

After new evidence, IRA 'Birmingham Six' released



Five of the "Birmingham Six" cheer as they are released from the British Court of Appeal in London. The group was imprisoned for 17 years on charges related to a series of Irish Republican Army pub bombings in 1974 but were exonerated based on new evidence.

By JESSICA BALDWIN
Associated Press Writer

LONDON — Six angry men walked free yesterday after 16 years in prison when the Court of Appeal reversed their convictions for the Irish Republican Army's deadliest bomb attack.

"Sixteen years because of hypocrisy, brutality. But every dog has its day and we are going to have ours!" proclaimed one of the so-called Birmingham Six, Richard McKenny, as he emerged from the Old Bailey court.

"Justice! I don't think the people in there have got the intelligence nor the honesty to spell the word, never mind dispense it!" shouted another, Patrick Hill. "They're rotten!"

Lord Justice Lloyd told the defendants, each convicted on 21 counts of murder in the 1974 bombings of two pubs in Birmingham, that they were being freed "in the light of fresh evidence."

Stung by the collapse of a third major IRA prosecution from the 1970s, Home Secretary Kenneth Baker quickly announced the appointment of a Royal Commission to review the criminal justice system from top to bottom, "to minimize as far as possible the likelihood of such events happening again."

The six, ranging in age from 44 to 60, four of them now completely gray-haired, appeared in court in dark, conservative suits.

Lloyd said the court would spell out its reasons for the reversal later. But during the nine-day hearing, prosecutors conceded the six were convicted on the basis of questionable scientific and police evidence.

Four of the six had confessed, but maintained they did so only after being beaten.

The six, all natives of Northern Ireland, were arrested shortly after explosions in two Birmingham pubs killed 21

people and injured 162 others on Nov. 21, 1974. It was the deadliest attack ever mounted by the IRA in England.

A jubilant crowd of about 500 people waited outside the Old Bailey for the defendants: McKenny, 57, Hill, 46, Johnny Walker, 55, Bill Power, 45, Gerard Hunter, 44, and Hugh Callaghan, 60.

The men embraced tearful wives and daughters, and posed for a picture with Chris Mullin, a Labor Party member of Parliament whose book, "Error of Judgement," had brought public attention to the case.

The six pumped their fists in the air and walked along police lines shaking hands two at a time, like politicians.

"They've grown old in prison but the happy part is they are out," said Sister Sarah Clark, an Irish nun in the throng.

"I just hope we learned some lessons from this," Mullin said outside the court. One lesson, he said, was the unreliability of uncorroborated confessions.

At a news conference Thursday night following a victory party at a Roman Catholic mission in north London, Hill said the police who allegedly falsified evidence "have got to be charged."

Hunter, however, said the reviews should take their course.

"I don't want to seek revenge. I don't want to see people going through what we went through," Hunter said.

Baker said the Royal Commission, to be led by Lord Runciman, would look at the criminal justice system from the investigation and pre-trial process up to the Court of Appeal. The review is expected to take two years, but he promised fast action on its findings.

"Changes do have to be made," Baker said in an interview with British Broadcasting Corp. radio.

In Dublin, Irish Prime Minister Charles Haughey welcomed the release and saluted "the courage and fortitude shown by the six over 16 wasted years."

FCC considers dialing up rules for '900' numbers

By ROBERT NAYLOR JR.
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Operators of 900-number telephone services would be required to tell callers how much they will be charged and give them a chance to hang up if rules proposed yesterday by the Federal Communications Commission are adopted.

The mushrooming \$1 billion a year industry offers callers the opportunity to talk with psychics, hear romantic "confessions," pledge money to fundraising efforts, hear stock quotations and sports scores or request information on used cars.

And companies are increasingly using the numbers to promise credit

cards and loans to people with poor credit ratings.

The proposal drew support from all five FCC commissioners, although a majority said they want to be careful not to discourage legitimate uses of 900 numbers.

The industry's trade group, the Information Industry Association, expressed some reservations about portions of the plan, but agreed that something must be done to weed out companies that use 900 numbers to take advantage of consumers.

"We think it is appropriate for the FCC to look at this," said association spokesman Steve Metalitz.

On another matter, the commission voted to consider regulations designed to protect consumers from

unknowingly having their long-distance companies switched.

The vote follows the settlement of a bitter feud late last year between industry behemoths American Telephone & Telegraph and MCI Communications.

If the FCC adopts the proposed rule, companies would have to receive verification from customers would have to respond in writing, call a toll-free number or verify to an independent auditing agency that they wanted to make a change.

The action on the 900-number services was prompted by a growing number of complaints — about 2,000 complaints over the last two years, said spokesman Richard Firestone.

Videotaped violence leads to broad study of police abuse

By JAMES ROWLEY
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Attorney General Dick Thornburgh yesterday broadened the federal investigation of the police beating of a black motorist in Los Angeles to include a review of all police brutality complaints received by the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division over the last six years.

Thornburgh announced the review after two members of the Congressional Black Caucus urged a wider probe of

the Los Angeles police. The FBI already was investigating the incident in which three white officers were videotaped beating the motorist.

The attorney general ordered the department's civil rights division to review all complaints of police brutality it has received from across the nation in the last six years "to discern whether any pattern of misconduct is apparent."

Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., and Rep. Edolphus Towns, D-N.Y., chairman of the caucus, had asked the Justice Department to expand its

investigation of the March 3 beating of Rodney King to review other allegations of brutality against Los Angeles police.

Conyers said there was ample evidence that King's beating was not an aberration but a product of a "culture of violence" on the Los Angeles force.

Thornburgh also ordered the National Institute of Justice to study whether there is a correlation between brutality and the lack of proper training and effective internal discipline.

"We know that we are going to get many more cases," Conyers said.

Scientists link gene to colon cancer

By PAUL RECER
AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Researchers said late yesterday they have identified a gene that is a "smoking gun" link to an early stage of colon cancer, advancing the prospect of developing a test to identify people at high risk for one of the major cancer killers.

Kenneth Kinzler of the Johns Hopkins Oncology Center in Baltimore said a team of researchers identified the gene by finding genetic mutations in cells that produce abnormal growth early in colon cancer development.

The gene they found has been called MCC, for "Mutated in Colon Cancer."

"We have several lines of evidence to suggest that (the mutation of the gene)

is one of the earliest changes that occurs during the progression from a normal cell to a colon cancer cell," Kinzler said.

Earlier studies have shown that many cancers arise from a series of genetic mutations in cells. Some mutated genes, called oncogenes, cause abnormal cell growth. Other genes, called tumor suppressors, normally prevent the abnormal growth. When mutation causes the tumor suppressors to not work normally, then a natural control on cell growth is removed.

Evidence suggests that it may take one or more oncogenes, plus the mutation of one or more suppressor genes for a tumor to develop.

Kinzler said that MCC appears to be a suppressor gene. In addition to its mutation, he said, "We think there are

four to six changes that have to occur before it can become a cancer cell."

The Hopkins researchers in earlier studies identified two other suppressor genes, called p53 and DCC, and one oncogene, called RAS, that play a role in colon cancer.

Colon and rectum cancer is diagnosed annually in about 140,000 Americans and is responsible for about 60,000 deaths a year, about 12 percent of all cancer deaths, according to the National Cancer Institute.

Kinzler said the Hopkins group found the MCC gene by searching through hundreds of colon tumor specimens.

"That is sort of a smoking gun," said Kinzler. "It is a very strong piece of evidence that this gene is important in the development of cancer."

S. Africa factions agree to stop intense violence in townships

By TOM COHEN
Associated Press Writer

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Representatives of the African National Congress and Inkatha Freedom Party agreed yesterday to work together to halt an outbreak of renewed violence in black townships near Johannesburg.

Scores of people have died in street fighting between supporters of the two black opposition groups the past two weeks in Soweto, Alexandra and Tembisa.

The government imposed emergency measures, including an overnight curfew, in the three townships this week.

Yesterday's ANC-Inkatha meeting lasted five hours, and participants told a news conference the goal was stop-

ping the violence, not casting blame.

Some black leaders have accused security forces of instigating violence to destabilize black opposition groups.

The joint ANC-Inkatha statement said the groups would conduct investigations to discover what it called the "criminal element" fueling conflict between them.

A statement said joint committees would be formed to monitor trouble spots and work with residents to stop the fighting. It said the committees would be an extension of the Jan. 29 peace agreement reached by ANC leader Nelson Mandela and Inkatha leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

Despite repeated calls by anti-apartheid leaders to end the violence, black factional fighting has continued. The

ANC-Inkatha conflict has killed more than 5,000 people the past five years in eastern Natal Province. Inkatha's power base.

The fighting spread to Johannesburg area townships last August, killing more than 1,000 people.

Both groups oppose apartheid but differ on how to combat it and the policies of a future South Africa.

Also yesterday, a right-wing white extremist who pleaded guilty to killing seven blacks last year told a judge he committed the crime out of fear of a black onslaught in South Africa.

Eugene Marais, speaking at a presentencing hearing, said he now felt remorse but at the time he believed his actions were necessary.

Republicans give up fight against 1972 U.S.-Soviet missile treaty

By DONNA CASSATA
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Senate Republicans, facing opposition from Democrats as well as members of their own party, yesterday abandoned a challenge to a 1972 U.S.-Soviet treaty limiting testing of anti-ballistic missile systems.

"This flatly contradicts current law," Sen. William Cohen of Maine, a leading Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said moments before an amendment dealing with the treaty was withdrawn from a bill authorizing funds to pay for the Persian Gulf War.

The explanation from the measure's sponsor, Sen. John Warner, R-Va., was the desire to expedite approval of the gulf bill.

But the fate of the amendment was likely decided by opposition from several GOP members as well as support for a substitute measure sponsored by Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Ga., chairman of the Armed Services panel.

Once Warner withdrew his amendment, Nunn pulled his substitute measure.

The Republican challenge to the treaty signals the opening

attack in the GOP effort to wrest control of the Senate from the Democrats in 1992. The party is targeting Nunn and other Democrats who voted against authorizing the use of force in the gulf.

Recent published reports have suggested Nunn has suffered a blow to his reputation as the Senate's expert on defense. After the Republicans let go of their attack on the treaty, the Georgia Democrat joked about the stories.

"Rigor mortis hasn't set in yet," Nunn said in an interview. Warner vowed to pursue the treaty issue during the coming months, saying, "I fully intend to continue, as do many other senators, to press this point."

In introducing the amendment late Wednesday, Warner cited the growing proliferation of ballistic missiles and the need to develop the Strategic Defense Initiative.

"We see it as a political advantage to agree to be in favor of this system," Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., a member of the Armed Services panel, said in reference to SDI, commonly known as Star Wars.

Nunn's substitute amendment called for \$224 million to buy more Patriot missiles, using funds already appropriated to the Army this fiscal year for missile production.



Yuk!

Barbara Bush makes a face at Elizabeth Newberg, 3, of Tampa, Fla. to emphasize the effects of poison. The first lady met Newberg, a survivor of drinking furniture polish, yesterday at Georgetown University Hospital's Washington, D.C. observance of National Poison Prevention Week.

Flags surprise homeowners one Erie day

ERIE — Hundreds of people in the city and in outlying areas awoke yesterday to find plastic American flags had been mysteriously placed in their front yards.

"Our whole neighborhood is planted with small flags," said Norma Rogers of Millcreek Township. "Whoever did it... it's marvelous."

The 12-by-18 inch flags were placed in yards throughout the city and in Fairview, Millcreek Township and McKean Township.

Greg Haney said the flags were placed in his Millcreek Township neighborhood last night.

"When I came home last night, all I could see in the headlights were American flags on both sides of the road," he said. "It was beautiful."

Whoever did it wasn't telling.

Police said they didn't know.

Delores Bross, service officer for the Erie County Veterans Affairs office, said no one in her office knew who did it.

"It had to be a group of people doing what they did," she said. "There were so many of them all over the county."

Robert Wagner, the owner of Robert Wagner Flag Sales of Morgantown, said his company sells many flags to the Erie area, but he wouldn't say if he knew who was behind it.