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Reported split in Noraid

Reports of a split in Noraid, which appeared in the Irish daily newspapers, particularly the Irish Press, following the Provisional Sinn Fein Ard Fheis, were in our view rather exaggerated. There is little doubt that there are at least two groupings within Noraid viz. the old guard (in the main Irish born with links, however, tenuous, to the old IRA) represented by Michael Flannery, the Noraid President and the younger group, (comprised of 1st or 2nd generation American/Irish, whose members have been swelled in recent years by an influx of younger pro Gerry Adams mainly Northern born immigrants) represented by Martin Galvin, Noraid's Publicity Director. There seems little doubt that Flannery was very angry at Galvin for having commented after learning of the Ard Fheis decision to end absentionism (apparently without prior consultation with Flannery) that Noraid continues to support Sinn Fein and the IRA and expressing confidence in the leadership of Gerry Adams. To talk about 'a major rift' in the leadership, as reported by Neil O'Dowd in the Irish Press of 4 November, seems to us to be wide of the mark. It should be noted incidentally that neither Galvin nor Flannery made statements, in the accepted sense of that term, to the press about the decision. Rather they were responding to questions put to them, by telephone, by O'Dowd. Absentionism has been an article of faith for Michael Flannery and his supporters from the outset. This apparently dates back to De Valera's decision to enter the Dail more than 50 years ago with which Flannery disagreed. Galvin and his supporters see things in a completely different light and take their cue from Gerry Adams. Both Galvin and Flannery hold very strong positions within Noraid: Flannery has the moral authority while Galvin by virtue of his editorship of the Irish People and his involvement in the Sean Downes affair holds a strong public profile. Galvin is using his media status as a launching pad for future leadership of the organisation which, in the absence of a new and forceful personality with a direct connection to the Provisional leadership in

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Northern Ireland, he seems certain to secure.

I think it is fair to say that over the years the Republican movement in the U.S. has been reactive to developments in Ireland. While there is clearly a major difference of perception between the Flannery and Galvin factions in Noraid a confrontation is not likely. Indeed all the signs are that one is being avoided at all costs. For both the bottom line is to assist the campaign of violence in Northern Ireland. For the purpose of public consumption this, of course, is presented as "providing financial help for Irish political prisoners and their dependents". Consequently it is highly unlikely that the Ard Fheis decision will have any impact whatever on Noraid or its fund raising efforts in the U.S. unless there are further developments in Ireland which would bring that about. The most dramatic such development would be the establishment of a military wing of Republican Sinn Fein. Such a development seems quite improbable.

Material about the "split" which appeared in recent issues of the Irish People is attached for ease of reference. It is interesting to note, incidentally, that the Irish Echo did not carry any reports of Noraid reaction to the split.

Jim Flavin
Consul General.

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