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Cc A Sec Gallagher.
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1st Sec A/I
P/A Friends of Ireland.
15/3/89

ST. PATRICK'S DAY STATEMENT
FRIENDS OF IRELAND.
UNITED STATES SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MARCH 17, 1990

As Friends of Ireland in the United States Congress, we join today with people of Irish heritage everywhere on this first St. Patrick's Day of the new decade to honor Ireland and to support the cause of peace, reconciliation, and justice for Northern Ireland.

Again this year, in the strongest possible terms, we condemn the violence and bloodshed in Northern Ireland. Absolutely and unequivocally, we abhor all attempts to achieve political goals in Northern Ireland through a campaign of hate and terror. We oppose all those in Ireland, the United States, or anywhere in the world who lend support to this terrorism, and we call on them to cease any political or financial support for violence.

We are troubled at this time by two developments in the past year that are serious setbacks for the cause of reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

First, while we welcome the British Government's acknowledgement of the gross miscarriage of justice in the case of the Guildford Four, we continue to be deeply concerned by the lack of relief in the Birmingham Six case. Inevitably, the circumstances of the Guildford Four case call into question the convictions of the Birmingham Six, who were sentenced to life imprisonment for the 1974 bombings of two pubs in Birmingham, England. We urge the British Government to support the fullest possible review of this case and we take particular notice of the recent resolutions introduced in both the House and Senate calling for a review of the Birmingham Six case.

Second, we are concerned over reports of collusion between British security forces and extremist paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. Reports of such collusion only serve to deepen the mistrust in Northern Ireland. The allegations that British security officers have provided information about the identities and activities of Nationalists in Northern Ireland are extremely troubling. We urge the British Government to get to the bottom of these allegations immediately, to make the findings of the investigation public, and to prosecute any officers responsible for such reprehensible activities.

We welcome the successful recent efforts of the Irish Government in reviving the economy and in achieving a rate of economic growth of 3 to 4 percent a year, one of the highest rates of growth among the nations in the European Community. We hope that this progress will soon be reflected in a significant decline in unemployment.

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For too long, emigrants from Ireland have endured unnecessary additional hardships because of the injustices in U.S. immigration laws. We applaud the success of the Donnelly visa program and its contribution toward reducing these injustices in recent years.

We commend President Bush and his administration for their continuing support for the efforts of Ireland and Great Britain to work together to address the social, economic, political and security problems of Northern Ireland, and we stand ready to work with the Administration to achieve these goals.

We continue to support the work of both the Irish and British Governments through the framework of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to promote peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. We remain committed to the belief that the solution to the problems of Northern Ireland will be found in a context which involves improved relations between the two communities in the North, between all the people sharing the island of Ireland, and between Ireland and Great Britain.

We commend the work of the International Fund for Ireland, established in a bilateral agreement between Great Britain and Ireland in 1986, to promote cooperation in economic and social development projects in areas most affected by the conflict in Northern Ireland.

We are encouraged by the success of the Fund in providing assistance for more than 1,200 projects and helping to generate over 8,000 permanent full-time jobs, half in the past year. We commend the Fund's shift in focus in 1988 toward assisting disadvantaged areas and helping local groups in depressed communities to revive their local economies. In our view, economic development is an essential part of the reconciliation process in Northern Ireland, and we urge the Fund to expand these important efforts.

We continue to be concerned about the disparity in unemployment rates between the two communities in Northern Ireland. We note the recent enactment by the British Parliament of a new Fair Employment Act, and we are hopeful that it will be vigorously implemented to reduce discrimination against the Nationalist minority in Northern Ireland.

Finally, we renew our commitment to the goal of Irish unity. We encourage the leaders of both the two great traditions in Northern Ireland, as well as the British and Irish Governments, to become part of the sweeping process of global reconciliation so that the spirit of reconciliation may come to all of Ireland too.

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