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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 27, Number 4

April 2002

Bill of Rights Is Inadequate

THE NORTHERN Ireland Human Rights Commission is deliberating its final advice to the secretary of state on the contents of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. This advice will be based on submissions on its consultation document, "Making a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland."

The Belfast-based human rights organization the Committee on the Administration of Justice has expressed concern that the Commission has rushed the consultation phase and could jeopardize the project if the proposed Bill of Rights does not win the support of the communities.

CAJ says the proposals contained in "Making a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland" "fall far short of a strong, comprehensive Bill of Rights [that] adheres to international standards. Much work remains to be done if the Commission is to make this a Bill of Rights of which we can be proud and which can truly guarantee and protect the human rights of all." The CAJ has expressed the following concerns about the consultation document.

Accessibility

The organization says the document is confusing, incoherent, and inaccessible. "The language itself is overly technical, with many groups having described it as 'disempowering.' Even the Preamble, as the section in a Bill of Rights which should be clear and easily understood, seems to be both long and complex.

"The use of clauses from the European Convention, which are then occasionally amended or even contradicted by subsequent paragraphs, is off-putting...."

Further, the document is inconsistent in reference to the people the document applies to. "Everyone," "citizens,"

(continued on Page 6)

Sinn Fein Builds All-Ireland Strategy

(Excerpt from report published online in the Feb. 28 *RM Distribution*)

"IRISH unity is no longer a vision. It's within our grasp to bring Irish unity into reality, but we need space to get a common rooted ideology. We need space to strategize, to think of how our activity can fit into an all Ireland framework, to create the kind of Ireland we want to see," Sinn Fein President **Gerry Adams** said at the recent All-Ireland Seminar. More than 300 party representatives and political activists from all parts of the country examined ways forward to achieve a united Ireland.

"We were never just a Brits-out party," said Adams. "We're not just changing the color of the post boxes. We need to widen the democratic basis within the party, through the *Cuige* structures. We're about empowering people, not controlling people. We've no monopoly on Irish republicanism.

"We've a huge responsibility to take from here, to strategize not only for Irish unity but for the Ireland we want to see. Unless you've a party ideologically sure of itself, you are going to get a hollowing out, a Fianna Fail party: a Fianna Fail Ireland.

"There is a very good mood in the party and on the streets," Adams commented, adding, "There will be harder times, but this conference has been a good start."

The All-Ireland Agenda

Conference organizer **Martina Anderson** established the framework of the conference. She said, "We have a vision predicated on knowledge that we are in an irreversible process, moving power from Westminster to the Assembly and from there into all-Ireland structures. Some of us are unclear about the tactics we're using to steer our strategy. We need a 'trajectory for victory' that is tangible and clearly understood by all. We must not allow ourselves to get bogged down in tactics.

"Today we will talk about some of the activities of the North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC). At these sessions, we need to make sure that

(continued on Page 7)

INSIDE

Peace Process Update	2
From the North	3
Newsbits	4
Derry Families Respond to Government Snub	5
Bill of Rights Is Inadequate (continued)	6
Sinn Fein Builds All-Ireland Strategy (continued)	7
Action Requests	8

Our View: Cold Shoulder Greet 2002

IN THE WAKE of Sept. 11, it seemed tacky to make noise about a peace process that was underway, albeit with a lot of bumps in the road. In the wake of Sept. 11, it seemed harrowing for President George Bush to tell his Cabinet to get on with his domestic agenda; he had a war to fight.

Bush would divert American attention from domestic issues--not the least of which is the imminent evisceration of the Arctic Wildlife Refuge--by drawing our attention to the Middle East and anyplace else where people don't wear Western clothing. He would thus have a free hand at home and abroad. Patriotic Americans would not ask questions.

PEC members see it in the way Bush flouts our letters with form letters signed by one Deborah K. Hair. We did not vote for her. We never even heard of her. She has no right to thumb her nose to us. We expect--we are entitled to--informed, considered replies to the questions we raise.

Indeed, in the wake of Sept. 11, it is ruthless of our Commander in Chief to sweep us under the rug as we engage in the democratic process. It is likewise ruthless of the Bush Administration's counterparts in the United Kingdom to refuse to answer democratically expressed concerns of people who are victims of state violence.

Indeed, these people are asking for a fair hearing. They are asking to learn the truth about their recent history. Despite Britain's failure to install democracy in the political aberration called Northern Ireland, these men and women who have lost family members as a result of state violence are willing to start from the present and engage in a dialogue that might lead to understanding and credible government. How dare Britain flout that.

How dare our leaders abuse democracy in this way and then justify violence in the name of democracy.

Peace Process Update

February 14

PSNI chief **Ronnie Flanagan** loses the support of Omagh bombing victim relatives following Flanagan's dismissing the police ombudsman's report criticizing his investigation into that atrocity.

February 15

Speaking at the opening of a new headquarters in County Wicklow for the Glenree peace and reconciliation project, **Prince Charles** says he knows Ireland's history has caused "much pain and much resentment in a world of imperfect human beings." He says, "We need to remember that the underlying meaning of peace is not just the absence of conflict. It is equally a climate in which understanding of others goes beyond caricature and where frozen images of hatred and negativity yield to a new vision of shared value and goodness."

February 19

British Home Secretary **David Blunkett** confirms the appointment of Flanagan as one of two new HM Inspectors of Constabulary.

February 21

The Catholic Reaction Force claims it has murdered a man in County Down. Security sources believe the killing was drugs related.

February 22

A group calling itself the South Londonderry Protestant Volunteer Force (a new cover name for the UVF) is responsible for at least 10 pipe bomb attacks and three hoaxes in the mid-Ulster and Derry areas. Applications for places at a Holy Cross Girls' Primary School in north Belfast drop by half after a long-term loyalist intimidation campaign. The Police Board postpones Flanagan's retirement from the PSNI until April. The chief constable was due to retire in one week.

(continued on Page 8)

American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC

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From the North: Northern Secretary Serves Unionism Well

By Robert Heatley, *co-founder of the campaign for Democracy, a predominantly Protestant organization, Belfast, Northern Ireland*

WHEN British proconsul **John Reid** warned people not to make Northern Ireland a “cold place for unionists” (in the context of the Mitchell Agreement reforms) he was speaking Brit-speak.

Nobody had trouble deciphering the message. He was telling republicans and nationalists not to expect their right to equal treatment right away. He was also telling them this strategy required a slowing down of the implementation of the Mitchell Agreement.

His manner did not convey that he was upset that this would be a long struggle that would lead to only partial attainment of nationalist rights. Indeed, it is clear that unionist peevishness suits Reid down to the ground.

He, too, wants to prolong the United Kingdom ethos and—more important—British rule in the North for as long as he can. That is his job. Meanwhile his spin doctors portray him as a long-suffering, well-intentioned, democratic man doing his best to drag two obtuse Irish tribes out of an obsolete conflict.

During a speech in Dublin, Reid claimed bragging rights to the following achievements in this almost impossible struggle.

1. He set the Stormont Assembly on a firmer footing. This means that he restrained the UUP from knocking it down whenever it suited its hard-liners to outflank Paisley’s DUP. This is no guarantee that unionists’ moth-balling the Assembly might not prove politically expedient again.

2. He achieved an act of IRA decommissioning. Unfortunately, he has not been equally successful with the loyalist paramilitaries. Reid remains optimistic about this, despite unionists’ declaring their intention to hang on to their weapons regardless of what the

IRA should do. They will hold them in case Northern Ireland should leave the United Kingdom, though the Mitchell Agreement says that this can happen when a democratic majority wills it.

Reid also claims as an achievement “hints” that the “UDA cease-fire, dismissed as bogus last autumn, will be reviewed soon.” He wants the UDA to come into politics.

3. Reid claimed he has achieved some cross-community support for policing. This means that he has gotten the SDLP, along with some British-government-appointed “independent” Catholics, to participate on the new Policing Board. Already there are indications of SDLP disenchantment with this unionist-dominated Board and the truncation of the Patten Report recommendations, however.

The SDLP has had to swallow the British crown’s presence in the “new” police badge. Also, the party has not been able to support unequivocally Ombudsman **Nuala O’Loan** in her confrontation with outgoing Chief Constable **Ronnie Flanagan** over her investigation into the RUC’s investigation into the Omagh bombing. Now there is growing disquiet over the British government’s unilateral backtracking in respect of the promised Criminal Justice review reforms—this, despite objections from the whole nationalist community, including the Irish government.

What has become interesting as a result of this action is that the SDLP seems to be discovering that it is only slightly post-nationalist. We used to be told that you couldn’t eat a symbol, and the SDLP’s spokespeople agreed readily enough to the crown’s presence on the new police badge.

This latest affront to the susceptibilities of nationalists—and, especially—the retention of their second-class status, has proved to be too much even for the SDLP to accept.

Some folks used to think that once the Irish people North and South had endorsed the Mitchell Agreement in referenda, it became the property of the Irish people. Over the past four years, the British government has disabused them of that notion.

Overall, the three markers that the northern secretary has set out to indicate the progress that he has made since coming into office eighteen months ago are nothing to boast about.

Reid will be tested once again. At his Ulster Unionist Council conference this month, First Minister and UUP leader **David Trimble** called for a border referendum in May, the same time as the Stormont Assembly election. He did this to again placate his anti-Agreement hard-liners and to outflank rival unionist **Ian Paisley**.

What will the proconsul do? Will he achieve yet more of his kind of progress by acceding to the demands of his main man in the North, Trimble? After all, the Mitchell Agreement is Reid’s property to dole out as he pleases. In the alternative, will he expedite the reforms without equivocation?

These reforms are intended to transform Northern Ireland from being a pathetic, sectarian, mono-ethnic, monocultural, economically failed, United Kingdom segment into a vibrant, multi-ethnic, liberal Irish democracy. Reid will succeed if he gets out of the way of that objective and stops making the North a “cold place” for democrats.

Newsbits

A CONTROVERSY over demographic trends in the North has fuelled a debate over the shape of a future united Ireland. Statisticians and demographers suggest the Catholic population is approaching the Protestant population at a dramatic rate. There appears to be a growing conviction that the North will have a Catholic majority from 10 to 30 years from now if present trends continue. Census statistics show the Catholic population of the North reaching 45 percent. The data collected in 2001 is being processed, but it seems likely that a combination of higher birth rates, a younger population, and a reversal of emigration trends will lead to a significant jump in the Catholic population. Dr. Paul Compton, a demographer at University College London, has said that differentials in birth-and-death rates between the two communities could result in a Catholic majority within 30 years. However, the figures remain the subject of debate, and there are some predictions that Catholic population growth will level off in line with trends elsewhere in Europe. (RM Dist. 2/15/02)

There have been calls for the resignation of Attorney General Michael McDowell after he attacks Sinn Fein. McDowell, who is contesting the May general election on behalf of junior coalition partners the Progressive Democrats, said Sinn Fein "has no business" in the Irish parliament. Claiming to be defending the process of "national reconciliation," McDowell suggested that Sinn Fein was involved in trading drugs and arms and "torture-mutilation." McDowell was speaking at the convention at which he was selected as a candidate for the Progressive Democrats in Dublin South East. The position of attorney

general is understood to be constitutionally independent and nonpolitical. (RM Dist. 2/22/02)

British Prime Minister **Tony Blair** and Irish counterpart **Bertie Ahern** discuss the appointment of a judge to probe a string of high profile murders in Northern Ireland. The governments have agreed an investigation is needed into six killings, including those of lawyers Rosemary Nelson and Pat Finucane. Relatives of Finucane have attacked the plan to appoint a judge to oversee the investigation as a stalling tactic to prevent a full international independent inquiry. However, speaking in Downing Street after the meeting, Ahern said "an eminent international judge" was needed. "We had some discussions about the kind of person we want but it has to be someone experienced in the area of human rights and large investigations," the Irish premier said. (AIS 2/18/02)

Madden & Finucane Solicitors have today lodged papers appealing the decision of **Justice Kerr** to dismiss an application for judicial review of the grant of screening to RUC/PSNI witnesses at the Saville Inquiry into Bloody Sunday. **Mary Doherty**, sister of Gerard Donaghy who was killed on Bloody Sunday, had sought to challenge the Tribunal's ruling that 20 former and serving RUC/PSNI members should be allowed to give their evidence whilst screened from the public and from the families of the deceased and the wounded.... It is a matter of the utmost importance to the families that this ruling is challenged. A blanket grant of screening to the majority of RUC/PSNI witnesses erodes the public nature of the inquiry and effectively excludes the families from almost an entire section of evidence. Moreover,

the families fear that soldiers, not satisfied with anonymity and a change of venue, will soon apply for screening and will rely on any decision given in favor of these witnesses. In the wider context, the court's ruling will have implications for the conduct of other legal proceedings. The decision of the Court of Appeal will be awaited with considerable interest. (Pat Finucane Center Press Release 2/21/01)

President **George Bush** sent the following reply to an Action Request letter PEC member **John Whelan** wrote to him. The letter fails Whelan and, indeed, all Americans concerned about peace in Ireland, because it says nothing. At the very least, we deserve letters that acknowledge our concerns. We don't need postal pep rallies for the Commander in Chief. The PEC urges you to notify your elected representatives that Bush is ignoring the concerns of Americans seeking peace with justice in Northern Ireland (See Action Request, Page 8). The letter in its entirety follows. "On behalf of President Bush, thank you for your letter. He appreciates hearing from the American people about their concerns and welcomes their suggestions. President Bush is strongly committed to pursuing policies and programs that meet America's priorities and address our needs. By working with Congress and focusing on results, his Administration is making significant progress on an agenda that is worthy of our great country. In support of this goal, President Bush welcomes the ideas and opinions of all Americans. Thank you for writing to him, and best wishes. Sincerely, **Deborah K. Hair** Special Assistant to the President Director of Correspondence and Presidential Messages. (AIN-PEC 3/7/02)

Derry Families Respond to Government Snub

(Derry – Feb. 20) THE FAMILIES of nine Derry people whom British forces killed in disputed circumstances will pursue legal action against the Director of Public Prosecutions following what they describe as “an insulting and inadequate response from the office of the DPP.”

In a letter to the families, the DPP again refused to give reasons for his failure to prosecute, despite the European Court's landmark ruling last year requiring him to do so.

The move follows a press conference last month with the families of Desmond Beattie, Kathleen Thompson, Colm Keenan, Manus Deery, Daniel Hegarty, Thomas Friel, Denis Heaney, Stephen McConomy, and Paul Whitters.

The Pat Finucane Center has today announced lawyers will seek leave to judicially review the DPP in two test cases on behalf of the families of Deery and Thompson.

Center spokesman **Paul O'Connor** said, “These test cases should be seen in the context of a series of ongoing legal challenges to the culture of impunity which has surrounded state killings over the past 30 years. As a result of the European judgement, legal challenges are presently going ahead regarding the inquest system and the failure to mount independent investigations. The test cases in respect of **Manus Deery and Kathleen Thompson** are groundbreaking in the sense that the office of the DPP will find itself in the dock, a unique reversal of roles.”

The relatives have also expressed their total outrage at the nature of the recent correspondence from the office of

the DPP. The letter makes no reference by name to those who died. Instead, each of the deceased has been given a reference number. **Raymond Beattie**, whose brother **Dessie** British soldiers killed in 1971, commented, “To give someone a number, not a name, is going down the path of the Nazis, who treated Jews as numbers.”

Maria McConomy, whose 11-year-old son **Stephen** a British soldier killed in 1982, said, “It's a disgrace and shows their mentality. To us he was a flesh and blood human being, an 11-year-old playing on the street, a son and a brother, not a number on a file to be ignored.”

The Pat Finucane Center says other families who lost loved ones in controversial killings should study the criticisms that emerged from the European judgement and ask themselves whether these might apply in their cases. “We would encourage families to contact their solicitor first and foremost or the PFC if in doubt,” O'Connor said.

Eight major criticisms emerge from the four judgements: lack of independence of the police investigation, which applies to police killings (**Jordan, McKerr**), army killings (**Kelly**), and cases of alleged collusion (**Shanaghan**); DPP's refusal to give reasons for failing to prosecute; lack of compellability of witnesses suspected of causing death; lack of verdicts at the inquest; absence of legal aid and nondisclosure of witness statements at the inquest; delays in the inquest proceedings; the limited scope of the inquest; and lack of prompt or effective investigation of the allegations of collusion.

Policing Board Must Publicize Guidelines for Plastic Bullets

HUMAN rights groups continue to call on the Policing Board--responsible for all plastic bullets that the PSNI fires--to demand the same control over plastic bullets that the British Army fires in so-called “policing situations.” The call comes following Minister of State **Adam Ingram**'s renewed refusal to reveal the guidelines governing the British army's use of plastic bullets (parliamentary reply, Jan. 23).

Spokesperson for the United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets **Clara Reilly** says, “This situation cannot be allowed to continue. If a member of the RUC/PSNI fires a plastic bullet in north Belfast tonight, there is an automatic investigation by the Ombudsman. If the same person tells a British soldier standing beside him/her to fire this lethal weapon, there is no investigation. Now we are told that complaints about British Army use should be made to the PSNI, yet they are no longer deemed fit to investigate complaints against themselves.”

Reilly continues: “Since the RUC could not effectively and impartially investigate the deaths caused through plastic bullets by the British army in the past, how can we have confidence that [it] will in the future? Until plastic bullets are completely banned, the only tenable position is for the Policing Board to demand the declassification of the British army's rules governing the use of plastic bullets as a minimum first step. The second step is to ensure that the use of plastic bullets by the British army will also result in automatic and independent investigation. Realization of these two demands will result in a reduction in the [number] of plastic bullets fired. Until then, the Policing Board must accept all responsibility for the consequences of the use of plastic bullets” (See related story, Page 7, Action Request, Page 8).

(continued from Page 1)

“people of Northern Ireland,” and “individuals born in Northern Ireland” are used interchangeably.

Identity and Community Rights

The chapter purports to follow the Framework Convention on National Minorities but in many instances seems to undermine the provisions contained in that Convention, the CAJ says. “The most worrying feature of this chapter is the document’s equating “minorities” with “communities.” The CAJ says, “The term ‘minorities’ has a specific meaning in international human rights law, and indeed these provisions are designed to protect the most vulnerable groups, and individuals in society precisely because they are minorities. Special provision is rarely, if ever, required to ensure protection for so-called ‘majority’ groups and elaboration of these rights do not normally feature in international human rights texts. It certainly would be unacceptable if the commission undermined any of the rights that minorities have as a result of the Framework Convention, and we believe the current proposals do exactly that.

“In addition, CAJ has some concerns about the proposed right of people *not* to be treated as a member of a particular community, as this could create problems for practices such as employment monitoring, integrated schooling, and police recruitment. There is a danger that these proposals risk undercutting equality proposals elsewhere in the Bill and in existing legislative provisions.

“CAJ is particularly concerned, given that equality is one of the particular areas mandated by the Agreement for the Human Rights Commission to examine in the Bill of Rights, that the Commission’s

proposals in this area are lacking in some respects. Most important, given concerns we have raised elsewhere in the submission, we feel that positive action *must be required, rather than being a discretionary mechanism.*”

Victims

The CAJ says the “most worrying in this chapter is the distinction [the Commission makes] between so-called ‘victims of the past’ and ‘victims of the future,’ which in effect rejects the idea of individuals seeking redress and runs counter to recent judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. It seems strange that the Commission would decide that individual families or victims should be unable to obtain access to justice simply because the act in question was committed during the conflict.”

Language

The CAJ points out that the Irish language and Ulster Scots receive no additional protection in the draft proposals. “While the proposals relating to the language rights of migrant communities are to be welcomed, it is unclear why the Commission felt it necessary to develop extra protections for English,” the CAJ says. International human rights law in relation to language rights focuses on the rights of those who are nationals of the state but belong to minorities. Why is the Commission departing from the international norm in this instance, particularly when to focus on indigenous languages would precisely reflect the ‘particular circumstances of Northern Ireland,’ as mandated by the Agreement?

Socioeconomic Rights

CAJ says the “text is entirely misleading in that it suggests that the Commission is responding positively

to the almost unanimous support for the inclusion of socioeconomic rights, when in fact the proposals add little to provisions already available elsewhere in the text....In effect, the whole chapter is meaningless since the protections it appears to offer are already offered elsewhere in the text. This section distorts the effective protection of social and economic rights, suggesting that they are being protected when that is not the case.

“The format of the chapter seeks to give the impression that socioeconomic rights are being treated differently from the other rights outlined in the Bill. Given that this is the one area in the Bill of Rights for which there is almost unanimous support among the people of Northern Ireland, CAJ believes that the Commission *must* propose strong and effective socioeconomic rights protection....”

Enforcement

“CAJ was particularly surprised to see that the Commission seems to have changed its policy in relation to the creation of a new court. In its submission to the Criminal Justice Review, the Commission endorsed the suggestion of creating a Constitutional Court dedicated to interpreting a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. In the current proposals, however, a new court is only an option, and one that does not seem to be in favor. CAJ remains firmly of the view that a new court is *essential* if the Bill of Rights is going to be effectively enforced. New judges sitting on a new court, entrusted as guardians of the Bill of Rights, cannot help but take those rights seriously and endeavor to ensure that they are respected. In addition, a new court, which is broadly representative of the community, would be a powerful symbol that the Bill of Rights truly belongs to everyone in Northern Ireland.”

(continued from Page 1)

our activities here are demonstrating to the people of Ireland the real benefits of reunification. Are there potential dangers in such projects' accelerating cross-border activity in ways that are normalizing the border?

"Today should lead into a discussion about opening up new sites of struggle, injecting a republican dynamic into the existing areas of cooperation, such as energy and waste management. We need to identify a number of manageable all-Ireland projects to pursue in local areas.

"As a part of this process, it is imperative that unionists enter into discussions about the kind of united Ireland that will undoubtedly emerge," Anderson added.

Implementation Bodies

The Mitchell Agreement provided a minimum of 12 subject areas for cooperation and implementation for mutual benefit under the aegis of the NSMC. In the case of six of these areas, new North-South Implementation bodies were set up: Trade and Business Development (InterTradeIreland), the Food Safety Promotion Board, the Language Body, the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission, the Special EU Programs Body, and Waterways Ireland.

Members of the first four, which have implementation boards, said the boards are continually held up as a result of the foot dragging of reluctant participants to the all-Ireland agenda and from civil servants who saw the bodies as challenging their domains.

For example, the largest of these boards is InterTradeIreland with 50 full-time staff. Sinn Fein member Robbie Smyth outlined the potential for the all-Ireland strategy in connection with this board. He said 18 bodies with broad remits for economic development had never met together before the body was set up. Likewise for 65 other projects in the border regions. Smyth spoke of the need for a common currency, a common tax system, and an end to competition between North and South. Smyth called on all Sinn Fein political representatives and activists to start asking of InterTradeIreland what this body is doing for their area and to begin to grasp the opportunities for local development strategies within the overall all-Ireland agenda.

Areas for Cooperation

Six more areas identified for cooperation were transport, agriculture, education, health, environment, and tourism. The conference identified advantages of rationalizing health resources and cooperating in education and training North and South of the border. It also identified the need for better cross-border roads assist rural development and reverse the underdevelopment of the periphery.

At the same time, conferees discussed the need to move beyond these manageable all-Ireland projects toward developing an all-Ireland strategy to promote an Ireland of equals, North and South. For example, the Irish people need to promote a policy for an all-Ireland health service based on equality for all rather than to promote the rationalization of an inadequate two-tier health service on either side of the border.

On the subject of waste management, attendees proposed developing, through cross-border cooperation, an all-Ireland vision for the preservation of a clean environment in place of rationalizing facilities for cross-border waste disposal.

Attendees agreed on the need for Sinn Fein members across the country to research opportunities for North-South cooperation in each of the subject areas identified in the Mitchell Agreement. All agreed on the need to generate understanding of the distinct advantages of North-South cooperation in every area.

Evaluation

Alex Maskey pointed out that the all-Ireland bodies are a reflection of Sinn Fein's strength, and "the stronger we are, the stronger they [the all-Ireland bodies] become." The whole party needs to be engaged in taking on strategies to engage with these institutions so that it can maximize their potential, he said.

Anderson concluded, "If we come away...energized to the point of being prepared to actively obtain a better understanding and to volunteer for follow-up action in our local areas, this seminar will have been a success."

Adams said, "We need the space to get a common rooted ideology. It would be an awful sin, for want of learning the lessons of the last 30 years, if we failed in this."

Plastic Bullets are a Flag of Convenience for State Murder

THE BRITISH army is responsible for 12 of the 17 plastic or rubber bullet deaths of Irish people.

There is an investigation whenever the PSNI fire plastic bullets. Not so for the British army.

Regulations for PSNI's firing of plastic bullets are in the public domain. The rules for the British army are classified.

Of all the plastic bullets it has fired since 1981, the British army has fired 99.6 percent in Northern Ireland.

The army has fired 14,801 plastic bullets in the North since 1981. It fired 58 during an incident in Kosovo in Feb. 2000. There are no other reported cases of the British army's using plastic bullets outside Ireland since 1981 (Hansard).

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Action Requests

Please take the actions recommended below. Mention that you are a PEC member.

✓ Contact: Minister for State **Adam Ingram**, email adam_ingram@compuserve.com; tele. (in the United Kingdom) 020-7219-4093

Message: As the former security minister in the Northern Ireland Office, you are well aware of the lethal potential of plastic bullets. Your recent refusal to publishing the British army's guidelines for firing plastic bullets suggests the British government has something to hide about its use of this weapon. I wish to see the British government do away with these weapons, but I urge you to publish the guidelines immediately.

Contact: **Your Representative**, 2244 Rayburn Office Building, Washington, DC 20515-3010

✓ Message: Americans who have expressed to President George Bush their concerns about aspects of the Irish peace process have received form letters that make no reference to the substance of their initial correspondence. This is unacceptable. We have honored the democratic process by working through it to help achieve a just, lasting peace in Ireland. Bush's failure to specifically acknowledge our concerns flouts that process. Please use your good offices to urge the President to pressure the British government to set up an immediate, independent investigation into the 1989 murder in Belfast of civil rights attorney Pat Finucane.

(continued from Page 2)

March 4

The Northern Ireland Assembly is to debate a motion calling for Sinn Fein's expulsion from government for a year. Anti-Agreement unionists **Ian Paisley** (DUP), **William McCrea** (DUP), **Denis Watson** (United Unionist), and **Robert McCartney** (UKUP) tabled the motion, which states that Sinn Fein should be excluded because of the IRA's retention of its weaponry. Northern Ireland First Minister **David Trimble** describes the motion as a "political stunt," adding, "The sole reason for this activity is just a stunt with regard to the annual meeting of our party....If the people who put the motion in were serious, they wouldn't be sitting sharing power with Sinn Fein. They wouldn't be sitting in committees with Sinn Fein. If they had integrity, they would get out of here."

March 5

British Secretary of State **John Reid** confirms reports that he has had held talks with representatives of the UDA with a view to recognizing a UDA cease-fire. Reid says he is talking with the UPRG [Ulster Political Research Group]. The UPRG has in recent weeks replaced the Ulster Democratic Party [UDP] as the group representing the UDA after the latter scrapped the failed political party. The harassment of Sinn Fein election candidates in the South in advance of the May general election increases with the arrest of the party's director of elections for Kerry-North and an apparent bid to suspend Cavan-Monaghan TD **Caoimghin O Caolain** from his seat in the Dail.

March 6

A motion to exclude Sinn Fein ministers from government for a year is defeated in the Assembly. Three nationalist members vote against the DUP motion, which has the support of 30 anti-Agreement unionists.