

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

March 14, 1996
American-Ireland
Fund Dinner

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 14, 1996

**REMARKS BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
AT THE FOURTH ANNUAL AMERICAN - IRELAND FUND DINNER
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

MRS. CLINTON: Good evening and thank you. I am so honored to be here, on behalf of my husband and myself, amongst so many who have supported with your resources, your prayers, your time, the kind of work that this Fund has done, is doing, and will continue to do. And as I watched the videos, I was very struck by how important it is for all of you, especially now, to continue standing up for the work of education and reconciliation and heritage that the Fund has stood for.

I am very honored to accept the American Ireland Fund Peace Award for the President and myself. He would have loved to have been here, too, but he has been, as you know, in the Middle East working to do more of the work that you recognize tonight. We are all praying that the summit of peacemakers in the Middle East sends the message to those who choose terror and violence: "You cannot win because the forces for peace will not be divided anywhere in the world."

The President and many of you in this audience whom I see are working with those who choose and seek peace from the Middle East to Bosnia to Haiti to Northern Ireland. This peace award is especially significant because of the work the Fund has done in pursuit of peace. Your efforts have lifted the lives of people throughout Northern Ireland and has strengthened the bonds that stretch back generations and across oceans.

As you know, President Clinton is very proud of his Irish roots. Some of you were with him at Cassidy's Pub. You know he takes them very seriously, along with more than 40 million other Americans. That heritage added a special dimension to our trip when the President became the first sitting American president to visit Northern Ireland. It was an extraordinary experience for both of us. And, Loretta, as I sat backstage watching the beautiful video that the Fund produced, I was brought back again to the feelings that we experienced there.

I will always carry with me the faces of the children who came out to greet us, who lined the streets. That is what I think of when I hear about the incidents that set back peace in recent weeks. I think of those beautiful, smiling, joyous children holding hands and holding up the hopes of their parents

and their grandparents. I think of those faces, and I know that we can make their futures as bright as their smiles. Those children I saw have seen peace, and anything less for them is unthinkable. They remind us that we have an obligation to seek peace, most of all for them. And that's why no one can give up hope. And that is why the cease-fire must be restored.

The President has always been and remains fully committed to supporting the peace process. His administration has worked closely with all of the parties and the people on all sides of the conflict: Nationalists, Unionists, Irish, British. He is especially pleased that the Irish and British governments have set forth a clear path to all party talks this June. It is a milestone achievement made possible by the efforts of both governments. And I want personally, on behalf of the President again, to thank Prime Minister Bruton and his predecessor, Albert Reynolds, and Prime Minister John Major. Those talks will begin the process of achieving what the people of Northern Ireland have long wanted -- a just and lasting settlement.

It is clear to anyone who has visited with the people of Northern Ireland that they have already chosen peace. They have chosen dialogue over division. They should not be overruled by a small group of people who choose bloodshed and violence. As the President said Monday night in New York, we must not allow those who have been hardened by the past to hijack the future of the children of Northern Ireland.

During our trip, I talked with many people about what the cease-fire had meant to them. I especially remember with great affection Joyce McCartan and was so personally saddened by her passing. A woman whom I only met for a few hours, but whose straightforward common sense, concern, and love for people, and commitment to standing for peace made a lasting impression on me. I was struck how grateful she and others were for the things we take for granted: to be able to walk freely, to go shopping, to let children play outside -- these small pleasures that make up the great delights of life, that make up normalcy, that remind us how many things we have in common despite whatever divisions there might be.

We all want to live meaningful lives. We all want to give more to our children. The challenge is remembering that, and not letting differences cloud the deeper truths of our shared human nature and experience. You who have worked so hard to give hope to a new generation of children are helping to promote the best of our common humanity. By your work, you bring people together. You remind all of us that we have so much at stake in learning to live and work together. It is a great gift you give. And for the President and myself, I want to thank you for the humanitarian work you do, for the example you set, and for the hope you embody. God bless you all, and thank you again.

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