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Americans For a New Irish Agenda

C0081

**Frank Durkan,
Chair**

March 19, 1996

Hon. William J. Clinton
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington DC 20500

Dear President Clinton:

It was a pleasure to meet you and the First Lady at the White House on March 15. It was a splendid event, but the end of the ceasefire on February 9, sadly, took away from what would have been a glorious holiday celebration of the impact your recent trip and your continuing leadership in the Irish peace process.

As you know, Americans for a New Irish Agenda grew out of Irish-Americans for Clinton-Gore in 1992. Our best activists are already preparing to work with your 1996 re-election campaign to help you win the White House again in November.

Clearly at this time there is a debate going on within the IRA. In our view Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams is doing all in his power to persuade the IRA to restore the ceasefire. The February 28 Anglo-Irish Communique is positive insofar as it sets a firm date for all party talks. But, before the ink was dry on that document, the British Government surrounded the June 10 date with what sounded, to many, to be new obstacles. The British Government -- with its 17-month record of squandering opportunities to begin inclusive negotiations and its dismissal of the work of the Mitchell Commission -- is widely mistrusted by Irish nationalists, let alone the IRA. The British record does not make the task of Gerry Adams and John Hume, who have met with the IRA to appeal for a new cessation, any easier.

Therefore we suggest that your Administration, which has carefully chosen to be an even-handed facilitator, continue in that role, in a new way, to overcome the mistrust:

- * Would Senator George Mitchell, for example, play a role again in the all-party talks, perhaps even as chairman? His further involvement in the peace process internationalizes the resolution of this conflict. It would heighten nationalist confidence and set limits on obstructionism from whatever quarter it comes.

- * Could the US seek guarantees from the two governments that the agenda will be balanced and that the time frame for reaching conclusions in the all-party talks will be reasonable? Not only Mr Trimble's agenda but the agenda of the nationalist section of the people of Northern Ireland must be addressed fully and fairly in negotiations.

- * At a minimum, could the US press the British Government to take certain powerful symbolic actions right away, for example, the repatriation of the dying prisoner Paddy Kelly to Ireland, a step supported by Sir Patrick Mayhew but resisted, we are informed, by Home Minister Michael Howard? There are other steps on prisoners that could be confidence-building, and quite influential with the IRA, and perhaps with the loyalists as well.

Your personal, historic support for the Irish peace process is an enormous achievement. These further steps toward confidence building could restore the ceasefire and get the peace process back on track, giving the American people yet another reason to express their thanks in November 1996.

Your truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frank Durkan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Frank Durkan
Chair

TRACKING SHEET

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