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IRELAND



Reference Code:	2011/127/1078
Creation Date(s):	March 1981
Extent and medium:	2 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
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Oifig an Taoisigh
Office of the Taoiseach

March, 1981.

Deputy Garret FitzGerald,
Leinster House.

Dear Deputy FitzGerald, *Garret,*

The following is a quotation from the draft St. Patrick's Day statement to be issued on 15th or 16th inst., by the "Four Horsemen" and a larger than usual group with Irish connections within the United States Congress:

"We must build, as well, on the progress we have made with the American people. We are therefore announcing our intention to establish a new organisation, "Friends of Ireland", whose purpose will be to seek an end to the violence and to support a peaceful settlement in accord with the principles we have stated. The organisation will be open to membership of all those in Congress who share our principles. It will strive to inform Congress and the country fully about all aspects of the conflict in Northern Ireland. It will emphasise our concern for both the Catholic and Protestant traditions in Ireland. It will seek in other appropriate ways to serve the cause of peace and to facilitate greater understanding of the positive role America can play in resolving this tragic conflict."

The final version of the statement could have slight variations in wording but the substance will be unchanged.

I propose, on behalf of the Government, to react favourably to this very welcome and constructive initiative.

The people taking the leading role in America have let us

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Oifig an Taoisigh
Office of the Taoiseach

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know that they see the next step as the formation of a Group within the Oireachtas, on an All-Party basis, to relate to the American Group. It seems to me that this could be done either

(1) directly on a Party basis; or

(2) through the Inter-Parliamentary Union

(though this ~~could~~ must not be favoured by the U.S. side)

I should be glad if you would consider the matter and let me have your views. I would be grateful also if you would treat this proposal as confidential until we would perhaps be in a position to agree on an announcement.

Yours sincerely,

Taoiseach

*in regard to
the Oireachtas
group.*