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THE 1983 NEW YORK ST PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

In response to press queries on participation in the forthcoming St Patrick's Day Parade in New York, the Irish Consulate-General issued the following statement:

We regret that a situation has been created which forces all Irish Government representatives and agencies to break with our long record of participation in the St. Patrick's Day Parade in New York.

In Ireland, and indeed throughout the world, St Patrick's Day is an occasion which draws together Irish people and friends of Ireland of every religious creed and every political persuasion in joint homage to Ireland's patron and to a heritage which is common to all Irish traditions. The bitter fruits of division, so evident in Northern Ireland, render such occasions particularly precious.

This year the organisers of the New York St Patrick's Day Parade

have selected as Grand Marshal of the Parade a person who has an avowed personal involvement in sponsoring violence in Ireland and who heads an organisation which the United States courts have declared to be agents of the IRA. The IRA, which is an illegal organisation in both parts of Ireland, has been responsible for a majority of the killings which have occurred in Northern Ireland since the troubles began. The overwhelming majority of victims have been Irish people.

The great majority of Irish people have a deep commitment to the process of politics and reconciliation. They repudiate violence both on moral grounds and because they believe it is a profoundly misguided and counterproductive approach to the present situation in Northern Ireland.

An element among those who have inherited from earlier times the privilege of organising the New York Parade have chosen to ignore this deeply held conviction. Instead, an attempt is being made to exploit the traditional goodwill felt towards the Parade and to link it with support for violence in Ireland.

We deplore the use of the healing and unifying symbol of Ireland's national patron for such bitterly divisive and destructive ends and we look forward to a time when the New York St Patrick's Day Parade will again become an occasion which every Irish person and friend of Ireland can wholeheartedly share.

9 February, 1983