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O'Callaghan's Visit Raises Questions

IRA informer Sean O'Callaghan is beginning a three-week publicity tour of the United States. He has already spoken to the National Press Club, CNN, and the MSNBC network and is scheduled to be interviewed by Charlie Rose and National Public Radio. He will also debate New York Congressman Peter King, a supporter of the Irish peace process.

The St. Louis unit of the Irish Northern Aid Committee wishes to express its concern regarding Mr. O'Callaghan's actions while in the United States. America cherishes and upholds the right to free speech, as an American organization, we share this love of free speech and champion the right of Mr. O'Callaghan to speak his mind. Mr. O'Callaghan was given a visa to visit the United States despite being convicted of two murders and misrepresenting himself on his visa application by claiming to be a journalist. Again, the St. Louis unit of the Irish Northern Aid Committee applauds the granting of this visa and hopes it indicates a new willingness by the government to assess the cases of former Irish POWs on their individual merits.

Mr. O'Callaghan was released from prison by Queen's pardon after serving 8 years of a 539-year sentence for the murder of two British soldiers. Since his release, he has been an outspoken critic of the Irish peace process and the United States' role in it and has acted as a consultant for the British Conservative party on the Irish peace process. Mr. O'Callaghan will address the Senate Foreign Relations Committee early this week and give his take on the role of Republicans in the peace process, despite having had no contact with Republicans in over 10 years. Mr. O'Callaghan's unprecedented access to this law-making body raises serious questions about American sovereignty and the role of the British government in setting American foreign policy. The British Foreign Office has been most supportive of Mr. O'Callaghan's visit.

The St. Louis unit of the Irish Northern Aid Committee urges local media outlets to keep in mind that Mr. O'Callaghan is acting as an agent of the British government. He is here at the bequest of the British government. His opposition to the Irish peace process should be assessed on that basis. We urge the local media to question why Mr. O'Callaghan is attempting to sway American foreign policy in Ireland and divide the consensus all American parties have gained regarding the importance of a just peace in Ireland.

The Irish Northern Aid Committee is a nonprofit organization that provides financial support to the families of Irish political prisoners and seeks to educate the American public regarding injustices in the North of Ireland.

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