cases. In light of the compelling new evidence surrounding Bloody Sunday, we add our voice to the calls for a new inquiry into this tragedy.

We are also concerned by the deteriorating conditions under which Republican prisoners are being held in Britain and in particular the treatment of Roisin McAliskey. It is essential, in negotiating a new political framework for Northern Ireland, that respect for human rights be guaranteed. The creation of a Bill of Rights, and a police service with the confidence of the whole community, are essential to ensure the protection of the rights of all and to lay a solid foundation for a lasting peace.

We strongly oppose the continued and increased punishment beatings by paramilitaries in both communities. Such atrocities have no place in society, and we call for an immediate end to these attacks.

It is essential that there be no repeat of the deplorable events during last year's marching season. The RUC behavior at Drumcree further eroded the confidence of the Catholic community in fairness of the police force. As the State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices recently noted: ''Many observers on both sides of the community perceived the Government's reversal in the face of unlawful Unionist protests as a victory of might over the rule of law, and the incident damaged the RUC's reputation as an impartial police force.''

We therefore strongly endorse the recommendations in the North Report that an independent parades commission be given full decision-making powers to deal effectively with controversial parades. We are concerned at the British Government's decision to delay implementation of significant sections of the report, which in our view must be in place in advance of this year's marching season.

The Friends of Ireland welcome the strong commitment of President Clinton and the Congress to the success of the peace process in Northern Ireland, and the transformation in the situation which all have helped bring about. We are confident that the United States will continue to play a constructive role in encouraging an early and peaceful resolution of the conflict for the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland.

FRIENDS OF IRELAND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Senate

Edward M. Kennedy.
Daniel Patrick Moynihan.
Christopher J. Dodd.

House of Representatives

Newt Gingrich.
Richard A. Gephardt.
James T. Walsh.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, March 14, 1997, the Federal debt stood at $5,362,748,754,102.53.

One year ago, March 14, 1996, the Federal debt stood at $5,035,166,000,000.

Twenty-five years ago, March 14, 1972, the Federal debt stood at $428,412,000,000 which reflects a debt increase of nearly $5 trillion—$4,934,336,754,102.53—during the past 25 years.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

APPOINTMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT COUNSEL TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGATIONS OF ILLEGAL FUNDRAISING

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of Senate Joint Resolution 22, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 22) to express the sense of the Congress concerning the application by the Attorney General for the appointment of an independent counsel to investigate allegations of illegal fundraising in the 1996 Presidential election campaign.

The Senate resumed consideration of the joint resolution.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last week there was an attempt made, I think, on the part of some—not all, but on the part of some—a serious attempt made in the Judiciary Committee to put together a bipartisan letter to the Attorney General regarding what should be done on the question of an independent counsel and some of the campaign fundraising issues. Unfortunately, it ended up being a partisan matter and the Republican majority, as is their right, sent a highly partisan letter asking immediately for an independent counsel.

Most of us on the other side sent a letter, which I signed as ranking member, along with other Democratic members, asking basically that we follow the law and we go through the various steps required on the issue of independent counsel: That we do not bring political pressure on the Attorney General to act one way or the other, recognizing that the reason for the independent counsel law was to shield the process and the Attorney General from political pressure or posturing.

In this regard, I would like to draw the attention of the Senate to the lead editorial in yesterday's Washington Post. The Post has been in the forefront of those investigative journalists who have been working on stories about many aspects of fundraising that has been taking place, and is taking place, to finance Federal elections—both fundraising by the Republican Party and by the Democratic Party. Certainly, the Post has not been shy about criticizing Republicans or Democrats, in the Congress or out, with regard to campaign fundraising.

It is interesting to read their editorial because, basically, they take the same position as we had taken on the Democratic side of the Senate Judiciary Committee. They speak of all the reasons to wait and follow the law itself, as she is now doing, and to have the Attorney General make her own determination. It ends by saying this:

There is one other major factor that argues for waiting awhile before deciding whether to seek an independent counsel in the campaign finance case. It has to do with what we believe to be the integrity and, if you will, independence of this attorney general herself. She is an uncommon figure in this town, and this administration, as even many who are banging on the table for an independent prosecutor will agree. We do not think it would be an inducement to sleeping well at night to know she was on your case if you had violated the law and were trying to hide it—especially with her honor being publicly challenged over and over again on this matter.

You balance risks in a decision like this. The risk of leaving the case in her hands at this stage, while Justice Department, congressional and other investigators continue to try to flesh it out, seems pretty slim. Events could change that. But right now the matter seems to us to be proceeding well enough without an independent counsel.

I ask unanimous consent the entire editorial be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the editorial was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, Mar. 16, 1997]

THE INDEPENDENT COUNSEL ISSUE

Attorney general Janet Reno says the conditions that would require the naming of an independent counsel in the case of the fundraising for the president's reelection campaign have yet to be met. She's taking a lot of heat for that. Critics accuse her of trying to protect the president. Congressional Republicans, some Democrats and all manner of other commentators say if ever a case carried out for an independent prosecutor, it is this one. We aren't so sure. Anything could turn up tomorrow. But on the basis of what is known today, an argument can be made that Ms. Reno is right.

We say that as strong supporters of the independent counsel statute, though in some instances we have thought past counsels carried on too long or went too far. We say it also as a frequent critic of both the administration and the rotten system of campaign finance, whose corrupting qualities the president did so much to confirm last year. The fund-raising practices, some of them, in which he, the vice president and their adherents indulged were shabby, heavy-handed, demeaning, unseemly, questionable, destructive of public confidence and pretty close to the edge. But it isn't clear they were illegal. That, in fact, is the problem. The law is at least elliptical; not enough of what ought to be illegal is.

The virtue of the independent counsel act is that it reduces the conflict of interest that inevitably arises when an administration is called upon to investigate its own behavior. But it is not meant to avert mere awkwardness; it comes into play in only certain instances. The attorney general must seek appointment of an independent counsel (by the special court created to do so) when confronted with specific, credible evidence of criminal wrongdoing by the president, vice president, Cabinet officials and certain others in the executive branch, including a limited number of senior White House aides. She also may seek appointment of a counsel when confronted with evidence of such conduct by a lesser official where she feels there is a conflict.

The evidence of such conduct in this case thus far is a lot more limited than the churning surrounding the case would suggest. A lot of pretty squalid stuff was done. But so far as we know, no specific, credible evidence exists that, say, an official covered by the act sold a particular piece of policy for a campaign contribution, or knowingly accepted money from a forbidden source. You could make the generic charge against both presidential campaigns that they violated and pretty well trashed the campaign finance laws, including their criminal provisions, by raising so much so-called soft money in excess of federal limits. They pretended it wasn't campaign money when it