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Speech by An Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald, T.D.,
at a luncheon for Vice President George Bush in
Dublin Castle, Tuesday, 5th July, 1983.

It is a special honour for me to welcome you, Mr. Vice President and Mrs. Bush and all our American friends to Dublin today.

When we met in Washington ten months ago you mentioned your hopes of coming to Dublin and visiting this city, where a young Irish architect called James Hoban first drew his inspiration. Out of a total of seven applicants three other Irishmen, as well as Hoban, competed for the White House design in 1792. Hoban won on the design of the best known Irish house in the world. The Irish in America, who had been to the fore in the politics and campaigns of the revolutionary period, were already marking the transition to the post-revolutionary period of the new American civilization.

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In Ireland we are intensely conscious that the United States has been a haven for our people for over two hundred years, from the first arrival there in the early eighteenth century of Presbyterians from Ulster who opened up the early frontier and of those Catholic Irish who came to Maryland, Virginia and the Carolines.

With the growth of the New Republic and securely protected by strong democratic institutions, the Irish in America thrived, making their own contribution in politics, in law, in the churches, in literature and in arms. All the while they retained a pride in the nation that they left and an eagerness to see realised the dawn of democracy and freedom in their homeland.

There are five million Irish in this island, Mr. Vice President. In your nation, where your President is a Reagan and where the Speaker of your House of Representatives is an O'Neill, there are over forty million who trace their heritage to Ireland. Nothing more eloquently exemplifies the nature and the intensity of the ties between Ireland and the United States.

We Irish are heartened by the goodwill shown by so many Americans who have visited us as welcome guests, who have availed of our investment programmes, encouraged our trade and endorsed our great objective of reconciliation in Ireland.

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The principal task we face in this island is a truly daunting one. It is our responsibility to find accommodation within the island of Ireland between those two traditions which make us what we are, and which also have contributed so much to making America what it is. As part of this undertaking, we have encouraged our British neighbours, who share this problem with us - no less because our histories have been intertwined and remain intertwined in Northern Ireland - to join with us in building peace and reconciliation in Ireland. This was indeed the commitment solemnly undertaken by Mrs. Thatcher and myself less than two years ago in London, and which we must now together implement.

The parties in the Republic and the Social Democratic and Labour Party in the North have recently come together in the New Ireland Forum, in a new joint initiative to examine how peace and stability can be achieved in this island. We look forward particularly to contributions from members of the Protestant tradition in Northern Ireland to the Forum process.

The New Ireland Forum has been supported by many friends in the United States. The goodwill and encouragement of all Americans will be important for Ireland in the future no less than in the past: to the community in Northern Ireland, beset by despair and frustration and at times of high emotion tempted even to

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vengeance, nothing is more vital than encouragement and evidence that those outside the area care for its people in their tragic drama. In this very process of searching for peace in Ireland, we will establish a new and closer relationship with our British neighbours.

Mr. Vice President, we are deeply appreciative of the interest which President Reagan has taken in the country of his forbears, and of his special concern for the tragic division within Northern Ireland. In his statements on Ireland and in his direct contacts with me he has been supportive of our attempts to promote reconciliation both within Ireland and between Ireland and Britain. The United States, which has so many special ties with both Britain and Ireland, is uniquely qualified, not to prescribe specific solutions, but rather to encourage a political process which would end the miserable tragedy of Northern Ireland and open a new era of peace and friendship between the people of these islands. All of us - the Irish in this State, both sections of the people of Northern Ireland and indeed, I believe, the British also - will need your support and encouragement, that of President Reagan, and that of all our many friends in America in the prosecution of this great enterprise.

Mr. Vice President, as members of the European Community we have recently had occasion to express our concern about a

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number of problems which included Central America, the Middle East, Poland and the Conference on Security and Cooperation on Europe.

It is heartening to note the growing signs of recovery in the world economy after four years of recession. For the moment, these signs are confined to a few major countries but they are nonetheless encouraging. We particularly welcome the situation in your own country, Mr. Vice President, where evidence of a strong revival in economic activity is now unmistakably clear.

Policy in the United States has a decisive influence on interest rates. It is my hope that, in the spirit of the commitments made at Williamsburg, your Administration will be able to structure policy in a fashion conducive to lowering them. Thus, supported by appropriate policies in other countries, we could all look forward confidently to the realisation of the objective formulated at Williamsburg of promoting "a sound and sustainable recovery, bringing new jobs and a better life for the people of the world".

Mr. Vice President, statesmen in exchanging greetings speak routinely of the "relations between our two peoples". In the case of Ireland and the United States the hackneyed phrase recovers its full force and resonance. Our relations are based not on national interest or on diplomatic calculation: they

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are founded solidly on generations of close contact between millions of people. We must never take this for granted. Your visit to this land, to which you and Mrs. Bush are most warmly welcome, is an important reinforcement of these deep and abiding links of kinship and friendship and shared hopes and values.