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Irish Northern Aid Committee

*Over a decade of American support
for the oppressed people of occupied Ireland*

U.S. Representatives
JACK McCARTHY
MICHAEL FLANNERY
JOHN McELHONE

Sponsors
DAN GLEESON
Tipperary
DES FERGUSON
Dublin

Trustees
SEAN KEENAN
Derry
JOE CAHILL
Belfast

Honorable Members of Congress

from Martin Galvin, National Publicity Director, Irish Northern Aid
and delegates of the St. Patrick's Day parade
who nominated Michael O'Rourke as Honorary Grand Marshal

in reply to Garret FitzGerald

1. As Americans, we urge our elected representatives in the United States Congress to consider our response to the address of Garret FitzGerald.
2. Few Americans wish peace and freedom for all of the people of Ireland as fervently as do the members and friends of the Irish Northern Aid Committee. Our commitment and concern has been demonstrated, not merely on St. Patrick's Day, but daily throughout the past fourteen years.
3. Yet violence and terrorism cannot be ended by self-serving condemnations of those who in reality are victims of British violence and terrorism, engaged in a patriotic defense of their own land. Nor can reconciliation be achieved in an environment wherein the British systematically implement religious discrimination in employment, housing and political patronage to foster divisions among Irish people. Nor can Garret FitzGerald realistically expect to promote peace by abandoning a substantial segment of Irish people in the service of personal political interests, or by misrepresenting those who forthrightly labor to secure national freedom and peace in Ireland.
4. An ironic yet tragic spectacle is now unfolding. There is indeed much to be said, by any true representative of the Irish people. FitzGerald presides under a Constitution which claims sovereignty over all of Ireland. The vast majority of Irish people support this claim. Yet British hegemony is enforced over six Irish counties, by 30,000 British forces that include the British Army, Royal Ulster Constabulary and Ulster Defense Regiment. The

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litany of suffering imposed by these forces upon unwilling Irish subjects grows daily. The impact wrought by institutionalized religious discrimination within the artificial polity is also deeply felt. The conflict waged between British forces and the Irish Republican Army has claimed more than 2,500 lives. Thousands more have been imprisoned or wounded. FitzGerald will speak to the legislative body of a nation which can exert significant pressure upon the British to withdraw. He will speak in a land whose population includes a substantial number of Irish-Americans with a proven concern and affinity for Ireland. Surely any true representative of the Irish people would welcome such a platform, to voice the suffering and national aspirations of fellow Irish men and women compelled to remain under British rule.

5. Garret FitzGerald will not use this platform to voice such fundamental concerns. He will be silent about the murders, under investigation by an international tribunal, in which British forces acted as death squads. He will ignore the murders of Irish children by British plastic bullets. He will not be concerned with the hundreds of thousands of gunpoint interrogations of innocent Irish people on Irish streets. He will not be troubled by the hundreds of thousands of gun-point invasions of Irish homes. FitzGerald will turn a blind eye to religious discrimination. Such matters can be suffered in silence by those Irish unfortunate enough to live within the British-held area. FitzGerald will not raise his voice against British rule in Ireland.
6. Instead FitzGerald will turn to those in America who will never abandon that segment of Irish people held by the British. FitzGerald will denounce Irish Northern Aid and its charitable efforts. He will denounce the Irish Republican Army and its struggles for Irish freedom. FitzGerald will use every propagandist fiction deemed serviceable. He will attempt to depict the IRA as Marxists-Leninists, although even the British concede that such a label is utterly false. The IRA have rejected any alliance with the Soviet Union or non-democratic economic systems. FitzGerald will pontificate that the IRA is a miniscule band of criminals without popular support. It is a fiction belied by the ability of the IRA to continue its fight against a massive British presence, and by the 103,000 Sinn Fein voters in the six counties. FitzGerald will intone that IRA Volunteers are criminals or terrorists, a slander refuted by the deaths of ten young Irish patriots on hunger strike. Criminals do not die such deaths for the freedom of their country.
7. It will be an ironic spectacle for the British, who finance and arm 30,000 occupation troops bringing violence to Irish soil, then witness an Irish official who is intimidated from raising his voice against their presence. It will be tragic for those victimized by FitzGerald's role as a pro-British apologist and his policy of national treason.
8. FitzGerald is prepared to sacrifice the Irish of the six counties. In so doing, he serves as a pro-British apologist, who distorts the nature of the conflict in order to undermine those who truly work to achieve freedom and the conditions of peace.

9. FitzGerald proposes a Forum which has no possibility of bringing progress. It invites those who support British violence against the Irish people by British troops or Loyalists. It then hypocritically excludes Sinn Féin, the emerging leading party of Irish Nationalists in the North, because it supports the right of the Irish people to defend themselves against British terrorism. The Forum offers no inducement for a British withdrawal or for surrender by Loyalists of their privileged status as the beneficiaries of sectarianism. It has already been rejected by Loyalist political leaders, who refuse even to attend, and consequently by the British who have said its proposals will not be accepted without consent of Loyalists.
10. FitzGerald's words will also stir an emotional response among those of whom his criticisms are directed. It will be a very different response from that intended. FitzGerald will not be acting in the interests of the Irish people. He will be representing his own vested political stake in preserving the truncated Ireland without which he would be divested of political power. He is prepared to morally betray fellow Irish men and women entitled to his support.
11. A series of messages have been sent by Irish-Americans to the Dublin government. The election of Michael Flannery as Grand Marshal of the St. Patrick's Day parade last year, and the election of Michael O'Rourke as Honorary Grand Marshal for 1984 are only the most publicized of many such messages. These are messages of support for those afflicted by British occupation forces. These are messages of opposition to British rule in Ireland, but also messages of indignation at the Dublin government's role in collaboration with the British. FitzGerald today assumes the role of a latter-day John Redmond, the then leading Irish representative to Westminster, who denounced the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising, as an unrepresentative band of pro-Germans and criminals and thus eased the way for the execution of Irish patriots.
12. Violence has little to do with monies collected in America. It has everything to do with the arms and monies contributed to 30,000 uniformed British terrorists on Irish soil by British taxpayers. Indeed, given the degree and intensity of suffering inflicted upon Irish people by British Army terrorists, we can be thankful that the Irish Republican Army in its struggle against British occupation, has, with a few tragic exceptions, chosen not to emulate the British by striking at innocent civilians.
13. Irish Northern Aid is comprised of Americans who fervently wish to see peace and freedom for all of the people of Ireland. Irish Northern Aid recognizes that peace can only come about when British colonial rule and religious discrimination are replaced by a free Irish nation guaranteeing religious liberty. A portion of our funds are contributed to the needy dependents of Irish political prisoners through recognized Irish charities. The remainder is expended here to educate Americans about British rule as an abiding source of conflict. It is this program of publicity and education which has engendered the wrath of Margaret Thatcher. Not one penny of INA monies has ever gone to armaments. However, Irish Northern Aid does morally support the struggle of the Irish Republican Army to free Ireland from British Army terrorism.

14. On March 17, 1976, Liam Cosgrave, who then headed the Dublin government, addressed the assembled members of the United States Congress. Cosgrave assailed the members of the Irish Northern Aid Committee for their outspoken opposition to British colonial rule in Ireland, and for their financial support for the families of Irish political prisoners. His speech reiterated remarks uttered in December 1975 by then British Prime Minister Harold Wilson. In the eight years which have since passed, the political fortunes of both have fallen. Irish-American support for Irish national freedom remains sufficiently strong to warrant repeated denunciations from British Prime Minister Thatcher and Dublin government head Garret FitzGerald. So long as Irish people are denied freedom in Ireland by British occupation, Irish-Americans will continue to labor to secure a British withdrawal, national freedom, religious equality - the basic pre-conditions of peace.