

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Reference Code: | 2008/79/3014 |
| Creation Date(s): | 20 December 1976 |
| Extent and medium: | 4 pages |
| Creator(s): | Department of Foreign Affairs |
| Access Conditions: | Open |
| Copyright: | National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives. |

14/3

Movements for peace in Ireland

1. There are a number of movements and groups in Ireland, at local and national level and on both sides of the border, dedicated to the pursuit of peace. This brief note outlines the development, activities and leading personalities of the leading groups.

2. Peace People

2.1. Development. This movement, which now over-shadows all others, began on 9 August, 1976 as a local effort by women in the Twinbrook housing estate, south-west Belfast when they took to the streets in protest against hijacking of vehicles and rioting in their area. The deaths of the three Maguire children, killed by a run-away Provisional IRA car on 10 August, 1976, sparked off a spontaneous outburst for peace. The defence of the Twinbrook estate became a secondary issue; the pursuit of peace became the primary objective.

2.2. Activities. The activities of the Peace People have thus far concentrated on peace marches throughout Ireland and in London, Birmingham, Leeds, Cardiff and some Scottish cities. Average attendance has circled 15,000. A fortnightly magazine "Peace by Peace" is also published.

On 30 November, 1976, Mrs. Betty Williams and Miss Mairead Corrigan, leaders of the Peace People, were presented with the Norwegian People's Peace Prize of £201,600.

On 17 November, 1976, a lengthy policy statement was issued. The statement says that the next stage of the campaign will involve members of the group examining, with other Northern Ireland groups, "the constitutional and political implications of the creation of a distinct, united and reconciled Northern Irish community". In the shorter term, i.e. within the next two months, the group is to convene two conferences - one to discuss with other peace movements how best their various activities can be co-ordinated and the other to discuss with leaders of community organisations how best they can work towards similar goals.

2.3. The current leadership of the Peace People consists of Mrs. Betty Williams, a Catholic, married with one daughter, Miss Mairead Corrigan, aunt of the three Maguire children who were killed on 10 August and Mr. Ciaran McKeown, editor of 'Fortnight' magazine and former "Irish Press" journalist.

3. Peace Point

3.1. Development. Established in 1972 with committees in both parts of Ireland, Peace Point had as its major objective the encouragement of more emphasis by the media on rebuilding, on community work and less on violence. It was established as a central news service for all groups who were "working for the good of Northern Ireland". It was backed by a number of influential figures, including Bishop James Kavanagh.

3.2. Peace Point has two full-time officers including Mr. Sean Cooney, (one of this year's "People of the Year"). Attached are current committee lists and a diary of activities to date.

4. Corrymeela Community

4.1. Development. Established in 1965, the Corrymeela Community grew from being an exclusively Protestant group to its present ecumenical form with 100 full members, who meet six times each year. In addition, there are now 1,500 Friends of Corrymeela -supporters, not so deeply involved in the work as members - and more than 300 young people who participate in the Community's work.

4.2. Activities. This body has two main lines of activity - (i) seminars and (ii) bringing people of differing religions and backgrounds together at Corrymeela, Co. Down. With regard to the former, the seminar, held on 12-14 November, 1976, on the subject of independence for Northern Ireland, is the most celebrated. With regard to the latter, on 12 January, 1976, a £45,000 "youth village" was opened at Corrymeela by Mr. Ray Carter, N.I. Parliamentary Under-Secretary.

Corrymeela is currently helping the Peace People by providing

it with office facilities at the Community's Belfast headquarters near Queen's University.

4.3. The leader of the Corrymeela Community is Rev. Ray Davey.

5. Athlone Movement for Peace

5.1. Development. Established in February, 1976, this group has held a number of meetings and seminars on peace and violence in Northern Ireland.

5.2. Activities. On 22 September, 1976, about 80 people, representing various towns and organisations throughout the Republic, met in Athlone to organise a massive drive for peace. Organisations represented included the I.C.A., the Irish Nurses' Organisation, Pax Christi, the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation and Peace Point.

5.3. Dr. Ursula O'Neill is the best known leader of the Athlone group.

6. Working for Peace

6.1. Development. This group was founded in July, 1972 by a number of persons resident in Dublin concerned about the cause of peace in Ireland.

6.2. Activities. A study-group has been researching the causes of violence. The major achievement to date has been the founding of the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation q.v.

6.3. Among those involved with this group are Lady Wicklow (of the Woman's Voluntary Emergency Service) and John Seager (Peace Point).

7. Glencree Reconciliation Centre

7.1. Development. A few years ago, several Dublin peace groups

decided on the need for a permanent centre from which to conduct their work for peace and reconciliation. An old reformatory in Glencree, Co. Wicklow, was leased from the Office of Public Works.

7.2. Activities. The major activities of the Centre can be classified under - Northern hospitality and rest facilities, work-camps, conferences and seminars and spiritual and personal growth. The Centre is also currently preparing to issue pamphlets and books on controversial N.I. topics. The Centre organised a major peace rally in Dublin on 28 August, 1976.

7.3. Rev. Shawn Curran, S.J. is Head of the Glencree Centre.