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cc: Ambassador
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TAOISEACH'S BRIEFING OF IRISH POLITICAL CORRESPONDENTS

IRISH EMBASSY, WASHINGTON.

17 MARCH 1987.

After Speaker Wright's lunch on Capitol Hill the Taoiseach returned to the Embassy and briefed Irish political correspondents at a short press conference.

Asked about what concrete developments he hoped for with regard to improving the situation of illegal immigrants, the Taoiseach said that Congress would have the main role in this matter since "Capitol Hill has the legislative function". The Taoiseach added that in discussing the matter on the Hill he had found a great deal of goodwill which he hoped could be translated into action.

Asked if he was planning another trip to the U.S., the Taoiseach said this was likely. He was contemplating a more extended visit later in the year. This had been a once-off visit dictated by circumstances.

Asked if he was pleased with the way the visit had gone, the Taoiseach replied that he was "very, very pleased". The visit had gone very well; the atmosphere at all times was "friendly, co-operative and helpful". Practically everyone of importance in Washington had come to one or other of the celebrations (the Ambassador's reception or the Speaker's lunch). He had found a readiness and willingness to be of assistance to Ireland. In particular the Friends of Ireland on Capitol Hill were "very active and of great significance".

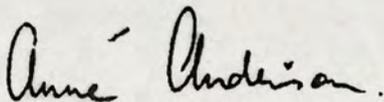
Asked if there was any risk of a diminishing interest in Ireland in Congress with the passing of "older generation" figures such as Tip O'Neill, the Taoiseach said this was not so at all. He instanced younger figures in Congress such as Congressman Donnelly, Senator Dodd, Senator Biden, who are very helpful and active on our behalf.

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In response to a general question about his future plans with regard to the U.S., the Taoiseach said that a great deal more must be done to harness the fund of goodwill towards Ireland that exists in the U.S. This goodwill exists across the political spectrum and is also very evident in business circles. Every effort must be made to pull it all together and weld it into a powerful instrument of support for Ireland at every level. Political, financial and business support from the U.S. can make an important contribution towards economic recovery in Ireland. The Taoiseach added that he was quite optimistic about the prospect of increased U.S. tourism to Ireland this year.

Asked if the Anglo-Irish Agreement had figured prominently in his conversations, the Taoiseach said that there is "a tacit acceptance that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is in place and will continue to operate. There was therefore very little talk about it". Asked about the significance of U.S. economic aid under the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Taoiseach said that the aid is very important in cross-border regions. These regions are currently devastated and the Government hopes to resurrect and revitalise them.

Asked if Saint Patrick's Day in the U.S. is merely a show of sentimentality, the Taoiseach replied that it is an occasion where the "deep-seated feeling" towards Ireland that exists in the U.S. becomes evident. This year he had found a seriousness about discussions and a willingness of people to talk about the issues in which the Irish Government is interested - issues such as investment and tourism promotion, and the situation of illegal immigrants.



Anne Anderson

Press Officer

19 March 1987

cc: Mr Bernard Davenport
Mr Richard O'Brien