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POLITICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

Vol. 6, No. 4

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER, 1981

Five More Hunger Strikers Murdered By PM Margaret Thatcher

Joe McDonnell - Martin Hurson - Kevin Lynch - Kieran Doherty - Thomas McElwee

NEWS BITS

Peg Matone

On June 19 a Belfast judge acquitted RUC man Robert McKeown of the murder of 16-year old Michael McCartan. Michael was shot in the back while painting "Provo" on a street wall. The RUC has been given the license to kill Catholic youths with impunity. (Irish People 7/11)...Prime Minister Thatcher cancelled Princess Margaret's scheduled visit to Washington in mid-July because of fear of anti-British demonstrations such as those which confronted Prince Charles in New York City in June. (Irish People 7/4)...Bernadette McDonnell, the 11-year old daughter of Joe McDonnell, now the fifth to die on hunger strike, returned to Belfast too late to see her dying father. She had been in the United States with the group of Northern Ireland children visiting for the summer. Bernadette had unsuccessfully attempted to meet with President Reagan to ask his intervention on behalf of the H-Block prisoners. (CBS News 7/7).

The New Jersey State AOH voted to support the Provisional wing of the IRA at the AOH State Convention in Spring Lake, N.J. New Jersey has since been joined by the California AOH and the Emerald Society of the NY Fire Dept. in its support. (Irish People 7/4)...British Labour Party member, Tony Benn, made Ulster a campaign issue, urging that U.N. peace-keeping forces replace British troops in Northern Ireland. (Christian Science Monitor 5/26)...Foreign Secretary Dr. David Owen recommends discussions in the wider diplomatic framework of a European Commission. (Christian Science Monitor 5/26)...Dubliner Kenneth O'Connor and his wife and family were raided by armed police in their home at Kings Cross area of London. The house was torn apart and

nothing illegal was found. The police apologized. (Irish Post 6/13).

"*Irish Razz the Prince*; 4 hecklers nabbed inside the Met as 5000 demonstrated outside Lincoln Center in New York City at the opening of the Royal Ballet. (New York Daily News, 6/18)...Eight IRA prisoners overpowered guards at Crumlin Road Jail in Belfast (Irish Echo, 6/13?)...Prime Minister Thatcher condemns week-long riots in Manchester and Liverpool (AP 7/9)...Maybe Maggie might recall Malcolm X's comment about "the chickens have come home to roost"...Rockland County PEC holds picket marchers against Grand Union Stores in Rockland. This is one way to make the British feel an economic impact from Americans who deplore their Northern Ireland policy. (Journal-News 6/12)

US Immigration Judge Ernest Hupp resigned from deportation case of Michael O'Rourke, an alleged former IRA member. It is believed that Hupp was going to rule in favor of O'Rourke and he and his wife were harrassed. Judge Lyons, who ruled on Joe Cahill in 1972, has replaced Hupp. (Irish Echo 6/20)

12 yr-old Carol Anne Kelly was murdered by British troops in Aspen Park, West Belfast, on May 19, when her head was smashed by a plastic bullet. She died in the hospital on May 22. (Irish People 6/13)...Congressman Mario Biaggi has requested that Defense Secretary Weinberger investigate reports that British troops are being trained at US bases in preparation for assignment in Northern Ireland. (Irish People 7/11)...Rioting rocked West Belfast after British troops moved in on the funeral procession of hunger striker Joe McDonnell...local Catholic priests said troops shot and killed two civilians as the fighting turned into a major street battle (AP 7/11).

NEW YORK CITY FIREFIGHTERS DEMONSTRATE SUPPORT FOR IRISH FREEDOM

John J. Finucane

On July 25 up to 1,000 off-duty New York City firemen, led by Fire Commissioner Charles J. Hynes, Brooklyn Boro. President Harold Golden, Uniformed Firefighters Association President Nicholas Mancuso, and Uniformed Fire Officers Association President Vincent Bollon, joined several thousand more demonstrators in front of the British Consulate to demonstrate their support for the Irish hunger strikers and to call for an end to England's colonial occupation of Ireland. The firefighters' participation was sponsored by the Emerald Society Fire Department, City of New York, and the Emerald Society Bag Pipe Band.

Commissioner Hynes said that the officials and the fire-

fighters were there to assist Irish Northern Aid in telling the British Government "that while one Irishman is in an English jail on Irish soil, no Irishman anywhere in the world can be free".

Mr. Mancuso, President of the 10,000 member firefighters union, while addressing the several thousand participants, commended the members of the Political Education Committee who he said have been an invaluable source of continuing information for him and members of his executive board. Mr. Mancuso also stated that the firefighters union has joined the City Wide Labor Coalition for Irish Freedom.

(Ed. Note: The above is a fine example of the effectiveness of the PEC "educational program.")

WE THANK YOU

We wish to thank those of you who gave so generously in response to our financial appeal. Your donations will be used mainly for newspaper and radio advertising.

We have already advertised our highly informative information packet in a number of newspapers including the Sunday Catholic Visitor which has a nationwide circulation of 400,000. We are presently working on another newspaper advertising campaign that will cover the southwestern states and the north central states. The PEC is meeting the increasing demand for information on the Irish Question.

DID YOU SEND IN YOUR DONATION YET? MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO THE PEC - AOH and mail to the Political Education Committee at the above address. Attention: Treasurer.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is the last free issue of the PEC National Newsletter. As reported in the June/July issue, due to the high cost of printing and postage, (*all future issues will be mailed first class*), and the ever-increasing demand for the newsletter, we can no longer afford to offer the newsletter free.

If you wish to continue receiving the newsletter, simply forward a \$5.00 donation for a one year subscription. Please make checks payable to: PEC -AOH, and mail to the Political Education Committee at the above address. Attention: Treasurer.

WHO LET BOBBY SANDS DIE?

James F. Clarke

Who let Bobby Sands die? One answer is the British Government. However, in our view, the media let Bobby Sands die. The editors of newspapers, magazines, television, and radio let Bobby Sands die.

During the hunger strike of October through December, 1980 the British Government sent members of Parliament (M.P.'s) to the United States to use the media ostensibly to influence the American public. The media, in fairness, gave them access and wide coverage. However, the M.P.'s were really assessing the editors' reaction to the hunger strike and the possible deaths.

Public opinion did not matter! They knew that if the editors favored, or were inclined to endorse, the British Government's position toward "convicted IRA killers", they were successful in their mission.

The first indication of their successful mission was seen when the British Government rewrote the prison rules, acceding to the prisoners' demands, and assured Bobby Sands that an expeditious effort would be made so that the prisoners would be washed, shaved, have hair cuts and would wear their own clothes to Mass on Sunday, December 21, 1980.

Bobby Sands was presented with the revised prison rules late at night with Sean McKenna near death, without fellow

prisoners for consultants, or outside negotiators. He accepted the proposals which ended the hunger strike.

Based on the report of the M.P.'s and others, the British Government blitzed the media announcing the end of the hunger strike by stating that the prisoners came off the hunger strike and that the government did not budge an inch. No matter what was said on behalf of the prisoners, the media accepted the British Government's announcement without question.

The stage was now set for the second hunger strike as the prisoners conformed to the rules, hoping that the agreement would be implemented but they were never to receive their own clothes. The British Government was now confident that the media would continue to accept their viewpoint no matter if future hunger strikers died, since they were "convicted IRA killers." When Bobby Sands went on hunger strike, there was no major propaganda effort by the British Government.

It is easy for editors to accept, without question, and publish a press release prepared by the British Government. Upon examination of the press releases, the editors should have realized that the focus was narrow.

They should have questioned the blind use of military force to solve a political problem and the political parties in Britain agreeing not to make Northern Ireland a political issue. Can responsible democratic government morally exclude a political issue from the political arena?

The question that we ask is: Why is there an institutionalized conspiracy against Irish Nationalist views in the media?

In conclusion, we leave you with this thought. While no one doubts the sincerity of the revulsion to the violence in Ireland, one can question the fairmindedness of critics who view the Nationalist political viewpoint as incitive and the English as innocent bystanders. It is now up to the editors as Bobby Sands handed over the challenge. Proper action on their part can now save lives in Northern Ireland. (*Ed. Note: This article was written in May following Bobby Sands' death.*)

Published by: Rockland County Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Emerald Society, Fire Department of New York City.

P.O. Box 16, Garnerville, N.Y. 10923

Editor John J. Finucane
Assistant Editor Margaret Matone

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE THE BI-MONTHLY POLITICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE NATIONAL NEWSLETTER, PLEASE SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS, AND A \$5.00 DONATION TO THE POLITICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE, POST OFFICE BOX 16, GARNERVILLE, N.Y. 10923. ATTENTION: CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT.

TID BITS

The following are the results of Ireland's general election in 1918 (all 32 counties):

- There were 105 constituencies voting. Seventy nine (Sinn Fein, 73; Nationalist, 6) voted for a united 32-county Ireland and self-determination and 26 constituencies voted to maintain the union with England.

- There were 1,515,861 votes cast. 1,207,151 voted for a united 32-county Ireland and only 308,713 voted to maintain union with England.

FROM THE EDITOR

What is it that makes England so powerful within the U.S.? What is it that causes the U.S. Government to condone *by silence*, English atrocities in occupied northeast Ireland? Is it because England is an ally? Not likely. We fought 2 wars against England and kept her from defeat in 2 wars. English mortars were captured from the North Koreans during that conflict; England violated our Cuban Blockade; and the second largest merchant marine fleet doing business in North Viet Nam's ports during the Viet Nam conflict was England's. Whether or not the Viet Nam Conflict was right or wrong, England did not help the U.S. as other allies did. The above makes it clear that England has never proven its worth as an ally.

There must be something else that makes our government so supportive of Britain. That is, strong British influence in all important facets of American life — government, the news media, big business, etc. When England lost in the American Revolution, did all her loyalists go back to England? Not at all. They remained in the U.S. and in very high positions. They remained loyal to "Mother England". Why should the U.S. be any different than other English colonies? In many cases when England withdrew from colony, it managed to keep a strong power base in that nation. Today England keeps many Americans loyal via American universities that are English orientated and of course, the Rhodes Scholarship. One must wonder, what kind of an individual is it that can support England, a nation that has slaughtered tens of millions of innocents, building its colonial empire that benefited a handful of individuals?

We must open a second front in America. As Americans, we must negate the English image in America.

A JOURNEY INTO THE IRISH PAST

Professor Seamus Metress, Toledo, Ohio

In Ireland the Irish peasantry economically supported not only the great lords, but a hierarchy of middlemen sometimes four deep. The peasant was subjected to rack rents, eviction from his lands to make way for grass farming, and heavy tithes to support the church of England. In the context of such socioeconomic circumstances, an agrarian resistance movement emerged.

Agrarian resistance emerged initially in Tipperary in 1761 as a reaction to an attempt by the landlords to enclose formerly communal grazing lands. At first the Whiteboys were known as Levellers because they assembled at night to level the ditches erected around the commons. Later they began to wear white shirts to identify themselves in the dark and became known as Buachaillí Bana, or the Whiteboys. The Whiteboys developed into a permanent source of resistance to the rack renters, evictions, tithe-collectors, land grabbers, and landlord-employers who employed people at less than standard rates.

The movement spread through Munster and into Connacht and Leinster. Its activities were local or regional with no national organization, but it did establish an agrarian solidarity code. Also, this code was enforced by a loose aggregation of self-contained secret societies known collectively as the Whiteboys. In the opinion of some socio-historians, the movement had the effect of a tenants' protective society or of an agricultural labor union.

From 1761 to 1778, the government engaged in a perpetual war with the Whiteboys. Military expeditions were launched

against them and numbers of suspects were captured, hanged, and their corpses subsequently desecrated. In 1765, a law was passed that demanded the death penalty for taking the Whiteboy oath. The crown reported extermination of the Whiteboys numerous times, but the Whiteboys with much mass support outwitted the pursuit and lived on to fight another day.

Few people were killed, but a great deal of property damage occurred and effective intimidation was established. Whiteboy methods included threatening leaders and potential collaborators, physical beatings, destruction of houses and hay ricks, and the maiming of cattle and horses; murder was rare. Whiteboy justice was swift, severe and often cruel. But, keep in mind that the laws were cruel, vindictive, unfair, and alien. The Whiteboys attempted to secure justice denied by a foreign government.

The movement was denounced by the authorities as popery, but the Catholic Church excommunicated those who took the oath and Catholic landlords were also attacked. In some cases the clergy did encourage the resistance in defiance of the church hierarchy. Father Nicholas Sheehy, a parish priest from Clogheen, Tipperary, was cruelly executed at Cionmel in 1766 for his part in the Whiteboy "conspiracy". Further, the movement under other names, such as the Oaksboys, Steelboys, and Peep O'Day boys, was active in Ulster where both Catholic and Protestant laborers participated.

Whiteboyism and its offshoots paved the way for later national movements. In Ulster the movement was less ferociously repressed, but it eventually led to emigration of many Ulstermen to the New World. The Ulster Irish and their southern counterparts carried their hate for the English and royalty to America, where it reached fruition in the American Revolution. A gravestone inscription in the Shenandoah Valley makes an interesting quote:

"Here lies the remains of John Lewis who slew the Irish lord, settled Augusta county, located the town of Stanton and furnished five sons to fight the battle of the American Revolution."

ACTION LETTER

Raymond O'Connor, Pompano Beach, Florida

We must keep the pressure on President Ronald Reagan. More and more members of the U.S. Senate and Congress are calling upon President Reagan to become involved in resolving the troubles in Ireland. Again, we ask you to write to President Reagan. Below, for your convenience, is a sample letter that you may use as a guide or simply *rewrite* on your own stationery.

address _____

date _____

President Ronald Reagan
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As an American citizen, I call upon you as President of the United States, to become actively and publicly involved in resolving the troubles in Ireland. Britain must declare its intent to withdraw from Ireland.

Sincerely,
signature

THE CLERGY SPEAKS OUT

As clergy of the Diocese of Paterson, State of New Jersey, we wish to express our concern on the inhumane and degrading treatment of Irish prisoners in British jails. We are alarmed at the fate of the hunger strikers in Long Kesh concentration camp and the unnecessary loss of life and limb which will inevitably ensue.

Margaret Thatcher and the British government have shown a base intransigence towards the Irish people. Her arrogance and insensitivity can only exacerbate the conflict. Men who have been condemned by rigged courts are dying a slow and torturous death. More will follow in the prisons and on the streets unless a solution is obtained.

In the name of decency and basic human rights, we call upon the United Nations, our President, and Government to use whatever influence is deemed necessary to alleviate a terrible situation. Our government has demonstrated a vital and active interest in other countries. We call upon it now to use its good offices in persuading its greatest ally, Britain, to show compassion and courage to its closest neighbor.

The above statement has been signed and endorsed by:

Msgr. Herbert K. Tillyer, Chancellor, Diocese of Paterson; Msgr. John P. McHugh, Associate Superintendent of Schools, Diocese of Paterson; Msgr. Eugene McQuaid, Pastor, Holy Spirit Church, Pequannock, N.J.; Msgr. James J. Doyle, Pastor, St. Michael Church, Netcong, N.J.; Rev. Louis J. Gallo, Pastor, St. Mary's Church, Paterson, N.J.; Rev. Kevin Flanagan, Pastor, St. Clare Church, Clifton, N.J.; Rev. Finbarr Corr, Pastor, St. Vincent's Church, Madison, N.J.; Rev. Michael Conway, Pastor, St. Nicholas Church, Passaic, N.J.; Rev. Daniel P. Noonan, Pastor, St. Joseph's Church, Paterson, N.J.; Rev. Peter McBride, St. Andrew's Church, Clifton, N.J.; Rev. Brendan Ryan, St. Jude Church, Hopatcong, N.J.; Rev. John O'Brien, Director, Hope House, Dover, N.J.; Rev. Denis Haughney, Associate Pastor, St. Michael Church, Netcong, N.J.; Rev. Jeremiah O'Riordan, St. Christopher Church, Parsippany, N.J.; Rev. Michael Quinn, St. Andrew's Church, Clifton, N.J.; Rev. Patrick O'Donovan, Associate, St. Patrick's Church, Chatham, N.J.; Rev. Denis McHugh, Associate, Sacred Heart Church, Dover, N.J.; Rev. Eugene M. Boland, Associate, St. James Church, Totowa, N.J.; Rev. William Collins, Associate, St. Clare Church, Clifton, N.J.; Rev. Robert Hooper, Lakewood, N.J.

'BARRY' DAY VETOED

Assemblywoman Florence Sullivan (R-C, Bay Ridge, Sunset Park), today (6/17/81) expressed her surprise and sincere regret that Governor Carey has, for the second successive year, vetoed legislation that would make Sept. 13 "John Barry Day" in New York State.

The measure, which had sailed through both houses of the State Legislature, would honor the native of Wexford, Ireland, as the founder of the American Navy, one of the major figures in America's fight for independence, and one of our nation's first Irish-American patriots.

"I am really shocked that Governor Carey could so callously brush aside a day of commemoration for one of our state and nation's great heroes," Assemblywoman Sullivan said.

"The veto message again attempted to justify the Governor's action by claiming that a governor's proclamation and legislative resolution are an adequate method of honoring the achievements of great state and national leaders.

"The veto by Governor Carey will be viewed as a great disappointment to the Irish-American families, not only of Brooklyn and New York State, but throughout the country.

"It will also be viewed with great disappointment by the officers and the men of the Navy who have written and called me in support of 'John Barry Day' bill.

"Commodore Barry has been seen for many years as a prototype for those of Irish ancestry who are totally committed to individual freedom and national independence," Assemblywoman Sullivan pointed out.

Barry, after whom Brooklyn's Commodore John Barry Club is named, came to the U.S. in 1759. His commission is the initial entry in the records of the U.S. Navy.

ROCKLAND COUNTY ELECTION NOTE

PEC supporter and Irish activist William A. Kelly will be a candidate for Town Justice of Clarkstown, N.Y. at the primary election on THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10th and the general election on Tuesday, November 3rd. Mr. Kelly, who presently serves as a senior trial attorney in the Bronx District Attorney's Office, is a long-time activist in the struggle for Irish freedom and Human Rights and an A.O.H. division president.

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