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EMBASSY OF IRELAND
2234 MASSACHUSETTS AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008

25 MAR 1999

FAX COVER SHEET

DATE: March 24, 1999 **PAGES:** 4

To: A-I Division **For:** Mr Colm O Floinn

From: Adrian O'Neill

c/c: *Mr Bassett; Mr McDaid*

Re: Altercation at the American-Ireland Fund Dinner

There was a heated altercation in the course of last week's American-Ireland Fund dinner in Washington when David Trimble confronted the US publisher of ***The Committee*** (by Sean McPhilemy), Jack Van Zant of Roberts Rinehart. According to witnesses, Mr Trimble was both verbally abusive and adopted an aggressive physical posture towards Van Zant.

Mr Van Zant has now written the attached "pen letter" to Mr Trimble and it is being widely circulated here, including in the media.

END

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23 March, 1999

Mr. David Trimble, MP
C/O Anne Smith
Ulster Unionist Party – North America
P.O. Box 16488,
Washington DC 20041

AN OPEN LETTER

Dear Mr. Trimble,

Following up on our two conversations in Washington last week, I am writing this letter to reiterate my offer to you as well as put forth my views in writing in order that you might be able to consider them under less distracting circumstances. I am also sending you a copy of your letter to our company of last year and my response, which you indicated to me that you have never read.

My invitation to you to debate the allegations of our book *The Committee* with the author Sean McPhilemy in a national public forum sponsored by our company remains in force. My invitation to you to inspect the mountain of evidence supporting the contentions of the book also still stands.

Furthermore, I repeat my invitation to you to write your own book that will be published by our company unedited for political content. I will be happy to work with you personally on this book, as I have with Gary McMichael, John Hume and Gerry Adams. I believe this is the best way for you to get your opinion before the American public. You should also take the opportunity to tell our readers your life story.

In the meantime, you made some very heated and debatable comments to me in front of my guests and friends at the American Ireland Fund Dinner last week. I would like to remind you of these comments and ask you to elaborate on what you meant. You also made some statements in your letter of last year that I would like you to explain further.

In your letter you state that you had not (at that time) read the book *The Committee*, yet you say that the "alleged Committee is a myth." How do you know this if you have not read the book or inspected the evidence?

You go on to say in your letter that the "persons named as members are what they are, namely respected members of the police, army and business community" and that "I have not protected any murderers." I understand that you had seen a list of the members of the

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Committee before writing your letter as Liam Clarke of the *Sunday Times* told me that he had shown you the list. Since two members of the Committee were well-known murderers, namely Billy Wright (aka King Rat) and Robin Jackson (aka the Jackal), it would appear that you are doing exactly what you deny doing, vouching for and protecting murderers. Furthermore, two other members of the Committee, Philip Black and Richard Monteith, have also been convicted of what we would call hate crimes in the United States. Indeed you have personally vouched for Mr. Monteith in public on a number of occasions. If you declare these men to be "respected members of the community," what are we to think about the others named, in light of your declaring them innocent at the same time? Can you tell me how you justify vouching for King Rat and the Jackal, two men who were responsible for murdering nearly 300 innocent people? I am assuming that you did know these men, as you did not deny knowing them, and since there are photographs of you with Billy Wright.

In our conversation last week, you deny ever meeting, or knowing, David and Albert Prentice, the two men who have sued our company for $100 million. Yet you declared to us that they are entirely innocent. If you do not know these men, and you have not seen the evidence against them, how do you know they are innocent?

Also in our conversation, you deny knowing anything about the primary source for the book, Jim Sands. However, you then stated that you knew his wife and later stated that you knew his mother. Can you clarify this? And, if you do not know Mr. Sands, and you have not seen the evidence he has given in this matter, how can you declare that he is a liar at the same time that you defend men that you also do not know?

You stated several times to me and my guests, one of whom works for Senator Moynihan as his Legislative Director, that "the United States is a country without integrity." Yet you used the opportunity as a guest in our country to openly state your opinions, which are rightly protected by the First Amendment of our Constitution, a document that you stated you had little respect for. Also, you must admit that the Easter Agreement would have been difficult, if not impossible to achieve, without the participation of President Clinton and George Mitchell. You have been the guest of our President at the White House and of the Congress on Capitol Hill on numerous occasions, and you have been given the opportunity to put your views to the American public through our media. Where is the lack of integrity in that?

You stated several times that you "knew my name and number" and that I was a "despicable person" and my company was the "mouthpiece of evil." May I remind you that in your country, with no freedom of speech and the press, these would be libelous and threatening statements for which you could be successfully sued. You took full advantage of our First Amendment as a guest in our country once again to state your opinion, and I commend you for your honesty. However, you do not know me and did not even give me a chance to tell you who I am and what the aim of my company is with regards to Ireland.

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I would like to take issue with you over your statements that our company is the "mouthpiece of evil" and that we "do not understand Northern Ireland." In fact, our company is the largest and most highly respected publisher of Irish books in America. We have many thousands of readers including President Clinton, Senator George Mitchell, Senators Kennedy and Moynihan, numerous members of Congress, and Irish Ambassador Sean O'Huiginn. We have a comprehensive program of publications from Ireland on many subjects, not just politics. However, we have taken a great interest in the promotion of the peace process in Ireland, and intend to publish books by as many political leaders from the North as will write them. Our American readers are not stupid, contrary to what you implied. They are well informed and want to consider the views of all of the different sides in the conflict. We do not have any need for censorship in our country. We believe that people can make up their own minds based on freely available information and opinions.

Mr. Trimble, you are the co-winner of the world's most important award, the Nobel Peace Prize. In accepting that award, you took the responsibility to dedicate your life to promoting peace in Ireland under any circumstances. I have dedicated my life as a publisher to the same cause, as has our company. By inviting you to write a book with your views, I hope that I am showing you the respect and civility that a man in your position should be accorded. I ask in return that you show the same respect to me, my company and my country for our efforts on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland of all political and religious persuasions.

I look forward to hearing from you soon with regards to the above, and receiving your manuscript in due course.

Sincerely,

Jack Van Zandt
CEO

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