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VISIT TO IRELAND BY SECRETARY OF COMMERCE RON BROWN

13 - 14 DECEMBER 1994

Presidential Package

1. Describing it as the "chance of a generation", the White House on 1 November announced a series of initiatives to increase US support for the political and economic revitalisation of Northern Ireland and the border counties. The Clinton Administration said that the United States wanted to do its part to ensure that peace brings to Ireland new opportunities for job growth and economic prosperity, which in turn will help ensure that this new found peace is a stable and lasting one. The package was the most comprehensive ever announced by a US Administration for Ireland and underscores the Clinton Administration's determination to continue to play an active and constructive role in sustaining peace in Northern Ireland.
  
2. Measures announced include the convening of a White House Conference on Trade and Investment in Philadelphia in April 1995 "which will aim to show US companies that sustained peace is dramatically improving business opportunities on the island of Ireland and, particularly, in Northern Ireland and the border counties". At the same time, it was announced that Commerce Secretary, Ron Brown, would lead a US delegation to Prime Minister Major's Investment Conference in Belfast in December, and also visit Dublin for consultations. The announcement added that "in both cities he will prepare the ground work for the White House Conference for Trade and Investment in Ireland". The President has also asked the Secretary to present any new initiatives he identifies to the Philadelphia Conference.
  
3. Besides Belfast and Dublin, Secretary Brown will also visit Derry and Dundalk before travelling to Brussels for

consultations with EU officials on Union measures to underpin peace.

#### Belfast Conference

4. The controversy surrounding the Belfast Conference, arising from the (initial) British decision to exclude Sinn Féin, has made it considerably more difficult for the Administration to put together both a business and a Congressional delegation to accompany the Secretary. The view here was that the British decision had injected a political dimension to an event which people otherwise had seen in strictly economic terms. The problem was exacerbated by the short notice given to prospective participants. Moreover, many business people tend to see the Philadelphia Conference as offering a more effective and high profile opportunity to show support for the peace process.
  
5. Significantly also, the Administration made known its concern about the organisation of the Belfast Conference through direct contact between the White House and PM Major's office. This helped defuse the problem to some degree, including through London advancing the date for the opening of direct dialogue between the British Government and Sinn Féin. However, the continuing uncertainty surrounding Sinn Féin's role in the Conference has continued to have something of a negative impact. Initially, for instance, a US delegation comprising some 50 persons was envisaged; however, this has been scaled back, and it seems unlikely that more than 30 people will now accompany Secretary Brown. These will include some 10 US businessmen (see list attached), a number of fairly senior Administration staff and, perhaps also, a very small number of Congressmen/Senators.

White House Conference

6. Unlike the Belfast Conference, which is confined to Northern Ireland, the White House Conference has a clear cross-Border dimension. In addition to the US Government, it will involve both the Irish and British Governments and the relevant Irish and British industrial/trade promotion agencies. A Conference on this broad basis has become central to the US view of how they could best help to promote investment and employment and sustain peace.
  
7. To our knowledge, London did not advise Washington in advance of its intention to hold the Belfast Conference. This caused some surprise here and led to the view being expressed by some contacts in private that the Belfast initiative may have been, at least in part, designed to undermine the Philadelphia Conference. In the event, and given the problems surrounding the Belfast Conference, the White House has succeeded in retaining the initiative. Moreover, given the timing and especially the President's involvement, the Philadelphia Conference is clearly in a different and much more significant league from that of Belfast.

Senator Mitchell's Appointment

8. On 1 December, President Clinton announced the appointment of Senator George Mitchell, the outgoing Senate Majority Leader, as "Special Adviser to the President and the Secretary of State for Economic Initiatives in Ireland". In making this announcement, the President said that it was essential to create more economic opportunity "in a region whose prospects have been so blighted by bloodshed. There must be a peace dividend in Ireland for peace to succeed". He added that he wanted someone of Mitchell's talent, stature and wisdom to lead US efforts in this respect.

9. In addition to overseeing the White House Conference in April, and the implementation of the other initiatives announced on 1 November, the President said that Mitchell would "explore additional opportunities for helping peace and prosperity grow in Ireland". Senator Mitchell is expected to visit Ireland soon after taking up duty in his new job, perhaps in early February.

#### Other Measures

10. Among the other measures announced by the Administration was a 50% increase in the level of US support for the International Fund for Ireland. As a result, Congressional support will be sought for a figure of \$30 million for the IFI in each of fiscal years 1996 and 1997. The President also announced a number of initiatives under the auspices of the US Department of Commerce, the US Information Agency, the National Endowment for Democracy, the Trade and Development Agency, and USAID.

#### Points for Discussion

11. The following draft points might be helpful in preparing for discussions with Secretary Brown:
  - Ireland enthusiastically welcomes the Administration's assistance and engagement in the peace process. This has had a hugely positive impact.
  - It is crucially important that there should be early and visible signs of a peace dividend. We, therefore, particularly and warmly welcome the series of initiatives announced by the President, including of course the Secretary's attendance at the Belfast Conference.

- We are delighted that the Secretary has included Dundalk and Dublin on his itinerary. It is extremely important that the cross-Border/all-Ireland dimension - which will be central to any settlement - is a full and integral part of our work, as we move the peace process forward.
- We attach great importance to the President's Conference in Philadelphia. We will be delighted to participate in this Conference at a high political level, and to assist in every way possible in its preparation.
- The United States is the most important source of internationally mobile investment on the island of Ireland, North and South. In this regard, our two countries have had a most successful, and mutually beneficial, strategic alliance through the more than 400 US companies operating successfully here.
- The bulk of new inward investment to Ireland is likely to come from the United States. The importance of Secretary Brown's visit, and of the Philadelphia Conference, cannot therefore be over-emphasised.
- Senator Mitchell's appointment is very encouraging, and we look forward to welcoming him to Ireland early in the New Year. In the meantime, our Embassy will be working closely with the Senator, who is of course an old and close friend of our's.

Embassy of Ireland  
Washington  
December 1994