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## Proposal for a U.S. Special Envoy to Northern Ireland

### Background Note

1. Support for the concept of a U.S. Special Envoy has been expressed by Irish-American leaders periodically since the early eighties.
2. In 1983, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan introduced a resolution in the Senate - co-sponsored by Senator Kennedy and three other Senators - which called on the President to appoint a Special Envoy to "investigate and report how best the U.S. could actively assist the Governments of Ireland and Great Britain, and the communities in Northern Ireland, to arrive at an early, just and peaceful resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland".
3. While on the campaign trail last year, Governor Clinton expressed support for the idea of a Special Envoy in an "Irish Issues Forum" during the New York primary.
4. His decision last October to issue a campaign statement on Northern Ireland derived partly from pressure by Irish American organisations. However, it was also prompted by Mayor Flynn, Bruce Morrison and other advisers, who persuaded Clinton of the possible electoral value of a clear stand on Northern Ireland in relation to winning critical states such as New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Michigan.
5. The statement took the form of a letter (of 23 October) to former Congressman Morrison, one passage of which read as follows:  

"We are encouraged by the current talks between the constitutional parties of Northern Ireland and the British and Irish Governments. A Clinton Administration will take a more active role in

working with the leaders in these nations to achieve a just and lasting settlement of the conflict. A permanent and peaceful solution to the crisis in Northern Ireland can only be achieved if the underlying causes of strife and instability are dealt with vigorously, fairly and within a time-frame that guarantees genuine, substantial, and steady progress. I believe the appointment of a U.S. Special Envoy to Northern Ireland could be a catalyst in the effort to secure a lasting peace".

6. In a letter which they sent to President Clinton on 6 February 1993 on behalf of "Irish Americans for Clinton/Gore", Mayor Flynn and Mr. Morrison said that "... Irish Americans believe that the United States, given its special alliance with Great Britain and Ireland, can spearhead a purposeful series of negotiations leading to an agreeable resolution of issues that divide Northern Ireland". The submission continued that "the United States .... can provide the framework, expertise and commitment required to begin the process of peace in Northern Ireland. A special Envoy is the mechanism to begin this task in earnest".
7. Although the Secretary of State agreed with John Hume in the House of Commons on 26 November last that an Envoy with an economic role "would certainly be helpful", it is clear that the British are apprehensive about the proposal. At their informal meeting on 22 January 1993, the Secretary of State informed the Tánaiste that "any indication that the idea was not very popular with the Irish Government either would be very helpful".
8. Prior to a visit by Prime Minister Major to Washington on 24 February, the British Government provided background media briefings which indicated a willingness to accept a "fact finding mission" in place of a Special Envoy

appointment. This mission, the briefings further indicated, would be confined to contact with Governments and the constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland (i. e. Sinn Fein would be excluded).

9. On 19 February US Ambassador Seitz told a Belfast audience that "President Clinton may indeed consider appointing an emissary or representative to Northern Ireland . . . . someone who can gather the facts as they stand and report the situation directly to him and to Congress".
10. Around the same time, sections of the British media reported that Speaker Foley had been approached by the Administration in connection with a fact-finding mission to Northern Ireland. This was denied in Washington. It is believed that these reports were indeed accurate and that the disclosure of this approach (almost certainly by British sources) has probably scuttled this particular initiative.
11. Another name mentioned in the same connection has been that of former President Carter.
12. Following his discussions with the President on 24 February, Prime Minister Major was questioned on the North at his Press Conference and in subsequent TV interviews. He avoided direct replies on the Special Envoy issue noting merely that " that is a matter for the President, and that's not concluded yet and wasn't agreed in our discussions", and that "the President will no doubt consider it further".
13. It is regarded as likely that President Clinton will reserve his decision on this matter until after a new US Ambassador has been appointed to Dublin. The current front-runners are Mrs. Jean Kennedy Smith and Brian Donnelly, though a number of other names have also been

mentioned.

14. On 2 March, Ambassador Gallagher was told by a Senior State Department contact that
  - no decision on the Envoy issue had yet been taken nor would Washington make any move without the fullest consultation with Dublin;
  - the only consultation with London had been in the context of preparing the ground for the Prime Minister's visit;
  - the Envoy issue had only been discussed at the tete-a-tete with Mr. Major and then only for a relatively short period;
  - the general approach of the U.S. was to seek to be as helpful as possible to the political process and avoid any action or signal that might be seen as divisive.
  
15. When Ambassador Gallagher said he presumed that there could be no question of giving an enhanced role to the Consulate in Belfast or to the Embassy in London as a substitute for the envoy proposal, his contact confirmed that there was no possibility of any move along these lines. He indicated, however, that, as a possible first step, the State Department were considering recommending the appointment of a "fact finder" to review and report on the situation in the North to the White House and Congress. Ambassador Gallagher pointed out that it would be necessary, both before such an appointment and following the fact finder's report, to carry out the widest possible consultation. Asked informally for views on Speaker Foley as a source of advice (and perhaps implicitly as a possible choice for "fact finder"), Ambassador Gallagher responded by emphasising our appreciation of the Speaker's concern and support over many years.

16. Immediately before the Prime Minister's visit to Washington, twelve Senators (including Dodd, Kennedy and Simon) wrote to President Clinton, referring in positive terms to his Special Envoy commitment and also expressing their unhappiness about a range of human rights issues in Northern Ireland. Similarly, thirty-four members of the House wrote to the President raising the Special Envoy question, the MacBride Principles and the human rights situation in the North. In addition, six members of Congress (Joseph Kennedy, Manton, Fish, Nedler, Gilman, King) all made short statements on the floor of the House highlighting the necessity for the Administration to implement the President's election commitments to Ireland.
17. In a letter of 19 January to President Clinton, the Taoiseach expressed appreciation for the President's concern in relation to Northern Ireland and, inter alia, stated that "we believe that the constructive interest and support of the United States has the potential to be uniquely helpful on this critical issue".
18. The Taoiseach and the Tánaiste have recently sent letters in response to a message of good will from Mayor Flynn of Boston. In his letter, the Tánaiste stated in relation to the Special Envoy proposal: "The Government welcomes this constructive proposal while acknowledging, of course, that careful consultation and discussion will be required on ways of enabling the best possible effect to be given to it".



Suggested line

19. It is suggested that the Taoiseach might lend broad support in principle to the proposal for a "special envoy", subject to a process of careful consultation and preparation with the two Governments and with the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland.
  
20. The following considerations are relevant:
  - The proposal originated with responsible leaders of the Irish-American community such as Mayor Flynn and former Congressman Morrison, who expect the President to deliver on it. Political difficulties would arise if the Government were perceived by the Irish-American community to be dismissive of the idea, or even lukewarm about it.
  
  - There could be tactical advantage for the Government in keeping in play the possibility of this proposal being implemented, particularly at a time when the British Government is dependent on Unionist support in key votes in Parliament and may be ready to make policy concessions to the Unionists.
  
21. The British Government will accept a "fact-finding" mission to Northern Ireland. They clearly hope, however, that the President will regard that as honouring sufficiently his election commitment and will not pursue the matter further.
  
22. The Taoiseach may wish to go along with a fact-finding mission in the first instance, while noting that the "fact-finder" would presumably report back to the President on how the latter's concern might subsequently

be given practical expression.

Anglo-Irish Section

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