

[SEPT. 4, 1917]

Washington, D. C.,

Hon. Henry D. Flood,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
House of Representatives,

Dear Sir,

The undersigned, the Executive Committee of the Patrick H. Pearse Branch of the Friends of Irish Freedom, of Washington, D. C., respectfully petition you as Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the House of Representatives to exert every effort to secure an early and a favorable report on the resolution introduced by Representative William E. Mason, (H. J. Res. 88), concerning Ireland's independence, and to promote its adoption by the House. We base our petition on the following grounds:

1) The United States owes its existence to the successful assertion by force of arms of the principle, enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, that "all governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed."

2) The Congress of the United States has frequently in the past expressed its sympathy with nations struggling for the right to rule themselves against the aggressions and repressions, if not oppressions, of powerful neighbors.

3) Ireland traces her existence as a nation back to the time of the Roman Empire, and according to native tradition to a period far antedating that time. Her nationhood cannot be questioned, according to the testimony of history. It was recognized by England herself as late as 1783, when she passed the Act of Renunciation, declaring that "the right of Ireland to be governed by the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland was ascertained and established forever, and should at no time thereafter be questioned or questionable."

4) The present condition of Ireland is that of a nation subjugated by a foreign power, just as truly as is that of Belgium, and just as truly in absolute contradiction to the principles enunciated in the Declaration of Independence of the American Colonies. This subjugation began in 1171, and was not completed before the dawn of the eighteenth century. It was accomplished by bloodshed, confiscation of property, exile of the inhabitants, treachery, breach of treaties (cf. the "scrap of paper" known as the Treaty of Limerick), rapine, (cf. the atrocities that led to the rebellion of 1798, and those that preceded the Dublin rebellion of 1916), and bribery (cf. the notorious bribery that brought about the illegal and unconstitutional Act of Union of 1800). During all the centuries since 1171 the Irish people have never ceased to assert their right to rule themselves, in testimony whereof we may cite the continual warfare of the 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, and the wars of 1640 and of 1690, before the recognition of Ireland's independence by England in 1783; and since then the wars of 1798, of 1848, of 1867, and finally that of 1916. Evidently, the govern-

ment of Ireland was not and is not now based on the consent of the governed, and therefore cannot be considered to be a just government according to the principles of our Declaration of Independence. Ireland is not in any sense a colony of England, as certain of the thirteen American colonies were when they declared their independence of England in 1776. Ireland is a separate island, a separate nation, inhabited by a separate race, always-before the Anglo-Norman invasion- ruled by a separate government, and possessing its own separate language, literature and historical and intellectual tradition. That Ireland was a savage nation civilized by the beneficence of the Anglo-Saxons is a myth no longer ~~credited~~ credited by reputable scholars. The Anglo-Saxon, or rather the Anglo-Norman, occupation of Ireland is just as truly a pure and simple aggression as the present occupation of Belgium by Germany. The Union of Parliaments in 1800 was illegal and unconstitutional, being compassed by the bribery of men who represented only a small portion of the Irish people, and never has been accepted by the Irish people themselves.

5) England has declared thru her premier that she is now fighting for the existence of small nationalities, and no one can deny that Ireland comes in under this head. Hence the adoption of the Mason Resolution can give no offense to England, but will rather be a declaration of confidence in her sincerity.

6) Our President has declared and reiterated that the United States is in this war for democracy and for the overthrow of autocracy. We can conclude from this only that the United States is in the war in order to give freedom to Ireland, Belgium, Egypt, Serbia, ^{India,} Montenegro and all the other nations who at present are prevented by force from ruling themselves according to their own national traditions. Hence, the adoption of this Resolution will be a declaration of confidence in the sincerity of the President.

7) If the Congress of the United States and the President fail to use every effort to secure the freedom of Ireland from foreign domination, it is not only inconsistent but entirely absurd and self-stultifying to declare that we are fighting for democracy. Autocracy is the only term that can be applied to English rule in Ireland, and no clear line can be drawn between English autocracy, German autocracy, Russian autocracy, etc. All autocracy, by whomsoever exercised, is rightfully hated by true Americans who understand the principles and the spirit of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution.

8) Failure by the Congress to take favorable action on the Mason Resolution, (H. J. Res. 88), or similar action recognizing the fact that Ireland is a nation, entitled to rule herself, and urging England to recognize that fact once more, as she did in 1783 by the Act of Renunciation, will be construed as a strong argument to corroborate the opinion now held by a large portion of the American people that the real, underlying purpose of American participation in the European war is to rescue England from the defeat that is now plainly and

evidently staring her in the face, and that the beautiful words and sentiments about humanity, democracy, equality of nations, etc., are (to use an expression once applied to party platforms) only "molasses to catch flies with". Moreover, such inconsistency, bearing as it does the appearance and implication of insincerity, is bound to react on the political fortunes ^{of} those responsible for it. It is almost unthinkable, for the ordinary citizen, [^] that the President and the Congress of the United States should plunge the country into war "for the sake of humanity, democracy and the rights of small nations," and then to say, in effect, that these lofty and noble ideals are for all the rest of the world, but not for Ireland, by refusing to adopt a resolution asserting that they do apply to Ireland, - who has a special claim upon the gratitude and aid of the United States, because she has contributed so much in flesh and blood, in brawn and sinew, and in money and treasure to the establishment, the upbuilding and the preservation of this republic, and whose grievance against England is two hundred and fifty times as old as Belgium's grievance against Germany, or as Serbia's grievance against Austria.

On these grounds we ask, therefore, that you exert every effort in favor of the passage of the Mason Resolution, and we trust that the Congress will see the wisdom of taking this step to manifest its absolute consistency and sincerity in regard to the war-aims of the United States, and thus minimize the dangers of the reaction that is bound to come when the people have an opportunity of making their voice heard concerning the present situation.

(Rev.) James A. Geary, (Chairman),
 James A. O'Shea, (President),
 (Miss) Margaret L. Brosnahan, (Secretary),

J. Frank O'Meara,
 P. J. Ryan,
 (Mrs.) M. Doyle,

Executive Committee,

-Patrick H. Pearse Branch,
 Friends of Irish Freedom.