

country has got to get over believing that our political life is about beating each other up and hurting people, instead of lifting people up and bringing them together. That is what I've tried to do. That is what we stand for. And if we remember that, we're going to do just fine in the 21st century.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Willie E. Gary and Gloria Gary, dinner hosts; Joseph J. Andrew, national chair-designate, and Beth Dozoretz, national finance chair-designate, Democratic National Committee; Bishop Harold C. Ray, Redemptive Life Fellowship, who gave the invocation; and Bishop William H. Graves, vice chairman NAACP Board of Directors, and Ernestine Diller, who sang the National Anthem.

### Remarks at the Speaker's Saint Patrick's Day Luncheon

March 17, 1999

Well, I'd like to say, first of all, Mr. Speaker, thank you for inviting us here, for a wonderful lunch. We welcome all of our friends from Northern Ireland and the Republic—[inaudible]—welcome them home.

Father, we thank you for your invocation and for the plug for the town of my roots. You should know that after—I'm convinced that the chamber of commerce there encouraged this, because after the invocation he came over to me and said, "Don't you ever come back to Ireland without going there." [Laughter] So I thank you.

*Taoiseach*, Secretary Albright, Secretary Daley, and to all the Members of Congress. I congratulate Senator Kennedy on his award from the American Ireland Fund.

The Speaker said something I'd like to pick up on. You know, normally, at this time of year, for the last several years, John, David, Gerry, Seamus—somebody's come here and thanked some American for supporting the Irish peace process. But the truth is that we should all be thanking you, because it's only when you come here that you bring us all together—[inaudible]—add to that, to your citation. [Laughter] But we're very grateful.

Let me also say that we look forward to the day when this will be a total celebration. What a different year we had this year,

*Taoiseach*, because of the Good Friday accords. We're grateful that Senator Mitchell was able to take a leading role—[inaudible]—all you have done. We know not only in Ireland but, indeed, in other places, that the closer you get to peace, the more desperate the enemies of peace become. And we have seen the tragedy of the Omagh bombing. We have seen the tragedy of the murder of Rosemary Nelson. We just had another loss last night—[inaudible].

This is perfectly predictable. It happened in the Middle East. I've seen it happen all over the world. Whenever people in responsible positions stick their necks out, there's always someone who knows the best way to rekindle a sense of mistrust necessary to destroy the peace is to kill someone and focus on violence.

Your presence here today is a strong commitment to the peace process and therefore gratefully noted. And all I can say is, I think I can speak for every Member of Congress in this room without regard to party, for every member of our administration—you know that we feel, *Taoiseach*, almost an overwhelming and inexpressible bond to the Irish people. We want to help all of you succeed. It probably seems meddlesome sometimes, but we look forward to the day when Irish children will look at The Troubles as if they were some part of mystic Celtic folklore, and all of us who were alive during that period will seem like relics of a bygone history.

We hope we can help you to achieve that. And believe me, all of us are quite mindful that it is much harder for you—every one of you here in this room who have been a part of this—than it is for us. We don't mean to meddle, but we do want to help.

And we've had a lot of great Speakers of the House who were Irish: McCormack, O'Neill, Foley. I think we ought to rename the Speaker "O'Hastert" after—[laughter]—his words today, because they were right on point.

So you know that across all the gulfs of American politics, we join in welcoming all of our Irish friends. And right now, I'll ask *Taoiseach* Bertie Ahern to take the floor and give us a few remarks.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 12 noon in Room H207 of the Rayburn House Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Father Sean McManus, who gave the invocation; Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland; Social Democratic and Labour Party leader John Hume; Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble; Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams; and Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon, Northern Ireland Assembly.

### **Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Ceremony With Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland**

*March 17, 1999*

**The President.** Thank you very much. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. Happy Saint Patrick's Day—and what a beautiful day it is.

We are following the custom today, which is, first of all, I received my shamrocks, for which I am very grateful. And with the year ahead I'd say we are very much in need of them, and we'll make good use of them. I would like to ask the *Taoiseach* to come up now and make his remarks, as is customary, and then I'd like to say a few words about where we are in the peace process.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome back to the United States.

*[Prime Minister Ahern made remarks on the peace process.]*

**The President.** Thank you very much, *Taoiseach*. Thank you for the beautiful crystal bowl of shamrocks, its promise of spring, which is reflected in the weather we enjoy today, and its symbol of our shared heritage, our shared values, and our shared hopes for the future.

Let me say first a few words of tribute to you for your leadership of the Republic and the success you have enjoyed. Last year was Bertie Ahern's first Saint Patrick's Day in Washington as *Taoiseach*. I talked then about Frank McCourt growing up in poverty in Limerick, about Van Morrison growing up in Belfast and hearing a new world through music, about a generation of children growing up in the shadows of The Troubles. Together on that day, the *Taoiseach* and I reaffirmed that the parties in Northern Ireland had the chance to find common ground.

Now, a year later, look at what's happened. First of all, as I told the *Taoiseach* over lunch, Frank McCourt's book, "Angela's Ashes," is being made into a movie. But Ireland and Limerick are doing so well economically, as I had a chance to see for myself last summer, that the producers could not find in all of Limerick enough dilapidated buildings to use in the film. And so in order to film in Ireland, they actually had to construct new dilapidated buildings. That is true economic progress. Meanwhile, Van Morrison's music continues to inspire people seeking to end the violence and, of course, most importantly, in the last year the negotiators did the job with the Good Friday agreement. The people of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic overwhelmingly endorsed it, and as the *Taoiseach* has said, enormous progress has been made in its implementation.

We are grateful for the work of the leaders in Northern Ireland, in Ireland, and in Great Britain for their support and their efforts in this regard. We are grateful, in particular, for the *Taoiseach*, for Prime Minister Blair, for Mo Mowlam, and all those who have taken an especially leading role. We are grateful for the Nobel Prize winners, John Hume and David Trimble, and all the other leaders of the various factions in Northern Ireland.

But as Bertie said, the enemies of peace are still rearing their head. We saw it in Omagh. We saw it on Monday with the murder of Rosemary Nelson. We saw it with another act of violence yesterday.

Now, in a few short weeks, the time will come to bring the new institutions to life so that the people of Northern Ireland finally can begin to take their destinies into their own hands.

To fully implement the Good Friday accord, the parties simply must resolve their differences, and to do it, they have to have the same spirit of cooperation and trust that led to the first agreement. They must lift their sights above the short-term difficulties. They must see that distant horizon when children will grow up in an Ireland trouble-free, and not even remember how it used to be.

You know, on Saint Patrick's Day, we all rejoice in being Irish; even people that aren't Irish in America claim to be Irish. I told the *Taoiseach* at the Speaker's lunch—we just