

from the office of

*Senator Edward M. Kennedy
of Massachusetts*

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**ADDRESS OF SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY
"NORTHERN IRELAND -- A VIEW FROM AMERICA"
TIP O'NEILL MEMORIAL LECTURE
UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER, MAGEE COLLEGE, INCORE, GUILDHALL
DERRY, NORTHERN IRELAND
JANUARY 9, 1998**

I want to thank Professor Lord Smith and the University of Ulster's Initiative on Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity, the home of the Tip O'Neill Chair in Peace Studies and the Tip O'Neill Fellowship, for inviting me here today. Let me also thank the Deputy Mayor, Joe Miller and everyone at Derry City Council for welcoming me to this beautiful city. I'm grateful to Dr. Maurice Hayes for his generous introduction, and I commend him and the Ireland Funds for establishing this living memorial to a great man, a great friend of mine, and a great friend of Ireland.

I'm especially honored that Mr. and Mrs. Restorick and Mr. and Mrs. McGoldrick have traveled from Peterborough in England and from Craigavon to take part in this occasion. In the face of great personal tragedy, these two families refuse to hate. They honor their sons Stephen and Michael most by their resolve that no other family shall have to suffer what they endure. Their lives every day are as eloquent as their words here today.

I'm honored as well that the U.S. Ambassador to the U.K., Philip Lader, is with us today. Ambassador Lader has close personal and professional ties to President Clinton, and I have great respect for his skill and judgment. He is perhaps best known in America for his ability to bring people together, and he's an excellent choice to represent President Clinton here at this auspicious and hopeful time.

And I'm delighted that my sister Jean is here. My family has a great love for this island from which we come and which for us will always be a home. Jean visited Ireland in 1963 with President Kennedy and I know he would be proud -- as all the Kennedys are -- of the extraordinary work she has done as our Ambassador to Ireland.

A President of Harvard is reported to have said that the reason universities are such great storehouses of learning is that every entering student brings a little knowledge in -- and no graduating student ever takes any knowledge out.

But I'm sure that's not true at the University of Ulster.

This institution teaches, in many different ways, the most important lesson of all -- that all knowledge is universal and all men and women are brothers and sisters.

It was here, in the Guildhall, in November 1995 that President Clinton inaugurated the Tip O'Neill Chair in Peace Studies. As he said on that occasion, "peace is really the work of a lifetime."

In that spirit, I come here to give the Tip O'Neill Memorial Lecture. And it is fitting that I do so in this place, because Tip's ancestral home on his grandfather O'Neill's side was just down the road in Buncrana.

Throughout Tip's life, Ireland was one of his greatest loves. His Irish smile could light up a living room, the whole chamber of the U.S. House of Representatives, and the whole State of Massachusetts.

One of Tip's most famous stories was about a gift by Henry Ford to help build a new hospital in Ireland. His gift was \$5,000, but a local newspaper the next day reported that it was \$50,000. The editor apologized profusely for the mistake, and said he'd run a correction right away, explaining that the actual gift was only \$5,000. It took Henry Ford about one second to realize what was happening, and he said, "No, no, don't run the correction. I'll give the \$50,000, but on one condition -- that you install a plaque over the entrance to the hospital with this inscription -- "I came unto you, and you took me in."

Tip was scrupulously neutral in the American presidential campaign of 1980, when I was running for President against Jimmy Carter. But Tip told me that every night, before he went to sleep, he was secretly praying that we would have another Irish President of the United States. The prayer was a little ambiguous -- but Tip's Irish friend Ronald Reagan, who eventually won that election, was very grateful.

This doesn't quite feel like my first visit to Derry, since I've known John Hume for so long, and I've heard him sing "The Town I Love So Well" so many times.

I first met him a quarter century ago, in the fall of 1972. I was troubled by what had been taking place here, and people I knew well in Massachusetts told me to get in touch with him. I was traveling to Germany for a NATO conference in November of that year. So I called John and he agreed to meet me in Bonn. We had dinner at the home of Ireland's Ambassador there, Sean Ronan. When I signed the Ambassador's guest book, I wrote that I hoped to see him again when there was peace in Ireland. I see Ambassador Ronan here today, so I'm more hopeful than ever that lasting peace is finally very close.

In the following years, John Hume came to Washington often, and we would sit together and talk about the Troubles. He has been a constant voice of reason, an often lonely champion of non-violence, a stalwart advocate of peace.

In 1977, because of John, four Irish-American elected officials -- Tip O'Neill, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, Governor Hugh Carey of New York, and I -- joined forces to condemn the support for violence that was coming from the United States, and to insist that dollars from America must never be used to kill innocent men and women and children in Northern Ireland. And so the Four Horsemen were born, and over the years, we acted together on many occasions to do what we could to advance a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Forty-four million Americans are of Irish descent. It is no accident that America has an abiding interest in the island of Ireland -- and in the current generation, an abiding commitment to

peace and justice in Northern Ireland. Over the years, we have welcomed many leaders of Northern Ireland -- from politics, business, churches and communities. We have listened to all and tried to be a friend to all.

When President Clinton took office in 1993, it was clear that America had a President who would go the extra mile for peace -- and an opportunity soon arose. In December 1993, the Irish and British Governments issued their Downing Street Declaration, which gave birth to the current peace initiative. Soon thereafter, President Clinton was faced with a critical decision -- whether the goal of ending the violence would be enhanced by granting a visa for Gerry Adams to visit the United States. I had been receiving reports for several months from a delegation led by journalist Niall O'Dowd that the IRA was serious about silencing the guns. My sister Jean had heard the same reports.

John Hume and Jean both said that a visit by Gerry Adams to the United States could be very important in achieving a ceasefire by the IRA. So I and others in Congress urged President Clinton to act favorably. He made the bold and courageous decision to grant the visa, despite advice from some quarters in Congress and the Administration that he should deny it. The visa was given, the ceasefire followed, and a new and hopeful period in the history of Northern Ireland was born.

Since then, there have been setbacks along the way. But America's interest has not faltered, and President Clinton has provided continuing encouragement. His visit to this island in November and December of 1995 was a powerful demonstration that America cares about peace -- and the outpouring of affection that greeted him from Protestants and Catholics alike was an unmistakable sign to political leaders on both sides that peace was the people's priority.

Today, we stand at a defining moment in the modern epic of this land. The talks that are about to resume offer both a challenge and an opportunity. In the coming crucial weeks, the parties will determine whether this is a genuine way forward, or just another failed station on the way of sorrows.

To Nationalists who have suffered decades of injustice and discrimination, I say "Look how far you've come". One need only look around to see the success of the Nationalist community -- what John Hume has done for the peace process and for new investment in Derry -- what Seamus Heaney, Seamus Deane, Brian Friel, Frank McGuinness, and Phil Coulter have done for the spirit of Ireland -- North and South. Ireland has its first ever President from Northern Ireland. Gerry Adams and other Sinn Fein leaders have been to Downing Street. You have come so far. Have faith in yourselves and in the future.

And to Unionists who often feel afraid of what the future may bring, I recall that you are descendants of the pioneers who helped build America, and now you can be the pioneers who build a better future for this island.

Everyone is well aware of the numerous contributions of Irish immigrants -- mostly Catholic -- who came to America in the 19th century, fleeing famine. Many of those famine ships left from Derry. But it is often forgotten that more than half of the 44 million Americans of Irish descent today are Protestants.

Most of that Protestant immigration came in the 1700's and early 1800's. As far back as the late 1600's, persecution of Scottish Presbyterians led many to leave Ulster and seek religious freedom in the American colonies. The father of American Presbyterianism was born only a few miles from here. Magee College, our host today, was in fact a training college for Irish Presbyterianism. Historically, the very hallmark of that faith is respect for differences. The

Presbyterian tradition helped endow America with that respect. It is one of our greatest strengths. That same basic value -- respect for differences -- is now the key to a better future here as well.

The impact on America of Scotch-Irish settlers from what is today Northern Ireland was profound. Large numbers joined our fight for independence. Five signed the Declaration of Independence. John Dunlap of Strabane printed the Declaration, and also established the first daily newspaper in America.

In the years that followed America's independence, these settlers were instrumental in founding the Democratic Party in the United States. They helped assure the election of two of our greatest Presidents, Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson.

Jackson himself was of Ulster Presbyterian stock and proud of it. As he said on a visit to Boston in 1833, "I have always been proud of my ancestry and of being descended from that noble race. Would to God, Sir, that Irishmen on the other side of the great water enjoyed the comforts, happiness, contentment and liberty that they enjoy here."

Eleven other Presidents of the United States were of Scotch-Irish heritage, including President Clinton.

In ways such as these, Protestants of Irish descent have made indispensable contributions to America as a land of freedom and opportunity for all. You are part of our heritage and history. We are brothers and sisters, not enemies. The vast -- vast -- majority of Irish Catholics in America bear you no ill will. Our hope is that as your ancestors did for America, you will lead the way to peace and justice for Northern Ireland.

It is an apt coincidence that the goal for the peace talks is to reach a successful conclusion in this year that marks the two hundredth anniversary of the United Irishmen Rebellion of 1798. As 1998 begins, we can all salute the idealism and courage of those leaders two centuries ago -- Catholics, Presbyterians, and Anglicans as one. Their brave doomed uprising took its immediate inspiration from the French Revolution and its call for liberty, equality, and fraternity. But Wolfe Tone, Samuel Neilson, Thomas Russell, William Drennan and other members of the United Irishmen were also well aware of the Irish role in the American Revolution.

For some, the United Irishmen will be remembered primarily as courageous and independent-minded ancestors. Others will celebrate the political philosophy they created. The point is that all traditions can draw current inspiration from the vision that guided their struggle. They believed that the different traditions in Ireland were not destined to be enemies, but had a profound shared interest in championing and guarding each others' rights.

So I hope that the participants in the current all-important talks can draw inspiration from all these streams of our common heritage, and succeed in devising new arrangements for this land that will at last give true effect to our shared ideals.

Many people have already taken risks for peace. John Hume laid the groundwork over many years for the current progress, and is one of the shining apostles of non-violence in our century. Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness impressively led the way to the IRA cease-fire of 1994 and its restoration last summer. David Trimble demonstrated genuine leadership in bringing the Ulster Unionist Party to the peace table. John Alderdice deserves credit for his efforts to bridge the gap between the two communities. The representatives of the Loyalist paramilitaries -- David Ervine, Gary McMichael and others -- helped achieve the Loyalist cease-fire and have made ceaseless efforts to maintain it. The Women's Coalition deserves admiration and support for participating and

persevering -- and for demonstrating anew the rightful place of women at the highest level of politics.

The Governments of Bertie Ahern and Tony Blair have carried the process forward with skill and wisdom. Mo Mowlam is tireless in her commitment. George Mitchell's transatlantic shuttle diplomacy is America's special gift to the peace process -- living daily proof that the United States not only cares, but can be scrupulously even-handed too. John de Chastelain and Harri Holkeri deserve credit for their leadership and patience. And numerous others -- church leaders such as Father Alex Reid and Reverend Roy Magee -- community workers such as Geraldine McAteer and Jackie Redpath -- have worked hard and well at building bridges.

Above all, the people of Northern Ireland deserve credit for never giving up their dreams of peace, and for constantly reminding political leaders of their responsibility to achieve it. As Yeats wrote, "In dreams begins responsibility."

There are some who seek to wreck the peace process. They are blinded by fear of a future they cannot imagine -- a future in which respect for differences is a healing and unifying force. They are driven by an anger that holds no respect for life -- even for the lives of children.

But a new spirit of hope is gaining momentum. It can banish the fear that blinds. It can conquer the anger that fuels the merchants of violence. We are building an irresistible force that can make the immovable object move.

In 1968, at a time of unconscionable violence in America, my brother Robert Kennedy spoke of the dream of peace and an end to conflict, in words that summon us all to action now:

"It is up to those who are here -- fellow citizens and public officials -- to carry out that dream, to try to end the divisions that exist so deeply in our country and to remove the stain of bloodshed from our land."

It is not my plan or place to address the details of the talks -- that is for the participants. But comments from observers may prove useful as a source of perspective and reflection, as a way to dispel distortions and misunderstandings and to create possibilities for peace -- and above all, to demonstrate as powerfully as we can that America truly cares.

Irish Americans are anything but indifferent to what is happening. We have a long-enduring desire to see peace and prosperity take root here. Our commitment embraces the welfare of all the people of Northern Ireland -- and when we say "all," we mean all.

Whoever we are, wherever we come from, whatever our differences -- there is one self-evident, fundamental, enduring truth. There must be no return to violence. Killing produces only more killing. Endless, escalating cycles of death and devastation have brought unspeakable human tragedy, deeper division between and within the two great traditions, and painful stagnation and failed prosperity for Northern Ireland.

It does not have to be that way. Addressing the Irish Parliament in 1963, President Kennedy quoted the famous words of George Bernard Shaw: "Some people see things as they are and say, 'Why?' But I dream things that never were, and I say, 'Why not?'" May those words inspire the search for peace today.

The present must learn from the past. As the Joint Declaration states: "the lessons of Irish history, and especially of Northern Ireland, show that stability and well-being will not be found

under any political system which is refused allegiance or rejected on grounds of identity by a significant minority of those governed by it."

Equality and mutual respect are the twin pillars of peace. It is clear that the Nationalist community will never accept a role of subservience to Unionism. And the Unionist community will never accept a role of subservience to Nationalism.

The obvious and inescapable conclusion is that these two traditions can find a stable relationship only on a basis of equality and mutual respect. A successful outcome must mean no second-class citizens on this island, and no second-class traditions either.

The peace process does not mean asking Unionists or Nationalists to change or discard their identity and aspirations. It means using democratic methods, not bombs and bullets, to resolve the inevitable differences and tensions between them.

However far into the future, whatever the color of the flags, there will be two communities, each with its own character and its own pride, sharing this beautiful piece of earth.

The heritage of America offers a hope and a lesson. The motto of America -- to which John Hume has often referred -- is the Latin phrase "e pluribus unum" -- out of many, one -- the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The diversity of America is America's greatest strength, and the diversity here can be your greatest strength as well.

As you travel the road together, the choice is whether it will be as wary adversaries forever fearful of each other, or as friends and neighbors who agree on fair rules for the journey ahead, willing to meet and master fateful challenges together.

At its core, the conflict is about each side cherishing its noble ideals, and fearing the other may damage or destroy them.

If the true goal for each side is the protection of its rights and aspirations, rather than the denial of the rights and aspirations of the other, then surely there is a high and common ground. Protecting the rights of both sides, based on principles of equality and mutual respect, is the surest path -- perhaps the only path -- to peace.

I appeal to the talks participants to ask nothing for their own side they are not prepared to grant to the other -- and to ask nothing from the other side they would not accept for their own. Let us make that principle the Golden Rule for the road to peace -- to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

I urge everyone involved in the peace process to approach the talks with a view to giving as much as they can, rather than as little as they think they can get away with. In the words of Seamus Heaney, you must "walk on air, against your better judgment."

As we come to a new century, the three basic relationships -- within the North, between North and South, and between Britain and Ireland -- can be transformed. Hatred and injustice can be replaced with respect and equality.

Taking full advantage of this unique opportunity will bring lasting peace, and a genuine place in history for all those who make it happen. Failure to grasp this opportunity will be devastating. History will harshly judge any who fail the test and waste the decisive moment.

I particularly encourage the young people of this island to become involved in the work for peace. For it is you -- even more than your parents and your grandparents -- who have the most to gain, and the most to lose.

As you extend yourselves to reach agreement, the United States will exert itself to build more bridges. Personal bridges. Political bridges. Economic bridges. And be assured, I will do all in my power to see that the U.S. assumes a central role in providing economic assistance to implement the agreement that is reached.

In the closing pages of the Iliad, Priam, the elderly king of Troy, goes to Achilles to beg for the return of his son Hector, whom Achilles has slain in the war. Achilles, in an act of simple humanity, gives the old man the body of his son.

The last lines of Michael Longley's eloquent poem "Ceasefire" draw an analogy with Northern Ireland. Priam speaks these words:

"I get down on my knees and do what must be done
And kiss Achilles' hand, the killer of my son."

The two communities in Northern Ireland must reach out and do what must be done -- and join hands across centuries and chasms of killing and pain.

And there is great pain in both communities. Families -- Protestant and Catholic -- have been denied the bodies of loved ones to bury. Families -- like those whose loved ones were killed on Bloody Sunday -- have been denied the truth. Families -- like those whose loved ones died at Enniskillen -- have been denied justice. Families -- enduring generations of unemployment -- have been denied opportunity. Families -- harassed by security forces -- have been denied dignity. Families -- victims of punishment beatings -- have been denied justice. Children -- Catholic and Protestant -- have been denied their future. It is time to say enough is enough is enough is enough. It is time to replace hate with hope.

My prayer today is that individuals, families, and political, religious, business, educational and community leaders across Northern Ireland will show the forgiveness and compassion and humanity that John and Rita Restorick showed -- that Gordon Wilson showed -- that Joyce McCartan showed -- that Michael and Bride McGoldrick showed -- that everyone must show.

Like so many of you here, my family has been touched by tragedy. I know that the feelings of grief and loss are immediate -- and they are enduring. The best way to ease these feelings is to forgive, and to carry on -- not to lash out in fury, but to reach out in trust and hope.

So in closing, let me share with you a letter my father wrote in 1958 to a friend whose son had died. Fourteen years earlier, my oldest brother Joe had been killed in World War II. Ten years earlier, my oldest sister Kathleen had been killed in an airplane crash. My father wrote to his grieving friend:

"There are no words to dispel your feelings at this time and there is no time that will ever dispel them. Nor is it any easier the second time than it was the first. And yet, I cannot share your grief because no one could share mine. When one of your children goes out of your life, you think of what he might have done with a few more years and you wonder what you are going to do with the rest of yours. Then one day, because there is a world to be lived in, you find yourself a part of it again, trying to accomplish something -- something that he did not have time enough to do. And, perhaps, that is the reason for it all. I hope so."

Too many lives of too many sons and daughters of this land have been cut short. We must dedicate ourselves to accomplish for them what many "did not have time enough to do" -- a lasting peace for Northern Ireland.

Thank you, and may God bless the work ahead.

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