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## American Irish Newsletter - February 1997

American Ireland Education Foundation - PEC

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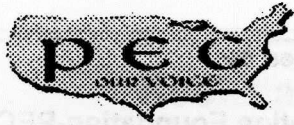
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# AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 22, Number 2

February 1997

## Major's Britain Didn't Want Peace

That is the sad conclusion that we must come to in our examination of the British government's role in the Irish peace process. This is not a startling revelation whatsoever. Indeed right from the beginning of the August 1994 IRA cessation, the actions of the British government only fueled the suspicion that the British government wasn't serious about achieving a negotiated solution to the conflict in Ireland.

The John Major's government's record is well documented. From the moment of the IRA ceasefire in August 1994, far from trying to move the process forward and seize the initiative, Major did nothing but raise obstacles and preconditions to Sinn Fein's participation in all party talks. Now, even British papers such as the *London Independent* and the *Guardian* have faulted his handling of the peace process and his lack of courage in dealing with the IRA's cessation right from the beginning.

Major has put a nail in the coffin of the peace process. He now declares that the 18 month IRA cessation was a "phony" ceasefire. A new one will have to be "lasting" (We guess longer than 18 months) and British intelligence will have to determine whether it is "genuine". Once again, Mr. Major makes demands he knows cannot be achieved. Once again he raises further obstacles to peace.

We can understand that Mr. Major is in a political predicament. His Tory party is now a minority government and relies on the nine votes in the House of Commons from the Ulster Unionists. Also, many of Mr. Major's own right-wing back-benchers are rabid unionists. But it was not always like this. If Major had shown courage and made genuine efforts to achieve a settlement, we would not be in the unhappy situation which we are in at the moment. As for the Tory right wing dogs barking at the heels of Mr. Major, if he had stood up to them in the first place and laid down the law, it is safe to say that they would not have brought down his government. This is because an election would likely have led to many Tories finding themselves on the dole after the predicted inevitable Labour party landslide.

What the Irish process was in desperate need of is what it sorely lacked from the British government. The process needed a DeKlerk or a Rabin, not a politically spineless John Major.

But, more importantly, Major has squandered what he himself termed, "the best hope for peace in Northern Ireland in generations." He had a chance to go down in history as the man who led the fight to bring peace to Ireland. He may go down in history as the man who wrecked the hope for peace in Ireland.

## Help Spread the Word

The PEC needs volunteers to distribute extra copies of the *American Irish Newsletter*. It will only involve a small number of copies but will go a long way towards spreading the truth about Northern Ireland.

To volunteer, please call the PEC at (800) 777-6807, Tuesday thru Friday 9am to 5pm. We look forward to hearing from you.

## Newsbits by Kathy Regan

Angry Irish speakers have accused the British government of double standards after another 3 million pounds was lavished on Gaelic TV in Scotland at a time when the Northern Ireland Office is refusing point-blank to fund Irish programming here. Conradh na Gaeilge chief Georoid O Caricallain says, rather than investing money in Irish programs, the British are forcing UTV to cough up almost one million pounds each year to fund television programs in Welsh and Scots Gaelic. "It's the height of hypocrisy for the British to bleed Ulster TV for funds for Welsh and Gaelic TV when the same channel says it hasn't got the money to produce programs in Irish. It's time that Irish got the same four-star treatment from the Northern Ireland Office which Welsh and Scots Gaelic get from their Welsh and Scottish offices. It's a shameful situation where one Gaelic program in Scotland can get a grant bigger than the NIO's entire expenditure on Irish language. If the British are serious about affording Irish parity of esteem, then it's time they started funding Irish at the same level as Scots Gaelic and Welsh are funded," said O Caricallain.

*(Andersonstown News 1/12/97)*

*cont. on page 4*

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### OUR VIEW

*The PEC has always preached that the maintenance of the pan-nationalist alliance (the alliance of the Irish government, SDLP and Sinn Fein) is an absolute necessity if the interests of the Irish people are to be protected. We have always felt that the SDLP and Sinn Fein should enter into an electoral pact to maximize support for the nationalist agenda.*

*The PEC is very disappointed that, as of now, SDLP leader John Hume has rejected the idea of a pact between the SDLP and Sinn Fein. A pact would be a crucial opportunity to strengthen the position of the nationalist community.*

*John Hume has given two conditions for entering a pact with Sinn Fein for the upcoming election. First, there would have to be a complete IRA ceasefire. This is acceptable as it would be impossible for the SDLP to enter into a pact with Sinn Fein without an IRA ceasefire. His second condition is that Sinn Fein end its policy of abstentionism and take its seats in Westminster. This is an unreal and ridiculous demand. It is unrealistic that Sinn Fein would abandon its policy for a couple of seats at Westminster. Furthermore, without a pact, it is likely that, because of the split in the nationalist vote, districts with small nationalist majorities like Mid-Ulster, Fermanagh-South Tyrone and West Tyrone will continue to be represented by unionists like Ken Maginnis of the UUP and Willie McCrea of the DUP. That should be reason enough to agree to a pact.*

*The real issue is not the insignificant number of seats that Northern Ireland commands at Westminster. The real issue is maximizing the potential of the nationalist electorate and strengthening the position of the pan-nationalist alliance at the bargaining table. This opportunity must not be wasted. Petty political consideration must be put aside in the interests of the nationalist people as a whole.*

**(SEE ARTICLE BELOW AND WRITE THE LETTER TO JOHN HUME)**

## Write a Letter to John Hume

As you have read above in our editorial, SDLP leader John Hume has rejected the proposal for an electoral pact between his party and Sinn Fein. The purpose of such a pact would be to maximize the support for both nationalist parties and to achieve victories in marginal nationalist constituencies that are presently represented by unionists due to the split in the nationalist vote between the SDLP and Sinn Fein.

It is an absolute necessity for Sinn Fein and the SDLP to enter into an electoral pact for the upcoming British general election. So far the SDLP has rejected the idea but it is not too late for the SDLP to change its mind. Both parties must put aside their political differences for the good of the nationalist people. Trimble and Paisley are entering into an electoral pact. If the nationalist parties don't, it would be a grave mistake.

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

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Write the following letter in your own words or as is to: Mr. John Hume, President, SDLP, Crown Moore House, 611C Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT 979T, Northern Ireland

Mention in your letter that you are a member of the American Irish PEC.

Dear Sir:

Please reconsider your decision not to enter into an electoral pact with Sinn Fein for the upcoming general election. The interests of the nationalist people demand that the parties enter into a pact. A pact will strengthen the position of both parties.

Sincerely,

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

## **From the North: The Human Rights Challenge**

Commentary by the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ), an independent human rights organization based in Northern Ireland

On International Human Rights Day - December 10th - five of the major human rights groups in Britain and Ireland issued a human rights challenge to all concerned about Northern Ireland.

On December 10th, two years ago, the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ), Liberty, the Irish and Scottish Councils for Civil Liberties and British Irish Rights Watch, called for urgent action on human rights. Yet an audit of the current human rights situation shows that action to date has been very limited. In the belief that issues of justice and fairness have been at the very heart of the conflict in Northern Ireland, and that they must therefore be at the heart of the peace process, our initial public appeal was elaborated in 1995 to a detailed agenda for human rights protection. Political developments since then make it more, not less, important to emphasize the centrality of human rights - yet the agenda for action - (summarized below) has still to be seriously addressed.

### **Constitutional Protection for Human Rights**

A Bill of Rights is urgently required. All the political parties support the introduction of a Bill of Rights in principle. The British and Irish governments have committed themselves in the Framework Document to introducing appropriate legislation to protect rights and to the adoption of a Charter or Covenant of Rights. While recognizing that any discussion of a Bill of Rights will need to be wide-ranging and could be both lengthy and difficult, we deplore the delay in initiating the debate. The creation of a society where everyone is treated fairly, and their rights adequately protected cannot await resolution of larger constitutional and political issues. Indeed, we believe that

a broad based discussion of how best to protect everyone's rights would go a long way to facilitating discussion of other even more controversial areas of political disagreement.

### **Legislative provisions**

Emergency legislation should be repealed. Emergency powers have led inevitably to an abuse of rights - both within Northern Ireland and in the neighboring jurisdiction of England, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It is perhaps in this context that the response of the authorities to the peace process has been most disappointing. In the Agenda for Change, the five human rights groups called for the repeal of emergency legislation, arguing that the powers provided in ordinary law are sufficient. Several UN bodies have expressed grave reservations about the "apparatus of laws infringing civil liberties which were designed for periods of emergency." Instead of dismantling these laws, the government renewed their emergency powers and, in some respects, extended them.

### **Institutional Changes**

Institutional changes are necessary for the better protection of human rights. The summer's events only serve to emphasize the need for a fundamental review of policing so as to make it more accountable, representative and responsive to the community it serves. While it is true that four separate official reviews have been announced into various aspects of policing since the ceasefires, they have so far produced no concrete changes. The unwillingness of the government to appoint an independent inquiry into recent events, and particularly into the usage of plastic bullets, deepens fears that no serious changes are envisaged. Moreover, changes to policy and the legal structure, if they are to be

effective, must be complemented by a vigilant judiciary committed to the protection of rights.

### **Dealing with the legacy of the past**

It is counter-productive to ignore the legacy of the past. Consideration needs to be given to at least four areas of concern. The issue of the right to truth needs to be addressed. Regarding prisoners, while there has been some change in respect of remission and parole, this has had a limited impact and should be set against the deterioration in conditions for prisoners held in Britain. Despite calls from the UN "to enhance in Northern Ireland confidence in the administration of justice by resolving outstanding cases and by putting in place transparently fair procedures for independent investigation of complaints," the government has failed to act effectively. Allegations of lethal force incidents and continuing miscarriages of justice need to be addressed urgently.

### **Building for the future**

Human rights must imbue our political institutions and our legal systems; but responsibility for the protection of rights is shared by all.

We urge that anti-discrimination legislation be extended and strengthened and that, most particularly, the government's Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment guidelines, which are intended to promote equality of opportunity, be given a statutory basis.

More generally, a strong and effective culture of rights must be developed with a view to individuals working to protect and promote not only their own rights but, just as importantly, the rights of others.

### Newsbits *cont. from page 1*

With both the republican and loyalist ceasefires in tatters, it's clear that a new peace process is going to have to be built and it's clear too that can only be done when the rent book at Ten Downing Street changes hands. There are serious grounds for doubt as to whether a strong new Labour administration is going to have any more commitment to securing a lasting peace here than had John Major and his arrogant pack of plum-voice incompetents. Certainly, Tony Blair's insistence on slavishly following the line - any line - set out by the Tories is not an encouraging sign. And an emergence of a Kate Hoey-inspired neo-unionism within the party has led not only to the unceremonious dumping of anyone perceived to have any ideas on the way forward here, but also of the commitment to unity by consent. How much of all of the above has simply been allowed to happen by default in order that an issue like Ireland - relatively meaningless in the great hunt for votes in England, Scotland and Wales - not be allowed to sink the shiny new Labour ship, and how much will change in the event of a convincing Labour win, is not altogether clear. It would be unbearably smug and trite, however, simply to trumpet the old adage that the next lot can't be any worse than the last, because if history has taught us anything it is that we should never underestimate the callousness/stupidity of the British when it comes to Ireland. (*Andersonstown News 1/4/97*)

John Hume is under intense pressure, but he is not a quitter. The leader of the SDLP who brokered the longest ceasefire in Northern Ireland is poised to defy medical advice and seek a fresh Westminster mandate for his Ulster peace process. He has told friends that he wants to 'see things through' despite warnings from his doctor to cut down on his workload most effectively by standing down in his Foyle constituency at the forthcoming General Election. Hume is suffering from over work and hypertension. (*London Independent 1/5/97*)

## The Father Of American Chemistry: William J. MacNeven

by Dr. Roger McGrath, *California*

Physician, author, chemist and Irish patriot William James MacNeven was born in County Galway in 1763. His father was a "country gentleman" who lived on his own estate. The MacNeven family had once possessed large holdings in Ulster but, because of their Catholicism and Irish nationalism, had been dispossessed in the Cromwellian Confiscation and forced to settle in southeastern Galway near Loughrea.

Resistance to English aggression had been a family tradition since the twelfth century. A number of the family had distinguished themselves on the battlefield against the forces of the English crown. Perhaps most notable was Hugh MacKnavin, chief of the sept, who helped defeat more than one Elizabethan army before he was finally captured and hanged in 1602.

The double blows of the Cromwellian Confiscation and later the Penal Laws meant that promising young MacNevens had to leave Ireland for education and opportunity. William MacNeven's uncle, William O'Kelly MacNeven, had gone to Austria. There he earned a medical degree, rose to the post of physician to the Empress Maria Theresa and was made a baron.

When William James was twelve he joined his uncle in Austria. Young William excelled in school - something the English denied him in Ireland - and by the time he was 21 he had studied at both the University of Prague and the University of Vienna and had earned a medical degree.

MacNeven returned to Ireland, settled in Dublin and soon won a reputation as a brilliant physician. He also won a reputation as an Irish patriot and a political activist. His political activities and his membership in the United Irishmen led the English to imprison him, first at Kilmainham in Dublin and then at Fort George, Scotland, where Thomas Addis Emmet was a fellow prisoner. Emmet and MacNeven became fast friends.

MacNeven was released in 1802 but the English banished him for life from Ireland. He spent the rest of 1802 hiking through Switzerland, which he described in his first book. The next year he went to France in an effort to get Napoleon to liberate Ireland. MacNeven himself was in the distinguished Irish Brigade of the French army. After some three years of service and convinced that he could no longer aid the cause of Ireland in Europe, MacNeven sailed for the United States. He arrived in New York the Fourth of July 1805.

Dr. MacNeven soon had a thriving practice; in addition, he lectured at New York Hospital. In 1808 he was professor of obstetrics in the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Three years later he was made the Chair of Chemistry and established the first chemical laboratory in New York. In 1815 his first book on chemistry appeared, followed four years later by his classic work, *Exposition of the Atomic Theory of Chemistry*. He was also responsible for an emendated edition of W.T. Brande's *Manual of Chemistry* and was coeditor of the *New York Medical and Philosophical Journal*. In 1823 MacNeven was elected a member of the prestigious American Philosophical Society and later he helped establish a medical school at Rutgers College. He would soon be referred to as the "Father of American Chemistry."

Despite his brilliant and pioneering work in chemistry and medicine, MacNeven still found time to continue the fight for Ireland's cause. In 1807 his *Pieces of Irish History* appeared, followed shortly by a manual for immigrant Irish arriving in America. He also established an employment bureau for immigrant Irish and was the first president of the Friends of Ireland.

# New York Times' Biased Irish News Coverage

by Albert Doyle, Vice-President

The PEC has access to a number of separate information sources about the conflict in Northern Ireland. Earlier this year, since we are based in New York, we became concerned about the obvious gap in what we were hearing and what was being reported in the *New York Times*, a newspaper often considered the leader in American journalism. In late May 1996, we started to track daily and in detail the *Times*' coverage of Irish matters and, in order to have a yardstick, we compared the *Times*' "Irish" coverage with that of its coverage of Israel and Jewish matters. The use of this yardstick caused some anxiety with some northeast political friends but was only intended as a yardstick, although it ultimately proved quite revealing about the *Times*' bias. And so that Irish Americans don't become overly sensitive, we note that Irish news is not the only area "scooped" by Israeli and Jewish items. Others of importance outscored by a wide margin include Russia and the former Soviet Republics, the non-Israel Middle East, China, all European and Latin American countries just to name some.

Our conclusion? Based on general observations over many years and the more scientific study over the past six months, the *Times*' coverage of Irish matters and the current Irish peace process in particular is so appalling that one must conclude that the editors of the *Times* are indeed biased and even hostile. Now this may not surprise some but what impressed us after these months of detailed observation was the real depth of the problem which emerges clearly only after a daily analysis of events as compared with the actual *Times* coverage.

The prejudice in the *Times*' coverage is not simply a matter of the amount of lineage. It is even more profound when one considers the quality of the journalism involved; not only what is covered, but, perhaps more

important, what is not covered, what is emphasized and what is downplayed. For example, in recent months the coverage of the so-called peace process in Ireland has been virtually nil, yet many important actions have taken place, as witnessed in the attention given in the British and Irish media.

As noted above, all of this stands in stark contrast to the *Times*' massive and generally high quality coverage of Israeli-related subjects and Jewish matters in general. Now, as we said in one of the earlier releases on the topic, we would concede that Middle Eastern related matters may be of more interest to *Times* readers, particularly in view of the strategic importance of the Middle East and the large Jewish population in the New York area. But we also note that the *Times* purports to be more than a parochial New York paper and indeed has some of the best international reportage. So we asked, and continue to ask, why this trivializing of Irish peace process news, which is itself of considerable interest to many, many Americans?

Let's take a look at the latest statistics based on our observations of the full period, May 25, 1996 to December 31, 1996, 221 days of publication:

Item	Irish	Israeli
News items	65	365
"Op Ed" pieces	4	66
Editorials	5	25
Letters	9	134

Aside from the "quality" factor, is this really in proportion to the "news value" of the two areas? We are aware, of course, that the Israeli elections and the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations took place during this time and were certainly of major news importance. But was the Irish peace process not worthy of more serious notice? Our problem is not that the

*Times* is reporting on the Middle East, our problem is that the Irish peace process is ignored. While the *Times* failed to report many major events in Ireland, these events were reported in supposed far less prestigious news outlets. Also, not weighted in the above "item" statistics is the vast lineage imbalance on an individual item basis against the "Irish" items. The huge personnel commitment (reporters) of the *Times* in the Israel area is also noted. Finally, and most important, in the qualitative area, we find Irish items covered by a semiretired reporter in Dublin, or by the *Times*' British orientated staff from London (Former *Times* reporter, Jo Thomas did a brilliant expose of this and the negative effect it has on Irish news) with its British "slant" on events.

It is in this area, the "quality" of the *Times*' Irish coverage, that the real picture of the inadequacy of its reporting becomes clear. Since the Irish "peace process" restarted in September, it has been virtually ignored by the *Times*. Most of the coverage has been of the variety dealing with items completely unrelated to the peace process. Of course, the *Times* is "Johnny-on-the-spot" in reporting the latest IRA actions! The omission of vital news is revealing. For example, omitted were important events such as John Major's Nov. 23rd rejection of any compromise to move the talks forward; the visit of Taoiseach John Bruton to Washington and his speech to a joint session of Congress in September, entirely unreported; and the British "dirty tricks" scheme to discredit Senator Mitchell by planting false stories about his assistant not mentioned - the weekly picketing of Catholic mass-goers by Loyalists and the bombing of Catholic homes, churches and schools in Ballymena, County Antrim - never reported.

The bottom line: the *New York Times* is guilty of being biased in its coverage of Irish news, particularly that related to the Irish peace process. What can you do about it? Turn to page six of this newsletter and follow Action Request #1. Let them know we are tired of being ignored or trivialized!

# Peace In Ireland Needs Your Help

Dear Friend of Ireland,

**Reproduce & Distribute**

*New York - History shows that the famine, far from being a natural disaster, was a deliberate campaign by the British to deny the Irish people the food they needed to survive. Governor George Pataki.*

*Washington - The President will continue to fight for peace and democracy in Northern Ireland in his second term.*

The above positive results are clear indications of mounting pressure on our government leaders to speak out against England's presence in Ireland. Where did this pressure originate? Letters from thousands of people like you telling our political leaders what they want them to do. Who is responsible for organizing much of the letter-writing campaigns over the past twenty-two years? We are! And who are we? We are the American Irish Political Education Committee (PEC).

**What is needed now** to get the Irish peace process back on track, to make the peace process succeed in finding a just and lasting solution to the English-Irish conflict, is **letters, letters, letters** by the thousands: written with the strength of unity. That is why the PEC has developed the nationwide United Action Program (UAP).

The UAP is a simple program by which the PEC helps keep concerned Americans informed and provides them that all important **organized** and **united** course of action (organized letter-writing, phone-calls, fax, etc. campaigns). We provide that course of action through our monthly *American Irish Newsletter* and weekly *Telephone Hotline*.

**So do your share! Join UAP today for the SPECIAL PRICE of only \$15 and receive a one-year subscription to our *American Irish Newsletter*.**

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Yes, I want to help make peace with justice in Ireland a reality. Enclosed is my *tax-deductible* donation to join UAP.

New Member Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ ST \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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To charge your UAP donation, call (800) 777-6807 (Visa/Mastercard only). Mail checks payable to: AIEF-PEC, 54 South Liberty Drive, Stony Point, NY 10980

## Books and Videos for Saint Patrick's Day

Now you can take advantage of the vast amount of publications and videos on sale at the PEC for Saint Patrick's Day. These materials make a fine gift for someone special including yourself.

### VIDEOS

**Riverdance** – The spectacular show played before sold-out audiences from Ireland to Europe to New York. This unique video presentation captures the exhilarating show performed by the original cast, live from Dublin. Starring Michael Flatley and Jean Butler. 78 Minutes, VHS.....\$24.95

**When Ireland Starved** – This powerful documentary exposes the full devastation of the Great Hunger of 1845-50 which occurred at a time when there was enough food in Ireland to feed twice its population. Skillfully made using archival sketches, location shots and interviews, this video provides a chance to understand and learn about this catastrophic event that has been for too long solely blamed on the "potato blight." Two hours, VHS.....\$29.95

### BOOKS

**Paddy's Lament**, Thomas Gallagher

Thomas Gallagher's poignant portrayal in graphic detail of the suffering of the Irish peasant during the potato blight of 1846. Paperback, 345 pages.....\$12.00

**The Great Hunger**, Cecil Woodham-Smith

The Irish Potato Famine of the 1840's killed at least a million people and drove as many more to emigrate to America. Cecil Woodham-Smith provides a vivid and disturbing account of this tragedy and the culpability of the British government for it. Paperback, 510 pages.....\$13.95

**This Great Calamity: The Irish Famine 1845-52**,  
Dr. Christine Kinealy.

Dr. Kinealy unravels fact from opinion, confronts the role of ethnic stereotypes and examines the Anglo-Irish government's response to the disaster while analyzing its motives. She reveals the scope of the Great Hunger's impact and provides a detailed account of the relief measures organized at different levels. Hardcover, 450 pages.....\$24.95

**To order:** Send check or money order payable to American Ireland Education Foundation, 54 South Liberty Dr., Stony Point, NY 10980. Include \$2 postage and handling for the first item and 50 cents for each additional item. NYS residents add sales tax.

**To charge:** call (800) 777-6807 Tuesday thru Friday, 9am to 5pm (Visa/Mastercard only).

## URGENT!

### *We Need Your Help To Recruit Badly Needed New Members*

We need every member to make a special effort to recruit at least one new member during the St. Patrick's Day season. We are offering a special price of \$15 for a one-year membership/subscription which includes 12 monthly issues of our *American Irish Newsletter*.

Make copies of the **Peace In Ireland...** Reproduce & Distribute article and distribute them wherever possible. Put a little pressure on your friends, relatives, co-workers, business associates, etc... If you have any questions call 800 777-6807.

**GO GET THAT NEW MEMBER!**

## The Irish Hunger Strike

The Irish hunger strike is now back in the headlines due to the marvelous motion picture *Some Mother's Son*, by Irish Director Terry George. Tom Collins' book, *The Irish Hunger Strike*, is the perfect compliment to the movie.

*The Irish Hunger Strike* is a moving portrayal of the hunger strike from the perspectives of the strikers, their families, friends and supporters. The book gives a deep insight into the lives of the brave ten men who died during that tragic period. *The Irish Hunger Strike* is a must read for all. Paperback 626 pages. \$12.00

## Hot Off the Presses Gerry Adams' Autobiography *Before the Dawn*

Gerry Adams' controversial autobiography *Before the Dawn* is now available from the PEC. Adams' book, which was a best-seller in Ireland for months, is now available in the United States.

The book details the Sinn Fein President's involvement in the Republican movement from his days as an organizer and republican activist to his present role as the head of Sinn Fein and leader in the Irish peace process.

Adams' book gives a poignant insight into Adams, the man behind the public figure to which we are accustomed, and the republican movement through the eyes of the man who has been one of its leaders since the early seventies. Hardcover, 378 pages.....\$25.00



### Action Requests

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

Mention in your letters that you are a member of the American Irish PEC

1. Editor

The New York Times  
229 W 43rd Street  
New York, NY 10036

Message: I am very disappointed by the Times' coverage of the Irish peace process. Please give the Irish peace process the same attention and quality which your paper displays in its reporting of events in the Middle East.

2. Hon. Madeline Albright

Department of State  
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Message: Congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of State. Please use your position to ensure that the Irish peace process remains a foreign policy priority for the Clinton administration. Without US involvement, the process is doomed to failure.

## Pearson Case Goes to Trial

The political asylum case of Irish national Brian Pearson went to trial in Federal Immigration Court on January 7th, before US Immigration Judge Phillip Williams. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is trying to deport Pearson, who served 12 years as a political prisoner (with special category status) in Long Kesh prison in Northern Ireland. Pearson came to the United States in 1988 and is married to an American citizen and has an American daughter.

Pearson was forced to file for political asylum after the INS refused to grant him permanent residency on the basis of his past IRA involvement.

Many prominent politicians and long-time activists turned out on Pearson's behalf either to testify or just to support him, including: US Representative **Ben Gilman**, Chairman of the House International Relations Committee, **Loretta Fitzgibbons**, American Irish PEC Executive Officer, **Patrick Donaghy**, President of Structure Tone, **Margaret Finucane**, American Irish PEC rep, Judge **William Kelly**, New York State Legislator, **Sam Coleman**, retired Assistant NYC Police Chief **Thomas Gallagher**, human rights activist, **Oliver Kearney**, journalists **Sean Cronin** and **Oisten Macbride** and hero New York City Police Officer **Steven MacDonald**.

The INS is attempting to apply the recently passed Immigration Responsibility Act to the Pearson case. The Act precludes aliens convicted of crimes from seeking asylum. Congressman Gilman, who has been a vocal supporter of Irish issues since he began working with the American Irish PEC more than twenty years ago, testified that the new immigration bill was not retroactive and could not be applied to Pearson. Gilman also attacked the government for comparing Pearson's acts with the World Trade Center bombing.

William Kelly, a District Judge from Rockland County, New York, blasted the government on the stand when they tried to compare Pearson to members of the "Weather Underground" (an offshoot of the Black Panthers) who killed two police officers in New York in 1981. Kelly described Pearson's actions as "acts of freedom."

Pearson's wife Doris gave emotional testimony on the second day of the trial, when she testified about the emotional and financial hardship that would be caused to her family if her husband were to be deported. She also expressed fear that Brian and her family would be attacked and killed by Loyalist death squads in Ireland. Oisten Macbride recounted the cases of Irish nationalists who have been tortured and killed by loyalists upon returning to Northern Ireland or being released from prison.

The trial resumes on February 21st and Judge Williams' decision on whether Brian Pearson and his family can remain in this country will likely come by the end of the summer.

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