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three statements from
the northern ireland civil
rights association - belfast

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Statement by Ivan Barr

ORIGINAL DEMANDS OF ASSOCIATION:

- (1) ONE MAN ONE VOTE.
- (2) LEGISLATION TO OUTLAW INCITEMENT TO RELIGIOUS HATRED.
- (3) LEGISLATION TO OUTLAW DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT.
- (4) REPEAL OF REPRESSIVE LEGISLATION I.E. (SPECIAL POWERS ACT).
- (5) APPOINTMENT OF OMBUDSMAN.

The above demands were formulated and submitted to the No. Ireland Government for the following reasons:

(1)

The implementation of "One Man one Vote" was necessary because the Northern Ireland Government had devised a system of voting within Local Government Areas (Boroughs) where the only adult members of the working class, who were allowed to vote in Borough elections, were those who had signed Tenancy Agreements with Borough Councils. For example - irrespective of the number of Adult members of any one family, who occupied a local authority house, only the husband and wife who were the actual tenants were allowed to vote in Local Government (Borough) elections.

As opposed to the penalizing of working class votes, Business or Property Owners were awarded votes on the Rateable (Taxable) value of their property. For example, one vote was awarded for every \$30.00 Annual Rates (Tax) paid by Business or Property Owners.

In order to appreciate the advantages of this voting system to the Unionist Government one must first realize that a) the majority of Business or Property Owners in Northern Ireland are Unionist Supporters of the Government. Therefore, where each of these privileged individuals found themselves, awarded with a number of votes they were automatically lodged in favor of Unionist Party Candidates. Many of the Non-Unionist Property or Business Owners also lodged

their multiple votes in favor of Unionist Party Candidates, in the hope of soliciting trade for their Business from Unionist Party (Government) Supporters; b) Local Authority or (Borough) Boundaries were Gerrymandered in such a fashion that even in Working Class Areas where the Non-Unionist Party Community had a majority. The Governing Body (Council) which was elected was dominated by a majority of Unionist Party representatives. For example, Derry City (Londonderry) in which the vast majority of the community have always voted for Non-Unionist candidates. In each successive election a Governing Body (Council) dominated by Unionist Party Representatives was returned elected. This result was due to the skillfull gerrymandering of Local Government (Borough) boundaries by the Unionist Party (Northern Ireland) Government.

(2)

The demand for legislation to outlaw incitement to Religious Hatred was necessary, in an attempt to put an end to the perpetual stream of Hatred aired against the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland on each occasion that a Rep. of the Northern Ireland Gov't., Unionist Party or the Orange Order addressed a Loyalist Rally.

(3)

The demand for the implementation of legislation to outlaw discrimination in Housing and Employment, was necessary in an attempt to put an end to the Unionist Party Government sponsored policy of giving priority in the allocation of Houses and Jobs to Loyalist (Protestant) supporters of the Government. This practice was carried out on a large scale by local government (Borough) Councils and was so blatant that candidates for Houses and Jobs were compelled to state their religion on making application. The object of this policy was to deprive the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, to as great an extent as possible, of House and Jobs thus encouraging the emigration of large numbers of the Catholic minority. Thus in turn ensured that the Catholic community would never become the majority community in Northern Ireland, and be an electoral

threat to the Power of the Unionist Party system of Government.

(4)

The Demand for the Repeal of Repressive Legislation, was necessary because of the fact that under the Notorious "Special Powers Act", the Northern Ireland Government had such Arbitrary Powers as to:

- a) imprison any person for an indefinite period, without trial or charge.
- b) suppress an inquest on prisoners who die in custody.
- c) enter and search private property without warrant, and refuse compensation for damage caused.
- d) arrest any individual without warrant.
- e) proscribe any chapter or organization.
- f) seize any recording, gramophone, or literature and proscribe same.
- g) ban assemblies, fairs or markets.
- h) arrest any person suspected of spreading rumor by word of mouth.

This act was repeatedly enforced against the minority community, against individuals and organizations representative of that community, in an attempt to suppress legitimate Political opposition to the Northern Ireland Government.

(5)

The demand for the appointment of an Ombudsman (Commissioner of Complaints) was necessary, in an attempt to have an impartial Commissioner appointed who would investigate complaints in reference to discrimination in the allocation of Jobs and Houses by Local Government (Borough) Bodies.

It is important to realize that 3 of the above basic demands were granted by the Northern Ireland Government, after many members of the minority had lost their lives and houses at the hands of extreme loyalist supporters of that government. As a result of the terror of the August 1969 Pogroms, The Westminster Government then pressured the Northern Ireland Government to introduce these Reforms. But to date the Reforms granted have not been of any advantage to the minority community within Northern Ireland. For example - One Man-One Vote at 18 years of age was granted in local Government (Borough) Elections; 3

but the Northern Ireland Government immediately cancelled all local Government (Borough) Elections until 1973. Local Government (Borough) Boundaries are to be redrawn before 1973 and will no doubt mean a new Gerrymander in favor of the Unionist Government which will nullify the possible advantages to the minority in the granting of One Man-One Vote.

Legislation to outlaw incitement to Religious Hatred has been placed on the Statute Book. But the Northern Ireland Government has steadfastly refused to implement this legislation against extreme loyalists.

An Ombudsman (Commissioner of Complaints) has been appointed to investigate complaints against local authorities; but to date the Ombudsman has been totally ineffective.

Rather than accede to the demand for Repeal of the Special Powers Act, the Northern Ireland Gov't. has introduced 3 further acts of Repressive Legislation:

- a) Criminal Justice (Temporary Provisions) Act.
- b) Repayment of Debt Act.
- c) Public Order (Amendment) Act.

The most obnoxious and repressive Powers under the Special Powers Act was re-introduced on August 9th, 1971, this being imprisonment without Charge or Trial. Up to date of Printing January 1972, almost 700 male members of the minority community in Northern Ireland are incarcerated in British Concentration Camps or the Prison Ship Maidstone in Northern Ireland. The Introduction of internment in Northern Ireland has totally alienated the minority community from the Partisan Northern Ireland Gov't. and since its inception many lives have been lost as a result of the continuation of this Barbarous act.

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association launched a campaign of Non-Violent civil disobedience on August 9th, 1971. The aim of the campaign being to bring an end imprisonment without charge or trial. The campaign which included Non-Payment of Rent, Gas and Electricity accounts, has been supported by 30,000 families and deprives the Northern Ireland Government

of \$150,000 per week. On January 2nd a militant non-violent campaign on the streets was launched with a massive illegal march in Belfast. This campaign will also include further marches, sit-downs on Public Highways which will obstruct traffic, and the occupation of Government Buildings. The campaign will continue until Imprisonment without Trial and the use of Repressive legislation come to an end.

As a result of the successful march in Belfast on Jan. 2nd, the Northern Ireland Government has now retaliated by issuing summons' to 3 members of the national executive, N.I.C.R.A., and 4 Opposition members of Parliament. These persons now face mandatory sentences of 6 months imprisonment.

IVAN BARR, Chairman
Northern Ireland Civil Rights
Association

Testimony of Kevin McCorry

"It may seem from the history of Northern Ireland from 1920 onwards that it poses an insoluble problem for those who want to bring normal politics to the area. But an understanding of the historical developments of government in Northern Ireland will show that the present trouble is not the result of some particular quirk in the Irish character, but the result of that historical development. "Home Rule" for Northern Ireland was not wanted by the official Unionist or the Sinn Fein parties in Ireland. The grand design of the British government under the Government of Ireland Act was to establish two subordinate parliaments in Ireland, co-operating within a Council of Ireland, but with important powers "reserved" to Westminster protecting the "supreme authority of the Parliament of the United Kingdom."

The statelet of Northern Ireland was set up under the threat of armed rebellion against the wishes of the large majority of the population of Ireland, and a very large minority of the population of those six counties.

This historical background to the establishment of the parliament and government of Northern Ireland explains the subsequent history of the next fifty years and provides a valuable insight into the extraordinary events and legal developments of an integral part of Great Britain, but whose standard and code of behaviour have been fundamentally different.

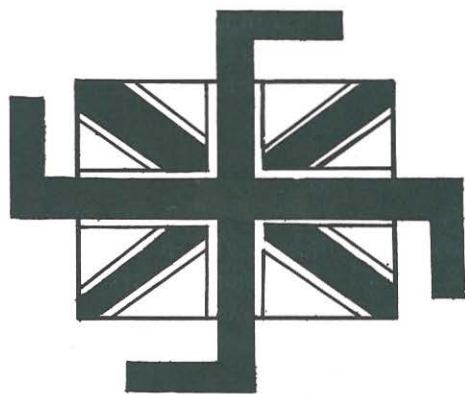
For fifty years political power in Northern Ireland has been in the hands of one party, the Unionist Party, which commands the largest number of votes from the electorate. From the time this party came into power, it has institutionalised sectarian differences by sophisticated and intelligent devices. First it successfully challenged in 1922, the attempt by the British Government to withhold the Royal Assent to Bills passed by the Senate and the Northern Ireland House of Commons. Then a vast apparatus was created by Stormont, often attaining Byzantine grotesqueness, for stirring up and maintaining sectarian animosities, myths, mummery, marches and provocations. Through every aspect of life in Northern Ireland runs the policy divide et impera. It is only necessary to mention in passing the alteration that was made in local government boundaries and electoral divisions and the imposition of an obligation on members of local authorities to make a declaration of allegiance to Stormont.

Also the array of repressive legislation in which the Special Powers Act (abrogating 2/3 of the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) has the effect of preventing the development of peaceful politics in the North.

Northern Ireland has never been allowed by the Unionists to develop as an area where ordinary political and ideological differences are settled by political means. The deprivation of civil and human rights for a large and settled minority has been indicted by such reports as drawn up by the Hunt and Cameron Commissions and direct intervention by the British Government as a result of civil rights initiatives forced the Stormont government to introduce minimum reforms.

But it is a tragedy that successive British governments have given higher priority to maintaining the constitutional status quo against encroachments

DIRECT RULE



the position of the civil rights association

~~STATEMENT BY THE NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL RIGHTS ASSOCIATION~~
ON THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER'S (Edward Heath) INITIATIVES
ON NORTHERN IRELAND

Released in the United States by the National Association
for Irish Freedom on March 24th, 1972.

NICRA stands for civil rights for all the people of Northern Ireland. Our demands were made repeatedly to the successive British Governments and we have mobilized our people to achieve them. This struggle which has reached a new intensity with the introduction of internment and the launching of the Civil Disobedience Campaign has now forced the British Government to ditch the Stormont regime which represents no significant section of the Northern Ireland population. We see this as a victory for the ordinary people who have paralyzed the system by their active involvement in the Civil Disobedience Campaign. The NICRA believes that internment has been the most decisive measure which has been introduced in the North over the last two years. We do not accept that there can be any progress towards an end to the sterile divisions which has seriously hurt our community while internment without trial lasts.

We do not accept that the so-called phasing out of internment represents a genuine attempt by the London Government to come to grips with this problem. After August 9th, 1971 we declared that the Civil Disobedience Campaign would continue until the end of internment. We still hold to that position and we declare that the Rents and Rates (Taxes) campaign will continue until our objectives are won.

With regard to the present repressive role of the British Army as the main instrument of internment the Civil Rights Association does not accept that the handing over of security to Westminster represents any real change in that role. Until the British Government removes all legislative obstacles, including the Special Powers Act, to the free exercise of the civil and political rights for all the people of Northern Ireland, the British Army will continue its repressive activities.

At any time in the last six years the British Government could have gone over the heads of their local allegiance and started to dismantle the Orange Unionist system (the Northern Ireland Government). Now Britain has simply ditched the Unionist Party without giving the people of Northern Ireland the tool to build up a genuine democratic alternative to that system.

The NICRA demands these tools. They are not provided by a non-democratically appointed commission or periodic plebiscites on the border. For this reason we will not cooperate with the Westminster appointed commission. Neither the commission nor the plebiscite represents a real and genuine attempt to end sectarianism and bring democracy to the area. We declare that the civil disobedience campaign will not be ended until internment is ended and full civil rights are established. The NICRA does not believe that its demands have been met by Heath's initiatives, nevertheless our association recognizes that the procuring of the Stormont Regime shows a crisis in British policy towards Ireland. If the British government is genuine in their desire to create communal harmony then today's proposals must be followed by the granting of our demands. These are:

- 1) The immediate release of all internees.
- 2) The withdrawal of troops from all areas pending their total withdrawal, and an immediate end to the policy of military occupation and repression of anti-Unionist areas.
- 3) Legislation by the Westminster Government to abolish the Special Powers Act in its entirety.
- 4) The dismissal of the Stormont administration and immediate legislation at Westminster to guarantee the following:
 - a) Free elections under Proportional Representation.
 - b) The rights of all political groups including those opposed to the present state.
 - c) An end to discrimination.
 - d) A recognition that it is as legitimate to work for an independent and united Ireland as it is to work for the maintenance of the Union of Northern Ireland with Great Britain and the removal of all legislative obstacles in the Government of Ireland Acts that stand in the way of this objective.

The granting of these demands would show the good will of the government. We, for our part will show our commitment to a desire for a genuine peace by the declaration of a one month moratorium on Marches. To this end, Marches planned for Strabane and Derry inside that period will be postponed.

However, if there are no moves towards a granting of the full civil rights program just outlined, the Civil Rights Association will re-launch its campaign of Marches and activate people in civil disobedience with a March in Strabane on Sunday, April 23rd, 1972. We are not calling

for a moritorium on Rallies and Public Meetings and indeed we have organized a thirty-two county Anti-internment rally at Forts Cross near Crossmaglen (So. Armagh) this Sunday, March 26th which will re-affirm our solid stand on internment and re-dedicate ourselves to the Civil Disobedience Campaign. We believe that the major contribution to progress towards attainment of the Civil Rights objectives would be an immediate ending of the present bombing campaign which has been a factor in the polarizing of the two sectors of our community.

We also appeal to everyone to avoid anything which could lead to an increase in sectarianism, We especially direct our appeal to those who have most to lose in an outbreak of sectarian strife, the working people of Northern Ireland. This is not the time for the people of Northern Ireland to be lead into the back woods of sectarianism, but rather it is a time which must be seized to create a real unity of the ordinary people on the basis of democracy and social progress.

The Heath government have now been forced to replace Mr. Faulkner by direct rule from Westminster and an undemocratic commission. By this means the British Government hope to win time rather than immediately granting the necessary civil and political rights which must be the basis of social reconciliation in our community.

The National Association for Irish Freedom
799 Broadway (11th St.) Room 422
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than to rectifying the unjustifiable grievances of the civil rights movement. London could do this because Section 75 of the Government of Ireland Act reserves Westminster control over every person and thing within its boundaries.

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association does not believe that the suspension of Stormont or direct rule from Westminster would lead to an improvement in the civil rights position. Direct rule or any variation on direct rule would mean less democracy for the North not more. Instead of one man one vote it would mean one man no vote. If Westminster ruled the North directly there would be only three non-Unionists from Northern Ireland among the six hundred M.P.s who would be making laws for the area. The people of the North whether Catholic or Protestant, would not have a say on what was being done. Furthermore, direct rule would be using the proverbial sledgehammer to crack a nut, for reforms in civil rights can be legislated at Westminster without the need to suspend the Stormont Parliament.

We believe that the Westminster Parliament, whose creature Northern Ireland is, has a responsibility and the power to see that as a minimum British standards of democracy apply there. Already enlightened efforts have been made to introduce this sort of legislation into the Westminster Parliament. In May 1971, to mention only the most recent, Mr. Arthur Latham M.P. sought leave to introduce a bill under whose provisions the Parliament of Westminster would use its reserve powers to intervene on behalf of the minority with the object of establishing a modus vivendi based on equality of rights for all citizens, under which conditions sectarian animosity could be expected to die out over a period of time.

This bill, which N.I.C.R.A. believes constitutes an important element in any solution to the present violence, proposes the application to Northern Ireland of the provisions of the Race Relations Act; protection of the right of dissemination of their political views to all those prepared to work within the law; safeguarding them from provocation and insult; restoring proportional representation in all elections. It would have made ultra vires any enactment which countervenes the generally accepted principles of

human rights subscribed to by the British government. It also gives encouragement to initiatives designed to improve relations between Northern Ireland and the Republic across the border. Had this Bill of Rights been passed in May 1971 the recent and continuing violence in Northern Ireland could have been avoided. Instead of being compelled to enforce the ill-devised and one sided enactments of the Stormont regime any British soldiers it might have been agreed were desirable in Northern Ireland would have had the duty of enforcing the Bill of Rights, a duty in which they would have enjoyed the cooperation of the anti-Unionist minority as well as a substantial proportion of the working class Unionist voters who under different leadership, and with the benefits of a different overall policy from the British government would be expected to see the advantages of ordered social, political, and economic progress in the interests of all. We ask you not to accept the proposition that the Protestant community in Northern Ireland is congenitally incapable of cooperation with the Catholics, but instead that wise laws and good government can affect a total reconciliation.

But in the absence of the legislation which N.I.C.R.A. recommends unemployment has risen to its highest level in well over two decades. The fires of destruction have spread ever wider as two artificially estranged communities composed of men and women like you all here today, lurch blindly towards a disastrous civil war. But when the situation was already sufficiently dangerous Mr. Faulkner instead of listening to the voice of reason and forbearance, consulted the extremists within his party, and sought to blot out opposition by wholesale internment of people he seems to have fancied were its leaders.

The employment of British military forces to support this action has opened a wound which will remain with us for many years. Community relations in Northern Ireland have worsened.

Relations between Britain and the Irish Republic have almost broken down, and suspicion and resentment have developed between the British and Irish people where a mutual understanding should be.

Any solution at the present time must have a

confidence to the minority in Northern Ireland and at the same time do nothing to heighten sectarian divisions. The British government must instruct the government of Northern Ireland under pain of immediate legislation to release all internees and detainees. Secondly troops must be progressively withdrawn, first from anti Unionist areas, then back to barracks pending their ultimate withdrawal from Northern Ireland. The next requirement is the immediate introduction of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland along the lines which we have outlined subject to such modification as may arise from discussions with interested parties. The next requirement is the convening at the earliest possible moment of a conference of interested parties without prior conditions on the part of the British government, with the purpose of agreeing upon the best and broadest basis of cooperation in carrying out the general policy envisaged in the Bill of Rights namely, of equality between citizens and progress toward social reconciliation.

We respectfully recommend these observations to your consideration.

A.

NICRA POLICY - A.G.M. 2/72

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association will continue to campaign until we have achieved the objectives set when the Association was formed; a society in which every citizen will enjoy full civil rights and social justice. Despite the Downing Street Declaration and legislation passed at Stormont, the ordinary citizen has less freedom than at any time for the past 50 years.

The complete failure of the Stormont Administration to carry out the Downing Street Declaration, the refusal to repeal the Special Powers Act, and its increased use by the Military, UDR and RUC against anti-Unionists, the Falls Curfew, the one-sided arms-searches, the shoot-to-kill policy in Catholic areas, the introduction of internment, the continuing torture of 9

prisoners, and the present policy of terrorising and dragooning the whole anti-Unionist population has led to the final alienation of that population. This alienation is the direct result of the policies of the Westminster Government and Stormont Administration. The alienation has taken two forms: one a violent response: one a non-violent response as exemplified by the Civil Disobedience Campaign.

The British Government and the N. Ireland administration are trying to obscure the Civil Disobedience Campaign which has involved hundreds of thousands of people, by claiming the struggle is solely between the British Army and a handful of "terrorists". The reality which must be emphasised is that a whole community has totally rejected the Stormont system.

The Civil Disobedience Campaign will go on until our demands are met. The meeting of our demands will create a climate where peaceful politics are possible.

To create conditions in which talks can take place, the following demands must be met and the NICRA must be represented at such talks.

1. The immediate release of all internees.
2. The withdrawal of troops from all areas pending their total withdrawal, and an immediate end to the policy of military occupation and repression of anti-Unionist areas.
3. Legislation by the Westminster Government to abolish the Special Powers Act in its entirety.
4. The dismissal of the Stormont administration and immediate legislation at Westminster to guarantee the following:

- a) Free elections under Proportional Representation
- b) The rights of all political groups including those opposed to the present state.
- c) An end to discrimination.
- d) A recognition that it is as legitimate to work for an independent and united Ireland as it is to work for the maintenance of the Union of Northern Ireland with Great Britain and the removal of all legislative obstacles in the Government of Ireland Acts that stand in the way of this objective.

We reiterate that the civil disobedience campaign will continue until talks on a political solution have reached a satisfactory conclusion.

the minimum acceptable outcome of these talks would be the ending of:

1. The Public Order (Amendment) Act, the Criminal Justice (Temporary Provisions) Act, the Flags and Emblems Act, Payment of Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act and other repressive legislation.
2. Discrimination in all forms of private and public employment and housing and the allocation of development capital.
3. All elections to be held under P.R. with fair boundaries.
4. The establishment of a civilian and impartial police force.
5. A radical reform of the entire legal system, to include: the implementation of the idea of law as a community service available to all, and not a repressive agency used against some; the end to anti-working class and anti-feminist and political bias in the selection of jurors; the dismissal of all politically appointed judges; the immediate creation of an impartial public prosecutor's office, outside the control and influence of government.
6. That the involvement of local organisations in deciding future policy for their area, as recommended by the McCrory Report should be real and meaningful.
7. An amnesty for all political prisoners in British and Irish Jails.
8. An amnesty for all illegally held guns and the disbandment of sectarian gun clubs.
9. Those responsible for murdering innocent people, and torturing detainees and war crimes should be brought to trial.
10. That the Westminster Government which bears an immense and overwhelming burden of guilt for its neglect of this area, and its unwillingness to take any action against the excesses of its subordinate Government at Stormont, make available the capital necessary to end unemployment, bad housing and the lack of community amenities.

We stress that our function is to secure basic human and civil rights for all of the people in this area, irrespective of their politics or religion. This could be attained by the adoption of an effective Bill of Rights by the Government in power.

A LETTER FROM NICRA

March 21, 1972

Dear NICRA Supporter,

As newly elected chairman of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA), I was invited to come to the U.S. to meet with our supporters in The National Association for Irish Freedom (NAIF) and to participate in the activities which they had arranged. Although the visit was a brief one, as I am to return to Northern Ireland this evening, I have spoken to many people and realize the hard work that has been done by all the people in the NAIF and their affiliated organizations.

As, I am sure, the past two NICRA representatives, Ivan Barr as the then chairman and Kevin McCorry have done, I wish to thank everyone who has supported the aims of NICRA since we began our campaign in 1967.

I am only sorry that time does not allow me to speak to each of you individually to express our thanks. Not only for the financial support but also for your attempt to explain the true facts about Northern Ireland in a country whose mass media pictures the crisis as some kind of holy war. Although there are some sectarian aspects involved, these are not new to the history of Ireland and are only encouraged by those who want to remain in control by any means.

I have been asked many questions since arriving in the United States. Two of the most important being; what is NICRA's program for the future, and how can people here help NICRA to succeed in its aims. The first is rather simple to answer. NICRA plans to push ahead with its marches and organizing in every corner of Northern Ireland. We want to have a society where everyone, even if he stands for union with the Republic (or with Britain), has the right to organize openly and no longer be considered outlawed. There are many other things of importance which we demand and I encourage each of you to purchase a copy of a new, 48 page booklet, MASSACRE AT DERRY, which contains the whole program of NICRA. It also gives many full eyewitness reports of the massacre of unarmed NICRA marchers in Derry on January 30th.

The second question is a little more difficult to deal with but I will do so in as few words as possible. If you think that you have done enough you are wrong, we are very close to some type of solution, but put simply, we need funds to push it over the top or to push in our direction. If your group is not planning a function please ask them to begin, if you live in an area where there is no NAIF affiliate, contact the National Office and get help to establish one in your area, even if it is small at first. The first job you can take on is to sell the booklet Massacre At Derry (Donation \$1.00). Then plan for an NAIF (or NICRA, if there is one in the U.S.) speaker to come to your area and also begin to plan to run some kind of dance or house party with the proceeds going to NICRA through the NAIF National Office in New York City.

I feel a little guilty leaving you with all this work but we have come too far to be turned back by a few promises from the Governments involved. We need from the U.S. funds, but by all means you must, in coordination with the NAIF, continue to get the true facts about Northern Ireland over to the American People.

Yours for Irish Freedom,

Jimmy Doris, Chairman NICRA

Copies of this and other booklets and information are available from the U.S. support group for the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, The National Association for Irish Freedom. Write:

N.A.I.F.

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