

Prologue

The following paragraph, taken from 'Famine in West Cork: The Mizen Peninsula, Land and People 1800 to 1852' p. 144 by Patrick Hickey - Mercier Press - Cork 2002 fills us in on the Relief Commission for Ireland and Sir Randolph Routh:

"One of the last acts of Peel's cabinet before it split on the Corn Law question was to appoint a Relief Commission for Ireland in November 1845. The chairman was Edward Lucas who had been under-secretary, the secretary was John Pitt Kennedy who had been secretary of the Devon Commission. Other members were: James Dombain, inspector of the coast-guard service, Colonel Harry Jones, chairman of the Board of Works, Edward Twistleton, the Poor Law commissioner, Colonel McGregor, inspector-general of the constabulary and Robert Kane. The leading member of this Relief Commission was Randolph Routh of the Commissariat service of the army, his duty was to buy corn. the Relief Commission was to encourage landlords, the principal clergymen of both denominations and important residents to form local relief committees. Their duties were to raise subscriptions, purchase food and provide employment. The Relief Commission would give a grant amounting to one-third of the subscriptions. The relief committees were forbidden to distribute free food unless the workhouse was full and then only to persons incapable of working."

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### A. LETTER FROM PARISH POOR RELIEF COMMITTEE TO DANIEL O'CONNELL

November 14th 1846  
32 Nelson Street

Dear Sir,

The Poor Relief Committee of the United Parishes of Kilmichael and Macloneigh beg to acquaint you that the above Parishes, embracing an extensive rural district, contain a population of 12,000 persons -- There is no town or village within the district. The nearest place where provisions could be obtained is the town of Macroom, which is nine miles distant from the centre of those Parishes. -- The remnant of the Potatoo crop has long since disappeared and but for the unaided and untiring exertions of the Committee the population must have ere now perished, not in unity but in thousands. -- The Committee, however, by the aid of private subscriptions with the greatest difficulty obtained, succeeded in introducing into those Parishes fifty tons of meal and flour within the last two months, which they sold under first cost. Had they not done so, the consequences must have been most appalling, as the entire capital of all the Huxters in those Parishes would not supply the children resident there with even one meal. The contributions received by the Committee within the last two months amount to £107. -- The Committee pledge themselves to collect the difference between that sum and £200 and they now earnestly and urgently request of Government to grant them a like sum of £200 in aid of these subscriptions. If Government will grant the foregoing request, the Committee pledge themselves that no fellow Creature will die of want within the next twelve months within their district. But if they decline to do so, the exertions of the Committee will become entirely paralyzed, and disease and famine will seize on many a victim.

Hoping Dear Sir, you will forward this Communication to Government with such observations as your intimate Knowledge of country suggests. We remain with sincere esteem and regard Yours very respectfully

John Barrett O'Sullivan, Chairman of the Committee  
John Edward Barrett, Treasurer

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B. COVERING LETTER BY DANIEL O'CONNELL ON FORWARDING ABOVE LETTER TO SIR RANDOLPH ROUTH

Merrion Square
November 16 / 1846

Sir

I beg leave to enclose to you the letter to me from the Poor Relief Committee of the United Parishes of Kilmichael and Macloneigh. I know that a repetition of tales of distress palls on the mind and checks the vivacity of attention. I venture particularly to press upon your attention this especial case of a district in which there is neither town nor Village to afford any scope for the application of the principles of political economy. There must be, unless the people are sacrificed, a direct application of public funds by the Government of funds applicable in the manner suggested.

On behalf, therefore, of a most wretched portion of my constituents, I beg leave earnestly to press their claim on your kind consideration.

I have the honour to be,
With the greatest respect
Your obedient Servant
Daniel O'Connell

Sir Randolph Routh
The Castle.

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**C. MEMO ON THE MARGIN OF O'CONNELL'S COVERING LETTER ABOVE**

Answered on 17th November -- that there is no fund or authority to make this grant of £200.  
R Routh