President’s Column

By Tom Burke, National President

Well, by now, your new-ish national president has got his feet wet, if not soaked, here at IAUC. I can tell you that IAUC’s status as the gold standard of American Irish freedom and unity organizations not only remains intact but gains luster daily.

IAUC recently enhanced its presence in Congress by attendance of our Washington, D.C. chapter President Peter Kissel, along with other chapter members, at a Congressional hearing chaired by Rep. Christopher Smith. IAUC’s reputation for pithy rejoinders to wrongheaded media reports on Irish subjects remains intact, too. Incisive ripostes from Mike Cummings, Peter Kissel, and Joe Farrell continue in the tradition of IAUC’s prowess with the written word. My thanks go out to them and others who have done the same things in their communities, too.

If we suffer from anything at IAUC, it is from an abundance of talent and dedication. I’ll take that kind of excess all day, any day.

IAUC National is on its way to rebuilding and reconstructing its treasury. While IAUC has never been even close to financial embarrassment, the slow effects of so-called Peace Process Fatigue in America since the Good Friday Agreement has had its fiscal effects on all Irish freedom and unity advocacy organizations, including IAUC. I am delighted to report that through hard work and generosity, we have within the past weeks alone added approximately $10,000 to our treasury, with more to come.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to Bill Berardo and George Trainor for their hard work in conducting the successful Two Tickets to Ireland Raffle concluded on March 31, and to the Oakland, Michigan chapter members for their generosity in donating a goodly portion of the chapter’s charitable bingo proceeds to IAUC National. These and additional funding sources will provide IAUC National with the wherewithal to travel to Ireland for commemorations of deceased volunteers for Irish freedom in the coming summer. These include commemorations and wreath laying for individual Hunger Strikees during July and August this coming summer. IAUC will be represented at one or more of them during the summer of 2011.

Finally, our contacts with the Republic’s diplomatic corps have resulted in encouragement for IAUC to become better acquainted in government circles in Dublin, starting with meeting and making the acquaintance of key figures in that government. This will add a new and additional dimension to IAUC. These friendly contacts can’t help but come in handy in times to come.

From Denver, I extend my best wishes and high regards to all members of IAUC and its chapters.
Guess Who Can Work Together to Pass a Budget?

(It’s not Republicans, Democrats, or most states)

By Joe Farrell, Vice President

On December 14, the Northern Ireland Executive approved Northern Ireland’s 2011 budget, on the votes of the DUP, Sinn Fein, and the Alliance Party.

First Minister Peter Robinson said “We did what we had to do.” Deputy First Minister Martin McGuiness said “A ton of work went into this”

In other words, two previously irreconcilable parties, when in government, have worked together to create a complex and difficult financial plan for their country in uniquely difficult times, making and agreeing on literally volumes of painful choices.

This is a job that long-established democratic states elsewhere haven’t even been able to do, or have done only under extreme duress and accompanied by rioting in the streets.

Ten years ago who predicted this? No, what they told us was that the conflict in Ireland was incomprehensible, and insoluble. It was neither. And, we've been told that a United Ireland was a pipe dream. Don’t believe it.

There is “a ton of work to do.” But let’s “do what we have to do.” A united, peaceful, democratic Ireland: I think we’re half way there.
A Free and United Ireland

By Tracy E. Tucker, 2011 copyright reserved

No American that believes in the principles upon which the United States of America was founded should be able to look at the existence of a partitioned “Northern Ireland” as a tenable situation. That is because The United States was, of course, founded on the notion that the just power of government is derived from the consent of the governed, and should not be imposed upon anyone against his will. This was one of numerous reasons cited in the American Declaration of Independence for separation from the British crown, and can be indeed, argued as the very cornerstone issue.

“Northern Ireland,” as it were, came into existence in exactly the opposite way. It was "partitioned" out of the rest of Ireland, and this arrangement was imposed upon all the people of Ireland without their consent. It follows then, that any power the leadership in “Northern Ireland” wields is not derived from the consent of the governed rather it is derived from alliance with the British government. The entire notion of this arrangement flies in the face of democracy.

There are many reasons we as Americans of Irish ancestry should be supportive of the United Ireland movement. Among those reasons are the fact that a stable environment in the North of Ireland will be conducive to American business and national security interests. Additionally, supporting those who yearn for freedom from imposed (read: tyrannical) government, combined with the protection of basic human rights, is the American way.

The IAUC is supportive of these ends, and is proudly non-sectarian. What some may not realize is that IAUC is an organization with a very diverse range of membership, friends and supporters. One is just as likely to see Catholic and Protestant alike, serving and supporting the organization’s objectives, which is one of the IAUC’s most endearing qualities. It should be the goal of everyone who serves and supports the IAUC to spread the mindset of peaceful, non-violent coexistence to everyone in the United States, Ireland, and Britain.

Sectarianism is clearly at odds with this notion. Sectarianism causes political matters to disguise themselves as religious issues, and to be cloaked in religious rhetoric, when they have very little to do with religion at all. When this mindset pervades a society, it prevents equal protection under the law, and creates an environment of fear and intimidation that peaceful twenty-first century societies should be long past.

Perhaps the most important thing we can do as Americans of Irish ancestry, apart from praying for the Lord’s grace and mercy, is to educate our fellow Americans. We can present the facts in proper historical context, and articulate the benefits of a free, peaceful and united Ireland in persuasive, rather than divisive terms. We can do this by speaking in public whenever possible, writing letters to editors, blogs etc., and by petitioning our own elected officials. We should not be afraid to engage in the due democratic process afforded to us by our Constitution for the redress of grievances. “Grievances” in this case, not meaning injustices per se here at home, but rather the American interests served by a peaceful, free and united Ireland.

Mr. Tracy E. Tucker (Uá Tauthchair) is an at large member of the IAUC from South Carolina. A writer, genealogist and member of clergy, his Irish family roots are in Co. Tipperary, Co. Offaly and the North of Ireland. He is the married father of two and can be reached by email at: otuachair@comcast.net
Submitted by Marie Smith
This has been a busy month for the South Florida chapter of the IAUC. We had booths at two festivals, sold raffle tickets, spoke on the Famine at Nova University, and had our Gaelic Mass of commemoration on Sunday, March 27th, when all the local Irish Americans organizations participated. Media coverage was great and we educated many on the watershed in Irish history.

In the aftermath of my meeting with the Pat Carey, Minister for Community, Equality & Gaeltacht Affairs in Dublin last July, before he left office in February I received a very encouraging letter from him stating that my recommendations were brought before the National Famine Commemoration Committee and this year the implementation of one of the requests, a competition involving schools, had been initiated.

A blog: Gaeilge, and website: www.bladair.com was recently launched by the Mayo Education Center, requesting bloggers to recount their stories of the famine in their particular areas. The National Famine Commemoration page of the department is website, www.pobail.ie. It is hoped that this first step with the Irish government will eventually bear fruit in the opening of a workhouse famine museum. Recently on an Oprah show, Rosie O'Donnell's unknown ancestry was showcased and for the first time she learned that her grandparents were put on a coffin ship to Canada from a workhouse in Naas, County Kildare. She was flown to Ireland and shown what a workhouse represented and it was a traumatic experience for her - our first notable whose origins were the workhouses of Ireland.

Over fifteen years ago the IAUC had a foundation and under its umbrella we educated many people in the history of Ireland, and their origins. What amazes me today is the number of Irish Americans who still know nothing of their history. The former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill stated: "Truth is a very precious thing, and it should be guarded by half-truths" So with the falsehood of the word famine, we all know now there was no famine in Ireland. Bumer rops left Ireland during the years of the supposed "famine" while the rural Irish, who subsisted on potatoes only, starved to death.

Submitted by George Trainor
The IAUC is a co-sponsor of the Second Annual An Gorta Mór Commemoration this Spring. The National Famine Commemoration Memorial Day has been set for the weekend of May 21-22, 2011. Commemorating the famine in San Francisco will be the California Irish Cultural Society and the Irish American Unity Conference. This event supports San Francisco's Saint Anthony's Dining Hall.

The Irish famine, An Gorta Mór, was unparalleled. No famine ever claimed such a high percentage of a country's population. The given cause of An Gorta Mór was the failure of the potato crop, on which most Irish were solely reliant for food, due to a Europe-wide blight. However, there was enough food produced in Ireland during the years of 1845-1851, to keep most of the victims alive; but that food was taken from the Irish by (mainly English) landlords as rent. Keeping it for themselves meant sure eviction from their land and therefore sure starvation.

Father Alfred Boeddeker opened the doors of St. Anthony Dining Room for the first time on October 4, 1950 in a former auto repair shop and served 400 hot, nutritious meals to his hungry and homeless neighbors in the Tenderloin of San Francisco. Last year, St. Anthony Dining Room served 950,000 meals. The dining hall is located at 45 Jones Street. Meals are served from 10:15 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Members of the CICS and IAUC, along with some of the staff of St. Anthony Dining Room, recently met with Consul General of Ireland Gerry Staunton. The group discussed with the Consul General their plans for raising money and awareness for St. Anthony's Dining Hall.

George Trainor of the Irish American Unity Conference stated that last year's commemoration was very successful. "We hope this year more Irish organizations and businesses join us in honoring the victims of An Gorta Mór"

For more information on the American Committee to honor the victims of the Irish Hunger, please visit their website: http://irishhungercomm.wordpress.com/about/
Washington DC Activities

Submitted by Peter Kissel

The Washington DC chapter turned out in force for Washington’s annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade on Sunday, March 13. Chapter members Jim Galvin, Dan McCarthy, James McDonough, Peter Kissel, Nuala Moore and Jack O’Brien joined with the Irish Northern Aid group on a beautiful day to march under the United Ireland banner along the National Mall and up Constitution Avenue. As our group passed the reviewing stand filled with Irish diplomats, an announcement was made proclaiming our mission of peace and justice in a united Ireland. The event served to reaffirm and strengthen our members’ commitment to unification and justice.

The following week, IAUC-DC hosted the Ballymurphy Massacre Families representatives again during their return visit to Washington to testify before the Helsinki Commission and meet various Northern Ireland politicians. Briege Voyle, whose mother Joan was murdered by the British Army during the tragedy, and John Teggart, whose father Danny was also ruthlessly shot 14 times, coincided their visit with the annual influx of Irish politicians. On March 16, John Teggart made a powerful presentation to the Helsinki Commission’s hearing on “Northern Ireland: Why Justice in Individual Cases Matters,” as did John Finucane on behalf of the Pat Finucane family, Ciaran McAirt on behalf of the McGurk’s Bar loyalist bombing victims, and Jane Winter, Director of British Irish Rights Watch. Commission Chair Congressman Christopher Smith (R-NJ) was very forceful and encouraging in supporting the families, and has promised to hold future hearings.

A large contingent of Irish-American activists turned out for the hearing, including members from IAUC-DC, AOH Washington, AOH Baltimore, New Jersey IAUC and AOH, LAOH, as well as Pat Finucane’s widow Geraldine, Rita O’Hare of Sinn Fein and many others. Following the hearing, a number of our supporters gathered at The Dubliner pub to enjoy themselves and discuss further actions. Thanks to all who came – it was a great show of support!! John Teggart’s testimony can be found on the Helsinki Commission’s website:


Pittsburgh Chapter News

Submitted by Sarah McAuliffe-Bellin

The Pittsburgh Chapter has been busy since the beginning of 2011. Chapter members marched in Pittsburgh’s annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade on March 12. Participants and parade-goers were provided handouts describing the 30th Annual Commemoration of the 1981 Hunger Strikes. Chapter members have observed this event annually since 1981 by sponsoring Masses in remembrance of the 10 men who died.

On May 7, 2011 the IAUC, in cooperation with many other local Irish American organizations, has organized a Mass at St. Patrick’s Church at 17th & Liberty Avenues in Pittsburgh followed by a procession to Mullaney’s Harp & Fiddle where Matt Morrison will be the featured speaker and an exhibit and video will be available for viewing and discussion.

Chapter member Jim Caldwell has been busy approaching State Representatives seeking legislative sponsors for the United Ireland Resolution to submit to the PA State House and Senate. Resolutions were submitted last year in both the Senate and House but were not acted on before the end of the legislative year. The effort will continue until Pennsylvania has a United Ireland Resolution passed in its legislature.
Remembering the Hungerstrikers
An Interview with Terry Kirby, Former Blanketman

Written by Bobby Lavery
Not one single day goes by without thoughts of our ten heroes of the 1981 Hunger Strike and the smashed hopes of the 1980 Strike.

The 1980 Strike looked to be a success with the Brits promising an end to the Strike and a new approach from them. With at least one of the strikers near to death we hadn’t a lot of choice, the strike was called off and the rest is history. What followed was a total devastation, and it was a feeling we were soon to get used to during the next year. To survive without losing our sanity was nothing less than a miracle.

We became numb and I believe there was an acute awareness that the actions by the British, indeed were leading to deaths in the H Blocks; one way or another, perhaps being the catapult which would bring the Irish struggle onto the world stage.

The 1981 Hunger Strike became so inevitable the sadness was palpable. The 1st of March began the long Hunger Strike that would lead to one of the saddest periods of modern Irish history.

I would like to share brief encounters with some of my comrades as I personally knew them; not the media hype that typically surrounds these incredible men and the events in history.

I was fortunate to know several of the Ten personally and I shall start with my dear friend and comrade Joe McDonnell. For a short while I went with Joe’s youngest sister, however my friendship with Joe was much longer. We were interned together and later we served together in the sentenced wings of prison.

I worked with Big Joe in West Belfast and soon learned that his care and love for our people was immeasurable. It was not long before I began to copy his wonderful style with those who opened their homes to us. He had been good to us but who we knew to be in financial difficulties. I had a good teacher in my friend Joe McDonnell.

Kieran Doherty was another comrade I would class as a personal friend. He was known as “the gentle giant”. Kieran and I played GAA games when we were kids. He was a very clear and concise political thinker. He was a great supporter and advocate for the GAA. We were interned together and later went on the run and subsequently we were captured together. Kieran was strong willed, when the prison warders wanted to do a mirror search on him (legs stretched naked over a mirror to examine your rectum) he resisted, the outcome of the refusal was to have his testicles squeezed until he finally collapsed.

Kevin Lynch was a member of the INLA. He had a kind heart and a great sense of humor but he was a very sincere person. His nickname was Barabas and I heard this story before he was moved into the same cell with me. Before being moved into my cell, Kevin was in a cell across the wing from me. On our wing was a prison orderly (prisoner who works for the prison) who was particularly nasty to our prisoners. During the no wash protest Kevin was in his cell spreading excreta around the wall when he saw this orderly outside his cell window (there actually wasn’t any glass in any of the windows). When Kevin saw him he threw a piece of the excreta at the orderly which hit him on the head. Of course this lead to one of the many beatings Kevin received. He was eventually moved into my cell. Kevin made me laugh so much he really helped me. He too was a great one for the GAA and he was a gifted storyteller.

(Continued on next page)
I first came into contact with Francis Hughes in Musgrave Park Hospital Military Wing. I had been moved to the hospital wing after a particularly severe beating. My hospital room had its own bathroom and the Governor from the blocks came in and told me that I had to shave. He said that I needed to comply with prison regulations. “I’m not in prison,” I said, “I’m in a hospital.” None too pleased, he walked away. While in my hospital room I saw a person being wheeled into the next room. I shouted, “Who are ye?” “I’m Francis Hughes, Republican Volunteer, Who are you?” I answered, “Terry Kirby, Blanketman, H3”. The next day they came in and moved me away from him.

I met Patsy O Hara while interned in 73/74. He was with the INLA, he was brought in with his brother, known as “Scatter O Hara” IRA. I wonder why?!

I heard that Raymond McCreesh was one of the nicest people anyone could ever meet, I only saw him going to and from visits but I feel that alone was a privilege.

Now when I think of Martin Hurston I remember the song “Sean South”. Martin, as they say, hadn’t a note in his head, but that didn’t stop him giving his rendition of “Sean South” when an opportunity arose. I met him first in Crumlin Gaol in 1976 and again in the H Blocks on “the blanket”. He had a great sense of humor which he needed when he sang!

Thomas McIlwee was arrested with his brother Benny and friend Seamus McPeake. The one thing I remember most about Tom was that he had no time for anything which even slightly resembled bullying.

My first meeting with Mickey Devine was hilarious. It was in Crumlin Gaol in 1976 when he was a new prisoner. To help our people adjust to their new surroundings we had developed a bit of an initiation ceremony if you like. In Mickey’s case I was picked to be “the Doctor”. Of course Red Mick didn’t know that I was not a Doctor. When he discovered the joke he was hysterical. Too long a story to tell but I’m glad I didn’t have to be the Priest! Mickey was known as Red Mick because of his bright red hair not his politics.

Lastly, what can I say about Bobby Sands that has not already been said? I knew the Sands family. Bobby was an out and out political activist and a fluent Irish speaker. He loved to use the language but if there was someone in the company that Sands didn’t know too well he would always translate. He and Bik wrote a couple of great songs and the songs became famous.

Bobby’s last arrest was with Big Joe. When he took over prison command from Darkie Hughes he started political classes, Irish language classes, political discussions etc. He was a great leader and made us much more aware of what we, as republicans were about.

It is my belief that his leadership, inside the prison, was more responsible for creating conditions for a peace process to emerge than that on the outside. I believe that the peace process is a monument to Bobby and the others. I am grateful to our leadership, inside and out, for going on to create a society in which we can now strive for our rights without physical conflict.

I hope that some will get an idea how our young heroes were very ordinary men who stood up to the bully Thatcher and her regime. Though they died they certainly gave much worse than a bloody nose to that Thatcher regime; those brave men will be remembered by more people with pride and love than Thatcher will ever be remembered.

I think of our heroes every day and I believe that the peace process is their legacy. This legacy from our brave heroes will indeed enable “the laughter of the children,” all the children, Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter.

Not one single day goes by without thoughts of our ten Heroes of the 1981 Hunger Strike, but when I remember, I don’t have just sad memories, but many fond memories of them as my friends and my comrades.
Remembering the Hunger Strike

By Gretchen Bales

It is hard to imagine it has been thirty years since the word hunger strike became a headline in the news. I was not raised in a traditional Irish American household, yet as an eighteen year old, I vividly remember the day Bobby Sands died. I also remember sitting in a classroom at the end of my senior year of high school when a teacher made the comment, if the fools want to starve to death, just let them. Now, thirty years later I still remember those words and the effect it had on me. The Sunday morning following Sands’ death, I can recall sitting in Mass, no one mentioned the hunger strike or what was happening in the north. I don’t know why, but I didn’t get out of my seat to take communion, all I did the entire service was weep and it was something odd that I can’t describe, but an anger was growing inside me, an anger that motivated me later in my life as an adult to never again remain silent and allow insults against the Irish people.

Fast forward thirty years, now it is not possible for the word hunger strike, H-blocks, etc. not to have become a part of normal vocabulary for those of us who supported the republican movement. Words a farm girl from Indiana couldn’t have imagined all those 30 plus years ago, but it happened.

Perhaps I have no right to pen a memorial to all those who served and those who died on the hunger strike, all I have to offer are words from my heart and how that event changed my life. Those agonizing months were so powerful it served to awaken me and many others who had been guilty of overlooking the events taking place. 1980 and 1981 were a long way from having instant updates via internet; we were still dependent upon the 6:00 p.m. news, the newspaper and radio for updates but we organized and made long bus trips to major cities to protest, we put together letter writing campaigns, all the things we hoped would spare just one life with the influence of our politicians, the influence of Irish America. Sadly, that wasn’t to happen, we failed to stop the heartache that resulted from each death.

I pen this not as a personal friend or family member of any of those brave men. I simply want to share how strongly their sacrifice influenced the world, even my small piece in Indiana. Without their commitment and bravery, I don’t believe that so many people, from so many various walks of life, would have taken the time to make those bus trips, to stand in the cold in front of British embassies, to march in parades, call our elected officials, or any of the events we hoped would draw attention to what was happening in the H-Blocks and all over the north.

So, now as the thirty year anniversary is upon us, I remember those men and always honor their memory in my own way. I realize that no one knew what would happen, none knew where things would be in thirty years; but I honestly can’t see that the peace process would have been possible if not for those brave ten men.

Gretchen Bales is Treasurer of TharSaile

The Mission of Thar Saile is to achieve a permanent solution to the immigration issues facing the former Irish Republican Political Prisoners residing within the United States.
Remembering the Hunger Strike – Personal Recollections from Inside Long Kesh

By Matt Morrison

Just as those of us who are old enough to remember where we were or what we were doing when JFK was shot, I remember where I was when Bobby Sands died on Hunger Strike. I was about one hundred yards away from Sands, a prisoner of the British in the Cages of Long Kesh. We Republican POWs in the Cages had the political status that the British had so arbitrarily denied our comrades in the H Blocks and Armagh Prison.

I was saddened but not shocked by Bobby Sands death. Margaret Thatcher was determined to break the Hunger Strikers, break the Blanketmen, and break the Republican Movement. The Hunger Strike was not just about achieving Political Status. It was about asserting the legitimacy of the Irish People’s right to live free from the oppression of the British and with the right to determine the shape of our own future unencumbered by the British or anyone else for that matter.

Our men in H Blocks and our women POWs in Armagh were subjected to barbarously inhumane treatment by the gaolers. They were vilified by the British propagandists as “criminals”, entombed in concrete cells naked, half-starved and forced to live in their own urine and fecum. The deaths of the ten hunger strikers marked a personal low for us all, but internationalized our struggle, paved the way for Sinn Fein electoral successes and created a matrix within which the Peace Process would occur.

Patsy O’Hara was my childhood friend. I went to primary and secondary school with him and knew him as well as any of my neighbors. The hallmark of this man was that he was “ordinary”. He would laugh if I say anything other than that. At the risk of hearing his laughter, I would say that there was a messianic quality to this young man who denied himself a future so that his people might have a better one. It was this desire to see something better for our suffering people which elevated the Hunger Strikers, turned them into an energy currency for forward political movement.

I still have a bad taste in my mouth from that time, thinking about those clergy, particularly Roman Catholic priests who branded the Hunger Strikers as "suicidal". The British loved these men as much as they hated the Hunger Strikers. I do remember with affection Cardinal O’Fiaich and the wonderful Father Des Wilson who represented truth and justice, who represented their oppressed people and who were literally demonised by the British and pro-British media for being outspoken.

Things have moved forward. I thank Bobby Sands and the other Hunger Strikers who sacrificed for all of us and I am sad that British intransigence left no other way for things to unfold.
“Loyalism always says the right things, but then loyalty always does the wrong things.”

Anonymous

By Dr. Tony Novosel

Over the past 40 years, most writing on loyalty has focused on the “wrong things” that loyalty did during the conflict, heinous acts such as McGuirk’s Bar, the murders by the Shankill Butchers, and Grahams’ Bookies. However, almost unknown and nearly lost in the history of the conflict is what the leading elements within the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Red Hand Commando (RHC) and their political allies tried to do in the 1970s to achieve a compromise peace that involved all warring factions in Northern Ireland.

In the early 1970s, both the RHC and the UVF leadership began to think, in Gusty Spence’s (UVF) words outside the “traditional railway lines of unionism.” In fact, in 1972 Spence called the Unionist dominated state into question when he argued, “In so far as people speak of fifty years of misrule, I wouldn't disagree with that.”

This shift became evident at a 1974 news conference when Billy Mitchell, a UVF volunteer said, “We want to see peace but we want peace that will satisfy both the Ulster Protestants and the Irish Nationalists. Some solution will have to be worked out between . . . the men of violence.” Spence reiterated this in 1977 when he called on “all the paramilitaries . . . to call a universal ceasefire.” In words similar to Mitchell’s he continued “Eventually loyalist and republican must sit down together. . . dialogue will have to come sometime, so why not now? There is no victory in Ulster, not for the I.R.A. or the U.V.F., the police or the army.” Armed with this analysis, they began to think about how to end the conflict and create the basis for a lasting peace.

This search began in 1972, when prisoners, in talks with the Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP), proposed a 3-month truce culminating in “Amnesty for Political Prisoners – to include ALL SIDES, [emphasis in original] and to embrace the United Kingdom, The Republic of Ireland, and Northern Ireland.” In 1973, this thinking reappeared in a RHC document, Proposals for the Assembly. Echoing Spence and Mitchell, the RHC stated, “It will not be one force that will dictate the terms for a ceasefire, nor a politician alone. It must be done with the cooperation of all concerned in the struggle, for the survival of Ulster.” To accomplish this, they suggested a cease-fire of all paramilitary groups lasting six months, which would then lead to the release of all internees and a political amnesty, along with decommissioning with no fear of arrest. The peace talks would then come later.

The RHC expanded on this proposal in 1975 as the Provisional IRA (PIRA) debated extending its ceasefire in January of that year. They published a document entitled A Ten Point Plan for Peace with Honour. This proposal also envisioned a staged process that would lead to talks, but went further. It proposed a 100 seat Convention to include “ALL warring factions” [emphasis in original]. The goal of these proposals was to facilitate talks towards a “just and equitable” peace by creating a “breathing space.” As one of those involved in this document said, “[the] first thing was your ceasefires, then your talks and, then your agreement.”

In 1974, the UVF sent a communiqué to the Sunday News (the only paper that published their communiqués). In this statement, the UVF stated, “that life in Ulster can only be enjoyed to the full by the creation of a new society based upon, the Unity and sovereignty of the ordinary rank and file Ulster people - Protestant and Catholic alike.” In the same year, the UVF launched the Volunteer Political Party (VPP). The leadership called on their volunteers to think politically arguing, “It is not enough to know that you can fight physically without knowing as to why you are fighting.” As Spence had challenged the volunteers in Long Kesh to think about “why they were there” so now the UVF challenged their volunteers to begin to think about why they fought.

Shortly after the UVF launched the VPP, the RHC published a document entitled Within the Context of Northern Ireland aimed at the upcoming constitutional convention. This paper called for a new constitution guaranteeing human rights, social justice, social housing equal right to employment, “Religion and Politics to be parted forever,” “cooperation with the Republic on the basis of friendship and of course the continued link with Britain. Furthermore, in August of 1974, the RHC newspaper Loyalist News also called for an act of Parliament to mandate integrated education.

(Continued on next page)
The RHC and UVF, along with their political allies on the outside of the organizations also began to expand on their earlier ideas and formulated even more detailed proposals. Work on these proposals began as early as 1972 between the thinkers in Long Kesh and those on the outside and eventually resulted in the first version of *Sharing Responsibility* (It was not called this at the time.), which found its way to press in 1977. It appeared under the auspices of the Independent Unionist Group, which later became the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP). This document called for proportional representation, a bill of rights, freedom of religion, freedom of aspiration, an end to all discrimination, release of all political prisoners and the building on an Israeli type wall along the border. Except for the last item, the document anticipated the Good Friday Agreement and envisioned a large enough assembly (153 members) and committees (15) that no one party could dominate and a true opposition could develop. The proposal also called for “co-opting” civil society at all levels as non-voting members of the committees.

Clearly, the UVF/RHC, or at least leading elements of both groups and their political allies, had stepped outside the “railway lines of traditional unionism.” They had begun to rethink the conflict and created proposals for ending the violence and ensuring that Northern Ireland would never return, to what David Ervine called the “stinking polluted politics” of the Stormont era, politics that he believed had led to the violence.

For all their good intentions, their thinking and actions achieved very little. David Ervine himself believed that there was “not a chance” in this era for politics to work. Roy Garland agrees, arguing that “When they sought to find a new way forward many vested interests and not all on the Unionist side preferred the Volunteers to conform as far as possible to the traditional stereotype.”

Garland is correct. There were too many entrenched interests and factors working against the UVF and RHC as they tried to move away from armed conflict. In the first place, they faced stiff resistance within their organizations and in their very own communities. In effect, they had gone too far too fast down the political path and discovered that there was little support in their own community and organizations for their politics.

As for the PIRA, after the “50 years of unionist misrule,” and their stated goal of a United Ireland, the Provisionals could not contemplate ending the war in compromise. At the same time, the PIRA had not developed enough politically to respond to anything coming out of loyalism. In fact, the PIRA did not publicly accept compromise until 1992. The violence of the era also worked against any sort of compromise peace because, as one RHC volunteer put it, “[You] couldn’t hear the voices over the bombs and bullets.”

Other factors crippled “political” loyalism. Sarah Nelson argues that the UVF “found they had walked into a fire” when they embraced politics. Fearing for their position, Unionism launched a virulent attack on the VPP and the UVF with “allegations of Communism, atheism, pro-republicanism, debauchery and all manner of vices.” This resulted in a humiliating political defeat for the VPP in 1974.

Evidence also suggests that some elements of the British establishment viewed the emergence of political loyalism and loyalist and working class paramilitary politics as a challenge to, in Colin Crawford’s words, “the whole social structure of Northern Ireland” and so deliberately sabotaged the emergence of loyalist politics. Colin Wallace, an MI5 agent argues that they [intel] “wanted the more politically minded ones ousted” and even suggests that some intelligence services carried out sectarian killings to undermine any emergence of working class politics of compromise.

This work is tentative and much more research is necessary, but from this brief survey, the accepted wisdom of loyalism and the simple narrative of loyalism and the conflict are no longer tenable. This forces us to reexamine loyalism and this entire period in all its facets and question what we think we “know” about the conflict in Northern Ireland. Only then, can we really move beyond the rhetoric, inherited histories, and stereotypes of the past and move forward into the future.

Tony teaches History at the University of Pittsburgh and has travelled to Northern Ireland since 1974, doing volunteer work with various community groups and government agencies as well as research into the political evolution of the UVF and RHC in the 1970s and why their politics failed at the time. He is currently working on a book tentatively entitled “Lost Opportunity: The Promise of Political Loyalism.”
AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR THE COMMEMORATION OF VICTIMS OF THE IRISH HUNGER (1845-1851)

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May 21-22, 2011

IN 2009 THE IRISH GOVERNMENT FORMED A COMMEMORATION COMMITTEE TO HONOR THE VICTIMS OF THE GREAT HUNGER. PEOPLE OF IRISH HERITAGE WORLDWIDE ARE ASKED TO PARTICIPATE AT MASSES AND OTHER MEMORIAL SERVICES. THIS INTERNATIONAL EVENT RECOGNIZES THE VICTIMS OF THE HUNGER, INCLUDING THOSE WHO REFUSED TO ABANDON THEIR FAITH AND THOSE WHO FLED IRELAND IN ORDER TO SURVIVE.

ALL IRISH ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD WORK TOGETHER TO PLAN AND EXECUTE ACTIVITIES TO HONOR THEIR FAMILY ANCESTORS IN THEIR LOCAL AREAS ON ONE OR BOTH OF THESE DATES. EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS AND MATERIAL SHOULD BE USED TO INFORM PEOPLE ABOUT THE CONCIOS GOVERNMENT FAILURE AND ITS ROLE IN CAUSING A POTATO BLIGHT TO BECOME A MAN-MADE TRAGEDY. HISTORIANS HAVE PROCLAIMED THE IRISH HUNGER OF 1845-51 AS THE WORST SOCIAL DISASTER IN 19TH CENTURY EUROPEAN HISTORY. FOOD WAS BEING EXPORTED WHILE THE PEOPLE WERE STARVING.

FORM COMMITTEES, CONTACT PUBLIC OFFICIALS, NEWS MEDIA AND OTHER IRISH AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS. THERE ARE EXISTING MONUMENTS, PLAQUES, MEMORIALS, ETC. HONORING THE IRISH HUNGER VICTIMS WHERE CEREMONIES COULD TAKE PLACE. CONSULT WITH CHURCHES FOR MASSES IN THEIR Mem-  

AFTER WAITING FOR MORE THAN 150 YEARS, WE FINALLY HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO HONOR THESE VICTIMS. WE SHOULD RESPECT AND HONOR THEIR MEMORY BY HAVING OVERFLOW CROWDS AT ALL THESE MASSES AND CEREMONIES.

IT IS THE LEAST WE CAN DO CONSIDERING THE DEPTHS OF THEIR INHUMAN SUFFERING AND SACRIFICES.

Purpose of the Hunger Commemoration Committee:

1. To encourage all people in the Irish diaspora to honor the victims of the Irish Hunger for their courage and sacrifices under inhuman conditions.
2. To support, organize and assist worldwide appropriate Activities in Remembrance of Irish Hunger victims.
3. To support the Irish Government’s Commemoration Committee’s annual commemoration activities
And the IAUC National Raffle Winner is…..
Congratulations to Retired Judge Andy Somers of Tucson, Arizona who won the IAUC Raffle on March 31, 2011! Judge Somers is a former two-term National President of the IAUC and the luck of the Irish shined on him this year.

Thank you to all who supported the raffle and a very special thanks to Bill Berardo, the IAUC Oakland County Chapter, Oakland County, Michigan and George Trainor of San Francisco for making this happen.

A Reminder from the National Treasurer to All IAUC Chapters

The deadline for filing the IRS 990-EZ is May 15 for all IAUC Chapters. It is now mandatory that all chapters file their own tax returns directly with the Internal Revenue Service. A copy of the return should be sent to Kevin Barry, National Treasurer at 110 Island Avenue, Little Falls, New Jersey 07424. This requirement is in keeping with changes to IRS policies for non-profit organizations. Forms can be found online at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). Questions, please contact Kevin directly 973-812-8915, email kevinbnj@aol.com

United Ireland Resolutions

George Trainor sends in an update on the campaign for the passage of United Ireland Resolutions: As you know I reached out to the AOH in Portland, Oregon last year asking for their assistance in gaining a United Ireland resolution from the State of Oregon. Working with the AOH in Portland through E-mails and phone calls Mayor Sam Adams of the City of Portland, Oregon signed a Proclamation on March 17, 2011.

Washington DC Chapter marching in the St. Patrick's Day Parade under the INA banner
Mary’s Gift Irish Language Foundation

Mike Breen, member of 5th & 9th Chapter, is the executive director of Mary’s Gift. This foundation was created exclusively to provide financial support to Irish-immersion schools in the north of Ireland. GaelGolf 2011 is a golf tournament in support of Mary’s Gift, which will be held on Monday, Sept 26 at Ridgewood Country Club, Paramus, NJ.

For more info: [www.marysgift.org/](http://www.marysgift.org/) or contact Mike Breen at 201-745-3144.

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**GAELGOLF 2011**

September 26, 2011
The Ridgewood Country Club
Paramus, New Jersey

GaelGolf 2011 is the inaugural golf tournament in support of Mary’s Gift Irish Language Foundation, Inc. Mary’s Gift is a 501(c)(3) public charity which supports Irish (Gaelic) immersion schools in the north of Ireland. Join us for a day of world-class golf and Ceol Tradisiúnta, cairde, agus craic – Irish music, friends and fun!

Gael Golf 2011 will be held at the Ridgewood Country Club, one of the northeast’s most acclaimed golf courses, and the site of last year’s Barclays tournament.

Golfers AND non-golfers can enjoy this one-of-a-kind event!

Golf Package includes a round of golf at the prestigious Ridgewood Country Club course (including course refreshment stations, green fees, cart fees and caddy), delicious barbeque lunch, free access to driving range and practice greens, cocktail hour, and three-course awards dinner with Irish-themed entertainment throughout!
Membership in the IAUC

To renew or become a member of the IAUC, please fill out the following and mail to:

Irish American Unity Conference
PO Box 55573
Washington, DC  20040
Attention Kathleen Kelly, Membership

Dues

Regular Member: $30.00
Family Membership: $40.00
Senior Citizen/Student: $20.00

Name: __________________________________________________________
Street Address: ________________________________________________
City, State & Zip: ______________________________________________
Email address: _________________________________________________
Phone Number: _________________________________________________

Checks or money orders should be made payable to “IAUC”

The IAUC has some chapters in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, California, Michigan, Florida and Washington, DC. If you would like chapter information please let us know.