



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Taoiseach's Meeting with ANIA group members, Niall O'Dowd and Bill Flynn, 28 June 1996

1. The aim of the visit by the two members of the ANIA group is two-fold, viz:
 - (a) to convey the view of Irish America that, despite recent events, there is still some optimism that the IRA ceasefire can be restored and that, therefore, the door should not be closed on governmental contacts with Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein.
 - (b) to impress upon Gerry Adams the anger Irish Americans feel about recent IRA atrocities and to remind him that their support is for a peace strategy not a renewal of IRA violence. They will indicate that the strong US constituency for the peace process will evaporate quickly unless the IRA restore the ceasefire. The Clinton Administration has invested a great deal of its time, resources and credibility in the current peace process. If it were to collapse because of renewed violence future US Administrations may well be wary of a similar level of involvement in the future.
2. In the meeting with the Taoiseach, the two ANIA members will be interested to hear firsthand the Irish Government's view of the possibilities for a restoration of the ceasefire and the prospects for the multiparty talks. They are likely, after giving their own analysis of how Irish America sees the faltering peace process, to press the Taoiseach to keep open contacts with Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein.
3. The general view of Irish America is that the possibility of a further IRA ceasefire still exists. Groups like ANIA, therefore, argue that Gerry Adams represents the best hope for a renewal and that he should be given some room/slack to allow him to convince the IRA to announce another ceasefire. Continued governmental contacts with Sinn Fein would assist this. At the same time, these groups argue, that pressure should be kept up on Adams to use his influence with the IRA and to make him aware of the consequences in the US of the failure to get a restoration. Anger amongst Irish America for the faltering peace process tends to be directed at the IRA and not at Sinn Fein. There is a strong wish for Sinn Fein to be allowed into the multiparty talks but also a recognition that it is the IRA that is keeping Sinn Fein out of such talks. While Irish Americans are drawing a distinction between the IRA and Sinn Fein, there is no wish to see a split, especially if it leaves a militarist rump to continue the armed struggle.

Americans for a New Irish Agenda

1. Americans for a New Irish Agenda (ANIA) had its origins in a 1992 political support group called Irish Americans for Clinton-Gore. The latter brought together a number of Irish American activists who saw in the Democratic candidate the prospect of greater engagement by the United States on Northern Ireland. The group met several times with then candidate Bill Clinton and advocated support for a number of initiatives by the incoming Administration, in particular a more active role on Northern Ireland. In November 1992, immediately before the election, Clinton wrote to the group in the course of which he repeated a number of promises made during the campaign. These included issuing a US visa to Gerry Adams and the appointment of a special envoy for Northern Ireland. Those primarily associated with the group at that stage included Niall O'Dowd, publisher of Irish America magazine and the Irish Voice; Bruce Morrison, former Congressman and immigration lawyer; and then Boston Mayor, Ray Flynn.
2. After the election, the group renamed itself "Americans for a New Irish Agenda" with a commitment to get the US to play "an active and constructive role in helping secure a just, lasting and peaceful resolution of the troubles in Northern Ireland". It was never a formal body in any sense but primarily through Morrison and O'Dowd maintained contact with the White House in an effort to secure delivery by the President on his pre-election promises. At this stage also, the prominent New York businessman, Mr Bill Flynn, became associated with the group, as did Mr Chuck Feeney, both of whom were members of the Taoiseach's Economic Advisory Board in the United States.
3. Apart from maintaining pressure on the new Administration, the group visited Ireland on several occasions and established and maintained contact with Sinn Fein. The informal IRA 36-hour ceasefire in May 1993 was generally seen as having taken place in anticipation of a meeting between the group and Adams. The Irish-American group arranged a second visit to Ireland later that year and again secured a promise of an unannounced week-long ceasefire from the IRA starting September 6. On their several visits to Ireland, the group has also met with the President, the Taoiseach and the Tanaiste and leaders of all the political parties in Northern Ireland except the DUP. The group visited Ireland again in the immediate run-up to the IRA ceasefire and sees itself, and is acknowledged in Irish-American circles, as having been closely associated with achieving this outcome.
4. Americans for a New Irish Agenda have again pledged their support for President Clinton in 1996. Morrison applauded the President's role in fostering the peace process as "one of the great success stories of your Administration's foreign policy". He suggested to the President that without his "personal intervention and sustained interest in finding a solution to the conflict, we would have not come as close as we have to a just and lasting peace in Ireland.". Despite periodic concerns expressed by the group that the Administration should be even more active than it has been, the group has every reason to continue this full support for President Clinton and Vice President Gore.

5. Those travelling on this occasion are:

Niall O'Dowd:

Prominent Irish-born publisher of Irish America magazine and the Irish Voice newspaper. Generally seen as having played an important role as an intermediary between Sinn Fein and the White House. O'Dowd has been associated with a number of other important Irish-American initiatives including the Irish America Business 100, Irish America Top 100, etc. He is also seen as having engaged the interest of businessman Bill Flynn in the peace process.

Bill Flynn:

A prominent New York insurance executive and the Chairman of Mutual of America. Flynn, in his role as Chairman of the National Committee for American Foreign Policy, issued the invitation that enabled Adams to finally secure a visa to speak in New York in January 1994. Flynn serves on the boards of several Irish organisations and is known to be generous with financial support for worthy causes. A member of the Taoiseach's Economic Advisory Board.
