



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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No 3

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Remarks by Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Mr. Brian Lenihan, T.D., at the Annual Wolfe Tone Commemoration
in Bodenstown, Sunday, 16 October, 1988

Wolfe Tone was one of the founding fathers of republican democracy. He believed with the United Irishmen that the differences and hatreds created by despotic governments could be overcome in the spirit of liberty, equality and fraternity. In his view the key to Irish freedom was to be found in a European and world context.

Over most of Ireland we have created a stable, democratic republic. But our vision and ultimate goal remains that of the United Irishmen. We have sought to vindicate and safeguard the rights of Irish men and women in all parts of the island, and we continue to hold out the hand of friendship and the opportunity of dialogue to those who belong to a different political tradition.

The remaining task can only be completed by political means. A system of dialogue with the British government, of Anglo-Irish cooperation, has been established since 1980, and further developed since, and is making slow but significant progress in relation to the problems of Northern Ireland. We will shortly be reviewing this process, and examining ways in which it can be speeded up. Violence provides no way forward and no alternative. Those who advocate it have no electoral support in this state, and under Article 6 of our Republican Constitution "all powers of government, legislative, executive and judicial derive under god from the people".

Fianna Fail is a constitutional republican party. We adhere, as we have always done to our republican ideals, and will do whatever can or needs to be done at any particular time to advance them. We pride ourselves on a scrupulous respect for our international obligations, and can legitimately demand that the rule of law be fully upheld and respected by others. We cannot repudiate our international obligations, without jeopardising the considerable support and sympathy that we enjoy abroad, and

without jeopardising the rights of Irish citizens generally. Under our own constitution, we are a sovereign, independent, democratic state taking our place as a nation in Robert Emmett's words "among the nations of the earth".

Fianna Fail has always been a disciplined party, and that has been its strength. We have managed in the last eighteen months to do what no other government could do, to revolutionise Ireland's economic prospects for the future by tackling our problems with firmness, resolution and unity. On the basis of a firm economic foundation we can achieve our social and political objectives. Success is clearly within our grasp, and misguided attitudes must not be allowed to place that at risk.

We have inevitably experienced occasions in the past, when the demands of loyalty have caused some strain. Let me recall what Eamon de Valera said in the difficult war circumstances of Easter, 1940: "Today we have been commemorating the uprising of 1916, and paying our tribute to the memory of the leaders who gave their lives in that effort to get rid of foreign domination and to secure our national independence. There is no way in which we can better do honour to these men than by endeavouring to bring to realisation the noble national community which they envisaged. Such a community we can never become unless we voluntarily subject ourselves to a proper discipline and secure unity of national effort by adjusting our individual wills to the decisions of those whom we have chosen to lead".

We are fortunate to have as head of the Irish government in direct succession to de Valera a great political leader, Charles Haughey. If he had been here today, I know that he would have given as he has done in the past, a broad and inspiring address on the issues that are fundamental to our party and to our country. I am sure you all wish him a speedy recovery. Being a

loyal member of the party demands giving full support and confidence to the leadership of an Taoiseach and his Government, and turning a deaf ear to the insinuations of those who have no electoral support of any kind and who persist in a campaign of violence against the express wishes of the vast majority of the Irish people, a campaign which serves to divide, and not to unite our people.

The freely-elected Fianna Fail government seeks to bring together all the elements of our people, in the whole island of Ireland, and I believe that this government by its outstanding performance in a difficult situation deserves and requires the full and unstinted support of all members of Fianna Fail. I know that we will get that support.