

Ten years ago, March 16, 1989, the federal debt stood at \$2,737,640,000,000 (Two trillion, seven hundred thirty-seven billion, six hundred forty million).

Fifteen years ago, March 16, 1984, the federal debt stood at \$1,465,672,000,000 (One trillion, four hundred sixty-five billion, six hundred seventy-two million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,173,670,063,058.30 (Four trillion, one hundred seventy-three billion, six hundred seventy million, sixty-three thousand, fifty-eight dollars and thirty cents) during the past 15 years.

FLATHEAD IRRIGATION ACT OF 1999

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, yesterday I introduced a bill to transfer the operation of an irrigation project in Montana from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the local irrigators. This is a bill, which has been before Congress before, but has been changed to address the concerns expressed by the BIA and groups which have opposed this legislation in the past.

Years of management by the Bureau of Indian Affairs has led to a project in poor physical condition. Rather than being an asset for the government and the users, the Flathead Irrigation is rapidly becoming a liability. Using current estimates, the project is in need of \$15 to \$20 million worth of repair and conditioning. Government managers admit that costs associated with rehabilitation of this project could be as much as 40 percent higher than if the project were under local control.

The irony of this project however, is the fact that studies on locally owned irrigation projects in Montana and Wyoming show that the costs of operation and maintenance of the Flathead project are some of the highest in the Rocky Mountain Region the condition of the project may be worst in that same region. What do these people, and for that matter the taxpayer, get for the higher costs associated with the current management? Not much if anything at all.

Let's take a moment here to see what local control of this irrigation project would mean to the irrigators and to the taxpayer. First of all, local control will mean increased accountability of the monies collected by and used in the operation of the Flathead Irrigation Project. At the current time the BIA is unable, or unwilling, to provide basic financial information to the local irrigation districts. This despite the fact that the local farmers and ranchers pay 100% of the costs to operate and maintain the project. At the same time, the current management cannot even deliver a year-end balance of funds paid by the local irrigation users.

Local control will also create savings over the current operation management. By using these savings the local management could be used to restore

the Flathead Irrigation Project to a fully functioning, efficiently operating unit.

Without the transfer to local control, the residents of the Flathead face an uncertain future. This irrigation project is located in one of the most beautiful valleys in western Montana. Current trends in agriculture have put farmers and ranchers in a difficult position. Montana farmers and ranchers have always been land rich and cash poor. In the case of this valley in Montana, this is the rule and not the exception. They live in an area that is being changed daily due to the number of summer home construction, because of the beauty and a temperate climate for Montana.

The family farmers and ranchers in this area continue to face economic pressures from outside. Which has led to a number of folks packing up and subdividing their land for residential home sites. Those who have packed up and left the area, have taken their land and subdivided it for the residential development, removing the land from agricultural production.

The subdivision of the land has a number of negative impacts on this valley and Montana and the Nation. The landscape is dotted with magnificent homes which impacts on the landscape and open spaces, and of course wildlife. Another of the major impacts is on the local and state economies and governments. Agriculture land in Montana pays approximately \$1.29 in property taxes for every dollar invested by the local government for services. Residential subdivisions only pay approximately \$0.89 for every dollar they receive in local government services.

Preservation of the small family farm and ranch in the Mission, Jocko and Camas valleys in Montana is dependent upon local control. As local control of the Flathead Irrigation Project will provide these hard working Americans an opportunity to control and have input on the costs associated with the operation of this vital water source.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY STATEMENT BY THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, the past year has seen far-reaching developments which bring the dream of peace in Northern Ireland closer than at any time in our lifetimes.

Today, the Friends of Ireland in Congress is releasing its annual St. Patrick's Day Statement. The Friends of Ireland is a bipartisan group of Senators and Representatives opposed to violence and terrorism in Northern Ireland and dedicated to a United States policy that promotes a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the conflict, which has taken more than 3,100 lives over the past 30 years.

I believe the Friends of Ireland statement will be of interest to all of our colleagues who are concerned about this issue, and I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

STATEMENT BY THE FRIENDS OF ST. PATRICK'S DAY 1999

On this St. Patrick's Day 1999, the friends of Ireland in the United States Congress join with the 44 million Americans of Irish ancestry in commemorating an extraordinary year for the people of the island of Ireland. We are proud of the dramatic progress achieved in last year's Good Friday Agreement. We commend those who contributed to this historic agreement.

The Agreement is a unique opportunity to end a tragic conflict which has caused needless tragedy and destruction. It holds out the promise of a new beginning, honorable and realistic, for all involved. The Agreement was endorsed decisively by the people in both parts of the island of Ireland as a clear democratic mandate to their political leaders. We call on all those leaders to implement that mandate fully and fairly, and to embrace the opportunity for peace offered by the Agreement with courage, imagination and empathy. History will not deal kindly with those who fail to do so.

We are pleased to welcome to Washington over the St. Patrick's Day period many of those who were central to the success of the negotiations leading to the Good Friday Agreement. We particularly welcome the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, whose outstanding commitment and leadership, both during the negotiations, and in the succeeding months, have been deservedly recognized. We also pay tribute to Prime Minister Tony Blair, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Marjorie Mowlam, Minister for Foreign Affairs David Andrews, the leaders of the Northern Ireland political parties, and many other Irish and British Government officials for their courage and determination to reach agreement despite the opposition they faced.

We congratulate John Hume and David Trimble on the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of their efforts for peace. We take pride in the contribution made to the peace process by President Clinton and many other leaders in the United States. We especially salute our former colleague, Senator George Mitchell, for his indispensable leadership, and welcome the recent establishment by the U.S.-Ireland Alliance of the Mitchell Scholarships in his honor. We welcome the generous \$3 million contribution of the Irish Government to this scholarship fund, announced by the Taoiseach last September during our President's visit to Ireland. We also welcome the Irish Government's support of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, through a grant to promote the Festival of Irish Arts, in May 2000.

Ireland has given to America in many ways, including men to fight our battles from the Revolutionary War to Desert Storm. In appreciation for these services, and as a special tribute to 12 Irish citizens who gave their lives as members of the U.S. Armed Forces in the Vietnam War, we are pleased to note that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund's travelling wall, called the Wall that Heals, will be making a tour of Ireland from April 16 to May 3 this year.

This July, we look forward to welcoming the first 4,000 young men and women who will enter the United States under special visas provided by the Irish Peace Process and Cultural Training Program Act of 1998. The visa will allow these young adults from both communities an opportunity to experience America's unique blend of cultural diversity and economic prosperity. After their visit, they will return home providing the crucial skill base needed to attract private investment in their local economies. That Congress initiated and passed this visa with

unanimous support is evidence of our continuing bipartisan commitment to supporting the Good Friday Agreement.

We believe the most crucial task now facing the Irish and British Governments and all the political leaders in Northern Ireland is to build momentum for the full implementation of the Agreement.

Inevitably, there will be continuing difficulties to surmount in resolving this deep and longstanding conflict. We believe the implementation of the Agreement offers the best way forward and the best yardstick to judge the policies and actions of those struggling to overcome these difficulties. We do not believe that the goals of the Agreement can be served by inaction or procrastination in implementing its provisions. Those who take political risks for the implementation of the Agreement can be assured of our consistent support.

Following last month's decision by the Assembly to approve the designation of the Northern Ireland Departments and the list of cross-border bodies, and the signing last week by the United Kingdom and Ireland of the historic treaties to set up the institutions, it is vital that this decision be implemented without delay. Progress in all of these areas is, of course, dependent on the establishment of the multi-party Executive, as provided in the Agreement. We are dismayed at the delay in establishing the Executive, and urge it be established as soon as possible. It is the best way to create conditions for progress on other difficult issues, including the problem of decommissioning.

The carnage inflicted on the town of Omagh last August was a grim reminder that, in spite of all that has been achieved, there are those who still do not recognize the futility of violence. The cowardly murder of Rosemary Nelson this week reminds of the urgency of the task at hand. The horror of these actions unites all the people of Ireland and Great Britain, and friends of Ireland everywhere, in a determination that such methods will be totally repudiated and will never succeed. We also condemn, in the strongest terms, the practice of sectarian attacks, punishment beatings, and other acts of violence. These actions are a violation of fundamental human rights, and serve only to promote further division and recrimination. Against this background of irresponsible and unacceptable reliance on violence, we commend all those who, notwithstanding the pressures caused by these attacks, refuse to be diverted from the pursuit of peace and political progress.

We have in the past consistently drawn attention to the importance of developing a police organization in Northern Ireland capable of attracting and sustaining the support of all parts of the community. We welcome the creation of the Patten Commission to propose new arrangements for policing, accountable to and fully representative of the society. A major responsibility rests on the members of the Commission on this vitally important issue. Their mandate from the Agreement should lead to far-reaching change and we look forward to their report later this year.

We attach particular importance to the provisions in the Good Friday Agreement which promote a new respect for human rights. Such respect is essential if the commitment to equality, which lies at the very heart of the undertaking, is to be given practical effect. We are heartened by progress in relation to the Human Rights Commissions and look forward to the development of close cross-border co-operation on this vital issue. We also hope to see early progress on the review of the criminal laws, and the dismantling of emergency legislation.

We are concerned by evidence of the lack of protection for lawyers active on human

rights cases in Northern Ireland, as described by the Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights, and urge an early response to calls for an independent inquiry into the murder of Belfast lawyer Pat Finucane. We will also continue to follow closely the progress of the inquiry into the tragic events of Bloody Sunday in Derry in 1972.

As preparations for this year's marching season begin, we note with concern that, despite efforts to encourage dialogue, the situation at Drumcree remains disturbing. We call on all involved to uphold the decisions of the Parades Commission.

The Friends of Ireland welcome the strong support which President Clinton and both parties in Congress have given to the peace process, and to the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, including the continuing support for the International Fund for Ireland. We salute the parties on what has been achieved thus far and believe that with commitment and determination, and a readiness to seek accommodation, the remaining differences can be overcome.

As we prepare to enter the new century, the parties to the Good Friday Agreement have a truly historic opportunity to achieve peace with justice for the benefit of all generations to come. As always, we in the Friends of Ireland stand ready to help in any way we can.

FRIENDS OF IRELAND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

House: Dennis J. Hastert, Richard A. Gephardt, James T. Walsh.

Senate: Edward M. Kennedy, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Christopher J. Dodd, Connie Mack.

Mr. REID addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUTCHINSON). The Senator from Nevada.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended for another 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR JOHN BREAUX

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a man who is a Member of this body who has devoted his entire adult life to public service. Today I speak of Senator JOHN BREAUX of Louisiana. I do that today because there are a number of things that have been written since yesterday, when the Medicare Commission made their report. I think lost in the information that has been produced is the fact that Senator BREAUX has spent tireless hours, weeks, and months on this one proposal.

When I came to the Congress in 1982, Senator BREAUX had already been a Member of the House of Representatives for 10 years. He came to the House of Representatives when he was 28 years old. As I said, he has served his entire adult life in public service. Even prior to coming to the House of Representatives, Senator BREAUX had worked on a congressional staff.

Here is a man who could have been a success, as he has been as a Member of

the House of Representatives and the Senate, in anything he wanted to do. He had a fine record as a student. He could have made a lot of money practicing law, but he decided to devote his life to public service. I think too often we lose sight of what people do to contribute to the public good.

In my estimation, no one has contributed to the public good more than Senator JOHN BREAUX in the years he has been a Member of the House of Representatives and the Senate. If there is a difficult problem, JOHN BREAUX has to be called in to work on that problem.

This is an example. He was called to be the Cochairman of the Medicare Commission, a very difficult job, but there was someone needed who understood the finances of this country; and that includes the tax structure of this country, that includes the very difficult health care delivery system we have, not only for those people who are not seniors, but particularly seniors, people who are on Medicare. I think we tend to forget how complex Medicare is and how important it is to the well-being of this country.

Mr. President, I served as a member of a county hospital board when Medicare came into being in the 1960s; 1966 through 1968 I served on that board. Prior to Medicare coming into being, about 40 percent of everyone that entered our hospital who were seniors had no health insurance of any kind. And that is the way it was around the rest of the country.

Today, though, Mr. President, over 99 percent of seniors have health insurance. That is because of Medicare. Senator BREAUX understood this very difficult problem. That is why he was asked to be the Chairman of this Commission.

Of the 17 members of this Commission, 10 of them agreed as to what should be done. I am not going to get into the merits of what the findings of the Commission were other than to say it was very difficult. Ten people agreed to the findings because of the diligent work of Chairman BREAUX.

I repeat, he did not spend hours on this program; he did not spend days—he spent weeks of his time. When other people were doing other things with their constituencies at home or taking a little time off from the rigors of this body, he was devoting his time to working on Medicare.

I mention that because not only was Senator BREAUX called in to be the Chair of the Medicare Commission, he has also done a number of other difficult things. We in the West understand the Wallop-Breaux legislation which established a program for restoring our coastal areas in the country. It set damages for boats that damaged the environment. It is a very important part of the environmental movement that has taken place in this country. Senator BREAUX was at the forefront of that. The legislation is named after him.