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Transport Workers Union of America

Affiliated with American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

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July 25, 1996

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

Dear President Clinton:

The events of the last few weeks, with riots engulfing Northern Ireland again, show how unwilling this British government and its Unionist allies are to reach a just and lasting settlement in Northern Ireland. Towards this end, I assure you that our Union, with its great Irish History, led by Mike Quill, will be working for a renewed cease-fire from the IRA. However, the provocative decision made by British Prime Minister Major to allow Orange bigots to march through Catholic neighborhoods threw gasoline on the flames. Along with the British squandering of the 17-month IRA cease-fire, the continual attempts to find new excuses not to come to the conference table, especially the introductions of the new "decommissioning" demand, the rejection of the Mitchell Report, there is no doubt in our mind where the main blame lies.

Nevertheless, there is hope. Despite recent events, the people in Northern Ireland want peace. If, as in other war-torn areas, the United States Administration stubbornly continues to push for negotiations and a just solution, progress can be made. The most urgent task is to make sure that August is not like July, and violence does not truly become uncontrollable. For example, the White House and Senator Mitchell could demand that fair rules for contentious marches are devised and the Northern Ireland police, the RUC, does not become an arm of the Orange Order once again.

As your re-election looms and the departure of the current British government approaches, in a few months there will be new chances to make headway toward a just peace. Many millions of Irish-American voters, especially, are aware of your unprecedented work for peace in Ireland. What is needed now is wisdom and American persistence. We urge you to continue to stay fully engaged in this issue.

Sincerely,

Sonny Hall
International President

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c: John Sweeney, President, AFL-CIO
Edward Cleary, President, NYS AFL-CIO

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