

for peace today, tomorrow, and the rest of your lives.

Oh yes, there are still a few hills to climb on the road ahead. The *Taoiseach* mentioned them. But the people of Ireland have two advantages now. You now know the value of peace, and in the hard moments, you can also still draw strength from the inspiration of your poets. Seamus Heaney once said of William Butler Yeats, “His intent was to clear a space in the mind and in the world for the miraculous.” Seamus was born the year Yeats died, and has spent his own life clearing that space, following this instruction to himself: “Walk on air against your better judgment.”

As extraordinary as Ireland’s efforts are in exporting peace and peacekeepers to troubled areas all around the world, I can tell you nothing—nothing—will compare to the gift Ireland gives the world if you make peace here permanent. You can give people all over the world desperately needed hope and proof that peace can prevail, that the past is history, not destiny. That is what I came to ask you to redouble your efforts to do.

Every Saint Patrick’s Day, the *Taoiseach* comes to the United States, and we have a ceremony in the White House. We sing Irish songs, tell Irish stories—everything we say is strictly true, of course. [*Laughter*] In my very first Saint Patrick’s Day occasion as President, I said I would be a friend of Ireland not just on Saint Patrick’s Day but every day. I have tried to be as good as my word. And every effort has been an honor and a gift.

Your kindness to me has brought life to Yeats’ wonderful lines, “Think where a man’s glory most begins and ends, and say my glory was, I had such friends.” And so, my friends, as I prepare to leave my office, a large part of my heart will always be in Ireland, for all the days of my life. And let me say, I will pray: May the road of peace rise up to meet you. May the wind of prosperity be always at your back. And may the God of Saint Patrick hold you in the hollow of his hand.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:52 p.m. in the Courthouse Square. In his remarks, he referred to Pearce O’Hanrahan, councillor, Dundalk Urban District Council No. 1; and Joan

McGuinness, company secretary, Facility Management Workshop, Ltd. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Bertie Ahern.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, First Minister David Trimble, and Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon of Northern Ireland in Belfast

December 13, 2000

Supreme Court Decision

Q. Mr. President, do you have any reaction to the Supreme Court’s decision?

The President. Actually, I haven’t had a chance to read all the opinions yet. I think that what I’d like to focus on now is what I can do, what the United States can do to be helpful to this ongoing peace process. I may want to make a statement later, but I’d really like to have a chance to read all the opinions first and then I’ll probably—

Q. Have you spoken to the Vice President today?

Northern Ireland Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, what would you say to your successor, whoever he may be, about continued involvement in the peace process here?

The President. I think it’s important for the United States to continue. I think it also has the side benefit of increasing confidence among American investors in Northern Ireland. I saw a story yesterday in the local press, indicating that some 600 million pounds in American investment had come here over the last 5 years. That’s the sort of thing we need more of. So I hope the next President will be intimately involved and highly supportive of the efforts that the parties are making to carry out the Good Friday accords and get on with it.

Q. Mr. President, what progress do you think can be made today? Do you think the peace process can be improved upon?

The President. I hope so. But I think it’s important for me to listen to the leaders here and see what we can do first.

Q. Would you like to return and have a role in the peace process?

The President. Oh, I'd like to return, but I won't be President. And that's—the next American administration that will have to take up that mantle.

Q. Mr. President, will your last act—will one of your last acts be to do something in relation to dissident republican groups, like the Real IRA, and do something in terms of stopping them from fundraising and organizing in the United States?

The President. Well, we've got this whole subject under review as part of our ongoing look at people who use violence for political or other means, not just here but throughout the world. And I may have something more to say about that later but not now.

Q. Mr. President, the two men to your left and right, in many ways, hold the key to our future. What can be done—what can the Prime Minister do to bring the two men together, to secure this?

The President. I don't—I think that we'd better get on with our talks. [Laughter] I want to give a speech later, but I'd like to get on with the business here.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:26 a.m. at the Stormont Parliament Buildings. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to the People of Northern Ireland in Belfast

December 13, 2000

The President. Thank you very much. Let me, first of all, thank Prime Minister Blair, First Minister Trimble, Deputy First Minister Mallon, for their strong leadership and their kind and generous remarks today.

I am delighted to be with them, Cherie, Mrs. Trimble, my longtime friend John Hume; Senator George Mitchell, who is here; the Members of the Parliament in Northern Ireland; the Members of the United States Congress and the American delegation over here to my right. I thank Chris Gibson of the Civic Forum and many others who helped to make this day possible. Hillary, Chelsea, and I are delighted to be back in Northern Ireland, and here.

I also can't help noting that this magnificent new arena is new since I was last here in '98—a new team, a new sport, a new facility, a new Northern Ireland. I want to thank the Belfast Giants for letting us use the arena tonight. I understand they don't treat their opponents as kindly as me, and I thank them for that. [Applause] Thank you.

Believe it or not, I actually read in the press this reference that said that since I'll be out of work soon—[laughter]—that if I can skate and shoot and I'm not very expensive, the Giants would consider offering me a position. Well, I'm used to absorbing blows, but that's about the only qualification I have. [Laughter] Senator Mitchell, however, comes from Maine, where they play hockey all the time, and I think you should consider offering him a position. He is very well suited for it.

Let me say to all of you, I have been honored to be involved in the quest for peace here for almost 8 years now. It has been not a passing interest but a passion for me and my administration and, as many of you know, for my family as well. And I want to say a special word of thanks to my wife and to the women here in Northern Ireland who have worked with her through the Vital Voices program and other things to try to make a contribution to the peace.

I came here 5 years ago for the first time. Now I am back on my third visit. No other American President can say that. I want you to know that I'm here not just because I have Irish roots, like millions of Americans, and not simply because I love the land and the people. I believe in the peace you are building. I believe there can be no turning back. I believe you are committed to that. And I think it's very important that people the world over see what you are doing and support you along the way.

Some of you may know, I left Dublin yesterday, and I had to drive to Dundalk for this rally we had last night—and there were one or two people there. We had this vast crowd of enthusiastic supporters of the peace. And because the weather was too bad for me to helicopter there and I drove, apparently, some people thought I was going to drive from there to Belfast. So I want to give a special word of thanks to the thousands of