



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

USCC, PRESBYTERIAN LEADERS INSIST PEACE EFFORTS BE ADVANCED THROUGH INVESTMENT AND FAIR EMPLOYMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

WASHINGTON--U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC) and Presbyterian Church leaders called for efforts to promote investment linked to fair employment in Northern Ireland in joint written testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on International Relations on March 15.

The Church leaders, John Carr, Secretary of the USCC Department of Social Development and World Peace, and Rev. Henry J. Postel, Chairman of the Northern Ireland Working Group of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., said that U.S. private and governmental support of trade and investment in Northern Ireland that are linked to fair employment would contribute to progress in the peace process.

"We welcome President Clinton's decision to hold a White House Conference on Trade and Investment in Northern Ireland, and we have been encouraging business persons from our two congregations to participate in this important conference," the leaders said.

"The private trade and investment being promoted by the White House Conference will provide the greatest impetus to job creation and economic reconstruction in Northern Ireland, but the U.S. government can also play an important direct role through increases in U.S. contributions to the International Fund for Ireland," they added. "The relatively small U.S. contribution to the Fund produces economic benefits quite out of proportion to its size. Moreover, it is a tangible symbol of American support for the

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peace process in Northern Ireland."

Reiterating the 1994 Call for Fair Employment and Investment issued by the four main churches in Ireland and their counterparts in the United States, the churchmen pointed to the link between economic deprivation and unrest in Northern Ireland, especially as it affects the Catholic community.

"While chronic double-digit unemployment touches both communities, the fact that Catholic males are more than twice as likely as Protestant males to be unemployed demonstrates the urgent need, as a matter of justice and morality, to create new jobs, to strengthen efforts to ensure fair employment, to combat discrimination and to address the structural causes of economic deprivation," they said.

They reiterated the churches' support for strong fair employment measures in Northern Ireland, but noted that job creation was also necessary to rectify employment inequities.

Investment and job creation in Northern Ireland would help facilitate this, they said.

"Without more jobs, fair employment could end up only redistributing unemployment in Northern Ireland. Increased investment by companies with strong equal opportunity practices will contribute to fair employment, especially if efforts are made to develop cross-community work forces and if investment is targeted to areas of social need.

"Peace and prosperity are linked; new opportunities must be created and distributed in a just manner," they said.

"U.S. investment, in addition to benefiting from an increasingly attractive business environment, can make a major contribution to peace in Northern Ireland by offering more employment and more fair employment for the people of Northern Ireland," they said also.

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Copies of the testimony are available by calling (202) 541-3200.

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