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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 21, Number 5

May 1996

Bruton Has Failed Ireland

There was a great sense of frustration and trepidation among Irish nationalists when John Bruton took over as Taoiseach from Albert Reynolds. The reasons were clear. Reynolds was one of the chief architects of the peace process and the IRA ceasefire. Albert Reynolds was also one of the main builders of the nationalist alliance between the Irish government, the SDLP and Sinn Fein. He also proved to be an equal match to John Major and was ready and willing to stand up to the British when necessary.

John Bruton's record on the other hand was a cause for grave concern. Bruton has always been regarded as a closet unionist. Bruton has always supported the abandoning of Articles Two and Three of the Irish constitution (Ireland's rightful claim to the six counties). He also savagely attacked Albert Reynolds throughout the peace process. John Hume was also a favorite target for Bruton's wrath for engaging in the very negotiations with Gerry Adams which led to the IRA cessation. If John Bruton had come to power a few months earlier, it is safe to say that there would have been no ceasefire or peace process.

With this in mind, supporters of a united democratic Ireland had cause for concern when Bruton came to power. Bruton showed a bit of promise at first when the Joint Framework Document was published. The document was largely along the lines of what Reynolds had negotiated and was a largely positive document.

Unfortunately it has been all down hill from there. It started St. Patrick's Day 1995, when on his US trip, Bruton stated that he agreed that decommissioning should be a pre-condition to all-party talks. He later modified that statement but it still gave the British government the opening to continue their stalling tactics. Bruton's failure to stand up forcefully to the British government is one of the main reasons why the peace process has been on the brink of collapse.

Bruton's greatest failure and one of the reasons why the British have been able to move the process at a snail's pace is that Bruton has failed to maintain the pan-nationalist consensus. Britain has always tried to "divide and conquer" the nationalist consensus. Bruton himself refused to meet with Hume and Adams at the same time saying that he did not want to give the impression of a pan-nationalist front. It is the duty of the Prime Minister of Ireland to promote the nationalist agenda. Moreover, a united nationalist front is a necessity to deal with the alliance between the British government and the unionists.

When the British Government erected stumbling block after stumbling block on the road to peace, John Bruton should have stood up and denounced them loud and clear and with the same vehemence that he denounced Sinn Fein and the IRA all these years. He should have stood up and told the British that decommissioning was never a pre-condition, that Britain was in violation of the Downing Street Declaration by not calling all-party talks, that there was no need for these ridiculous elections etc... Instead Bruton has failed to provide leadership, failed to adhere to his responsibilities as the leader of the Irish people and his failure has led this peace process to the brink of collapse. The ultimate responsibility for the nationalist agenda lies with the Irish government. So far John Bruton has failed us.

Newsbits by Kathy Regan

The American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC extended its condolences to the family of Commerce Secretary Ron Brown in a letter to President Clinton. Brown was very active in seeking to create investment in Ireland and he was a tireless fighter against anti-Catholic discrimination in the Northern Ireland. (PEC-AIN 4/5/96)

Democratic voters are still being humiliated by the refusal of the British government to treat voters for Sinn Fein as equal to voters for the DUP... Paisley has conducted campaigns against his Catholic and Presbyterian fellow citizens for forty years and still can meet both Taoiseach and Prime Minister while the elected representatives of a substantial number of the democratic population are allowed to meet only officials in some shady civil service office. (Andersontown News, 3/2/96)

Loyalists: They think they're British but... 1) Currency from Northern Ireland must be exchanged for sterling for use in England and other countries... 2) If you want to know what oppressive measures will be introduced in Britain tomorrow, watch the north of Ireland today. British administrators have used Ireland as a testing ground for what they wanted to do some day to their

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OUR VIEW

The conduct of the British government and its Unionist allies throughout the 18-month Irish Republican Army ceasefire is well documented. Newly created preconditions, broken promises, deliberate stalling tactics, lies and a complete lack of willingness to engage positively in the peace process -- that is Britain's legacy during the past 20 months.

The problem with the current peace process is that the real issues that are the main causes of the conflict in Ireland are not being addressed. As it stands, even if genuine, inclusive all-party negotiations were underway, a just and lasting solution will not be found. Why? Because England will not accept the two core issues relating to the conflict: Britain's illegal and unjust partition of the Irish nation is the main stumbling block to peace in Ireland. Moreover, so long as Britain is determined to give the Unionist minority in Ireland a veto on any progress on talks, there will never be a solution.

England partitioned Ireland in 1921 against the democratic wishes of more than 80% of the Irish people. The reunification of Ireland is the democratic wish of the vast majority of the Irish people (and even the British people).

The unionists of the north have rights that must be respected in a united Ireland. What they do not have a right to is a veto over Ireland's future, nor do they have a right to thwart the legitimate democratic rights of the overwhelming majority of the Irish people.

Winston Churchill said, "Whatever Ulster's right may be, she cannot stand in the way of the whole of the rest of Ireland. Half a province cannot impose a veto on the destiny of the nation."

There is only one solution that will bring a permanent democratic peace to Ireland. That solution is simple -- England must leave Ireland. Right now that option isn't even on the table.

Offensive Situations

by Paul Newman, New York

As readers of the *American Irish Newsletter* are aware, the PEC has called for a boycott of CBS television and radio. This boycott was called because of CBS' failure to accurately report the news on the Irish peace process and their obvious pro-British slant.

However, during the St. Patrick's Day holiday, CBS once again added fuel to the fire.

On Monday, March 18, the host of the CBS Late Show, **David Letterman**, engaged in tasteless anti-Irish slurs and stereotypes regarding alcohol.

Letterman's monologue was filled with the typical Irish alcoholic garbage. The most gratuitously offensive attack occurred when Letterman described a father teaching his son

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GREAT HUNGER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR: Frank Morris, Jr., 821 Briarwood Ln, Camp Hill, PA 17011-(717)737-7013

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

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how to celebrate St. Patrick's Day by puking in the gutter. This was described as a ritual that the father was passing down to his son.

This is an outrage that no other ethnic group would tolerate. It's high time the Irish stopped tolerating it.

Please write the following letter in your own words, or as is, to: Mr. Peter Lunt, President, CBS, 51 W 52nd St., New York, NY 10019--Ph#(212)975-4321.

Dear Sir:

I am outraged by the anti-Irish slurs made regarding the St. Patrick's Day holiday by David Letterman. His comments about the Irish and alcohol were well beyond the bounds of good taste. I also have been made aware of a boycott of your network because of the anti-Irish slant of your news coverage on Northern Ireland. Because of Mr. Letterman and your news division, I will be joining that boycott.

Sincerely,

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

From the North: Process a Bad British Joke

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

If the consequences for the people of Britain and Ireland were not potentially so serious, then the behavior of this British government with respect to the aftermath of the 'peace process' which was crippled by it, would be hilarious. Great Irish writers such as Swift, O'Casey and Shaw have written astute and highly comical pieces about the haplessness of the Englishman in Ireland who is congenitally and pathetically unable to empathize with the world and the culture of the people around him. But these artistic creations depicted hopeless dupes who were mere creatures of their own acculturation. They were knaves, empty vessels echoing the ideas and the attitudes of their own governing class.

But this British government and its uncritical upholders in the leadership of the 'New' British Labour Party cannot plead witlessness as an excuse for the tomfoolery in which they have been engaged throughout the eighteen months of the IRA's cease-fire and the time which has elapsed since. Even such a moderate and forgiving soul as the SDLP's Seamus Mallon was driven over the edge when the British Prime Minister, having been forced to concede a June date for negotiations, upped in the Westminster Parliament and announced that he was including yet another part of the Unionist agenda: elections in Northern Ireland that would produce an 'internal' assembly/body/forum, call it what you like. 'Devious', 'untrustworthy', 'weak', 'pragmatic' etc., these were a few of the epithets used by Mr. Mallon to describe the British PM's character and his behavior. He has threatened to publish minutes of meetings held with the British PM in order to prove his duplicity.

While these inadequacies on the part of the British have reduced the whole stymied process to a farce, criticism is now also being levelled at the coalition government of Mr. John Bruton. One of its major failings is that it has a proclivity for interpreting joint documents drawn up with the British government in a manner different from

that of its partner. Dublin tends to say it means one thing, while the British say it means another. The trouble is that the British invariably turn out to be right.

***The elections
are seen, on all
sides, as silly
and useless.
Just another
stalling tactic
on the part of
the British.***

The measure of the new coalition's failure and its ineptitude (based on anti-republican ideological causes) is that the British are in sole occupancy of the driving seat. There is absolutely no reason these days why this should be so. The British are not exactly flavor of the month with the rest of the fourteen European Union partners. Historically, Dublin has never before

had such a propitious opportunity to resolve an ancient feud, that is if it had the will and the stomach for taking on the task. But it has to be remembered that Mr. Bruton leads a party, of which one present junior minister is on record as having complacently commented that a united Ireland is a long way off and 'might not even be desirable'.

But in what does the British farcical attitude reside? No one in Ireland thinks that elections are necessary to produce negotiators for talks scheduled in June. Only the British and Northern Ireland Unionists want elections, but these are not primarily for producing negotiators. Indeed, the Unionists have given no guarantee that, even after elections, they will send representatives to the negotiating table. They are for the aforemen-

tioned assembly/body/forum which, the unionists hope, will be able to override the negotiations, in which case the negotiations are doomed to failure. Because Northern Ireland is an undemocratic, gerrymandered entity which was created by armed force, the Unionists of various hues have an in-built majority. Their views are bound to prevail.

Nevertheless, even though this approach breaches the Mitchell proviso that elections and a forum be 'broadly acceptable', which they are not, the British government has decided to press on. The nationalists, SDLP and republicans have decided to boycott the forum. It is clearly not broadly acceptable. Everyone in Ireland knows, in any case, what the outcome of elections will be. So, too, does the British government. Indeed, they are vigorously engaged in further refining the 'democratic' outcome. They have invented an electoral system of Byzantine complexion to facilitate their predetermined outcome. And so, as to be even more sure, (a kind of triple whammy, if you like) they have drawn up an "acceptable" (to them) list of political parties and groupings which will be allowed to be elected.

At the end of all this nonsense, will the negotiations take place with the involvement of all those who are capable of delivering the peace? Don't be so silly. According to the British, who are holding on to at least one precondition, the political representatives of one side to the armed conflict, even if they are substantially elected, have excluded themselves. What a way to negotiate peace. Only the British in Ireland could think that one up.

Don't Forget!

1. Reproduce and Distribute articles from this newsletter and send them to people you wish to educate.
2. Call Senator Bob Dole's campaign office (202) 414-6400 and request that he make a matter of public record his position on the English-Irish peace process.

Newsbits *con't. from page 1*

own people. They used CS gas here and in time all England was stocked with them. They tried torture and internment here. They now have the same powers in England...3) People in Northern Ireland are paying 23% more than anywhere else in the UK for their electricity... However sometimes even Loyalists prefer being Irish. Beef from Northern Ireland was excluded from the ban on English beef because it is "Irish". As one Loyalist might have said, "All my cows are Catholic." (*Andersontown News*, 3/16/96)

Paragraph 13 of the recent Consultative Document about future negotiations states, "If, during the negotiations, any party demonstrably dishonored its commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence by, for example, resorting to force or threatening the use of force to influence the outcome of the negotiations or failing to oppose the efforts of others who do so, it would no longer be allowed to participate in the negotiations." In other words, if, during the negotiations, the British government - or its intelligence, police or other agents - finds that things are going too much in the direction of a democratic settlement, all it has to do is plant a small "device" in a bin in West London, blame the IRA, call on Sinn Fein to condemn the IRA (which it will not do) and, lo and behold, Sinn Fein is out of negotiations. (*Andersontown News*, 3/23/96)

The use of names of British colonial and military icons . . . in the "Artillery Flats," one of the most staunchly nationalist areas of Belfast, had been resented. . . Now though they are to be renamed with Irish names. For example, Churchill House has become Teach Cuchalainn, and Artillery House is now Teach Grainne. (*Andersontown News*, 3/2/96)

In 1848, during the worst horrors of the Great Hunger, an Irish Orphan Immigration Scheme was organized in Australia by Irish Australians. The relief organization only continued for two years but in that time 4,175 orphan girls were brought from the workhouses of starving Ireland to Adelaide, Melbourne and Sidney. (*Andersontown News* 3/9/96)

Bigotry in Berryessa Update:

The February edition of the *American Irish Newsletter* alerted members to the anti-Irish bigotry and lack of respect for Celtic culture in the Berryessa School District in Berryessa, California.

Thanks to your letters, PEC member Dale Warner reports that the campaign has already had a substantial impact on the policies of the district. Already the Berryessa district held a very educational and tasteful commemoration of the St. Patrick's Day holiday (something they have never done before). Once again, your letters produced results.

However, dealings with the Berryessa School District were not particularly pleasant. Their spokesman, Dennis Connors, responded to the PEC and members in a way which, at best, can be described as insensitive and at worst downright bigoted. He even attacked one member who wrote him (Christopher Carley, Pearl River, NY) as an ignorant Irish immigrant. Mr. Carley, first of all, is not an immigrant. Secondly, he is a very bright young man. And lastly, Mr. Connors' assumption that Irish Americans are gullible and stupid reflects more clearly than we could ever hope to do, the anti-Irish prejudice of which we are complaining and that we were right to go after the District in the first place.

Letter writing works when we work together!

Use The PEC Telephone Hotline
(914) 429-7849

Thomas Francis Meagher

by Kevin P. Murphy, *Massachusetts*

In all of American Irish history few can surpass the heroics of County Waterford General Thomas Francis Meagher. Meagher came from a prominent Waterford family. He was educated in England's finest schools. Meagher in the 1840's became a leader of the "Young Ireland Movement." His eloquent speeches advocating Irish freedom became famous throughout Ireland. He once said, "The British invaders will never have peace as long as Ireland is kept in her shackles." After a Young Ireland Movement inspired rebellion in Tipperary, Meagher was sentenced to death. His sentence was commuted to deportation to Tasmania. He escaped Tasmania and came to New York where he became a successful attorney. He continued his agitation against English rule among the American Irish community.

At the start of the Civil War in 1861, Meagher recruited thousands of Irish immigrants into the US Army. The exploits of Meagher's Irish Brigade at Gettysburg, Antietam and Gaine's Hill earned his brigade many honors from President Lincoln. After the war, Meagher was appointed Governor of Montana. He became beloved by the people of the territory of roving bandits. At the young age of 44, Meagher drowned in the Missouri River as a result of a riding accident. At the Montana State Capitol at Helena, a large statue of Brigadier General Thomas Francis Meagher rests on the front lawn. It should be noted that Meagher is credited with introducing the tricolor flag to Ireland. In 1963 President Kennedy presented General Meagher's US Army Irish Brigade battle flag to Eamon De Valera. Meagher's flag now hangs in Leinster House, Dublin, the seat of Dail Eireann, the Irish Parliament. Meagher was an Irish-born American who had a profound impact on both Ireland and his adopted land of America.

Americans and a Bit of Haggling Can Rescue the Peace

by Vincent Browne, *Irish Times*

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The resumption of a full scale IRA campaign, the "armed struggle" with all the horrors it will cause and the horrors of the reaction it will cause, seems now a virtual certainty. It is because the "unarmed struggle" seems now a hopeless option for the IRA. Hopeless in terms of advancing its objectives, hopeless even in terms of being able to negotiate for its objectives in all-party talks, without what seems to it a final and humiliating surrender.

As I argued in this column last Wednesday, in spite of John Bruton's confident assurance that there is now agreement that all-party talks without preconditions starting on June 10th, there is no such assurance. Sure, it is possible that all-party talks will begin on that date, but only technically. Once they do begin and before substantive negotiations on a settlement could start, Sinn Fein would be required to comply with three preconditions. These are acceptance of the six principles of the Mitchell Commission to the satisfaction of the other parties; the satisfaction of the other parties on its commitment to exclusively peaceful and democratic means; and agreement with the other parties on a process of decommissioning of IRA arms during the course of negotiations.

Even if Sinn Fein was disposed to meet these three preconditions, almost certainly the first two could not be met because the Ulster Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionist Party are not open to being satisfied about anything concerning Sinn Fein and the IRA other than the total dismemberment of the latter, if not both.

Irish Government officials protest that this is not what the communique of February 28th states. No the communique does not state this but it is open to this interpretation and this is precisely how John Major interpreted the communique within a few minutes of it being agreed at Downing Street with John Bruton. And certainly it is precisely how the unionist parties interpret the communique.

Even if you disagree with this analysis, the fact is that the IRA accepts it. The IRA believes that if it reinstates the ceasefire on the current basis, these impossible demands will be made of Sinn Fein immediately when talks begin and there will be no start to substantive negotiations on a settlement. It would then be far more difficult for the IRA to revert to the "armed struggle". The organization would be gravely weakened by a new ceasefire which would have to be couched in terms of

permanence even if that word could be avoided.

Given these present realities what option does the IRA see for itself other than a reversion to full-scale violence.

There is no point in proclaiming the immorality of violence or in castigating the undemocratic character of an "armed struggle" taking place in circumstances in which the vast majority of all relevant communities deplore violence (the relevant communities being the people of Ireland as a whole, the people of Northern Ireland as a whole and the nationalist people of the "six counties") There is no point because a small minority of people believes that violence is a legitimate tactic in pursuit of the "right" to national self-determination and because, for them, the issue of a popular mandate does not arise. Let me explain.

We agree to be bound by majority decisions only where we give our tacit or open consent to the context in which such decisions are made. It is on this principle that the legitimacy of states is founded, that is, the legitimacy to enforce majority decisions in certain circumstances.

The problem with Northern Ireland has been that there is not widespread consent to the legitimacy of the state, and the problem with republicans is that they have withheld consent not just from the Northern State but also from the Southern State as well. Republicans recognize no entity that binds them to majority decisions, not even now the people of Ireland of the island as a whole for, they claim, the people of the island cannot take a truly free decision while the British remain involved in Irish affairs. It is for this reason that John Hume's proposed all-Ireland referendum would have no force as far as they are concerned and is therefore a waste of time since it is directed solely at republicans.

Daft, contradictory, unreasonable, whatever, that is the way it is. And part of what was so hopeful about the peace process was that it offered a way of drawing republicans into an arrangement to which they would give consent, thereby ending forever the enduring and chilling threat from an alienated tiny but menacing minority.

But back to where the peace process stands or languishes now.

It still seems possible to rescue this and to avert a return to full scale violence. Were the US government now to become actively involved in seeking "clarification"

of the February 28th communique, it might be possible to convince the IRA that substantive negotiations on a settlement would indeed begin on June 10th among those parties which secure an electoral mandate and subscribed to the Mitchell Commission six principles.

It would have to be established that while the issue of "parallel decommissioning" would be "considered" - as suggested by the Mitchell Commission - failure to reach agreement on that issue would not be an obstacle to going on to discuss all other issues that the parties wanted to raise. The question of Sinn Fein "satisfying" other parties on its acceptance of the Mitchell Commission principles and of its commitment to exclusively peaceful and democratic means would have to be disposed of - a simple affirmation of "total and absolute commitment" (as required by the Mitchell Commission report) to the six principles would have to suffice on both counts.

And there is a further point: were either or both of the main unionist parties to refuse to take part in negotiations on such a basis, it would have to be clear that the negotiations would take place anyway between the two governments and the eligible parties willing to attend - this can hardly be a problem for either government at this stage given the repeated assertion that the negotiations will start on June 10th come what may.

Maybe, even in such circumstances, the IRA would refuse to reinstate the ceasefire on the basis that acceptance of the Mitchell Commission principles represented a "precondition" to progress towards substantive negotiations. If so, so be it.

But I have reason to believe that it is not so or would not be so after a bit of haggling. Especially after a bit of haggling by the Americans and after President Clinton had lent his authority to the assurance that genuine, substantive negotiations would begin on June 10th among those parties which had secured an electoral mandate which accepted the Mitchell principles and turned up.

For further information contact:
American Ireland Education Foundation
54 South Liberty Dr.
Stony Point, NY 10980
(800) 777-6807

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It is difficult for Irish Americans of our time to understand the intense anti-Irish hostility which festered in this country in the last century. So-called "nativism" infected not only the uneducated, but "the best people" as well--and this included academic historians. Because of this, generations of Americans were given a false picture that the Irish strain in our national heritage began only in the 1850's as a result of mass immigration of Catholic "Southern" Irish due to the Great Hunger of 1845-50. Accordingly, all colonial period Irish were considered to be "Scots-Irish", meaning Ulster Presbyterians. However, those people never used the term "Scots-Irish" in reference to themselves, but called themselves, and were considered by their fellow Americans as, "Irish"!

Homage to Michael J. O'Brien

by Albert Doyle, Vice President AIEF-PEC

The distortions of conventional historic wisdom became apparent to a young Irishman, Michael J. O'Brien, who arrived in America in 1889 at the age of 19. O'Brien found employment with the Western Union Telegraph Company and his work allowed him to travel widely, particularly in the South. His intellectual curiosity led him to the study of the Irish in America.

O'Brien's amazing capacity to comb through local records, muster rolls of Washington's army and shipping records--together with his understanding of Ireland and its history--gave him an insight not available to most American academic historians. They seldom did this kind of primary research, but were often content to quote each other (so-called "secondary sources") and did not have O'Brien's Irish knowledge. His research convinced O'Brien that the contributions of his countrymen to American colonial history had been gravely slighted by the academics. It was clear to him that the "Kelly, Burke and Shea" names in great numbers in Washington's Army were certainly not the "Scots-Irish" of conventional wisdom, as would readily be known to anyone with a knowledge of Irish names. This knowledge was lacking in many academic American writers who had uncritically bought into the notion that Irish and Catholic were synonymous, as well as Protestant and English or Scot, and that the native Irish were not present in any significant numbers in colonial times. It is true that, after a generation or so in America, many of these colonial Irish might not be Catholics, largely due to the absence of

the church from the frontier. But O'Brien rightly concluded they were certainly not Englishmen or Scots-Irish! Needless to say, O'Brien's publication of his views, largely through the American Irish Historical Society, of which he became Historiographer, were not greeted with enthusiasm by the tribe of scribblers whom he was confronting!

Although O'Brien wrote a famous article entitled, "The Myth of the Scots-Irish", he never denied the presence and contribution of Ulster Presbyterians in colonial times. He was as proud to claim Andrew Jackson as Irish as Jackson was in asserting his Irish background! If only today's Northern Ireland Unionists were as proud of their Irishness as was Andrew Jackson! The present troubles would soon be over. O'Brien's point always was that the "other" Irish had been slighted and his views are only now being recognized as legitimate.

O'Brien never fell into the error of equating religion with national heritage. Although in his zeal to show that being Irish-born made one Irish, he often ignored the real divisions which existed in 18th century Ireland between the large majority of Irish people, Gaels, Norman Irish and Old English--mostly Catholic--and the minority of Anglo-Irish and conforming Irish who, backed by the English sword, ruled the country. This Anglo-Irish ruling class ignored the

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masses whenever they could and were as hostile to non-conforming Irish Presbyterians as they were to Irish Catholics. This fault is not a serious one, since religious differences seemed to lose importance on the American frontier where men were considered more on their practical merits than on their religion or culture. The evidence actually supports O'Brien's view that in colonial America being born in Ireland made one an Irishman regardless of religion. In Philadelphia only Scots-born joined the Scottish Thistle Society. The larger St. Patrick's Society had a membership of all persuasions, including prominent Protestant Scots-Irish and even some Anglo-Irish. The same was true in other areas, such as Charleston.

Michael J. O'Brien died in 1960 at age 90. His works include "A Hidden Phase of American History," a classic work documenting the large Irish presence in Washington's forces (interestingly, a fact recognized by the British military leaders in the War of Independence if not by the later American historians) and which will always stand as a hurdle to those who,

for whatever reason, may not wish to recognize the Irish contribution. We owe him a great debt of gratitude. A good way to show that gratitude would be to continue O'Brien's research. He has always said that he had only scratched the surface of the available material. He also complained about the Irish in America who

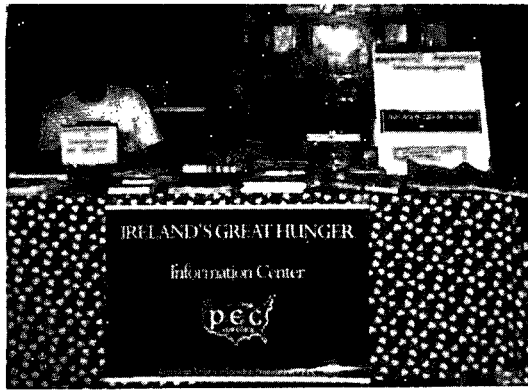
protested being slighted but did nothing about it.

This Anglo-Irish ruling class ignored the masses whenever they could and were as hostile to Irish Presbyterians as they were to Irish Catholics.

For further information contact:

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PEC information booth at North Texas Irish Festival manned by Lily McNally and David Hogan

Texas PEC Group in Action

The newly-formed North Texas Chapter of the American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC recently manned a booth at the 14th annual North Texas Irish Festival. The event was very successful. PEC literature on the "Great Hunger", the Irish peace process and PEC membership brochures were handed out to more than a thousand people and the group obtained the names of over 100 prospective new members. The group also took out an advertisement in the festival's journal which PEC chapter leader Pat Kelly described as a "very inexpensive way to reach almost 50,000 people."

Activities like those carried out by the North Texas Chapter, other chapters and individual members throughout the country, are a crucial part of one of the main functions of the PEC -- educating the public. Activities like manning a booth at festivals, handing out fliers, brochures and copies of R&D's to the public are an essential part of our mission.

PEC is grateful to the members and supporters of the North Texas Chapter of AIEF for all their hard work in planning and conducting the PEC booth at the festival. We urge all members to follow their example and help spread the word.

Britain Apologizes Once Again

The Associated Press reports that on March 30, 1996, Queen Elizabeth wound down her three-day visit to the Czech Republic with an apology for England's role in the 1938 appeasement of Nazi Germany that led to the end of democracy in Czechoslovakia.

Queen Elizabeth has now apologized to the Czechs and the indigenous Maori people in New Zealand for the atrocities committed against them by the English.

The PEC welcomes these well-deserved apologies, but the question remains: How come Britain still refuses to apologize to the Irish for the Great Hunger? Hopefully, the British Queen's next apology will be to the Irish.

British Apology Update

Frank Morris, Jr., *Great Hunger Coordinator*

The following is the text of a letter which gives great insight into the British Embassy's take on the apology campaign. The letter was sent from British Ambassador John Kerr in response to letters and postcards from concerned people calling on the British government to apologize for the Great Hunger.

Thank you for the card about the 150th anniversary of the Great Hunger in Ireland.

The Great Hunger was indeed a terrible tragedy, and I agree that the scars it left went deep, like those of the Civil War here a little later, or the Great Plagues which so often swept through Europe, in the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, and much more recently. Contemporary accounts of such disasters make haunting reading.

However, I think we do best now to concentrate, not on such past horrors, but on working together to build for a better future, as the governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic are seeking to do. Having been privileged to accompany President Clinton on his visit to Northern Ireland in November, I was able to see for myself the determination of the huge majority of the people of Belfast and Londonderry to take the Peace Process forward, on the basis of the Downing Street Declaration. They don't want to turn back to sectarian divisiveness and violence: they want to heed the lessons of history, not to re-live them.

My Government greatly appreciates US support for the Peace Process, and US condemnation of last week's bomb outrage in London.

Once again the British government is trying to avoid the issue and its responsibility for the catastrophe of Ireland's Great Hunger. Furthermore, you see the typical duplicitous British attempt to pass off the Great Hunger as an unfortunate natural disaster, i.e., the Great Plague and the Black Death.

The British Apology Campaign is not an attempt to re-live history or inflame passions. It is, however, a crucial element in any attempts to achieve reconciliation so that the wrongs committed by all sides are addressed and apologized for. The legacy of the Great Hunger still has a profound impact on the Irish people. Britain must admit her responsibility for the tragedy of Ireland's Great Hunger. **A British apology will further the peace process, not hinder it.**

Action Requests

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

1. Honorable Bill Clinton
The President
White House
Washington, DC 20500
Ph# (202) 456-1111
Fax# (202) 456-2461

Message: Please stop deportation proceedings against all Irish political prisoners in the US. Also please use your influence to ensure that all-party talks begin on June 10, that there are no preconditions to progress and that the decommissioning of IRA weapons is not the only issue on the table

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

Message: Please make sure that the British government doesn't allow all-party talks to center on the decommissioning issue. It is time for the Irish govt. to stand up for the rights of the Irish people. Don't allow the British to further stall the process.

Irish Political Deportations Update

by Sandy Boyer, *New York*

At least nine Irish men are facing deportation because of their past activities in the Irish Republican Army. Many are married to American citizens with children born in this country. Their wives and children are forced with a choice between exile and breaking up their families. None of the men face charges in Ireland or Britain.

Brian Pearson is a native of county Tyrone in Northern Ireland. He served 12 years in Long Kesh as a special category political prisoner. The British government themselves legally recognized Pearson as a political prisoner. Pearson came to the US in 1988. He met his wife Doris, an American citizen and they now have an American born daughter.

On April 9, Brian Pearson went to the Immigration and Naturalization service for what was supposed to be a routine procedural hearing. He was seized by INS agents who threatened to manacle him and put him on the next plane back to Ireland. They were only stopped by lawyers who claimed political asylum for him and threatened to get a writ of habeas corpus from a federal judge. Finally Brian Pearson was released on his own recognizance until August when he will have a political asylum hearing.

Matt Morrisian is currently awaiting a decision on his application for permanent residence based on his marriage to an American citizen and his American born children. Morrisian served 10 years in Long Kesh as special category political prisoner. He resides in St. Louis with his wife Francine and their six year-old son Matt and three year-old daughter Katie.

Robbie McErlean faces a deportation hearing on May 15. Like Pearson and Morrisian, he served as a political prisoner in Long Kesh. He left Ireland because of constant death threats and harassment from the British forces and Loyalist paramilitaries. In fact the lives of all of these men and their families, if returned to Ireland, would be in serious risk.

All of these men would almost automatically be given permanent resident status if it weren't for their one time connection to the IRA. The Justice Department is saying that anyone who was ever part of the IRA must be deported because the IRA are terrorists. American wives and families don't matter.

This is a purely political decision that could be changed with the stroke of a pen. (See Action Request #1) It is worth remembering that only a few years ago, the government also considered Nelson Mandela's African National Congress a terrorist organization.

Irish American Families Against Political Deportation is holding a demonstration in support of all the families facing deportation on Saturday May 11, at 1pm at 26 Federal Plaza in lower Manhattan.

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[] New Membership \$25 [] Membership Renewal \$25
[] Senior Citizen \$20 [] Student \$10
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Members receive the monthly *American Irish Newsletter*.

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Town/State/Zip _____

Phone number () _____

Name of your Congressman/woman _____

Make checks payable to AIEF-PEC and mail to 54 South Liberty Drive, Suite 401, Stony Point, NY 10980. For information call (914) 947-2726.

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