

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With the Hispanic Caucus March 16, 1993

Q. Mr. President, what are you doing in this meeting tonight, or this afternoon? Some special—

The President. Well, we're going to talk about a lot of things of interest to the caucus, and I'm going to listen. We're going to talk about the economic program, and they're going to talk about some things that they're interested in in the administration. And they can talk about it when the meeting is over. I'm listening today.

Surgeon General

Q. Mr. President, could you tell us why Dr. Novello is being asked to step down as Surgeon General before her term expires?

The President. I don't know what arrangements—she's going to continue in the Depart-

ment of Health and Human Services, and I have a very high regard for her. And I told Donna Shalala when I appointed her Secretary of HHS that I had a very strong feeling about wanting my health department director from home to be the Surgeon General, but that I very strongly approved of the record Dr. Novello has made and I hoped that we could persuade her to stay on. And this is an arrangement they all worked out. I don't know the details and the timing. I can't comment on it. I just don't know anything about that.

NOTE: The exchange began at 5:51 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks at the American Ireland Fund Dinner March 16, 1993

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for once again participating in the great American charade designed to convince people that the President has more authority than the Speaker of the House. Now, if I were a prime minister, I wouldn't have to worry about that. [*Laughter*] Mr. Prime Minister, it's a delight to welcome you to our Nation's Capital, and I look forward to our visit tomorrow. I want to congratulate Chairman O'Reilly. Let me ask you: Do you like the purple? [*Laughter*] I want you to understand that is not royal purple. That is a substitute, because he made the ultimate sacrifice; he gave his President the green.

I want to thank all those who worked so hard to make this dinner successful. It's often remarked that on St. Patrick's Day we're all Irish, or we wish we were. I am actually part Irish, and I have often been accused of having a certain gift for blarney—[*laughter*]—although those were not the words used last year when that was said. I'm glad to see Senator Kennedy and Congressman Kennedy and Mrs. Smith in the audience. But, you know, President Kennedy was the first Irish Catholic to become President. But though a Baptist from Arkansas, I'm the

first graduate of a Catholic university to become President. I'm glad to see Father O'Donovan out there, my president, of Georgetown. Thank you.

As a younger man, I went through a period of intense uncertainty about whether I should pursue a career in music or a career in politics. I was happy to learn that the Prime Minister, whom you affectionately called the Taoiseach—you know, I want the Members of the Congress to learn that. I like that, the chieftain. It has a good feeling. [*Laughter*] He's been an exponent of one of Ireland's most popular forms of native music, country and western. I'm glad he pursued his political career in Ireland, because if he had chosen to come to Arkansas, he might have defeated me with that sort of background. [*Laughter*] You know, Irish music has made almost as much of a contribution to modern life as Irish politicians, from the Chieftains to Phil Coulter to Van Morrison to that wonderful group U-2 that played such a major role in trying to get the young people in America to go and vote. The first time I heard that their lead singer was named Bono, I asked what his last name was. Then I found out he didn't

have a last name. Then, after I spent an hour with him, I discovered he didn't need one. [Laughter]

You know, there are 44 million Americans of Irish descent, that is, those who are telling the truth and those who lie, which qualifies them—[laughter]—who have contributed immeasurably to every sphere of our life. In fact, the house that I now live in, which either makes me the resident of America's finest public housing or, as some of my critics say, the crown jewel of the Federal penal system, was designed by James Hoban, a famous Irishman who designed the White House based on a model of a magnificent house in Ireland.

I thought I would tell you this, for those of you who don't know, since President Kennedy once said at a dinner of Nobel laureates that it was the most distinguished array of brainpower ever gathered in the White House since Thomas Jefferson dined there alone. [Laughter] James Hoban defeated Thomas Jefferson for the design of the White House. Jefferson submitted anonymously a design for the White House, and the people making the decision, basically George Washington and a few of his friends, concluded that Hoban was superior to Jefferson. [Laughter]

President Kennedy said that "Here on Earth, God's work is truly our own." Whenever I'm asked to speak in a church I say that. It captured for me, more than anything else, what the essence of public service is about. The American Ireland Foundation embodies that phrase as well as any group of Americans: offering hope and opportunity to all the people of Ireland; promoting peace, reconciliation, and common enterprise between Catholics and Protestants, nationalists and unionists; and promoting cultural activities, community development, employment opportunities in health care and counseling. I am absolutely delighted, I

must say, that the Government of Ireland is now providing a site, an historic castle, for the new Hole in the Wall Gang Camp for children with life-threatening diseases. I'm glad to see Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward here tonight, and I can tell you that Hillary and I visited the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp in Connecticut a couple of years ago, and I was moved beyond words by what I saw there. And I thank everyone who is responsible for giving the children of Ireland this remarkable opportunity.

The American Ireland Fund is doing in Ireland what we are trying to do here in the United States: to offer opportunity, to encourage responsibility, to reknit the social fabric badly frayed by the pressures of modern life, and to restore a sense of community without which it is difficult for people to proceed with their individual and family lives. I'm proud to support your work because it's important, it's an inspiration, it's a lesson for all of us, not only for those who are Irish all year long but for those who are just Irish for 24 hours a year.

I thank the Irish Americans who have worked with me, particularly in the last 16 months, to try to help me learn more about Ireland, as well as about the problems and promise of Irish Americans here at home, and I look forward to working with all of you in the days and weeks and years ahead. I hope that we will always be able to bring to our labors the remarkable spirit I sense in this room tonight, and never lose the sense of humor which has become so associated with this wonderful holiday.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:43 p.m. at the Capital Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to Anthony J.F. O'Reilly, chairman, American Ireland Fund.

Nomination for Five Ambassadorial Posts

March 16, 1993

The President named five career Foreign Service officers to ambassadorial positions today. The President announced his intention to nominate Alvin Adams to be Ambassador to Peru; Harry Gilmore, Ambassador to Armenia; Mark

Johnson, Ambassador to Senegal; Marilyn McAfee, Ambassador to Guatemala; and Allan Wendt, Ambassador to Slovenia.

"Secretary Christopher and I have pledged to name Ambassadors who meet the highest