



At his home in Belfast, Cardinal Cahal Daly receives from Jim Macdonell a copy of the *Northern Ireland Journal* which memorialized his friend Josiah Beeman.

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Disappointment Reigns and Hopes are Dashed as Plans for Northern Ireland Direct Rule Once Again Fall Short

Ever since the 1998 Belfast Good Friday Peace Agreement was approved in Northern Ireland, it has been the hope and plan of the Irish and British Governments to restore a devolved government in which the leading Northern Ireland political parties would share power and responsibility for the internal affairs of their own country.

Unfortunately, power-sharing self rule has only taken place in Northern Ireland several times since the Agreement was adopted back in 1998, and that for only brief periods of time before political squabbling caused governmental collapse. On the several occasions when this occurred, all executive power was then returned to Great Britain which resumed control over Northern Ireland governance through the offices of the British Secretary of State and the

various Direct Rule ministers he appointed. Elected Assembly members continued to receive salaries, although they did not deliberate or vote on any legislative business.

In recent years, after Northern Ireland Loyalist and Nationalist political parties disappointingly failed in their several attempts to form a power sharing government, Great Britain began to voice dissatisfaction over this stalemated situation. In the past, British Prime Minister Tony Blair has publicly stated the intentions of his country to remove itself from continuing to oversee or pay for Northern Ireland affairs.

Finally, early in 2006 the governments of Ireland and Great Britain announced an ultimatum. They set a firm November 24th deadline for the Northern Ireland political parties to form a power-sharing government. Quite bluntly they stated that if the

Northern Ireland political leaders did not find agreement by that time, the suspended Northern Ireland Assembly would be wound down, members salaries stopped, and further attempts to restore devolution would be shelved for at least several years.

Furthermore, Great Britain announced that failure to form a power-sharing government would lead it to either reduce or no longer pay for many of the programs and services in Northern Ireland which it had provided for in the past, inferring that if the politicians did not "get their act together by November 24th, the people of Northern Ireland would probably not be happy with the future they would be forced to face.

Consequently, during late spring and early summer, many urgent internal and cross-community meetings and discussions quietly took

place in Northern Ireland, to determine whether the political parties might be willing to explore and discuss obstacles and possibilities for forming a power-sharing government. The parties themselves first had to insure their own constituencies that they would not compromise or give up their proud historic principles, and mediators quietly attempted to seek ways in which long-time political enemies might sit down together to explore future possibilities that would benefit their nation.

Last August, when participants of the *11th Irish Summer Institute* visited the city of Armagh, the Irish Roman Catholic Primate Archbishop Sean Brady, shared with us that he had recently initiated and held successful meetings with the leaders of three different Protestant Orange Orders.

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Chairman's Message

By

The Rev. Dr. James G. Macdonell

The 11th (2006) Bi-Annual Irish Summer Institute took place August 14 -27, 2006 with 19 American Roman Catholic and Protestant participants gathering on August 15 for orientation in Dublin. The membership of this year's group consisted of one Anglican, two Roman Catholics, one of whom was a parish priest, and 16 Presbyterians, including 4 Presbyterian ministers. In future Institutes we would hope that we could produce a much more evenly balanced number of Roman Catholic and Protestant participants, which would give us increased credibility with our Irish hosts. Co-directing this year's Institute with me was Mr. Walt Grazer of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops office in Washington, DC.

Directing this year's Summer Institute gave me a whole new appreciation of the amazing, insightful efforts of our late PCNI founder Joe Beeman and former General Assembly Moderator Ken Hall, who initiated the dream of the Irish Summer Institute many years ago, and established and developed the astounding foundation of close relationships and contacts in Northern Ireland and the Republic which have remained constant for us throughout the years.

Among the outstanding Irish leaders this year's Institute participants met with last August included: Roman Catholic Cardinal Cahal Daly, Archbishop Sean Brady the Roman Catholic Primate of Ireland, Donal McKeown, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor, Bishop Seamus Hegarty of Armagh, former Bishop of Derry Edward Daly, one of the heroes of Derry's infamous 1972 "Bloody Sunday Massacre," Father Sean Rogan of Downpatrick, the priest who 25 years ago gave last rights to Bobby Sands who died in the Maze hunger strikes, Father Sean Dooley a leader of cross-

community efforts in Armagh, the present Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Right Rev. Dr. David Clarke of Coleraine, former Moderator, the Very Rev. Dr. John Dunlop, the Clerk of the P.C.I. General Assembly Rev. Dr. Donald Watts, and leading Presbyterian pastors Rev's Tony Davidson of Armagh, Robert Herron of Omagh, Bill Shaw, Director of the 174 Trust, Norman Hamilton a dynamic Belfast inner-city pastor with significant links to paramilitary leaders, and Rev. Doug Baker, our Belfast-based PCUSA Liaison for Ireland and the U.K. We also met with David Stevens the Leader of the Corrymeela Community in Ballycastle, Brigid, Sheils Makowski the delightful subject of the book "Daughter of Derry," who enthralled our group with her account of what it was like growing up in Derry's Catholic "Bogside" in the midst of "The Troubles" 3 decades ago to become a radical Nationalist leader in her adult years.

Institute participants also met with Nigel Hamilton, Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service at Stormont Castle, Deputy Chief Constable Paul Leighton of the Northern Ireland Policing Service, Jonathan Benton, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Dublin, Duncan Morrow, Director of the Belfast Community Relations Council, Brian Rowntree and Paddy McIntyre, the Chair and Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Dean Pittman, Consul General at the U.S. Consulate in Belfast, and the Mayors of the cities of Coleraine and Derry.

The Institute began and spent several days in Dublin before moving north across the border into Northern Ireland. Along the way we stopped to visit the 5,000 year old burial chamber "The Great Mound of



Cardinal Cahal Daly greets Marj Carpenter, former PCUSA Moderator, and PCNI chairman Jim Macdonell

Knowth," and, the 8th century A.D. Monasterboice cemetery with its huge 17 foot tall stone crosses and an ancient round tower.

Everywhere we traveled in Northern Ireland we met with local religious, political, and community leaders who briefed us on their views concerning the elusive Irish peace process.

Today the economy of the nation has dramatically improved with new business activities booming everywhere. The market places in Belfast and Derry are filled with eager shoppers, and foreign investment in the North is flourishing. The landscape of Belfast is changing drastically as huge sky-scraper office buildings are rising up everywhere.

In Belfast the Rev. Doug Baker addressed the Institute about continuing high community tension and hostility.

This year the Shankill and Falls Road areas in Belfast looked considerably shabbier and more depressing than they had appeared in previous Institutes. And the ugly so-called Peace Wall that divides and protects the Shankill District (the Protestant community) from the Falls Road District (the Roman Catholic community) has been raised in some areas to a height of nearly 40 feet for security reasons.

U.S. Consul General Dean Pittman in Belfast gave us his assessment that while the Good Friday Agreement ended most overt violence in Northern Ireland, it has not yet established or provided a workable political framework

to move the nation forward in a unified way.

One of our most encouraging Institute visits was to the Whitehouse Presbyterian Church in North Belfast, destroyed by sectarian arsonists back in the year 2002, but rebuilt in 2005 by dynamic, courageous members of the congregation, greatly assisted by the magnanimous financial support of several nearby Roman Catholic congregations.

At The 174 Trust, a vibrant community center directed by dynamic Presbyterian minister Bill Shaw, we received a briefing about the significant cross-community programs the Trust is generating in the Catholic Duncairn community of north Belfast.

One morning in Belfast we met at Church House, the headquarters of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (the PCI), with a significant gathering of PCI church leaders, including the Rev. Dr. Donald Watts the Clerk of the General Assembly, the present PCI Moderator David Clarke, and former Moderator John Dunlop. Clerk Watts had made a great effort to make the meeting truly ecumenical by inviting a local Catholic Bishop and two area Roman Catholic priests to join us.

On Sunday morning at the end of our first week, we broke into three groups to attend worship in the tiny rural town of Downpatrick, located 30 miles south of Belfast. There we attended services at a local Roman Catholic Church, a

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PCNI Awards Two Grants To Irish Peace Centers

The PCNI was founded in the late 1980's by a group of PCUSA lay and clergy leaders who urgently believed that our denomination should be at the forefront of strategies supporting peace and reconciliation efforts in Northern Ireland.

Over the years the PCNI has developed a number of initiatives supporting the goal of peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, including establishing close collegial relationships with leading Irish religious and political leaders involved in the peace process, keeping our American Presbyterian constituency informed of what is going on in Northern Ireland, and instituting a biannual study/travel seminar called the *Irish Summer Institute*, which provides an "up and close" first-hand personal opportunity for American Presbyterian and Roman Catholic Christians to visit Northern Ireland where they meet and dialogue with Irish leaders working for reconciliation.

Another occasional PCNI effort involves recognizing and supporting outstanding organizations and programs involved in the Irish peace process, by awarding them financial grants. This past September at its 2006 fall meeting, the Board of the PCNI voted unanimously to award \$3,000 grants to two of the world's outstanding

peace centers, the *Corrymeela Peace Centre* in Ballycastle, Northern Ireland, and the *Glencree Centre for Reconciliation*, located in County Wicklow in the Republic of Ireland. For many years *Irish Summer Institute* participants have visited the Corrymeela Community in Ballycastle, and for the past 3 *Institutes*, participants have also visited Glencree. Participants have always provided "rave review" about their visits to these two centers.

Before a final decision is made to award a grant to a worthy organization, the PCNI has established a set of questions which we ask potential recipients to answer. The answers to these questions form the criteria by which our decision is made. The questions are: 1) Are the programs and goals of your organization "cross-community" (involving both sectarian communities) in nature? 2) What kind of program efforts would this grant enable you to develop and produce? 3) Are you willing to provide the PCNI with a summary of your organization's past two years financial statements? 4) Would you be willing to inform your constituency about this grant if you were to receive it? 5) Would you be willing to announce receiving this grant to media sources and

would you send us copies of media articles? 6) Will you inform us of positive results that occur as the result of receiving a grant from us?

Both the Corrymeela and Glencree Centres provided us with excellent answers to these questions.

Corrymeela informed us that if it received a grant from us it planned to use the grant for its "School Project," a school-based curriculum designed to teach young people about combating violence and intolerance, and celebrating social diversity in society. For its part, The Glencree Centre stated a grant from us would support several programs, including: a) "The Churches Program," a major conference to be held next spring on "Faith in Civil Society;" b) "A Survivors and Combatants Program," which will bring together survivors and former combatants of "The Troubles." Both centers promise to keep us informed about these programs.

On November 16, 2006 we informed both Corrymeela and Glencree that it was with a deep sense of honor in recognition of their outstanding leadership efforts on behalf of peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, that we had awarded them each a grant of \$3,000.

Report by the Rev. Dr. James G. Macdonell,

and Northern Ireland were truly eye-opening experiences for all of us. We left Belfast to return home to the U.S.A. on August 27th feeling serious concern over what we had seen and heard, but also with undiminished hope for the future of Northern Ireland. This tiny nation has come so far on the road to peace since the days of "The Troubles," that there can be no turning back. However, there can be no denying that lingering distrust and enmity are still deeply rooted in the hearts of many die-hard zealots in both communities.



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Message... continued

Church of Ireland parish, and a Presbyterian Church.

After church we were all hosted for lunch in various parishioners' homes where we thoroughly enjoyed good food, warm fellowship and informal shared dialogue.

Another significant but much less positive experiences was an evening we spent with Presbyterian clergy in the city of Derry. The four Derry Presbyterian pastors we met with, shared their deep concern and reservations about having any contact or relation-

ships with their Roman Catholics neighbors. They candidly expressed their strong suspicion of all Nationalist/Republican Catholics, and revealed great anger and resentment about the 1998 Peace Agreement and its implications for their rural community.

This evening was an unforgettable, numbing reminder for us that the illusive dream of peaceful reconciliation is far from being realized in many areas of Northern Ireland.

Our two weeks in Ireland

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These meetings which in the past most Irish people would have felt to be impossible, not only took place, but Archbishop Brady informed us that they had been conciliatory, warm and positive.

The Archbishop further confided with us that for some time he had also been working on setting up a private meeting with fiery Protestant Democratic Unionist leader the Rev. Ian Paisley, who for the past four decades has been the leading Loyalist critic and opponent of the Nationalist community in general, and of the Roman Catholic Church in particular....an institution he has consistently demonized with demagogic slurs.

In early fall, to the astonishment of their nation, this meeting actually took place, and from news accounts attributed to both Paisley and the Archbishop, it was extremely positive. The meeting was friendly and cordial, common ground was established, and all parties announced that attempts would be made for further continuing dialogue....a truly amazing, break-through situation.

This past October, the British and Irish Prime Ministers invited leaders of all of the Northern Ireland political parties to a high level meeting in St. Andrews, Scotland, to discuss the major issues that would have to be resolved in order to successfully form and implement a power-sharing government in Northern Ireland.

The two leading parties, the Loyalist Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the Nationalist Sinn Fein arrived in St. Andrews and each presented major demands of the other which they insisted would have to be met in order to convince their constituencies to break the present impasse and to approve moving forward with negotiations.

The DUP, which in the past had persistently refused to meet with Sin Fein leaders until the IRA/Sinn Fein

denounced their use of violence and gave up and destroyed their huge arsenal of weapons and ammunition, suffered both chagrin and embarrassment after an International panel of experts complimented the IRA/Sinn Fein, and unanimously testified that an IRA/Sinn Fein decommissioning of their huge arsenal weapons had actually taken place.

This forced the DUP to come up with a new demand. Party members during the last national election had run for office under a manifesto declaring that the DUP would not agree to power-sharing with the Republicans until Sinn Fein completely renounced the use of violence and agreed to participate and support the criminal justice system and the Policing Board. Because Sinn Fein had in fact already publicly renounced further use of violence, the DUP still insisted that Sinn Fein unambiguously express its support for the rule of law in Northern Ireland by endorsing the role and function of the Policing Service of Northern Ireland, by specifically taking up their places on the Policing Board, which they had previously refused to do.

Sinn Fein is the only party in the Assembly which has withheld its support of the PSNI, insisting that the Nationalist community is not convinced that new police reforms go far enough to distinguish the PSNI from the old days and ways of the Royal Ulster Constabulary's political policing bias on behalf of the Unionist community. Sinn Fein continues to insist that it wants a clear commitment that policing and justice concerns will be controlled by the Northern Ireland Executive in ways that the DUP/Loyalists can not influence or negate.

Sinn Fein's response to DUP demands was to insist that their renouncement of violence and the decommissioning of all their weapons spoke for itself. They demand-

ed that the DUP unambiguously declare its willingness to share power with the Republicans on the basis of Sinn Fein's clear electoral mandate, not on the basis of Sinn Fein's acquiescence to DUP statements regarding Sinn Fein's role with the PSNI.

After two days of unsuccessful negotiations between the two leading parties at the St. Andrews meeting, the British and Irish government made their own proposals describing what they believed would be the necessary actions by the parties involved to insure moving forward with the process of creating a power-sharing government. The new proposals included several suggestions that would provide cover protection for party leaders from possible anger within their own constituencies.

Initial reaction from party leaders seemed to imply that both the DUP and Sinn Fein felt that the proposed St. Andrews plan might be workable. But then, within days, hardliners within both major parties began vocalizing new disagreements with various aspects of the proposed plan. Both Sinn Fein and the DUP leaders publicly demanded that the opposite party had to act first in accepting changes. Subsequently, scheduled meetings for on-going negotiations were either cancelled or involved no-shows by party representatives.

As the November 24 deadline approached, DUP leaders increased their demands on Sinn Fein, declaring that the British government would have to guarantee that Sinn Fein would have no part in power-sharing responsibility for police or justice issues for a considerable time period until Sinn Fein demonstrated that it could be trusted. Such statements enraged Sinn Fein leaders, and did not encourage them to voice public support for the PSNI.

Nonetheless, the British government proceeded to push legislation through

Parliament to implement the St. Andrews Agreement after the leading parties had made their nominations. This legislation provided for a "Transitional Assembly" to receive nominations and prepare the details of a future power-sharing government.

A few weeks before the approach of the deadline, further confusion developed. Sinn Fein Leader Jerry Adams nominated the DUP's Ian Paisley and Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness for the positions of First and Deputy First Minister, and McGuinness indicated that he would be willing to accept this nomination if the British government would first resolve Sinn Fein's concerns regarding policing and justice issues.

For his part Ian Paisley made a public statement indicating that he was open to accept nomination as First Minister, but he maintained serious reservations about anyone from Sinn Fein being ready to be considered for nomination to any national office.

The British government indicated that it possessed enough positive support for its power-sharing plan to justify postponing but continuing the negotiating process. It caved-in on the November 24 deadline, postponing it until March 26.

Meanwhile, significant philosophical inner-party erosion was taking place within both leading political parties.

The result of all this is that the possibility of a devolved power-sharing government in the near future is highly questionable. Great Britain's revised goal of a March 26 deadline for a new Assembly remains uncertain. Still, this is the best and only plan being considered. There is no alternative. The long journey for Northern Ireland peace and reconciliation continues unresolved. Stay tuned.

Report by the Rev. Dr. James G. Macdonell, 12-15-06