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Visit of Speaker Tip O'Neill, 8 to 15 July 1987

Steering Note

1. Speaker O'Neill is spending a week in Ireland from 8 to 15 July. The main purpose of his trip is to accept an honorary degree from Trinity College on the afternoon of 10 July. He is combining this with golfing at Lahinch, Portmarnock and Ballybunion, and a short stay at Mallow Castle. He is accompanied by his son (Tommy), nephew (Brian), four friends and his former assistant (Kevin Petersen). The Speaker has said he plans to visit Ireland regularly in the future (his family gave him a present some time ago of 65 acres near Buncrana).
2. Although Mr. O'Neill has retired as Speaker, he retains considerable access and influence in Washington. (He also retains the courtesy title of "Speaker"). Particularly if he limits his political involvement to a few areas of particular interest - and there are no signs that he plans to do otherwise - any approaches he chooses to make to former colleagues can be expected to yield results. It will therefore undoubtedly be helpful to us if the Speaker continues to be involved on Irish issues.
3. The general atmosphere of the lunch will no doubt be relaxed and informal, particularly as it takes place during what is essentially a holiday trip by the Speaker. In touching on serious topics, the Taoiseach might wish to concentrate on the Friends of Ireland, International Fund and immigration. Further detail on those topics is provided below. Other topics which may arise in the course of conversation, and on which the Taoiseach could ask the Speaker for his assessment, are the current "Irangate" hearings in the US Senate (Col. Oliver North is testifying this week) and the Democratic line up of Presidential candidates for the '88 race.

Friends of Ireland

4. Speaker O'Neill was instrumental in the establishment of the Friends of Ireland in the US Congress and retains a keen interest in their activities. The Taoiseach may wish to mention the idea of having the Friends broaden the scope of their activities to focus on selected economic as well as political issues. It would be useful to have the Speaker's view of the extent to which the Friends could become an effective lobbying group on a range of Irish interests.

5. The intention is that a major visit of the Friends of Ireland, led by the new Speaker Jim Wright, should take place early next year. However, there are plans (not yet finalised) for a smaller group, led by Majority Leader Tom Foley, to visit in late September (see attached telex). The Taoiseach might mention that we are pleased by the degree of interest in Ireland being shown by Mr. O'Neill's successor, Jim Wright, and that of course we appreciate the key role that Tom Foley continues to play.

International Fund

6. Tip O'Neill personally was heavily involved in the passage through Congress of the bill allocating \$120 m. to the Fund. Two of the three tranches (i.e., the first \$50 m. for financial year '86, and the next \$35 m. for financial year '87) have now been paid over to the Fund. Some steps still have to be gone through before we are sure of the third tranche (i.e., \$35 m. for financial year '88). After money has been committed in principle by Congress, an appropriation decision is required before the money can be disbursed. The appropriation process for the 1988 foreign operations budget is to begin very shortly. We may need to call on our friends in Congress to ensure that the \$35 m. allocated for Ireland is not subject to cutback during the appropriation process. Speaker O'Neill has

already indicated that he is willing to intercede in the matter if required.

7. The prospects of a further US contribution to the Fund after the initial three year period (i.e., anything further than the \$120 m. already voted) are uncertain. The Fund will yield its best fruits if it can continue to operate over a fairly extended period during which it will develop the economy of Northern Ireland and the border counties and also help to develop closer links between North and South. We therefore hope that there will be a continued US willingness to contribute beyond the initial three year period and we have begun work to have a contribution to the Fund included in appropriations for fiscal year 1989.
8. The Speaker will probably inquire what is happening as regards an EEC contribution to the Fund. We are repeatedly pressed on this matter in Washington, and it has been made clear to us that it is easier for the US to be generous if others also show themselves ready to contribute financially. The Taoiseach might indicate that we are very anxious to see early movement on the EEC front, and that we are continuing to press the British to join us in a joint approach to the Commission.
9. With regard to the operation of the Fund, the Board, which has been in existence for just less than seven months, has decided on budget allocations to seven programmes which will handle the projects submitted to it. Among the projects which the Board has approved or is expected to approve shortly are
 - A study of the feasibility of developing Eamhain Macha as a tourist/archaeological attraction.
 - Business incubation units at each of the Regional Technical Colleges in Dundalk, Sligo and Letterkenny.

- A fisheries research vessel to be used jointly by the two governments for the benefit of fishermen all along the east coast of Ireland.
- Joint promotion in new markets in the US and Canada of the whole island as a tourist destination (including promotion of all-Ireland golfing holidays).
- Support for the Flax Trust in Belfast (community-based job creation) in which Speaker O'Neill has a special interest.
- Support for an enterprise centre in Derry.

Immigration

10. Speaker O'Neill is of course aware of the problem of young Irish illegals in the US. Our understanding is that he is generally supportive of the initiatives taken by Congressman Donnelly (who is also of course a Massachusetts Democrat). However, it is not an issue on which he has taken a high profile and it would be useful to use the opportunity of this visit to underline the importance we attach to securing better access for Irish people to the US.
11. The Speaker and his party will no doubt be aware of the media publicity given in Ireland this week to the comments by Minister of State Fahey regarding Senator Kennedy's role (or absence of it) on the Irish immigration issue. If the Speaker should refer to this, it is suggested that the response might be that we are confident that Senator Kennedy understands the dimensions of the problem and that he will be helpful in seeking to get an appropriate measure through the Senate (see attached background note on Immigration). (The reality is that without the support of Senator Kennedy - who is Chairman of the Immigration Sub-Committee of the Judiciary Committee - it will be almost impossible to get anything through the

Senate. We know that Senator Kennedy has philosophical difficulties about any immigration measures that are tantamount to national quotas. We obviously need to handle our relationship with the Senator on this issue very delicately). The Taoiseach may wish to refer to his telephone conversation with Senator Kennedy on the matter.

Lunch hosted by Taoiseach for former Speaker O'Neill,
10 July, 1987

DRAFT REMARKS

Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me real pleasure to welcome Speaker O'Neill and his party on this visit to Ireland. I know, Mr. Speaker, that you regard this country as your second home, and certainly we all regard you as one of the most distinguished members of our overseas family. We look forward to having you back here often, especially as those acres in Buncrana need ploughing!

This is not a moment - at the conclusion of our relaxed lunch - to be overly serious. But there are a few things that I will say, because they deserve saying. I have no doubt that elaborate tributes will be paid to you, Mr. Speaker, in the course of this afternoon's ceremony at Trinity College, and they will all be richly deserved. But let me put it plainly and simply: we all admire and respect you for what you are and what you have achieved, and we are grateful for what you have done - and continue to do - for Ireland.

The Tip O'Neill legacy to American political life will be an enduring one. You never forgot where you came from, while keeping your eyes firmly fixed on where you wanted to go. You succeeded in communicating your vision of a caring society to millions of Americans. At a time when we in Ireland are facing dilemmas familiar to you in the United States - how to cut our debt while continuing to care for the neediest members of our society - your experience and insights are valuable to us.

The major problem facing us on this island is of course the situation in Northern Ireland. Your leadership, Mr. Speaker, in focussing the attention of the U.S. Congress on this issue

has been immensely valuable. The Friends of Ireland in the U.S. Congress have over the years demonstrated their consistency and conviction in addressing the problems of Northern Ireland, and indeed it is our hope that contacts with the Friends will broaden and deepen in the future.

Most recently, your own personal input was important - even decisive - in securing a decision by the U.S. Congress to make a generous contribution to the International Fund for Ireland. The Fund faces a real challenge in seeking to bring hope to people on both sides of the border who have suffered from the effects of years of conflict. But we are convinced that - especially if the U.S. contribution continues as envisaged beyond the initial 3 year period - the Fund will rise to that challenge.

I know that, like millions of Irish-Americans, you want to see the ties between our two countries continue to strengthen. We share that wish too. There are many issues that we need to tackle together. One in particular weighs heavily on our minds these days. From your own experience in Boston, Mr. Speaker, you will be aware of the thousands of young Irish immigrants who have gone to the U.S. in recent years in search of work. Naturally we want, in as short a time as possible, to be able to provide jobs and a future for those young people in Ireland. But in the meantime we owe it to them and to their families at home to try to improve the conditions under which they enter the U.S. We hope to find an understanding of our very real concern on this matter in the U.S. Administration and Congress.

But let me return to the celebratory theme of our lunch. Today we celebrate the achievements of Speaker O'Neill, the affection he has always shown for Ireland, the ties that bind Bunrana and Boston and the larger ties that bind our two countries. Let us drink to that.

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