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**IMMEDIATE**

**SECURE FAX**

**29 JULY 1998**

**TO HQ**
**FOR SECRETARY GALLAGHER**

**FROM WASHINGTON**
**FROM P HENNESSY**

**PRESIDENT CLINTON**

1. The President last night attended a private function held to honor Senator George Mitchell at the Georgetown home of Smith and Elizabeth Bagley. The event, which was organized by Irish Americans for a Democratic Victory, and attended by about 100 people, was a relaxed affair which the President, who arrived shortly after dinner and stayed past 11 o'clock, clearly enjoyed. Yesterday was, of course, a difficult day for the President who, in addition to presiding at solemn ceremonies in the Capitol in honor of the slain policemen, also faced major developments in the Starr investigation. On top of that the President has a summer cold, and indeed the organizers were advised in the early afternoon that he would be unable to attend the event. As it happens, he ended up staying way past the scheduled time.

2. The President's remarks were delivered without notes and were clearly heartfelt. The President began with an expression of appreciation for Niall O'Dowd's introductory remarks, commenting that he was glad to see one journalist who might speak well of him. He went on to say that on coming to office he had thought it important to move away from the situation where US policy on Northern Ireland was determined by "our friends" across the Atlantic, resulting in an unacceptable condition of "paralysis" (a word he used three times). He felt that the US had to take the initiative to move the process forward. Sometimes in the

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foreign policy arena, conventional wisdom leads simply to *paralysis*, as in Bosnia and in the stand-off between Greece and Turkey: people become trapped in "yesterday's categories".

3. The President continued that he had made mistakes from time to time, but the smartest thing he had done was to send George Mitchell to Ireland. Echoing Heaney's The Cure at Troy (which he clearly knows well) he said that the winds of progress were now blowing strongly through Ireland, bringing hope for a better future for all on the island.

4. Accepting the award from the President, Senator Mitchell (who confirmed in conversation that he will be travelling to Ireland with the President) referred to the publicity surrounding the President's telephone calls in the final hours of the negotiations. He said that what many commentators missed was that these calls were not out of the blue, but were merely the latest example of the President's on-going involvement throughout the process. That was why his intervention had been so effective.

5. Referring to an earlier comment by Niall O'Dowd, who pointed to the President's moral authority, rather than US military or financial strength, as the key to the US role, Mitchell said that the real strength of US diplomacy lay in the commitment to the ideals of freedom, democracy, allied with qualities of hope and optimism. It was this positive approach which had made the difference in the negotiations. The Good Friday Agreement was not the end of the road, but represented an opportunity for a fresh start. Having achieved a measure of peace, the ultimate goal must be one of reconciliation between the two communities (so that a loss in one community is felt as keenly by the other tradition). He welcomed the President's evident commitment to remain involved, and to stay the course. Senator Mitchell also included in his remarks a warm tribute to Ambassador O'Huiginn for his contribution to the peace process over many years.

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6. The President was clearly moved by the expression of appreciation for his contribution, and the many references to his forthcoming visit (including a suggestion that Chris Dodd was hoping to persuade him to add his local Connemara golf club to his schedule).

7. Although the function was closed to the press, (and the White House pool were not in attendance), Joe Carroll of the Irish Times was present and, we understand is preparing a report on the event.

8. Ambassador O'Huiginn spoke briefly to the President, stressing how much people in both parts of the island were looking forward to welcoming and thanking him. He mentioned briefly also the Taoiseach's hope that the President would have a relaxing game of golf in Ballybunion with whatever partners he chose, and suggested the information tour of Ennis as an interesting option for inclusion in his western itinerary. The Ambassador also mentioned the Taoisesach's interest in highlighting the social partnership theme in the President's address. The President's response was affable but confined to generalities on looking forward to his visit.

ENDS

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