 50 years, the number of evictions reached into the millions.

The English government's response to the needs of the starving and homeless people was the Vagrancy Act, which punished the homeless poor by imprisonment with hard labor. Other English laws said that an Irish person could be deported to the penal colony of Australia for being out of his abode between sun up and sun down, hunting or fishing, stealing a handful of corn from an English landlord to feed starving children, gathering seaweed to eat, and so on. The *Cork Examiner* said that starving crowds of 'prisoners' continuously conveyed before court judges by English soldiers for punishment were unable to even stand up.

Where were the fruits of the Irish farmers' labors? Most Irish foodstuffs were shipped to England for profit. According to Edward O'Meagher Condon in *The Irish Race in America* (1887), during every one of the "famine" years, more food was exported to England than would have fed twice Ireland's people at that time.

Foreign relief was hampered by British shipping rules favoring British shipping interests. American charitable relief was the largest. However, English authorities sometimes attempted to sell relief food to "famine" victims who were too poor to buy it. Much relief food rotted in English storehouses.

British Apology Update

by Frank Morris, PEC Great Hunger Awareness Campaign Director

Our **British Apology Campaign** picks up steam. On October 27, in London, Ireland's President, Mary Robinson called upon the British government to "express genuine regret for what was done or left undone" in its role in the Great Hunger. As reported in our last newsletter, on October 5, Mr. Bertie Ahearn, leader of Fianna Fail, Ireland's largest political party, called for the British government to apologize.

On the negative side, the present Irish Coalition Government is taking the line that the famine was a "shared experience", ludicrous as this may seem. A "shared experience", of victim and victimizer! **Obviously we have work to do!** Step up your efforts: get more petitions signed; get people to write to the Ambassador John Kerr, British Embassy, 3100 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008.

British Embassy Responds To PEC, October 13, 1995

Dear Mr. Finucane, Thank you for your letter of 29 August to the Ambassador, to which I have been asked to reply. I am sorry not to have done so sooner.

The great famine in Ireland was indeed a terrible tragedy. There are wide differences of opinion among historians, even in Ireland, over its causes. The Economist, in its 19 September edition, argued:

"For most of the past century, a romantic version of history has prevailed in Catholic Ireland: that of the "martyr nation" - pure, Gaelic, heroically resistant to alien, above all, British influence. The Great Famine, in this version, is the ultimate metaphor of oppression - the result of British negligence so extreme as to qualify as deliberate genocide. But such interpretations of Irish history are increasingly disputed. So-called "revisionist" Irish historians, both Catholic and Protestant, have striven to present a less black-and-white view. They deride the traditionalists as unduly romantic and parochial - purveyors of "theme park stuff." They debunk the notion of history espoused by Irish nationalists in their battle to erase British rule - and ideology - from the island. In Irish universities on both sides of the old divide, the revisionists now probably predominate. When it comes to the famine, some of them tend to stress the role of well-meaning and earnest Britons in the provision of relief. This battle over history has echoes in today's political argument over the future of an island of conflicting loyalties."

I doubt it is beneficial to get involved in an historical debate into the rights and wrongs of the famine. That the famine was a deeply regrettable episode is undeniable. With hindsight - 150 years on - it is easy to argue that different policy decisions decisions [sic] might have led to different results. But I do not think anyone seriously argues that there was intent to cause suffering or starvation. Parallels with Nazi atrocities or abuse of Korean women during World War Two are therefore wide of the mark. But, as the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Patrick Mayhew, said in a speech to Queen's University in Belfast in 1992:

"You will not find me seeking to argue that Britain's role in this island has only ever been associated with what has been uplifting. On the contrary, there is much in the long and tragic history of Ireland for deep regret, and the British Government for its part shares in that regret to the full." *Peter Bean, First Secretary (Ed. Note: PEC originally wrote to the British Embassy on July 19, 1995.)*

PEC's Rebuttal October 19, 1995

Dear Ambassador Kerr: We have received Mr. Peter Bean's letter of October 12 in response to ours of July 19, in which we had suggested that your government apolo-gize for the tragedy of the Irish Famine of 1845-1850, concerning which there are now beginning world-wide commemorations. Although your letter does not say so directly, we take it that you are rejecting the idea of making such an apology, particularly since we understand that you took advice from London before responding to us.

Of course, we are disappointed that you do not wish to join the ranks of the healers of historic enmities--such as the French, who apologized for the Vichy government's mistreatment of Jews in France; the Vatican, which apologized for historic Catholic anti-Jewish prejudices; the Japanese, who abused Korean women; the US Southern Baptist Convention for long-standing mistreatment of blacks; the German government for Nazi atrocities; and other such wise healing gestures. Although we see distinct parallels between these cases and British official actions during the Great Hunger and you do not, you must recognize that our position is widely supported, not just by the uninformed, as you imply, and that it is a source of friction between Britain and millions around the world, including, but not limited to, the Irish diaspora. Your apologizing would enhance the current English-Irish peace process, we believe. The support our campaign for your government's apology has received to date supports our view.

To be candid, and regretfully, we must say that we are not completely surprised by your response. We were hopeful and still are hopeful that the spirit of conciliation seen in the actions of the groups mentioned above might at last find its way to Britain.

Like Mr. Bean, we see no purpose to engaging in a debate about whether revisionist historians are more correct about the Great Hunger and the handling of it by Britain or if the traditional critical view of Britain's role is correct. You will not be surprised we believe the intellectual strength is with the latter view. We are well aware of the Irish revisionist historians, but we see them as either "West Briton" Irish or nit-pickers (Did a million starve or three million? Were all Irish landlords greedy churls or only a few? Would the food exported at sword-point from Ireland during the Great Hunger have saved all who starved to death, or only some?); whereas, those historians who examine the entire picture are more and more painting one of incompetent policy at best and a "hidden agenda" of

Continued on page six

Action Requests

Call or write the Presidential candidates listed below. Write the sample letter below, preferably in your own words, or as is. Have friends, organizations, business associates, etc., do the same.

Dole For President
810 First St., N.E., Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002
Ph.# 202 414-6485

Phil Gramm For President
P.O. Box 33119
Washington, DC 20033
Ph.# 1 800 964-7266

Buchanan For President
6862 Elm Street, Suite 210
McLean, VA 22101
Ph.# 703 848-1996

Sample Letter

Dear Mr. (Surname):

Please advise me of your public position, if any, on the English-Irish peace process. Have you advised the British government that if elected you would not return America to a pro-British policy on Ireland? Have you called on the British government to immediately begin all-party talks without pre-conditions?

Please forward to me any pertinent documents, letters, etc. along with your public position.

British Apology Update *continued from page 5*

genocide at worst. We particularly call to your attention the recent book, *This Great Calamity*, by Dr. Christine Kinealy of the University of Liverpool, in which she concludes that "...the response of the British Government to the Famine was inadequate in terms of humanitarian criteria, and, increasingly after 1847, systematically and deliberately so." Also recommended to you is Cecil Woodham-Smith's *The Great Hunger*. I'm sure you will agree that these two authors are reputable scholars and certainly not "Brit-bashers." But, as Mr. Bean implies, we probably will not convince you.

We are disturbed that your response seems to endorse the offensive language of the *Economist* that those, like us, who dare to see the cruel, arrogant mismanagement of the Great Hunger by the British government of the time as the cause of the catastrophe are basing our position on a "romantic version of history." This is patent anti-Irish prejudice reminiscent of past centuries and a spirit which in large measure led to the policies which had such tragic results for the Irish people.

Be assured that we will continue our campaign to seek an apology from your government and we will continue to hope for a change of heart, romantic though this notion may seem to you. *John J. Finucane, National President*

The Icing On The Cake -- According to Associated Press November 2, 1995, on November 1 England's Queen Elizabeth II arrived in New Zealand to apologize to the indigenous Maori people for the wrongs committed by British colonists. The Queen will also sign into law the biggest ever compensation deal with indigenous tribes.

Send PEC A Christmas Donation!

Members are urged to send PEC a special Christmas donation, especially those of you who did not have the opportunity to send PEC a donation during the year 1995. As always PEC is in need of your financial support. 1996 promises to be a costly year for PEC as we will be stepping up our efforts to influence all Presidential candidates to publicly support the peace process and to make clear to the British government that, regardless of who will be the next President of the United States, there will not be a return to a pro-British Irish policy.

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