

where others are at odds—is to do anything to disrupt the process. We’re trying to help make the peace, not to interrupt it.

Q. Would you address Irish-Americans today, that may on St. Patrick’s Day especially be listening to what is said here at the White House, who feel incumbent to contribute money to the IRA and for Republican forces in Ireland, since a great amount of the money that goes into that is coming from the United States?

The President. I would hope all Irish-Americans would embrace the declaration and the peace process. That’s what I think they ought to do.

Q. Given your role as President of the United States and given your relationship with the Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, and also your relationship with the British Prime Minister, what active role do you think the United States can play in trying to find peace in Northern Ireland?

The President. Well, right now I think we ought to give Prime Minister Reynolds a chance to work with Prime Minister Major to keep pushing it forward. I thought that we had a role to play in the issuance of the visa because I thought it would make a statement that the United States is searching for peace, wanted to give Mr. Adams a chance to have his voice heard here, make his statements here, articulate his concerns here, see the political process here, and hear from Irish-Americans that we support peace. I think that was the major thing that we could do at this moment. I think now we’ve seen a very heartening statement, apparently, by Mr. Adams today. I’ve had both the Prime

Minister of Great Britain and the Prime Minister of Ireland reaffirm their commitment to the process, and let’s see if we get a few breaks.

Whitewater Investigation

Q. Mr. President, on the Hill today you may hear from some Members, even Democrats, that the prospect of hearings on Whitewater is inevitable. What will you tell them?

The President. That it’s—the same thing I’ve always said: It’s up to Congress. I read a book the other night that in the early part of our century, one of our first four or five Presidents, a \$40 mirror was bought for the White House that was bought in another country, and the Congress in the early 1800’s spent several thousand dollars on hearings looking into this \$40 mirror. So I don’t know that—it’s up to the Congress. They’re an independent and coequal branch of Government, and they ought to do whatever it is they think is the right thing to do.

Bosnia

Q. Are you encouraged by Bosnia, sir?

The President. Yes, I am encouraged.
Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:59 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Féin. Prime Minister Reynolds’ closing remarks in Gaelic translate as, “A thousand thanks for everything you have done, and I wish you every success.”

Remarks at the Celebration of Ireland Dinner March 17, 1994

We are in the grip of the day, aren’t we? [*Laughter*] Thank you so much. Prime Minister and Mrs. Reynolds and to all our guests tonight, a warm welcome. *Ceade mile failte.*

Tonight we sought to honor the Prime Minister, his wife, and his family, and his family of fellow Irish men and women, in a way inspired by the warm and convivial hospitality of the Irish themselves that they have brought to our shores now through the ages.

There was a grand party in this house a long time ago, in 1829, when the first Irish-American

was inaugurated as President of the United States. Andrew Jackson was the only President in our Nation’s history whose parents were both immigrants to America. They came from Carrickfergus, a little town near Belfast. And their son grew up to be a great Democrat and a man of the people. When “Old Hickory,” as he was called then, opened this house to his people, so many came that the furniture was crushed in the excitement. That’s probably why so many of you have to stand tonight. [*Laughter*] The crowd squeezed so closely around the new

President in the Blue Room just down the hall that he had to escape by jumping out a window. Mr. Prime Minister, we will try to control ourselves better this evening. [Laughter] We promise that neither you nor I will be jumping out of any windows.

I wish I could recognize everyone here this evening of Irish descent. But perhaps I would do better to recognize everyone here who is not of Irish descent. [Laughter] I would like to say that the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Carol Browner, is here tonight with her father, who is from Limerick.

When people think of Irish strongholds in America, they think of Boston or Chicago or New York. But many people from all over America, including my home region, come from Ireland. According to the 1980 census, Taylorsville, Mississippi, has a higher percentage of Irish-Americans than Boston. Of course, the total—I know what you're thinking—the total population is 24, but it still makes a great story. [Laughter] Actually, that's not true; it's larger than that.

My own mother, as John Hume, a Member of Parliament from Derry, said today, was a Cassidy. And he assured me today that the Cassidys back in Ireland are a very nice family. I thank him for that courtesy, inasmuch as I seem to have relatives turning up all over the place from time to time. [Laughter] To the Irish who are here, relax, the Americans will explain it to you later.

Maybe I will jump out the window, Prime Minister. [Laughter]

This is the one day when we Americans remind ourselves that we are the sons and daughters of Ireland, both southerners and northerners, Catholic and Presbyterian, members of the Democratic and Republican Party, although we still have a few more Irish on our side.

When the Irish toast each other, they say, "*Slainte!*", which we Americans always took to mean health. But the White House did some research on this, and I am reliably informed that in Irish, "*Slainte!*" actually means health care for all. [Laughter]

You won't believe this, but one of my erudite and overeducated staff members prepared another set of notes for me tonight, all in Gaelic. And I said, "It looks like Hail Mary and the Lord's Prayer." And he said, "That's exactly what it is." [Laughter] So for a keepsake, I'm

going to give the notes to the Prime Minister and say that if I could say but one prayer tonight, it would be for peace and reconciliation in Ireland.

This is truly an era of profound change in our world. The Middle East is courageously trying to take steps toward peace. And we are doing our part. South Africa is weeks away from its first nonracial election. Tomorrow, here in the White House, we will witness the signing of agreements between Bosnians and Croats that advance the hope for peace in that troubled region. Our Nation's long cooperation with Ireland has never been more important than today.

In recent months, Prime Minister Reynolds and Prime Minister Major have tried to bring an end to a generation of troubles in Northern Ireland. Both have acted with vision and great political courage in putting forward the historic joint declaration last December. And Mr. Prime Minister, you and Prime Minister Major deserve our admiration and our thanks. And your declaration deserves the support of all people of good faith everywhere.

It is difficult to know what to make of the latest attacks at Heathrow Airport. Like the violence in Hebron or in South Africa, they may be a simple reminder that reactionary forces will always attempt to kill the peace whenever the progress and the prospect of peace becomes a possibility. The United States condemns such acts, as it does all acts of terrorism. As Ireland searches for peace, I assure you that America remains steadfast in our support.

Our late Ambassador to your great country, William V. Shannon, whose wife, Elizabeth, is here tonight and who greeted us all, wrote a wonderful book called "*The American Irish*" in which he included a beautiful and touching note on the immigrants who came to America from the shamrock shores of Eire. "What did they seek?" he asked. The answer is the same for them as for all. They sought a door that would open and give them access to hope.

Mr. Prime Minister, America has always been a beacon of hope to others around the world. But it is your pursuit of peace that is Ireland's hope today. When you return home, I hope you will tell the people of Ireland that we treasure the contributions the Irish have made to our country and its culture. And in return we

stand with you, as you seek a door that would open and give all of Ireland access to the hope of peace.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:34 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Message on the Observance of Saint Patrick's Day

March 17, 1994

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Saint Patrick's Day 1994. On this feast of the patron Saint of Ireland, we reflect on Saint Patrick's bravery and determination in delivering to the Irish people his message of faith and hope for the future—a spirit passed down through the many generations that followed.

With tremendous courage and strength of belief, Saint Patrick helped his native Ireland usher in a new era. Before Patrick returned to his island home as a Christian convert and missionary, Ireland was the last bastion of Celtic Europe. He encouraged the Irish people to adapt their ancient culture and deep spirituality to the new faith that had already transformed much of Europe. By bringing Christianity to Ireland, Saint Patrick heralded a new Eire and

prepared his people to embrace the changing world around them.

In celebrating Saint Patrick's Day, our nation not only remembers the apostle of Ireland for his achievements, but we also honor the many contributions that Irish Americans have made to their adopted homeland. As inheritors of Saint Patrick's legacy, Irish Americans have strengthened the United States with the richness of their unique history. Blessed with educators and business people, political leaders and people of faith, our nation owes a debt of gratitude to this thriving community from the Emerald Isle.

As Americans everywhere gather to celebrate our "Irishness," I extend best wishes to all for a wonderful St. Patrick's Day.

BILL CLINTON

Statement on Signing Legislation on Highway Bridge Seismic Retrofitting

March 17, 1994

Today I am pleased to sign into law S. 1789—a bill that responds to January's earthquake in Southern California and will help States reduce potential losses from future earthquakes. This legislation expands the eligible uses of Federal bridge replacement and rehabilitation funds to include seismic retrofitting of highway bridges, regardless of whether the bridges are in need of other repairs or work. S. 1789 will greatly assist States in their efforts to reinforce bridges to better withstand earthquakes.

The California earthquake crippled much of the regional transportation system, serving as a sharp reminder of the vulnerability of our infrastructure to natural disasters and of the need to increase our preparedness for such events. The damage to the transportation network in

Southern California had far reaching consequences. People's everyday lives were changed because of the difficulty of travel in the region, most notably in the time and effort spent getting to work. All levels of government immediately pulled together to minimize the disruption and resulting economic losses. That effort is continuing.

In my visits to the earthquake-damaged areas with members of my Cabinet and the Congress, one question was repeatedly raised: "We cannot prevent another earthquake, but can we prevent any of the resulting loss of life and debilitating infrastructure damage?" With regard to much of the damage to bridges and overpasses, the answer to that question is "yes." The California earthquake proved that seismic retrofitting