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DATE: 14 MARCH 1997
TO: HQ FROM: WASHINGTON
FOR: JAMES McINTYRE FROM: ADRIAN O'NEILL
CC'D: PRESS SECTION; DERMOT BRANGAN, CGNY.

Attached, for your information, is the text of the remarks made by Senator Mitchell at last night's AIF dinner in Washington. As you will see, the Senator made a strong statement condemning the "twin demons of Northern Ireland - violence and intransigence".

The Senator also made a strong appeal to Irish America not to support those who engage in or condone violence.

The Senator's remarks made a powerful impact on the audience and were very well received.

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TOTAL PAGES: (9)

*By Nolan
Already seen by the
Taoiseach - so not
passed on
[Signature]
23. 3. 97.*

**Excerpts from remarks by Senator George J. Mitchell
American-Ireland Fund Dinner
Washington, D.C. March 13, 1997**

I am grateful for this award. The American-Ireland Fund is an important force for good in Ireland. I commend you for your efforts and I encourage you to continue them.

As you know, I've spent most of the past two years in Northern Ireland. On my trips back to the U.S., I've been asked two questions, over and over again, by Americans who care about Ireland: Why are you doing this? And, What can I do to help?

Tonight, I will try to answer both of those questions.

Why am I doing this?

I've asked myself that question many times. To answer it, I must go back nearly 20 years, before I'd ever been to Ireland, before I'd ever thought seriously about Northern Ireland.

Before I entered the United States Senate I had the privilege of serving as a Federal Judge. In that position I had great power. The power I most enjoyed exercising was when I presided over what are called naturalization ceremonies. They're citizenship ceremonies. A group of people who'd come from every part of the world, who'd gone through all the required procedures, gathered before me in a federal courtroom. There I administered to them the oath of allegiance to the United States and, by the power vested in me under our constitution and laws I made them Americans.

It was always emotional for me, because my mother was an immigrant, my father the orphan son of immigrants. They had no education and they worked hard all their lives at difficult and low-paying jobs. But because of their efforts, and, more importantly, because of the openness of American society, I, their son, was able to become the majority leader of the United States Senate.

After every naturalization ceremony, I spoke personally with each new American, individually or in family groups. I asked them where they came from, how they came, why they came. Their stories were as different as their countries of origin. But they were all inspiring, and through them ran a common theme, best expressed by a young Asian. When I asked why he had come, he replied, in slow and halting English, "I came because here in America everybody has a chance".

A young man who'd been an American for just a few minutes summed up the meaning of our country in a single sentence. Here, everybody has a chance.

I was one of those who had a chance, and I thank God for my good fortune. Now, by an accident of fate, in a way that I did not seek or expect, I have been placed in a position where I can help others to have a chance. That they are in Ireland, the land of my father's heritage, is but a coincidence. That I am able to help, even in just a small way, is what matters.

No one can really have a chance in a society dominated by fear and violence. And so I, who have been helped by so many, now must do what I can to help others to try to end the violence, to banish the fear, to hasten the day when all the people of Northern Ireland can lead lives of peace, reconciliation and opportunity.

Let me say, as clearly and as emphatically as I can: There will be peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. I do not know exactly when it will come. But I am convinced that it is inevitable, for one overriding reason: It is the will of the overwhelming majority of the people of Northern Ireland.

They remain deeply divided along sectarian lines, they are suspicious and hostile, they mistrust each other. But they have a fervent desire not to return to the violence which for so long has filled their lives with fear and anxiety.

It will take a very long time for the mistrust to end. But it need not take a long time for the violence to end. Once it does, once people can live free of fear, then gradually the walls of division will come down. Walls that exist on the ground, and in people's minds, will come down, brick by brick, person by person, slowly but inevitably.

There is no alternative to democratic, meaningful, inclusive dialogue. For that to come about, there must be an end to violence and to intransigence. They are the twin demons of Northern Ireland - violence and intransigence. They feed off each other in a deadly ritual in which most of the victims are innocent.

There are those who don't want anything to change, ever. They want to recreate a past that can never again be. But their way will only guarantee never-ending conflict. It will insure that the next half century is as full of death and fear as was the past half century.

The people of Northern Ireland must make it clear to their leaders that they oppose intransigence, that they want meaningful negotiation. Not capitulation; not the surrender of conviction. But good-faith negotiation that places the interest of the people, the interest of peace, above personal or political considerations. Good faith negotiation can produce an agreed settlement that will command the support of the majority in Northern Ireland, including the majority in each community. It can be done.

With an end to intransigence must come a total and final repudiation of violence. There is no justification for violence, or the threat of violence. To those of you who ask: What can I do? Here is my answer: You, the leaders of the Irish-American community, must say that you condemn violence, that you demand its end, that you will not support those who engage in or support or condone violence. You must say it publicly, loudly, and forcefully. And you must say it over and over again.

Violence is wrong. It is counter productive. It deepens divisions. It increases hatred. It hurts innocent people. It makes peace and reconciliation more difficult to attain. It must end.

Let me be clear on one more point. There is no moral equivalence between intransigence and violence. They are both wrong. But as bad as intransigence is, violence is worse. Intransigence takes away people's hopes. Violence takes away their lives.

There exists an historic opportunity to end centuries of conflict in Northern Ireland. If it is not seized now, it may be years before it returns, and the failure could cost many their lives.

I have devoted more than two years to the search for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. It is a worthy cause. It deserves your attention and support. You can make a difference. What you say is heard, what you do matters.

As you leave tonight, ask yourself this question: Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if, on St. Patrick's day next year, rather than praying for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, we were celebrating its existence?

If you agree, then beginning tomorrow, help make it happen. If you do, you will reap the greatest of all rewards: You will have earned the title of peacemaker.