

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 25, 1995

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
AT CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND INVESTMENT IN IRELAND

Sheraton Washington  
Washington, D.C.

10:48 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Secretary Christopher, Secretary Brown, Senator Mitchell, Deputy Prime Minister Spring, Mr. Patrick Mayhew, Mr. Ambassador, ladies and gentlemen, to all of you of Irish, British, and American heritage from the business communities of these great nations, I thank you for being here. I have looked forward to this day for a long time, to having people like you here who see the opportunities for trade and investment that come from peace, and the opportunities for trade and investment to support peace.

I'm especially delighted that so many are here from Ireland and the United Kingdom. And to all of our friends from Northern Ireland, your attendance here shows your dedication to a future of cooperation and prosperity and we're particularly glad to have you.

Let me say a special word of thanks to George Mitchell for the tremendous work he has done in organizing this conference. His devotion to the cause of nurturing peace and growth in Northern Ireland and the Republic's border counties has played a central part in the progress that we celebrate here today. I'm delighted that he will lead another mission to Ireland this summer, and even more pleased that he's agreed to continue his work in overseeing our economic initiatives through the end of this year. (Applause.)

Ireland is lucky to have George Mitchell on its side, even if it has to put up with the envy of the United States Senate, the Supreme Court, and Major League Baseball. (Laughter.)

You know, George is Irish and Lebanese. Maybe when we succeed in Ireland, if the Secretary of State is not finished -- (laughter) -- he'll volunteer for other duty. (Laughter.)

As all of you know, the United States has a keen interest in a stable and democratic and prosperous Europe. But that interest is particularly strong when it comes to Ireland. Our strong bonds of kinship, culture and history shared with the peoples of the United Kingdom in Ireland are well-known.

This is a moment of historic opportunity for you and historic interest for the United States. For my own part, people ask me from time to time why this is a matter of such deep personal interest to me. It goes beyond my Irish roots. I wish I could just say that's all there was to it. But an important part of our mission at this moment in time as Americans is to help reconcile the divisions which keep people apart and lead them sometimes to violence both within our own country and around the world.

If you look into the next century you could thank the good Lord that we may -- we may -- succeed in removing the nuclear

MORE



threat from the children of the 21st century. But we still see these ancient impulses that keep people apart based on religious or racial or ethnic differences.

I tell my fellow Americans all the time that the great genius of our country in the next century may be our ability to exalt the greatest amount of diversity of any large country in the world. But it is still a challenge for us here. You see it all the time. And we can think of no greater mission in our quest to reconcile diversity than trying to help peace and prosperity succeed in Northern Ireland, and in Ireland, in general. (Applause.)

This is, as I'm sure you know, an extraordinary gathering which you are a part. Never before have representatives of all the political parties in Northern Ireland, officials from the United Kingdom and Ireland, and so many business leaders joined to help us to build a better tomorrow. The conference shows anew the historic progress that has been made toward a just and lasting settlement, and toward a peace that respects the rights and traditions of both communities.

In the last few months, thanks to the cease-fire and the momentum of the negotiations, a powerful transformation has begun. Peace is closer than it's been in a generation. For the first time in decades, children can walk to school without worrying. Families that have endured so much violence with so much dignity can now enjoy the blessings of days without violence and nights without fear.

The roads between North and South are more open than they have been in 25 years. And citizens of the Republic are visiting the North in even greater numbers. In Belfast, the army patrols have ended, the body armor and helmets are gone, hundreds of troops are now going home. These landmark achievements would not have been possible without the leadership and courage of Prime Minister Major, Prime Minister Bruton, and before him, Prime Minister Reynolds. With the Joint Framework Document, they are paving the way for a new and hopeful era of reconciliation. All true friends of Ireland are grateful to them and to the parties that have risen to their challenge. I salute them, and I salute others who work for peace -- individuals such as Foreign Minister Spring, Sir Patrick Mayhew, and that tireless advocate of peace, our friend, John Hume. (Applause.)

We pay tribute as well to the brave people of Northern Ireland, whose courage has brought them to this point. The United States is proud to have helped them and all peacemakers, and today I renew my pledge to do everything in my power to support their efforts. (Applause.) I know I speak for all Americans when I say that people who take risks for peace here and anywhere else in the world will always be welcome in the White House, in Washington, and throughout our country.

This momentum must be maintained. The ministerial-level talks represent a step of tremendous promise. I hope the parties can soon sit down together to discuss the future and their differences. That is the best guarantee of a permanent peace.

But there must be progress as well outside the conference rooms. Violence is diminished, but it has not disappeared. I call on all those who continue to employ violence to end the punishment beatings and the intimidation. (Applause.) And to all who are observing the cease-fire, I appeal to you to take the next step and begin to discuss serious decommissioning of weapons. (Applause.) Paramilitaries on both sides must get rid of their bombs and guns for good. And the specter of violence that has haunted Ireland must be banished, once and for all. (Applause.)

MORE



It is also time to begin healing the wounds of a generation. Many innocents disappeared during The Troubles. Others were banished from their homes. Today there are families that have still not had the chance to grieve in peace, to visit the graves of their loved ones, to reunite after years of separation. It is time to allow families to be whole again. (Applause.)

As everyone knows, peace is more than cease-fires and formal agreements. It demands real hope and progress in the hearts of people. It demands common striving for the common good. It is time for those who have been most affected by the fighting to feel this kind of hope and this sense of progress. As Yeats wrote, "Too long a sacrifice can make a stone of the heart." There must be a peace dividend in Northern Ireland and the border counties so that everyone is convinced that the future belongs to those who build, not those who destroy; so that the majority that supports peace is strengthened; so that there is no slipping back into the violence that frustration breeds.

That is why this conference is so important. It underscores that all sides have an interest in investing in the future of Northern Ireland, and that all sides will benefit from the peace. Our own experience here in America shows what a difference that kind of progress and benefit can bring. More than a century ago, our great sage, Ralph Waldo Emerson, said that trade was "the principle of liberty," that it "made peace and keeps peace." That is what we wish for Ireland, and now it is time to realize that wish.

The end of organized violence makes that possible. So I urge American businesses and all others to consider investing in Northern Ireland and the border counties. The opportunities are excellent. The work force is well-educated and well-motivated. The productivity levels are high. The unit labor costs are low. The labor relations are good. The infrastructure, the communications, the access to the European market are fine. With the prospect of an enduring settlement on the horizon, business confidence is rising fast. Experts predict investment booms on both sides of the border, and an increase in tourism in the North that could exceed 100 percent.

Already the United States is the number one investor in both Northern Ireland and the Republic. American companies employ nearly 10 percent of all the workers in Northern Ireland's manufacturing sector. And Ireland imports almost \$3 billion worth of American goods. The firms that we have in these markets are increasing their investments, strengthening their positions in Europe, building businesses that create jobs on both sides of the Atlantic. By doing well, these companies are also doing good.

More investment in Northern Ireland promises to lift the region out of the cycle of despair that leads to violence. It will reduce the chronic unemployment that runs around 50 percent in some urban areas and has deadened the dreams of so many.

If growth is accompanied by an end to discrimination, by fair and nonsectarian employment practices and encouraging investment in areas in greatest need, then both Catholics and Protestants will feel that they have a stake in their society and its peaceful future. (Applause.) When both communities feel the benefits of peace and see that they are distributed fairly, despair will lose its hold, and all will have the chance they deserve to fulfill their God-given potential.

"Peace," Yeats said, "comes dropping slow." The past will not be overcome in a day, but the perception of change provides the kindling for hope, and the opportunities for positive, powerful, profitable change clearly are now present in Northern Ireland.

MORE



As long as I am President, the United States will continue to encourage that change. I am proud of all that Secretary Brown has done in achieving -- on his mission to Ireland last December. I'm proud of the many efforts of the Department of Commerce, USAID, USIA and other government agencies to support reconciliation in Ireland. I am proud of the work of the State Department, and I want to say a special word of thanks to our Ambassadors in the area, Ambassador Grove and Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith for the outstanding work that they have both done. (Applause.) Thank you.

Ours is the first administration ever to include appropriations for the International Fund for Ireland. The IFI have lived up to our hopes for it. The Fund supports over 1,000 economic development projects, and has created some 23,000 jobs in areas that were recruiting grounds for the paramilitaries. It is promoting cooperation across the border and between communities.

The record challenges us to go even further. So we have increased our funding request for the IFI to almost \$60 million over the next two years. (Applause.) And we are working to build more bridges across the ocean through exchange programs for managers, students, agricultural experts, artists and scholars. Programs that establish bonds of friendship, while transporting ideas and information, benefitting people on both sides of the ocean.

There are some in Washington who would like to cut our funding for these and other programs that support peace -- in Ireland and throughout the world. That would be a grave error. (Applause.) The United States has an abiding interest in creating peace and the opportunities it brings. We must have the resources to foster peace and stand by those who take the hard risks for peace. We have seen time and again that our investments in peace, whether in the Middle East, Southern Africa, Haiti or Ireland, have always yielded great benefits for the American people -- in growing markets, greater stability, increased security.

I hope all those who want to see peace in Northern Ireland will keep that in mind. Peace has a price, but it is a small one compared to the alternative, and it is a price very much worth paying. (Applause.)

I'm also glad we've been able to help the cause of peace through this conference and other economic initiatives, because Ireland has given us so much. The two communities that today are coming together in cooperation have each given America a rich legacy. In our nation, Catholic and Protestant have been intertwined, and together they have contributed immensely to the greatness of our people and the success of America. There is evidence all around us. In places like New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, counties, cities and towns with names like Londonderry, Ulster and Antrim dot the map. Often these places mark the frontier in the 18th century when Ulster Protestants, some of them my ancestors, pushed west to build new lives and a new nation. These settlers were the forbears of nearly a dozen American presidents, including Andrew Jackson, William McKinley and Woodrow Wilson.

Irish Catholics contributed just as much to our country's rise, whether in building railroads or institutions. A visiting journalist in the last century took the measure of that effort when he said that, in America, you could see "water power, steam power, horse power and Irish power." (Laughter and applause.) And, he concluded, "the last works hardest of all." (Laughter.)

In this half of our century, the names John F. Kennedy, Justice William Brennan, Speaker Tip O'Neill only began to tell the story of Irish Catholics' contribution to all the branches of American democracy. These true traditions, harnessed together in the

MORE



American democracy. These true traditions, harnessed together in the New World for common goals, has been America's great fortune. Time and again, we have seen peoples of different backgrounds and ancestries put freedom over faction, the goals of the community over the interests of its separate parts.

Of the gifts we can give to Ireland, this example of people joining together for the common good clearly is the greatest. The challenges of the coming century demand that we keep in mind the example of those who went before us, who built bridges across their differences, and found the strength to pull together.

We now face a whole new set of challenges in this new era. The global economy, the explosion of information, the advance of technology, the growing mobility of people -- all these forces are bringing us into a more integrated world, more full of possibilities than ever before. The next century can be the most exciting time in all human history because of the opportunities for human possibilities.

But we have to recognize that all these forces of integration have a darker side, as well. If we do not rise to the challenges they present, we become vulnerable to the organized forces of destruction and evil; for the modern world requires us to be open in order to take advantage of all the forces of integration. And as we become more open, we become more vulnerable to those who would hate and those who would destroy.

As the people of Northern Ireland are showing, we can seize the moment. We can turn away from terror. We can turn away from destruction. We can turn toward peace and unity and possibility. But to keep this process going, to look in the accomplishments, we must make hope real. To grasp the opportunity, we must build stronger business and communities and families. We must have more and better jobs. We must strengthen the prospects of a better tomorrow.

That is the way to preempt fanaticism. That is the way to close the book on old and bloody conflicts. That is the way to give our children the future they all deserve. The chance is there. It is here. It is now. We have it in our power to make all the difference. Let us do it.

Thank you, and bless you all. (Applause.)

11:09 A.M. EDT