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MEETING BETWEEN THE TAOISEACH AND  
SPEAKER FOLEY IN THE SPEAKER'S OFFICE.  
16TH MARCH 1993

1. Speaker Foley was accompanied at the meeting by Werner Brandt (his former Senior Assistant and currently House Sergeant-at-Arms) and Michael O'Neil of his Office; present with the Taoiseach were the Ambassador and Messrs Pádraig O hUiginn, Seán O hUiginn, Walter Kirwan and Brendan Scannell.

International Fund

2. The Taoiseach thanked the Speaker for his tremendous support for the International Fund. The Fund was making an exceptional contribution to the situation in the North through creating much-needed employment and providing a real economic stimulus, in particular to the most disadvantaged areas. Unionists were now supportive of the Fund, though they had initially seen it as "blood money" because of its links to the Agreement.
3. The Speaker, in reply, said that securing support for the Fund in Congress was something of an uphill fight. He did not receive the broader support or backing that he would like; support was in fact coming from a small number of committed Members. Moreover, the Fund had recently been targetted as a political "pork project" by proponents against wasteful public spending.
4. On the positive side, the Speaker said that he hoped that President Clinton would include an allocation for the Fund in the Administration Budget this year. (The President subsequently confirmed that this was his intention; hitherto, Congress always took the initiative to include an allocation for the Fund in the budget sent to it by the Administration).
5. The Ambassador pointed out that the Fund had generally become a good news story in the Irish-American community, and that the AOH, in particular, had changed its position to one of firm support for it.

Irish American Community

6. The Speaker, in referring to Irish American organisations from New York and Pennsylvania and, to a lesser extent, New Jersey,

made the point that, though highly vocal on Irish issues, they were unrepresentative of the community at large. At the same time, some of these organisations sometimes succeeded in passing themselves off in Washington as representing the views of mainstream Irish America. The Speaker added that in Congress "ethnic divisions" could often be over-dramatised. As an example, he cited an occasion when Senator D'Amato of New York criticised the then Israeli Government for its intention to hand back Sinai, believing that such a stance would automatically win him strong support among the Jewish community in New York; his efforts were in fact a source of much puzzlement to that community.

#### Northern Ireland

7. The Speaker, referring to a transition dinner which he attended in early December in Little Rock with the President, Mrs Clinton, Vice President Gore, Senator Majority Leader Mitchell and House Majority Leader Gephardt, said he had made the point to the President-elect that he thought his campaign promises on the Special Envoy and MacBride principles were damaging, and that he had in fact made a bad mistake. However, in retrospect, he felt he may have been somewhat over forceful in his presentation. In the same sense, he seemed to regret the strong line he had taken in his recent interview with Conor O'Clery of the Irish Times. He added that O'Clery had also been "a little inaccurate" in quoting him as saying that the President had been "stupid and wrong" in his campaign promises - "I did not say it like that", the Speaker claimed, but instead was making the general point that candidates, on occasion, may have to back away from campaign promises once elected.
  
8. The Taoiseach said he warmly welcomed President Clinton's interest in the Northern situation; our priority now was to see that the President's campaign promises were channelled constructively. On the overall political situation, the Taoiseach said that some progress had been made in the round-table talks. Local elections were, however, scheduled for May in the North and there would be little movement on the political front until they were over. In the meantime, the Government would continue to reach out to all sides, with a

view to getting the round-table talks resumed as quickly as possible.

9. The Taoiseach went on to speak of his close relationship with Prime Minister Major who, unlike his predecessor, carried no traditional baggage on Northern Ireland - coming, as he did, from a different milieu and background from traditional conservative Tories.

Envoy

10. As regards the Envoy issue, the Taoiseach said that sending a fact-finding mission as a first step seemed a sensible approach. This would enable the President to be personally informed of the situation and to decide how best to structure a U.S. role and involvement. The Speaker expressed the worry that the background to the proposal (presumably that Noraid were also in favour of it) might give some heart to the proponents of violence; it was necessary to be absolutely vigilant that advocates of violence were not given any encouragement. He knew the Irish Government were fully determined in this area. It was vital that the virus of political violence not be allowed to grow among Irish Americans and, in this regard, he drew on a story often cited by former speaker Tip O'Neill - that the Bostonian Irish would put up a sign in their window stating "we gave" - to emphasise his point. It was important that this mentality should not be fostered in any way. As against that, the Speaker said he could agree with the President's statement that, if an Envoy could play a constructive and helpful role, the option should be considered.
11. The Taoiseach felt that any approach to resolve the Northern Ireland situation should take a long-term view. Irish American opinion could be helpful on this, in particular in encouraging the two Governments to get on with the job. The Taoiseach went on to say that there was a shift in the political landscape in Northern Ireland, with the Unionist rank and file - in particular the business community - being ahead of their own politicians.
12. The Taoiseach, while emphasising that the primary role rested

with the Irish and British Governments, made the point that the conveying of a view from Washington to the two Governments, and especially to London, could be extremely important in certain circumstances. He instanced that a message conveyed by President Reagan in 1983-84 had been an important factor in encouraging the British to get down to the serious negotiations which ultimately led to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. A similar message might be necessary (and could be very effective) at some stage in the future.

13. There was the additional consideration that John Major was at present in a tight political corner in Parliament and might be tempted to look for Unionist support. U.S. concern and interest would make any such move less likely. While Major was a helpful and constructive force, the same could not be said of the Northern Secretary. In this regard, some of the recent statements by Mayhew had been distinctly unhelpful, in particular in their one-sided constitutional focussing on Articles 2 and 3.

MacBride Principles

14. The Speaker said that the MacBride Principles were unhelpful in that they frightened away U.S. companies from investing in Northern Ireland. U.S. businesses would not become involved where there were legal uncertainties. The Taoiseach, in questioning the wisdom of the (confrontational) British approach to the Principles, said that the four Irish church leaders had "got it right" on their recent visit to the U.S. They had made the point that there was nothing wrong with the Principles as such but that another principle, inward investment, should be added to them. Likewise, the church leaders had emphasised the wide-ranging scope of the new fair employment legislation, which indeed went further than the MacBride Principles. The Speaker, in taking the Taoiseach's point, said that he had perhaps also been too strong in his approach on this question.
15. The Speaker enquired whether the Taoiseach knew the timing of the announcement on the new U.S. Ambassador. If Mrs Kennedy Smith were nominated on the following morning, he would like to invite her to the Friends of Ireland lunch that day.

Tax Deferral

16. The Taoiseach raised our concern about the present tax deferral proposal from the Treasury and set out the background to the issue, including the position of the Government. The Speaker listened sympathetically and promised to be as helpful as possible.

GATT

17. The Speaker envisaged the fast-track being extended for a relatively short time, perhaps six months at the most.

*Brendan Scannell*

19 March 1993