

**Irish
National
Congress**

P.O. Box No. 2814, Dublin 7



**Comhdháil
Náisiúnta
na hÉireann**

P.O. Box No. 2814, Dublin 7

March 1994

Peace — the next step

THE INC'S RESPONSE to the peace process is printed in full inside this newsletter. In it, we warmly welcome the overall process beginning with the Hume/Adams Initiative and including the Downing Street Declaration which has brought the northern conflict centre stage and engendered a widespread desire for peace.

We now need to focus on the next steps to be taken if peace is to be achieved. The Joint Declaration could be a step in the development of this process, but its deficiencies must now be addressed.

The INC believes that the British government must address Section 75 of their Government of Ireland Act which claims that "the supreme authority of the parliament of the United Kingdom shall remain unaffected and undiminished over all persons, matters and things in [Northern] Ireland and every part thereof."

The next step must focus on the causes of the conflict — fundamentally, the British claim to sovereignty and the division of the country — and also issues such as discrimination in employment, which condemns Catholics to an unemployment rate two-and-a-half times that of Protestants, human rights abuses such as shoot-to-kill operations by the British army and RUC, and collusion between these forces and loyalist paramilitary groups. Any peace process which does not address the causes of the conflict is doomed to failure.

The INC is also calling for international intervention in the conflict. Britain cannot be both a protagonist and an arbiter.

The two governments need to clarify the ambiguities that now exist about their positions but most importantly they need to focus on the next steps that are required to achieve a just and lasting peace. That requires a more imaginative response than a return to deadlocked inter-party talks.

Peace — the next step

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Write to the Irish government urging them to seek international intervention in the North and to call on the British government to delete its claim to sovereignty over "all persons, matters and things in [Northern] Ireland and every part thereof" as contained in the British Government of Ireland Act.
- Write to the newspapers
- Help to set up a new INC branch in your area by organising a meeting
- Bring our response to the peace process to your local elected representatives urging them to speak out.

Further copies are available by phoning 8202019 or writing to the INC, PO Box 2814, Dublin 7).



● Members of the Guth na mBan Women's group who walked from Derry to Dublin last December to raise support for the Hume/Adams Peace Initiative

RESPONSE TO THE PEACE PROCESS

1. The Irish National Congress (INC) welcomes the overall process, beginning with the Hume/Adams Initiative and including the Downing Street Declaration, which has not only brought the northern conflict to the centre of the political stage, but has also engendered a widespread desire for peace.

2. The INC is concerned that the original declaration and subsequent statements and actions by both governments have created an ambiguous and contradictory situation where a clear and unequivocal response to the declaration as a whole is difficult. Nevertheless, the INC, being an organisation committed to the peace process, believes that the declaration warrants a serious and considered response.

3. The INC recognises that the declaration could be a step in the development of a peace process. However, if a just and lasting peace is to be realised, then its serious deficiencies must be addressed.

4. On the key question of self-determination, the INC welcomes the positive recognition, in paragraph four of the declaration, of the right of the Irish people alone to determine their future. However, it must be accepted that this right is qualified many times in the declaration by a reaffirmation of what has become known as the unionist veto. This is confusing and contradictory. The declaration speaks of the right of the Irish people as a whole to decide their future. Yet obviously, the British government is only prepared to accept this right in the context of the maintenance of their statutory claim to sovereignty over all "persons, matters and things in Northern Ireland" (Section 75 of the Government of Ireland Act), since there is no acceptance by the prime minister in the declaration of the need for British constitutional change. On the other hand, in paragraph seven, the Taoiseach acknowledges the presence in the Irish Constitution of elements which are deeply resented by northern unionists and pledges to do

something about them in the context of an overall settlement. Consequently, the declaration not only fails to deal with the key constitutional issue in a clear manner, it also adopts a completely unbalanced position. The rights of the majority of Irish people are outweighed by the continuing British support for the unionist veto. The late Cardinal Tomás O Fiaich noted that "the present policy of the British government that there will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland while the majority want British rule to remain, is no policy at all. It means you do nothing and it means that loyalists in the North are given the encouragement to make no move at all. It is an encouragement to sit tight".

5. The INC accepts that the northern state cannot simply be absorbed into an unreformed southern state. On the other hand, it is highly unlikely that the South of Ireland will abandon its independence and rejoin the United Kingdom in order to be reunited with the North. Obviously, these two hypothetical scenarios are nonviable. The INC believes that a lasting settlement will only be achieved if everyone is prepared to move beyond the present constitutional arrangements. This will require enormous courage and imagination from all involved, but is essential for the establishment of real peace. After that, all parties can assemble to discuss the creation of totally new constitutional arrangements and political structures that can draw on the allegiance of both the nationalist and unionist people of the North and the rest of the Irish people. If through such discussion and debate democratic structures can be agreed upon, leading to future harmony, peace and prosperity, then the only victors will be the Irish people as a whole.

6. The INC notes that those aspects of the declaration which appear most favourable to nationalists are couched in terms that are largely rhetorical and consequently fail to translate into concrete proposals, whereas the unionist

veto is guaranteed, on several occasions, in totally unambiguous terms. If the declaration is to make a meaningful contribution to the peace process then a way must be found to bridge the gap between rhetoric and substance.

7. Paragraph one of the declaration acknowledges that "the most important issue facing the people and the governments is to remove the causes of the conflict", yet the INC is dismayed by the fact that never once in the rest of the declaration are those causes either spelled out or addressed — quite the reverse. Time and again the constitutional status of North of Ireland is underpinned, which would indicate that both signatories find the status quo acceptable. But surely, the very existence of the conflict is a solid indication that there is something fundamentally at fault with the status quo. The failure of the governments to use the declaration to address the many causes behind the conflict is its fundamental flaw. There is no mention of discrimination in employment, which, even after years of direct rule from Westminster and fair employment legislation, condemns Catholics to a rate of unemployment two and a half times that of their Protestant neighbours. Neither is there mention of human rights abuses, so meticulously recorded by international bodies like Helsinki Watch, Liberty and Amnesty International, nor of the higher levels of social deprivation and the daily harassment and abuse by the security forces experienced by large sections of the nationalist community. These injustices and others exacerbate the conflict and any peace process that fails to take them on board is doomed to failure.

8. The INC is disappointed by the pledge given by the Irish government in the declaration that Irish unity can only come about with majority consent in the North, because this means that, in practice, the northern state is going to continue. Consequently, this begs the question — what is going to be done about the litany of daily grievances of the

nationalist community? Can we look to the Downing Street Declaration for an answer? Unfortunately not, for it offers no structures or mechanisms to meet the needs of nationalists. If northern nationalists are expected to accept this declaration on trust, then, at the very least, the British government must recognise the legitimate grievances of nationalists and make new arrangements, supplementary to the declaration if necessary, which will recognise their Irish identity and redress the historical disadvantage and the present-day burdens which they suffer.

However, even if there was a greater willingness on the part of the British government to seek reform, the INC contends that the northern state, by its very nature, cannot respond effectively to demands for democratic change. The establishment of the state itself, forged by sectarianism and violence and designed to guarantee one section of the community domination in perpetuity has resulted in a culture and an ideology that has always resisted attempts to introduce equality and democracy. The INC is convinced that the fundamental cause of the ongoing conflict is the British claim to sovereignty and believes that the ending of the political division of Ireland must be central to the peace process.

9. The INC argues that the ambiguous and contradictory nature of the declaration has been compounded by subsequent statements and actions by the two governments. In the aftermath of the declaration, the British government immediately moved to assert a strong unionist position. John Major's first words in the House of Commons after

the declaration focused on the continuing statutory guarantee to the unionists and he stated that the British government's main interest was in the welfare of those people in the North of Ireland who support the union. The aggressive and threatening language used by the British government in its refusal to offer any clarification of its position does nothing to advance the peace process. This intransigence contrasts with the acceptance by Albert Reynolds of the need for clarification and his willingness to go beyond the declaration in several crucial areas, such as the question of amnesty and the need for demilitarisation on all sides. The two governments state that they are in agreement with what the declaration says. However, there seems to be some distance between what each government believes the declaration means. People who are committed to the peace process need to know precisely how the two governments are interpreting the document and precisely where they see the process going.

10. Conclusion: The INC is a nonparty political organisation committed to the process of building a just and lasting peace. We believe this must be on the basis of Irish unity and a complete end to any British claim to sovereignty over the North of Ireland. We commit ourselves to working for Irish unity through peaceful means, and believe the building of a popular movement to voice the views of the vast majority of the Irish people on this question is an urgent necessity.

The INC is:

- Writing to the two governments to ask them to publicly clarify the ambiguities that have arisen in the aftermath of the declaration.
- Asking the Irish government to seek international intervention in the conflict, as Britain cannot be both a protagonist and an arbitrator. The US Peace Envoy could be a helpful part of this process and International Human Rights observers could help monitor the security situation.
- Calling on the British government to delete its claim to sovereignty as set out in Section 75 of the Government of Ireland Act and Section one of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act. This move would validate its oft-quoted claim that it has no "selfish, strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland".
- Calling on all interested parties to refrain from adopting an aggressive or threatening position in the context of the peace process. Lasting peace is a prize worth attaining and patience and tolerance are a small price to pay.

Death of Des Earley

It was with deep sadness that members of the Irish National Congress learned of the death of our friend Des Earley. He died in Dublin's Mater Hospital on Thursday, 3 March after being fatally injured in a tragic accident.

Des was a staunch supporter of all activities organised by the INC in Dublin. He never missed a protest, picket, public meeting or demonstration and was a diligent fundraiser. He was active in support of every effort to fight injustice, especially that against the nationalist people of the Six Counties. He was a trade unionist and republican in the tradition of James Connolly and dedicated his life to achieving a free, united and peaceful Ireland.

The INC extends deepest sympathy to all Des' family and friends. We share your loss. Ní dhéanfaimid dearmad air.

INC Annual General Meeting

SATURDAY 9 APRIL

11AM-5PM

**TEACHERS' CLUB,
36 PARNELL SQUARE,
DUBLIN 1.**

**REGISTRATION FEE
£3 & £2 (UNWAGED)**

INCL LUNCH

**MEMBERSHIP FEE MUST
BE PAID BEFORE AGM OR
ON REGISTRATION**

**Members
wishing to
submit motions
etc should send
them in
advance to:
PO Box 2814,
Dublin 7.**



August marks the 25th anniversary of the reintroduction of British troops onto the streets of the North of Ireland — 25 years of bloodshed, repression, division and grief.

Many people forget that the Civil Rights Movement was met with serious violence by the northern state, culminating in pogroms against the nationalist community. The British army was sent in at the time to shore up the northern regime, following which the cycle of violence escalated and has continued since.

Twenty-five years on, many commentators and politicians are still trying to blame the main victims in this situation — the nationalist population and their representatives — for the ongoing nightmare they are living through. Objective

commentators and future historians will surely concede that those who control a society must eventually accept the blame for such an endemic state of affairs.

There have been many 'solutions' trumpeted as the ultimate panacea for peace. They have all failed because they have not tackled the root problem — the British armed presence which sustains the inherently sectarian and failed entity that is Northern Ireland. Those who genuinely want peace must face up to this reality. A British withdrawal is a prerequisite to creating a society where Protestants and Catholics can



live together. As we write, the British and Irish governments are discussing a peace initiative that does not even mention the future role, presence or absence of the British army. It's time for peace. It's time for the British army to go.

"Time for Peace — Time to Go" is organising a series of activities, nationally and internationally, to mark a quarter of a century of British militarisation of the North. These will culminate in a theatrical parade in Dublin on Saturday, 20 August, 1994, depicting all aspects of British rule in the North over the last 25 years.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 20TH 1994 — BE IN DUBLIN

Uain don tsíocháin

Uain don tsíocháin — is cóir imeacht. Is é ár gcuspóir a thabhairt chun cuimhne an 25 bliain ó cuireadh saighdiúirí na Breataine ar na sráideanna i dtuaisceart na hÉireann i mí Lúnasa, 1969.

Credimid go mbraitheann buansíocháin, í bunaithe ar cheart, go h-uile is go hiomlán ar tharraingt siar na Breataine as an tír seo go deo. Creidimid nach féidir an tsíocháin a chur chun cinn go dtí go n-aithníonn an Bhreataine an ceart atá ag muintir na hÉireann trí chéile ar an bhféinchineadh, gan cosc a bheith ag aon pháirtí ar an dul chun cinn polaitiúil.

Cumhacht armtha na Breataine ar an bhfód is bunchúis leis an gcoimhlint, í sin amháin a choiméadann ann an t-aonad seicteach gan dealramh a dtugtar 'Northern Ireland' air.

Caithfear béim a leagadh anois ar an deathoradh a leanfadh an chríochdheighilt a chur ar ceal.

An feachtas seo Uain don tsíocháin — is cóir imeacht, tá mórán i gceist leis, agus is é a bhuaic mórshuíl náisiúnta agus taispeántas i mBaile Atha Cliath ar an Satharn, 20 Lúnasa, Más mian leat cabhrú leis na himeachtaí seo, más maith leat coiste áitiúil a chur ar bun, nó má tá a thuilleadh eolais uait, scríobh chuig Robert Ballagh, Bosca O.P. 2814, Baile Atha Cliath 7, nó glaoigh ar 2824959 (fax 453 0408).

Justice denied

On 23 December 1993 two marines of 45 Commando of the British army were acquitted of the murder of 20-year-old Fergal Caraher and the attempted murder of his brother Michéal.

Obviously the family were disappointed, although not surprised, but then, we have come to expect nothing else from the British government or the legal system in the Six Counties.

Something else that came as no surprise was the fact that the main eye-witnesses, which include Michéal, were not called to give evidence. Those civilian witnesses who did give evidence were branded as liars by the Lord Chief Justice.

To Fergal's family, friends and community, indeed to the nationalist people of the Six Counties and the British judicial system sent a clear message to us all "our soldiers can kill at will and there will be no justice for you!"

Do you agree with the aims of the INC?

Would you like to join the INC and contribute to its work?
Can you organise a public meeting to form a Branch

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No: _____

Membership fee £5 waged/£3 unwaged.

Return to: Irish National Congress, P.O. Box 2814, Dublin 7.

Donations can be sent to: Bank of Ireland, College Green, Dublin 2.

Account No. 13733967 or to the Irish National Congress at:

PO Box 2814, Dublin 7.