



ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS



FREEDOM for ALL IRELAND

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HIBERNIAN FACT-FINDING MISSION CONCLUDES

Hibernians completed a highly publicized nine day fact-finding mission which included, a Ballymurphy Massacre Inquest session, receptions by Belfast and Derry Mayors, questioning Derry's Unionist Deputy Mayor and eight Councillors, briefings on collusion, legacy justice, Brexit, Pat Finucane, Bloody Sunday and the Dalraidian environmental threat, as well as meetings and presentations to community groups. The Freedom for all Ireland (FFAI) delegation led by President Jim McKay and LAOH President Carol Sheyer included leading Hibernians from 13 states. They concluded in Dublin briefing Irish Foreign Service officials and making a commitment to bring the facts back to AOH and LAOH members across the country.

FINUCANE

The 37 member Hibernian delegation stopped at the border, where "Border Communities Against Brexit" members Damien McGinnity, Declan Fearon and John Sheridan catalogued the catastrophic threat of Brexit. Judge McKay presented a copy of Congressman

Brendan Boyle's Resolution on the issue and outlined the ongoing American efforts to support these communities.

The tour then moved to Belfast, escorted by Mark Thompson of Relatives for Justice, to join the Finucane family for a vigil outside Pat Finucane's home. Here Judge McKay spoke about "the special courage of the civil rights lawyer who continued to fight for justice despite death threats until he was murdered for doing so."

BELFAST

The next morning the delegation, joined Ballymurphy Massacre victims' families outside Laganside Court, where Judge McKay told reporters that "Hibernians across the United States had their eyes on that courtroom and were behind these families in their long fight for justice". FFAI Chair Martin Galvin added that "if nationalists cannot get justice in a case where 11 victims included a priest and a grandmother, how could they expect justice in any case of British Army or collusion murder?"

Hibernians witnessed a court session marked more by deliberate British Ministry of Defense delays than testimony. AOH National Director Denny Parks, a court official, said "if anyone refused to comply with court orders in an American court the way the British had, the case would be dismissed and someone jailed for contempt!" Solicitor Padraig Murray and Barrister Michael Mansfield gave an update to the delegation on the progress and deliberate delays in the proceedings.

The FFAI delegation were welcomed at a City Hall reception hosted by Mayor Deidre Hargey, where she spoke about the role of nationalists in the city. Here Judge McKay made the announcement that the prestigious AOH-LAOH MacBride Award would be presented to Fr. Gary Donegan for his work in the Ardoyne Houben Centre.

The delegates met that evening at the Felon's Club with a number of community groups who have been supported by the AOH-LAOH Christmas Appeal.

BALLYMURPHY

The FFAI group returned the next day to Ballymurphy where campaign leader John Teggart , Carmel Quinn and other family members pointed out locations where loved ones were murdered.

The group then toured Republican graves at historic Milltown Cemetery escorted by Joe Austin and Brendan McFarlane of National Graves.

At An Culturlann that afternoon, author Richard O'Rawe spoke about his friend Gerry Conlon of the "Guildford Four", Niall Murphy analyzed the political implications of the recent Belfast Forum, Andree Murphy and Mary McCallan of Relatives for Justice spoke about the unique problems faced by women during the conflict. Sean Murray gave a preview showing of his film **UNQUIET GRAVES**, along with Anne Cadwallader and Alan Brecknell.

DERRY

The delegation then moved to Derry. At the George McBrearty Mural in Creggan, Kevin Hasson of the Bogside Artists explained the impact of political murals and art in the city. With members of the McBrearty family hosting, Martin Galvin spoke about George McBrearty's life as an example of what Republican commemorations and murals represent to people across the north.

At the nearby Mickey Devine Mural, former H-Block Blanketman Tony O'Hara gave an emotional personal recollection of his brother Patsy O'Hara's death on Hunger Strike, while Bobby Sands' former cellmate Thomas "Dixie Elliot" shared his personal memories of Bobby Sands, the song "Back Home in Derry" and another Hunger Striker cellmate Thomas McElwee.

Civil Rights leader, author and journalist Eamon McCann spoke on the Civil Rights Movement and Bloody Sunday and charged that the Saville Inquiry was unsatisfactory because it did not acknowledge the systematic cover-up begun almost immediately by the British Army.

The delegation raised this issue at the Guildhall or City Hall with Derry Mayor John Boyle. The FFAI group then had a spirited session with 8 Derry Councillors , led by Unionist Party Deputy Mayor Derek Hussey presiding joined by six Sinn Fein members and

an Independent Republican. Mr. Galvin began the questions by noting that last time he "accompanied an American delegation requesting a meeting with the British or Unionists he got an exclusion order in reply." The FFAI raised the question about Bloody Sunday cover-up posed by Eamon McCann, and asked the councillors what they would like to see from meeting an American FFAI delegation. The session had been scheduled to last 30 minutes but continued for 90.

The AOH-LAOH members went to the Museum of Free Derry, for a presentation on Bloody Sunday's continuing legacy by John Kelly and today's legacy and justice issues by Paul O'Connor of the Pat Finucane Center. They saw an exhibition on the Great Hunger hosted by Gerry O'Hara before finishing out the evening at Derry AOH hall.

LIAM RYAN

In Tyrone, the group, escorted by AOH County President Gerry McGeough climbed to the historic Mass Rock at the controversial Dalraidian gold mine site in the Sperrin Mountains. They visited the Republican Garden of Remembrance at Carrickmore with special mention of AOH member Ed Walsh who was killed in the 1916 Easter Rising and was affiliated with the American AOH Alliance and Hibernian Rifles.

At the Battery Bar Ardboe, the delegation saw the site where American citizen, and tour member Martin Galvin's close friend, Liam Ryan, was murdered by off duty members of the British Army's Ulster Defense Regiment in 1989, got a report about the investigation conducted into the case by Relatives for Justice and heard from Martin Mallon about the murder of his aunt Roseann Mallon with the same weapons. Francie McGuigan one of the Hooded Men spoke about what happened to him on beginning on the same day as the Ballymurphy Massacre.

The second day in Tyrone began with a tour of the historic Hill of O'Neill, stops at the Dungannon offices of the Republican ex-prisoner support group EALU and Relatives for Justice, and a discussion of legacy justice at Galbally Community Centre where relatives outlined a British strategy of "deny, delay and die."

Tyrone AOH then hosted the delegation to a night that included two pipe bands, other musicians and presentations to several delegates.

DUBLIN

The FFAI spent its final two days in Dublin, participating in a 1916 Easter Rising Walking Tour with Lorcan Collins, and a talk on 1916 evening with author and historian Ruan O'Donnell at Pearse House. Independent TD Peadar Toibin was given an opportunity speak to delegates on his newly formed political party. The AOH-LAOH members were then hosted at Leinster House by Senator Billy Lawless before being welcomed to give a full briefing at Iveagh House to Irish Foreign Service officials in meetings organized by National Director Dan Dennehy and Treasurer Sean Pender.

AOH Freedom-for -all-Ireland Chair Martin Galvin noted:

" As many delegates said, the end of this tour is just the beginning of a greater national campaign. Members of this delegation from across the United States saw just how much American help is needed by those still denied freedom from British rule and suffer injustice. We were told again and again across the north that they count on Irish America and see the AOH-LAOH as their voice, in America.

"It is crucial now more than ever that we bring the facts we have seen back across America and do more nationally to support those still denied justice and freedom."