

Bertie Ahern and former Prime Ministers John Bruton and Albert Reynolds of Ireland.

Remarks at a Groundbreaking Ceremony for Springvale Educational Village in Belfast

September 3, 1998

Thank you very much, Margaret. Margaret and Gerard said everything that needs to be said. I feel sort of like a fifth wheel now. They, just standing here and speaking as they did, embodied everything I would like to say to you and everything you would like to say to each other and everything your better selves calls on all of you to do. And I thank them for being here.

Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for your leadership in so many ways, large and small. Hillary and I are delighted to be back in Northern Ireland and to be here with you and Cherie. And I thank all those who were responsible for the Vital Voices conference at which Hillary spoke yesterday. I also would like to thank Secretary Mo Mowlam, who is one of the most remarkable people I ever met.

I thank others who have made this possible. Mo mentioned the First Lady. I also would like to thank Willie McCarter, the Chairman of the International Fund for Ireland; Lord Smith of Clifton, Vice Chancellor of the University; Professor Patrick Murphy, the Director of the Belfast Institute. I thank the members of the new Assembly with us today, the Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon, David Ervine, Joe Hendron, and of course, Gerry Adams. We're glad to be in your constituency, and I echo the words of the Prime Minister.

I thank the Americans who are here: the distinguished congressional delegation; the Secretary of Education, Dick Riley; the Secretary of Commerce, Bill Daley. You will notice, if you get a list of the Congress Members and the list of the people in the delegation, that—Assistant Secretary of Labor Kitty Higgins—there will be an enormous preponderance of Irish names in the American delegation here. And I thank them all. I thank especially Jim Lyons, my Special Adviser for Economic Initiatives, and Senator George Mitchell. I also would like to remember today our late Commerce Sec-

retary, Ron Brown, who did so much to bring opportunity here and who envisioned this day that we celebrate.

I want to say that, above all, the people who deserve recognition today are people on both sides of the peace line who need the work that will be done here. Here there is a site; there is a design; there are resources. But more than that, there is a glimpse of the future, that people so long torn apart will create something together that will benefit all.

Of course, there remain those who oppose the vision all of you share for reconciliation and tolerance. Thank God they live in the past and their support dwindles. With courage, determination, and palpable pride, which we saw all up and down the streets today driving from the Waterfront Hall to here, it is clear that people have chosen peace and the chance for prosperity.

These neighborhoods are your home, and you have taken them back. Now you are ready to move forward into a new century of hope, or, in the words of that great son of Belfast, Van Morrison, to “walk down the avenues again” because “the healing has begun.”

Indeed, the future has begun. And clearly the best path to a future that involves every citizen of every circumstance in every neighborhood is a strong education. Springvale Educational Village will help you get there. It will be a living, breathing monument to the triumph of peace. It will turn barren ground into fertile fields cultivating the world's most important resource, the minds of your people, providing opportunity not just for the young but for those long denied the chance for higher learning, creating jobs in neighborhoods where too many have gone without work for too long, bringing more technology and skill so that Northern Ireland at last can reap the full benefits of this new economy, creating unity from division, transforming a barbed wire boundary that kept communities apart into

common ground of learning and going forward together.

Again, let me thank Gerry Adams, who has worked hard to bring justice and a better life to the people of this constituency. There is more to be done by people on all sides. But his words this week, and I quote, "Violence must be a thing of the past, over, done with, gone"—those words were music to ears all across the world, and they pave the way for the progress still to come. Thank you, sir.

I am grateful that America was able to support Springvale working through the International Fund for Ireland, together with generous funding provided by the United Kingdom, the University of Ulster, and the Belfast Institute. All these allow us to break ground today.

I also want to acknowledge the support of Gateway 2000, an American company which has such a strong presence in the Republic and which has announced plans to donate a state-of-the-art computer system when Springvale opens. And I'm proud of the people here in Northern Ireland who, once again, have moved beyond pain to accomplishment.

Now you have, in the words of Seamus Heaney, a "chance to know the incomparable

and dive to a future." You have dared to dream of a better tomorrow. Now you dare to build one. That is even better. On this site and across this isle, what once seemed impossible is now becoming real. Don't stop.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:57 p.m. in a tent at the construction site. In his remarks, he referred to students Margaret Gibney, who introduced the President, and Gerard Quinn, who introduced Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Blair's wife, Cherie Blair; United Kingdom Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Marjorie (Mo) Mowlam; William T. McCarter, chairman, International Fund for Ireland; Lord Trevor Smith, vice chancellor, University of Ulster; Professor Patrick Murphy, chairman, Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education; Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon, and members David Ervine, Joseph Hendron, and Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams, Northern Ireland Assembly; former Senator George J. Mitchell, independent chairman of the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland; musician Van Morrison; and poet Seamus Heaney.

Remarks to Victims of the Bombing in Omagh, Northern Ireland

September 3, 1998

Thank you very much. Mr. Prime Minister, Mrs. Blair, Secretary Mowlam, Ambassador Lader, Senator Mitchell; to the people of Omagh. Hillary and I are honored to be in your presence. We come to tell you that, a long way away, the American people have mourned the loss of 28 innocents and all those who were injured. For those victims and family members who have come here today to say a word to us, we thank you for your presence.

To all of you, we thank you for standing up in the face of such a soul-searing loss and restating your determination to walk the road of peace.

We came here, knowing, as the Prime Minister said, that words are not very good at a time like this, simply to express our sympathy with the good people of this community, especially with the victims and their families, and

again to support your determined refusal to let a cowardly crime rob you of the future you have chosen.

What happened here on August 15th was so incredibly unreasonable, so shocking to the conscience of every decent person in this land, that it has perversely had exactly the reverse impact that the people who perpetrated this act intended. By killing Catholics and Protestants, young and old, men, women, and children, even those about to be born, people from Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic, and abroad—by doing all that in an aftermath of what the people have voted for in Northern Ireland, it galvanized, strengthened, and humanized the impulse to peace.

Even more than when we were here 3 years ago, people are saying to me: "It's high time that the few stop ruining the lives of the many;