

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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Address by the Fianna Fail Leader,
Mr. Charles J. Haughey, T.D.
at the Final Meeting of the New Ireland
Forum at Dublin Castle, on Wednesday, 2 May 1984.

A dhaoine uaisle,

The work of the New Ireland Forum represents an historic achievement. There is no precedent in the past sixty years for the coming together in one body of all the political parties representing nationalist opinion North and South. We have made a serious and sustained effort to study in depth the problem of Northern Ireland and to propound a political solution.

It is a major triumph that we have been able to agree on so much and I would like to pay tribute to my fellow party leaders and the members of the respective delegations for their responsible, dedicated approach to the intimidating task which faced us all.

I wish to offer my deepest personal gratitude and that of my delegation and party to our distinguished Chairman, Dr. Colm O hEocha. He

undertook as a patriotic duty and without hesitation one of the most arduous and demanding tasks of modern Irish politics. His total commitment, his calm courteous patience and above all, his determination that the Forum would succeed contributed more than any other single factor to the successful outcome of our work. To his talented and equally committed secretariat, to the respective delegation secretaries and all those many others who have helped us so significantly in one way or another in our historic task, I convey our deepest thanks.

The Report we present today contains the considered views of those who represent three quarters of the people on this island, and an overwhelming majority of those who see themselves as nationalists. The Forum has listened with care and attention to all those who have presented their views to us. The report takes into account all such views in its formulation and in its conclusion.

The Forum has succeeded in the task it set itself, and has presented an agreed basis on which peace and stability could be built in a new Ireland.

The Report will, I believe, stand the test of time. It speaks for itself. Its agreed recommendations will form the basis of any genuine political progress. The report shows that careful thought has been given to the different obstacles and that there are none that cannot be overcome.

However, the objectives of the Forum cannot be accomplished by ourselves alone. We are now entitled, on the basis of our endeavours to ask all those who are in a position to do so, to address the problem with the same degree of seriousness and dedication we have devoted to it. We would ask them to study the report carefully and with an open mind. Not to do so, would in effect, be rejecting democracy and constitutional politics in Ireland with all that that entails. There is a very clear choice confronting everyone, to accept the Forum report as a basis for progress or to allow death and violence with all their destructive consequences to gain the upper hand.

The Northern people have a proud tradition, in which they have contributed greatly to Ireland's achievements in the fields of industry and

commerce, in the fields of literature and the arts, and in many of the social and political struggles of the last two centuries. They have a rightful place in the leadership of this their country. It is a challenge to which, I believe they will, sooner or later, respond to the enormous benefit of the country as a whole and all the people of Ireland. When this happens it will bring to all parts of the island a resurgence of hope, and a prosperity and peace that has so long eluded us but which is our destiny and our right.

Rath De ar an obair ata deanta againn le cheile agus ar mhuintir na hEireann uile.