

Remarks to the 1994 National Hockey League Champion
New York Rangers
March 17, 1995

Good afternoon. Please be seated. I'm delighted to see all of you here, and welcome to the White House and to the Rose Garden. You come on the first day that the trees are blooming, so you're bringing us all wonderful weather.

It's an honor for me to host the New York Rangers here, including the commissioner of the National Hockey League, Gary Bettman; the president and general manager of the Rangers, Neil Smith; coach Colin Campbell; and assistant coach Dick Todd. And I think Congressman Eliot Engel was supposed to be here, and he is unless they're still voting.

It was last June 14th when the Rangers won the Stanley Cup, finally breaking the infamous curse. The next day I got a letter from Senator Moynihan, a big Ranger fan, who said that since the Rangers brought the cup back to Madison Square Garden, I should bring the Rangers to the Rose Garden. I'm delighted you're finally here. We've been trying to arrange this visit for some time, but what's a few months compared to 54 years? [*Laughter*]

I can't tell you how much I personally enjoyed the playoffs. I really got into them. I tried to rearrange my schedule so that I could see the games. I enjoyed seeing Mark Messier predicting and delivering a victory when your backs were against the wall. I enjoyed Brian Leetch's MVP playoff performance, the first by an American-born player. And I especially enjoyed your goalie Mike Richter's acrobatic saves. All of us here in Washington can appreciate what goalies do because we have so many shots taken at us every day. And I was hoping maybe, in addition to a jersey, one of you could loan me a face mask for the next year or so. [*Laughter*]

I also want to say something that I observed watching these playoffs. Stars alone don't win

championships; teams do. I remember your chant from last year, "Heave ho. Everybody pulling together." This year it's turned into "Heave ho. Two in a row."

The Stanley Cup is the oldest trophy competition by professional athletes in North America, the only trophy that bears the names of not only the teams but the individual players who won it. I'd also like to say a special word of appreciation because the Rangers boast the first four Russians ever to have their names engraved on the Stanley Cup, another sign of our increasingly interconnected global community and America's outreach to the rest of the world.

I also admire the tradition that the entire team shares the Stanley Cup. Each player gets to take it home to friends and to family. This team took that one step further, because the Rangers know that teamwork isn't only about the guys who lace up the skates, it's also about your fans, too. And if ever a team had great fans, you do. So you paid your fans back by remembering right after the victory a longtime fan who had passed away, by bringing the cup to sick children in the hospital and even by bringing the cup to restaurants and bars throughout New York—[*laughter*—as well as to one of the Vice President's favorite hangouts, the David Letterman show.

For all that, I thank you. Your victory has shown us what is best about professional sports: perseverance, hard work, real commitment to working together. It's an example for which all of us in Madison Square Garden and the Rose Garden are very grateful.

Congratulations, and welcome again.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:39 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Reception March 17, 1995

Is the microphone on? Now it is. Taoiseach and Mrs. Bruton, let me say again, welcome to the White House. *Ceade m'le failte*.

We have been breaking out the green for many years on St. Patrick's Day, but this is truly an historic St. Patrick's Day. For the first time we have invited leaders of all the major political groups from Northern Ireland to join us, and I am delighted that so many are here tonight. Those who take risks for peace are always welcome under this roof.

President Kennedy, with his marvelous Irish understatement, once pointed out, and I quote, "The observance of St. Patrick's Day is almost as old in America as the Irish themselves. And some say they arrived in the 6th century." Actually, the first recorded mention of St. Patrick in America was in 1636, when an Irish ship bearing that name sailed into, where else, Boston Harbor. It, however, did not receive a warm welcome. The Puritans were not well disposed toward the Catholics, but as history shows, it was only a temporary setback as—[laughter].

During the Revolutionary conflict, George Washington even paid his own compliment to the holiday in 1776. On March 17th, he ordered that the password of the day be "Boston," and the response, "St. Patrick." By the way, the Colonies' general at that time was a Sullivan.

A few months later, at least a dozen Irishmen signed the Declaration of Independence, and another, Mr. Dunlap of Philadelphia, printed the Declaration for the first time. He also lost the original copy. [Laughter] But that setback, too, was temporary because the Irish knew then how to back winners.

The Irish first became a force in our politics in the 1790's when they supported Thomas Jefferson. To their eternal credit, many of their descendants have seen fit to back his Democratic descendants in the years since. Taoiseach, as you know, I am on my mother's side Irish; her name was Cassidy. What you may not know was that the decisive battle for the nomination for President in 1992 was in Illinois and Michigan on St. Patrick's Day.

It is said that Ireland's greatest export is its people. No country has benefited more from that export, Catholic and Protestant, than the

United States. These two traditions have been intertwined, and together have contributed immensely to our success as a nation and to our greatness as a people. More than a dozen Presidents descended from Irish ancestors, from Andrew Jackson, the son of immigrants from Carrickfergus near Belfast who was our first President of Irish-Protestant heritage, to John Kennedy, the great-grandson of a cooper who left County Wexford and was our first Irish-Catholic President. I might say we're honored to have his sister as our Ambassador to Ireland and his brother and two of his nephews in the United States Congress today. They're now seeking to expand their stranglehold; one of his nieces is the Lieutenant Governor of Maryland. The next thing you know they'll insist on a position on every city council in America. They have enough relatives to fill that. [Laughter]

In the fight for our independence and in the fight to preserve our Union, there were Irishmen from both traditions serving side by side in all-Irish units. In both wars, they were among the most feared warriors. They put freedom over faction, and they helped to build our Nation.

Finley Peter Dunne, the great Irish-American humorist, wrote that a fanatic is someone who is sure God would be on his side if only He knew all the facts. [Laughter] Today, with good humor but complete seriousness, I urge all our guests from Northern Ireland and all the parties concerned to put aside all extremism for the common good of peace.

The Prime Minister of Ireland and the Prime Minister of Great Britain, at no inconsiderable risk to themselves, have paved the way to a new era of peace. I urge all of you to follow that path. The tough tasks of compromise still lie ahead. The hard, unending work of democracy is never easy. Even here, after all these years, two centuries of it, we still have our difficulties from time to time, living with those who differ from us. But as you work to forge a new future, free of violence, free of intimidation, with the participation of all the people of Northern Ireland, the United States will stand by you.

America has received so many gifts from Ireland, so many people who have enriched our