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CONSULATE GENERAL OF IRELAND
580 FIFTH AVENUE
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INF. 10.8

18 August 1982

Mr. Colm O'Flóinn
Department of Foreign Affairs
Dublin

Dear Colm,

You may wish to have, for the record, the text of Mr. Teddy Gleason's speech at the AOH Convention Banquet in San Antonio, together with a copy of the press release relating to the awarding to him of the J.F.K. Memorial Medal.

Both the speech and press release refer positively to Mr. Gleason's meeting with the Taoiseach last June.

Perhaps you could arrange to send to me in due course a photo-copy of any publicity in the Irish newspapers regarding Gleason's speech and medal-award.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Donal Hamill
Acting Consul General

DH/jmn
Encls:

James A. McNamara

Director of
Public Relations



INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S ASSOCIATION
AFL-CIO

TO: DONAL HAMILL

As per our telephone conversation, please find enclosed a copy of Teddy Gleason's remarks at the AOH Convention Banquet in San Antonio.

Also enclosed is a press release on his receiving the J.F.K. Memorial Medal.

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ADDRESS

OF

THOMAS W. GLEASON, SR.

PRESIDENT
INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S ASSOCIATION
AFL-CIO;

VICE PRESIDENT,
AFL-CIO;

AND

VICE PRESIDENT,
INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS' FEDERATION

TO

THE BIENNIAL CONVENTION

OF THE

ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS IN AMERICA

ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RECEIVING THE
JOHN F. KENNEDY MEMORIAL MEDAL

THURSDAY
AUGUST 5, 1982

HILTON PALACIA DEL RIO HOTEL
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

THANK YOU LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

OF THE MANY HONORS AND MEDALS THAT I HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE TO HAVE RECEIVED OVER THE YEARS, THE AWARD BEING BESTOWED UPON ME THIS EVENING CERTAINLY RANKS AMONG THE FOREMOST AND I DEEM IT A VERY PERSONAL ONE. IT SPEAKS NOT JUST IN TESTIMONY TO MY ACTIVITIES AS A LABOR LEADER. I FEEL IT FOCUSES ON TEDDY GLEASON AS AN IRISH AMERICAN.

IT IS INDEED A GREAT HONOR TO RECEIVE AN AWARD NAMED AFTER OUR 35TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY. PRESIDENT KENNEDY REPRESENTED THE HEIGHT OF ACHIEVEMENT TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS AND IRISH AMERICANS EVERYWHERE. IN HIS ELECTION AS PRESIDENT IN 1960 HE REALIZED THE ULTIMATE CULMINATION OF THE DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS OF ALL IRISH MEN AND WOMEN WHO TRAVELLED TO THOSE SHORES FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY WITH THE HOPES OF MAKING A BETTER LIFE FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

MY OWN MOTHER AND FATHER WERE TWO SUCH PEOPLE. MY FATHER WAS A NATIVE OF COUNTY TIPPERRARY AND MY MOTHER WAS FROM TYRONE. YET, WHEN THEY ARRIVED IN THIS COUNTRY BEFORE

THE TURN OF THE PRESENT CENTURY, THEY DISCOVERED A LAND THAT DID NOT LOOK FAVORABLY UPON THE IRISH. I MYSELF VIVIDLY RECALL THE OUTRIGHT BIGOTRY AGAINST THE IRISH IN 1915 WHEN I WENT TO WORK BESIDE MY FATHER ON THE WEST SIDE WATERFRONT. YOU COULDN'T GET MOST OF THE DECENT JOBS, IF ANY AT ALL, BECAUSE YOU NEEDED TO BELONG TO CERTAIN ORGANIZATIONS THAT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IRISH AMERICANS. PEOPLE TODAY NEVER KNEW -- OR HAVE FORGOTTEN -- THAT BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR, GREAT BRITAIN HAD INPUT OR CONTROL IN A GREAT NUMBER OF THE BUSINESSES IN THIS COUNTRY, SO IF YOU WERE IRISH, YOU WERE REALLY IN TROUBLE.

THAT'S THE SORT OF CONDITIONS I ENCOUNTERED WHEN I FIRST WENT TO WORK AS A LONGSHOREMAN IN 1915. I WENT TO THE DOCKS BECAUSE, LIKE MY FATHER AND EVEN HIS FATHER, AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, THERE WAS NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.

IN THESE DAYS, EVEN AFTER A COUPLE OF YEARS ON THE DOCKS, YOU WORKED HARD FOR LONG HOURS IN ORDER TO BRING HOME 35¢ FOR EACH HOUR WORKED TO SUPPORT YOUR FAMILY. I LEARNED THE HARD WAY THAT IF YOU TRIED TO DO SOMETHING POSITIVE TO

● BRING BETTER CONDITIONS, DIGNITY AND SELF-RESPECT TO LONGSHOREMEN, THEN YOU ALSO GAINED THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING BLACKLISTED FOR YOUR TROUBLES BY THE COMPANIES. I KNOW IT WELL, SINCE I WAS SO PRIVILEGED.

WELL, WITH A HERITAGE OF IRISH PERSISTENCE AND A MEASURE OF GOOD LUCK TO HELP IT ALONG, THE LAWS CHANGED. THE DAY DID COME WHEN I AND MY FELLOW TRADE UNIONISTS, A GOODLY NUMBER OF WHOM CAME FROM THE SAME BACKGROUND AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AS MYSELF, WERE PERMITTED WITH THE BACKING OF THE GOVERNMENT, TO RESUME ORGANIZING OUR BROTHER WORKERS. WE DID SO IN ORDER TO SEEK MORE HUMANE WORKING CONDITIONS, ONES WHICH RECOGNIZED THE TRUE VALUE OF THE SERVICES OF LONGSHOREMEN IN THE CRITICAL MOVEMENT OF MARITIME COMMERCE AND IN THE FIELD OF TRANSPORTATION, GENERALLY.

YOU ALL ARE WITNESS THAT TODAY THE INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S ASSOCIATION, AFL-CIO, WHICH I HAVE BEEN GRACED TO LEAD SINCE 1963, IS HAILED AS A PRIME EXAMPLE OF WHAT AN ORGANIZED LABOR FORCE CAN STRIVE FOR AND ACHIEVE WITH SOLID IRISH AND OTHER ETHNIC LEADERSHIP.

I FIND IT IMPORTANT TO NOTE FOR YOUR ATTENTION, HERE TONIGHT, THAT THROUGH ALL OF OUR OWN "TROUBLES" IN ACHIEVING BETTER CONTRACTS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S ASSOCIATION; OUR MEMBERS HAVE THROUGHOUT MAINTAINED -- INDEED, HAVE REINFORCED -- THOSE VALUES WHICH I FIND CHARACTERISTIC OF OUR IRISH UPBRINGING. THEY ARE: "LOVE OF GOD, FAMILY AND COUNTRY," AND THE DEDICATION TO A FREEDOM BASED UPON THE DIGNITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL. THANK GOODNESS, I HAVE NEVER BEEN FORCED TO COMPROMISE THESE CHERISHED VALUES, IN ANY MATERIAL WAY. THESE ARE QUALITIES THAT MOST PARTICULARLY MARK THE LONGSHOREMEN, WHETHER THEY BE IN MAINE, NEW YORK, BALTIMORE, TEXAS, PUERTO RICO OR SOMEWHERE ON THE GREAT LAKES OR IN CANADA.

LET ME ASSURE YOU THAT IRELAND AND THE IRISH PEOPLE HAVE NO GREATER FRIENDS THAN THOSE WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S ASSOCIATION, AS WELL AS IN THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS. COUNTLESS RESOLUTIONS HAVE BEEN ADOPTED BY THE ILA AND THE AFL-CIO IN SUPPORT OF A UNIFIED IRELAND AND FOR THE ABOLITION

● OF IMPRISONMENT WITHOUT TRIAL IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

YOU MAY BE AWARE THAT LEADERS FAR AND WIDE IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN THESE UNITED STATES HAVE BANDED TOGETHER TO OBTAIN EVENHANDEDNESS IN SETTLING THE DIFFICULT SITUATION IN IRELAND. JUST A FEW WEEKS AGO, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ARRANGE A MEETING IN NEW YORK BETWEEN IRISH PRIME MINISTER CHARLES HAUGHEY AND MANY OF THIS COUNTRY'S UNION LEADERS. OUR MEETING WAS EXTREMELY FRUITFUL AND FORMED THE BASIS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION.

SPEAKING AS AN AMERICAN LABOR LEADER, I TOLD MR. HAUGHEY THAT WE IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT SHARED HIS DREAM FOR A UNITED AND FREE IRELAND. I ASSURED HIM THAT WE INTEND TO PRESS OUR POLITICIANS TO KEEP THE IRISH ISSUE IN THE FOREFRONT AND NOT LET IT SIMMER ON THE BACK BURNER BECAUSE OF OTHER MORE DRAMATIC WORLD EVENTS. I POINTED OUT THAT WE IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN AMERICA, WITH HUMBLE BEGINNINGS, HAVE EXTENDED THE PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM AND EQUITY WHICH THIS COUNTRY WAS FOUNDED ON TO THE WORKING PLACE.

● SO TOO, I STATED, DO WE NOW DREAM AND HOPE TO SEE THESE
SOUND PRINCIPLES APPLIED TO AND THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF
IRELAND.

IT SHOULDN'T SURPRISE ANY OF THE HIBERNIANS GATHERED
HERE TOGETHER THIS EVENING, WHEN I REPEAT AND REEMPHASIZE
THAT UNIFICATION IS THE ONLY REASONABLE AND SENSIBLE WAY TO
END THE TRAGEDY IN NORTHERN IRELAND, IT HAS CARRIED ON FAR
TOO LONG AND CLAIMED FAR TOO MANY PRECIOUS LIVES ON ALL
SIDES.

I HAVE STATED ON OTHER OCCASIONS THAT THE TRADE
UNION MOVEMENT CANNOT STAND MUTE. ITS LEADERS MUST POINT
OUT TO THE WORLD THAT BRITAIN CANNOT CONDEMN RHODESIA OR
SOUTH AFRICA'S SUPPRESSION OF THE RIGHTS OF AN OPPRESSED
MAJORITY IN THE HANDS OF A MINORITY AND AT THE SAME TIME
SUPPORT A FAR WORSE TYRANNY. I MEAN BY THIS, OF COURSE, A
FOREIGN-IMPOSED MAJORITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND THAT PUTS DOWN
THE HUMAN, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS OF A NATIVE MINORITY,
UNDER FALSE PRETENSES.

LET ME BORROW FROM JOHN F. KENNEDY'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS ON JANUARY 20, 1961: "LET BOTH SIDES EXPLORE WHAT PROBLEMS UNITE THEM INSTEAD OF BELABORING ON THOSE PROBLEMS WHICH DIVIDE THEM." IT STANDS TO REASON THAT A UNITED IRELAND WILL REPRESENT A DISTINCT IRISH COMMUNITY, ACTING IN PEACEFUL PARTNERSHIP WITH HER NATURAL NEIGHBOR NEXT DOOR, AND GUARANTEEING THE RIGHTS OF ALL HER NORTHERN CITIZENS.

THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS WOULD STRENGTHEN ENGLAND'S MORAL AND FINANCIAL POSITIONS IN THE EUROPEAN AND WORLD MARKETS. BRITAIN WOULD NO LONGER OVEREXTEND HER FORCES AND SAP HER TREASURY. HER PARLIAMENT COULD PROPERLY CONCENTRATE ON THE SEVERE DEFENSE PROBLEMS REVEALED IN THE WAKE OF THE FALKLANDS FIASCO AND ON THE ENDLESS SERIES OF STRIKES BY WORKERS AND BOMBS AT HOME. BRITAIN IS FINALLY AWAKENING TO THE SEVERE COSTS AND STRAINS OF WAGING OPEN BATTLES AND THIS SHOULD CARRY OVER TO COVERT ONES AS WELL. WHATEVER GLORY IT MAY HAVE ACHIEVED IN THE ONE, IT CANNOT FIND TO APPEASE ITS OWN PEOPLE IN THE OTHER.

FELLOW HIBERNIANS, WE MUST REINFORCE OUR EFFORTS
HERE IN THIS COUNTRY TO HELP BRING ABOUT A PEACEFUL AND LONG-
LASTING SETTLEMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND, AN IRELAND WHICH IS
COMPRISED OF 32 COUNTIES. TO PARAPHRASE PRESIDENT KENNEDY,
ALL OF OUR WORK WILL NOT BE FINISHED IN A HUNDRED DAYS, NOR
WILL IT BE FINISHED IN A THOUSAND NOR POSSIBLY IN OUR OWN
LIFETIMES, "BUT LET US BEGIN."

IN PROUDLY, YET HUMBLY, ACCEPTING YOUR MEDAL, I
PLEDGE TO YOU THAT THIS MEMBER OF A.O.H. DIVISION NUMBER
SIX, BRONX, NEW YORK, WILL NEVER BE ACCUSED OF BEING FORGETFUL
OF OUR IRISH HERITAGE, NOR WILL HE LET HIS BRETHERN IN THE
LABOR MOVEMENT OF IRISH AND NON-IRISH ANCESTRY EVER DO SO.
THIS MEDAL WILL RANK AMONG MY MOST COVETED POSSESSIONS AND
MEMORIES.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH, AND GOD BLESS YOU.