



House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the House of Representatives

FROM: Representative Brendan F. Boyle

DATE: December 28, 2010

SUBJECT: Co-Sponsorship of Legislation Regarding the Molly Maguires

In the near future, I plan to introduce a resolution calling on the governor to issue an order acknowledging the lack of due process in the trials of alleged members of the Molly Maguires between 1876 and 1878.

Between 1876 and 1878, forty members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Northeastern Pennsylvania were arrested, tried, and convicted by officials and employees of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, the Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company, the Lehigh and Wilkes-Barre Coal and Iron Company, and the Lehigh Valley Railroad. The chief prosecutor of many of the accused was none other than the president of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad and Coal and Iron Company, the jury composition excluded those with Irish heritage and favored non-English speakers, and the key evidence was provided by a single employee of the coal and railroad companies. As the lack of due process was not reprehensible enough, the prosecuting railroad and coal companies involved in the trial engaged in constant ethnic bigotry, discrimination, and general unfairness towards their workers. Twenty of those convicted were sentenced to prison terms of various lengths and another twenty were hanged for their alleged crimes.

History acknowledges that crimes were committed against employees and administrators of the coal and railroad companies; that fact is not disputed. Rather, the trials and the denial of due process created a greater injustice. This injustice has been rectified for one of the accused, albeit posthumously, but not for all. In 1979, Governor Milton Shapp granted a pardon to the alleged "King of the Mollies", John "Black Jack" Kehoe, because of the overwhelming evidence of their innocence. This resolution calls upon the governor to acknowledge to facts and honor the memory of the accused and demonstrate that victims of failed justice in the past can be vindicated by the advancement of our system today.

If you would like to join me in support of this resolution, please contact Kristen Womelsdorf at (717) 787-3055 or at kwomelsd@pahouse.net