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NORTHERN IRELAND
Information Service

Mrs J Hetherington

SPEECH BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND,
SIR PATRICK MAYHEW QC MP, TO THE PITTSBURGH CONFERENCE ON
MONDAY 7 OCTOBER 1996

As delivered in his absence by Economy Minister Baroness Denton

The short speech that I am beginning now is rather different from what I had prepared.

There are two reasons for this.

The first reason is that last evening I was deeply moved, even before the Conference was properly underway, by the warmth of the welcome for us all, by the depth of real concern that I heard and met with everywhere for prosperity in Northern Ireland, for relaxation there and reconciliation, and for a true and lasting peace.

The second, and more recent, is the revolting and inexcusable bomb attacks in Lisburn which occurred earlier today.

If, like me, you have had the privilege of labouring for more than four and a half

years to help the people of Northern Ireland achieve that wonderful prize, you will have met with some set backs and disappointments along the way. They have a habit of recurring, and this last year has been no exception. This is when you find the constancy, the perceptiveness, the generosity and the sheer good heartedness of America and the American people so inspiring. So to my American hosts: in particular to Secretary Mickey Kantor and to Mayor Tom Murphy; and in general to all the Americans who have organised this Conference and come to it in such heartening numbers: to all who have made us so warmly and movingly welcome, I want first of all to say thank you.

Inevitably, by the end of last night's receptions and proceedings a number of important things that I would have liked to say tonight had been well said by others.

So, rewriting my speech early this morning, I thought I would not try to say them all once again in some slightly different way. That would be nice for the record but it would waste your time. Instead, I would try to tell you briefly how it looks from my seat: not overlooking the bad things, but not overdoing them either; and certainly not playing down what is good .

First, however, there are two things that simply demand to be said. Number one: All of us from Northern Ireland and from our administration still feel very deeply the loss of Ron Brown and Chuck Meissner. They were great servants of humanity and friends to us. With you we mourn and miss them still. Some of us last night heard Virginia Manuel read a wonderful letter from Chuck's widow. I believe we can all share her lovely thought that in our gathering here in Pittsburgh the spirits of those fine men are with us.

Number two: The links between America and Ireland, and Northern Ireland in particular, are so strong. So many men and women from there have made a fine contribution to their new country, and we are proud of that. Just how many Presidents is it who have sprung from those roots? Those links are always being renewed. Only last week I was in Fermanagh, and the place where the US Army's headquarters were in 1942 and where your Atlantic Patrol airmen were based. There is a lovely graveyard there for some of them who did not return from Northern Ireland to their own homes which they left to join us in the fight for freedom and democracy. Much more recently and in happier times those links brought President Clinton to Northern Ireland last November. It was an unforgettable and unforgotten experience. In speech after speech, and in gathering

after gathering, by his words and by his presence he called forth a vast expression of the yearning of the people for a true and lasting ~~and~~ peace. Not the so called peace when people surrender to violence, or the threat of it, but when they live their lives in true freedom, in democracy, and under the rule of law. And by his words and by his presence among them he gave them reassurance, in the knowledge that America willed them to achieve that peace. They greeted him in the streets in their tens of thousands. By her Chief, it was America that called forth that mighty affirmation, and to this day it remains a source of strength.

It is those links, too, that brought Ron and Chuck and so many others from America to the Prime Minister's Investment Conference in Belfast. Those links led the President to arrange his own Investment Conference in Washington; to break new ground by inviting the Congress to approve further American support for the IFI; and now those links bring us all together in Pittsburgh, to help by economic investment to bring hope and healing to Northern Ireland and the Border Counties.

When we make common cause in this great enterprise, we are going to succeed. I cannot tell when that day will come: but come it surely will, of that I feel quite

sure.

For the present the picture (from where I view it) is one of both light and darkness.

Let me not seem to conceal from you the savage blow inflicted by the ending of the IRA's cease-fire, and the dangers it presents. Indeed I know America felt it like a kick in her own teeth, and with good reason.

London and Manchester, their people and their business and commercial centres, have borne the immediate attacks. Who knows what might have happened elsewhere if that vast IRA arsenal had not been found last month in London. The made up bomb was five times more powerful than the one that wrecked Oklahoma City and murdered so many of its people.

Yet the people of Northern Ireland too have suffered. People openly wept when the cease-fire was abandoned. They had believed, or at least had hoped, that such violence was over for good. They are resolute, but they are anxious. Anxious about the inevitable economic damage. They are disgusted by the multiplying so called punishment beatings and the intimidation. They worry about the uncertainty.

Here let me pay deserved tribute to those who, in the face of many pressures, have steadfastly maintained the Loyalist cease-fire. For them to return to violence would be a catastrophe for all.

I ask them not to fall into the trap undoubtedly baited for them, but to maintain their admirable self-discipline.

Then we have had the dire events of this summer. They sprang from fears, from prejudices and from frustrations that lie close to the heart of the conflict that has to be fairly resolved. I fear that in consequence community divisions, dislikes and suspicions were left deeper and more bitter than they had been for a long time.

Yet this very fact has itself caused many people to pause to reflect - and, I believe, to determine that a better way of handling these still powerful latent forces must be found. To that end I have appointed Dr John Dunlop and Father Oliver Crilly, under the Chairmanship of Dr Peter North, to review the whole field of marches, with special reference to the summer of 1996, and to advise the Government.

So much for the dark side.

There is plenty in the picture that is bright. Let me mention three things in particular. First and foremost, the political parties sat down and started talking: and on time, on 10 June.

They are still talking and I believe that they want to succeed. Alright, the progress is very slow, we never expected otherwise. But progress there has been. And the fact that they are still at it is itself progress.

Again there are setbacks, and there will inevitably be regression as well as progress. But let us just remember how much further back we were only 3 years ago: and how improbable it seemed that we could make the progress we have made. The British and Irish Governments are side by side in our belief that these talks are the only game in town. We want the talks to be fully inclusive. Already 9 out of the 10 elected parties are taking part. We want the tenth one in - Sinn Fein. But there must be a unequivocal restoration of the cease-fire first, with events on the ground showing that they really are wishing to abide by the same democratic rules as everybody else. That is all the more necessary after the recent finds, both in London and the Republic. I do not think many Americans would approach it any other way.

Here I want to pay heartfelt tribute to Senator George Mitchell and his distinguished colleagues. It is a unique and invaluable service that that wonderful man, with the backing of President Clinton, is rendering to the people of Northern Ireland and many more besides. Without him the picture would have been a lot darker by now.

The second bright feature I select for you is that Northern Ireland is continuing to show itself a first class place for investment, the events of this year notwithstanding. American companies are to the fore in recognising this.

Copeland Corporation

Caterpillar

Seagate Technology

Ford

All have announced substantial investments this year, and from West to East across the Province. Seagate and Ford have not taken a leap in the dark: they are enlarging investments already made in Northern Ireland.

But other countries with no links such as America's with Ireland are in there too.

Ever since the ending of the IRA cease-fire in February, over 20 inward investment projects from other countries have been announced. Our Industrial Development Board has been able to help them: but their decisions have been hard-headed business decisions. In the last two years alone, over 1.2 billion dollars have been invested from sources world-wide in Northern Ireland. Why? Because Northern Ireland is a good place to do business. That is why I can say that, though this Conference is an act of great good will, it is not an act of charity. It is a Conference for countries who are proven partners, whose investment flows in both directions (the UK is the biggest direct investor into the US). It is a Conference in which we can seek each other out, build those friendships and familiarities that smooth away uncertainty and help to map out the path of mutual advantage. Here we can prove once again that, in solving any problem, two heads are better than one.

The third bright feature is that in Northern Ireland we are making real progress in the application of our anti-discrimination, fair employment laws - which are the toughest in all of Europe. They are for real, and it is showing.

I am a fervent enthusiast for Northern Ireland, for all its people (or almost all) for the real progress it has made, and above all for its prospects. We must foster them, whatever assaults upon them may be made by those who are enemies of the people's interests.