

Remarks on Receiving the Paul O'Dwyer Peace and Justice Award September 11, 1998

Thank you very much. Thank you. Well, I have loved this, but you must be exhausted. [Laughter] I want to say, Hillary and I have been over there just lapping this up. We don't want this to ever end. [Laughter] But I'm afraid you're going to get dizzy if you keep getting up and down.

Let me say to Brian O'Dwyer and the O'Dwyer family, I am profoundly grateful. Senator Kennedy, thank you so much for what you said and for more, what you have done. When the history of this century is written, I doubt very seriously that there will be a single other United States Senator who will have done so much for so long for the American people as Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts. I also like to borrow a lot of Senator Kennedy's lines when I can get away with it, and I might say, I will never let "St. George" live it down.

I want to thank all of you who are here: the members of my Cabinet, Secretary Daley and Administrator Aida Alvarez, and Kitty Higgins and others who are here in the administration. Thank you, John Sweeney, for your championing Irish-American and every American worker's rights, for what you have done.

I thank the Members of Congress who are here who have supported our policy, both Republicans and Democrats who have stood up for the initiative the United States has made and made it possible for me to continue to do whatever it is that we have been able to do to advance the cause of peace.

This is an honor that really belongs to all of you and many who are not even here today. But mostly, whenever I look at it, I will think of Paul O'Dwyer, for his devotion to civil rights and human rights and social justice and the cause of the Irish people and peace in the Irish heart. He was beloved by many people, including me. I will never forget when I first met him in 1991. I will never forget all that happened from that day to this, and the wonderful journey that that began with Irish-Americans and the people of Ireland.

There are many people that I would like to thank—and I'd like to save Senator Mitchell until last. I want to thank Tony Blair, who called me this afternoon again to continue to push

the Irish peace process. And the great Prime Minister of Ireland, the *Taoiseach*, Bertie Ahern. And thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for being here as well and for your service. I want to thank their predecessors. I want to thank all the Members of Congress, those that are here and those who aren't. I, too, want to say a good word for Jean Kennedy Smith, who from time to time rivaled her brother in their pushy insistence that I should do more—[laughter]—and more and more.

There are some people in the White House I'd like to thank. I want you to know the Vice President—first of all, he had his priorities in order, going to Parents Night, and that ought to speak volumes. But he only has one more to go, you know, so he doesn't want to miss another Parents Night. But I want you to know, all those things that he litanized there in his little speech, more than any other Vice President in the history of this country, he was involved in every difficult, controversial, and bold decision this administration has made, always pushing for it, including the work we did in the Irish peace process. And I'm grateful to him very much for that.

I want to thank Sandy Berger and Jim Steinberg with the National Security Council, and their predecessors in my first term—Tony Lake, and I thank Nancy Soderberg, now at the United Nations—for what they did for the Irish peace process.

I want to thank Hillary for reaching out to the women of Ireland, for going to the Vital Voices conference there last week, and building real, genuine partnerships with people who are reaching across the lines that have divided people for so long, to raise children and start businesses and build peace block by block. I personally believe that it was a sort of an unprecedented effort by an American public figure to deal at a human level that I can only wish I had had the opportunity to do. But I thank her for that because I think it's been very important.

There's one other person I'd like to thank who's not here, but I was sitting here thinking when I saw Congressman Manton out there, and I remembered the first time I came to

the Queens Democratic Committee, and he was chairing the committee. And I was thinking about that first meeting we had in New York with Paul O'Dwyer; and I think my good friend Bruce Morrison, a former Congressman from Connecticut, was there, who Hillary and I have known for 30 years. But I would like to thank the person who introduced me to them, who started this whole journey, the man who ran my campaign in New York in 1991 and '92, Harold Ickes. Without him, none of this might not have happened, because he brought me to them.

Now, George Mitchell was unconscionable in the praise that he heaped on me tonight, but when I was in Northern Ireland with him, I felt like Ray Lankford. Anybody here know who Ray Lankford is? [Applause] He's the guy that bats behind Mark McGwire. [Laughter] And he's a good baseball player, by the way. I was standing up there and I had the feeling half of the crowd was saying, "Who's that big fellow up there with George Mitchell?" [Laughter]

He can say whatever he wants about my phone calls and my meetings and my endless—somebody had to run that deal. When he started running that peace process, the people on opposite sides literally did not sit in the same room and listen to each other while the other one was talking. George's first big deal was to make sure that people stayed in the same room while their counterparts were talking, and actually listened. That's how far we have come. That was the distance that was traveled between the beginning and the Good Friday Agreement.

I cannot imagine another person who could have done it. I would never have had the patience to sit there and do it. I cannot imagine. And for years, George would hardly speak to me. [Laughter] He said, "I got out of public life; I left the Senate; I wanted to have a private life; I wanted to have a family. And then you stuck me with this." [Laughter]

I told him one time—he mentioned this in Ireland—I said, "George, you know the title of that old country song about the guy that makes a bad divorce settlement, 'She Got the Gold Mine and I Got the Shaft'? You got the shaft." [Laughter] We'd go everywhere, people would clap for me, and George would have to go back and sit in the meeting where people didn't talk to each other, you know. [Laughter] He'd have to wait for days on end to see if people would

sneeze in the right way. It was unbelievable. [Laughter]

Finally, on this last trip to Ireland, George Mitchell finally said, "Thank you. I'm glad I got to do it"—after 3 years. And I appreciate it.

I tell you that to make a serious and large point. All over the world there are people who ought to get along together who can't stand each other. All over the world there are people that have a great deal in common, but they will never find out because they won't even sit down and talk to each other and listen respectfully. All over the world there are people who spend day after day after day after day in abject misery because they are in the grip of a destructive obsession where they define the merit of their life by their ability to—[inaudible]—hopefully, in their minds, repress somebody who is of a different racial, religious, ethnic, or tribal group.

Piercing through to the human heart and engaging the human mind and opening human ears, and getting it all done at once, and then going through a rigorous system of work through complex, real issues where real interests are at stake is about the most difficult, exhausting, demanding work. And I personally hope I'll live to see George Mitchell get a Nobel Prize for what he did for the people of Ireland. [Applause] Thank you. Thank you.

I know it will grieve you, but I'm not going to give this speech that my wonderful staff wrote for me, because we've been here too long. But I want to make a couple of points. This is not a done deal, number one. It's wonderful, and even on our last trip it was great—Secretary Daley was there, and people were actually talking about business instead of fighting. We went to Stormont, and I got to meet—at least all the different parties stood in the same room together. Even Mr. Paisley's crowd was in the same room with everybody else—[laughter]—and we had a visit. It was kind of nice. I liked it.

And then I went to Waterfront Hall and tried to be as honest as I could be about what still has to be done. We've got to constitute a government over there, consistent with the agreement. We have to continue with the decommissioning. We have to complete every last step of this process.

But the good news is, the people really want it. You know, we went to Armagh, to this beautiful, beautiful city. We had thousands of people

there, young and old, in the seat of St. Patrick's mission to Ireland—the last popular Englishman in Ireland until Tony Blair came along, I think. [Laughter] But it was so wonderful to see all those young people there. And then I can't add anything to what Hillary told you about Omagh, except that through all their heartbreak they wanted us to go on, and they wanted this to go on.

And in the Republic—we had 50,000 people in the streets in Limerick—50,000 people—including Congressman King and his mother and half of his relatives. [Laughter] And then every little Irish village I went through in the west of Ireland on the way to Ballybunion, where everybody was in the streets, and the stores had all been repainted, and it was just unbelievable—they weren't there for me so much as they were there for the United States and for the idea that the United States is a genuine friend to the Irish people and to the reconciliation of the Irish people.

And so I say to you, when you leave here today—we've had a great time, and Hillary and I will never forget what you've done for us today, and I suspect you know. But we've got a lot of work to do over there. We cannot have come all this way not to finish the job. And we must commit to that.

It's also very much in our interest. Ireland's got the fastest growing economy in Europe—about 500 American companies there already. We visited one, Gateway 2000, had an amazing experience there—the congressional delegation here that was with us. Our partnership means a lot to the world. No nation has done as much, as long, as consistently for peacekeeping as Ireland has. Over the last 40 years, I don't believe there's been a single day there hasn't been an Irish peacekeeper somewhere in the world. Seventy-five have perished. But today, they're still there, from Africa to the Middle East to Bosnia, shoulder-to-shoulder with American troops. So we have a common agenda in terms of our economic interests but a common agenda in terms of our deep commitment to peace.

All of this is important. But maybe the most important thing from my point of view is this: If after 30 years of the Troubles, and roughly 800 as nearly as I can figure going back and forth and fighting, the Irish can be reconciled to themselves, and Ireland can come home to itself, then the United States can look every

other warring faction in the world dead in the eye and say, don't tell me this can't be done.

From the Middle East to Kosovo to Kashmir to the tribal conflicts in Africa, I would like to tell them the story of the hundreds of years of Irish history. I would like to tell them about the potato famine and the civil war and the conflicts with the British and the deeply embedded hatreds, and how in our time it all went away—because one of the problems we have in so many places is that people literally cannot imagine a future different from the present and the past. And if we finish this job, then we can go anywhere in the world and say, "Look, I know you've got a lot of problems and I know you can't stand your neighbor over there, but let me tell you about Northern Ireland." And every one of you knows—every one of you knows—that you have played a role in that.

A hundred years ago this year, William Butler Yeats gave a speech evaluating Ireland's past and predicting a new day. It's quite a deal for him to be optimistic, you know. He said, "We are building up a nation which shall be moved by noble purposes to noble ends." Well, it's taken some time to realize that vision. Almost 20 years after he wrote that, he was saying that things fall apart; the center cannot hold. I think he would be greatly pleased to know that things have come together, and the center seems to be holding very well, thank you.

So again let me say, I thank you all. This award belongs to all of you. But we have work to do. And when we do, when Ireland finally does completely come home to itself, it will be a gift not only to the Irish and not only to those of us who are Irish-Americans; it will be a gift for the whole world, a gift the world sorely needs. And all of you will have played a role in giving it.

God bless you, and thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Brian O'Dwyer, chairman, Emerald Isle Immigration Center, and son of the late activist attorney Paul O'Dwyer; John J. Sweeney, president, AFL-CIO; former Senator George J. Mitchell, independent chairman of the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Bertie Ahern and Ambassador to the U.S. Sean O'hUiginn of Ireland; U.S. Ambassador to Ireland

Jean Kennedy Smith; Anthony Lake, former Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs; Nancy E. Soderberg, former Deputy Assistant

to the President for National Security Affairs; and Rev. Ian Paisley, leader of Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party.

The President's Radio Address

September 12, 1998

Good morning. It's been an exhausting and difficult week in the Capital, not only for me but for many others. But as I told my Cabinet on Thursday, we cannot lose sight of our primary mission, which is to work for the American people and especially for the future of our children. The most important thing to do now is to stay focused on the issues the American people sent us here to deal with, from health care to the economy to terrorism.

Today that's exactly what we're doing. I want to tell you about the latest steps we're taking to combat a truly alarming trend, the growing use of drugs among our young people. The good news is that overall drug use has dropped by half since 1979. But among our children, the problem is getting worse. In fact, if present trends continue, half of all high school seniors will have smoked marijuana by the time they graduate. That's a frightening development. When we know that drugs lead to crime, to failure in school, to the fraying of families and neighborhoods, we know we must do better.

We can reverse this terrible trend if we attack it in the way we did the crime problem, by working together at the community level, neighborhood by neighborhood, block by block, person by person.

Crime overall has dropped to a 25-year low now, because whole communities are taking responsibility for their own streets and neighborhoods, and because here in Washington we're giving them the tools they need, such as support for community policing programs. When we assumed responsibility for bringing down crime, something remarkable happens: crime does go down.

We can have a similarly dramatic effect in curbing the use of drugs among our young people. But all of us have a responsibility to send our young people the same simple message: Drugs are wrong; drugs are illegal; and drugs can kill you.

This summer my administration launched an unprecedented media campaign to ensure that the message comes across when young people watch television, listen to radio, or read the newspaper. But media is not enough. We also must enlist the efforts of parents, teachers, ministers and clergy, coaches, principals from the community of adults around them. That's why, with the support of both Democrats and Republicans in Congress, and under the direction of General Barry McCaffrey, we're extending new help to community-based groups all over our Nation. Representatives of some of those groups are here with me in the Oval Office today. Already they are working to curb drug use by reclaiming drug houses, reaching out to at-risk foster kids, teaching parents to deliver the anti-drug message.

Today I'm delighted to announce the first round of high-impact, low-redtape grants to 93 communities. Their dollar amounts are not large, but if these grants empower communities to do more of what works to keep young people away from the scourge of drugs, their effect will be enormous.

Now, we also need the support of Congress on other serious issues facing our country. We are committed, in a bipartisan way, to fight against drug use among our young people. We must similarly be committed in a bipartisan way to continue our economic growth by staying with our economic strategy that has made our country the envy of the world, by maintaining our fiscal discipline, setting aside the surplus—every penny of it—until we save Social Security first.

We have to restore strength and growth to the world economy by investing our proportionate share in the International Monetary Fund. All of you know that the world economy has been going up and down and changing quite a bit lately. Treasury Secretary Rubin and I will go to New York on Monday, where I will discuss the current challenges of the global economy