

Passover for millions of people around the world. It was a day that marked a beginning for the people of Northern Ireland. A beginning on a path toward peace after thirty long years of civil conflict that claimed over 3000 lives. Although a great deal of work lies ahead to ensure that the peace agreement signed in Belfast is adopted by all parties and faithfully implemented, the agreement is an achievement of immense historic significance.

Over the years, like so many Americans who are proud of their Irish heritage, I have wondered if I would live to see this day. Some years ago, not long after the first cease-fire began, I traveled to Northern Ireland and met with both Catholics and Protestants. Both longed for peace. Both asked me to urge President Clinton, who had taken a chance for peace when he granted a visa to Gerry Adams, to stay the course. We all knew there would be setbacks. We knew more innocent blood would be lost. But while some longed for a past that was gone and others for a future that could never be, most knew that violence could not bring peace and that the only way to a better life was through compromise.

The April 10th agreement represents the culmination of a tremendous amount of effort, and a great deal of courage, by many people. As party leaders, John Hume, whom I consider it a great privilege to call a friend, Gerry Adams, and David Trimble brought their constituents' longing for peace to the negotiating table and understood the responsibility history had thrust upon them and the need to find the middle ground. British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Irish counterpart, Bertie Ahern, deserve enormous praise for putting the full weight of their offices and their personal reputations behind the negotiations.

Several other people I want to pay tribute to are former Irish Prime Ministers Albert Reynolds and John Bruton, and former Foreign Minister Dick Spring, who put the peace process in motion and labored day and night to keep it moving forward despite setbacks. Throughout this period Former Irish Ambassador Dermot Gallagher and his successor Sean O'Huiginn played a critical role keeping us informed here in Washington as they worked to further the peace process.

But I want to make particular mention of our former Senate colleague, George Mitchell, whose wisdom, steady perseverance and total dedication to the cause of peace enabled the parties to find a way to put the years of hatred behind them and look to a new day.

Senator Mitchell came from humble beginnings. Born to Lebanese and Irish immigrants in rural Maine, he worked his way through Bowdoin College and Georgetown Law School. As a federal judge and from the time he joined the Senate in 1982, he demonstrated patience, even-handedness and commitment to the public good. As Majority Leader, he served as an articulate na-

tional spokesman, a trusted colleague and a good friend.

As the first serving U.S. President to visit Northern Ireland, President Clinton made a commitment to the peace process early on, courageously put his prestige on the line by granting a visa to Gerry Adams, and showed great foresight in his appointment of Senator Mitchell as chairman of the negotiations. As I said at that time, I could not have imagined a person better suited to bring the sides together and forge a common path to the future. George Mitchell managed to do what many in the foreign policy establishment said was impossible. As the crafter of the agreement, he has given hope to millions of Irish citizens, and in doing so he has shown the world that even the most seemingly intractable conflicts, even the most bitter hatred, can be overcome.

Mr. President, an April 18, 1998 article by Mark Shields in the Washington Post gives a good description of Senator George Mitchell and his latest achievement. I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, Apr. 18, 1998]

THE POLITICS OF PEACE

(By Mark Shields)

After hearing the happy news from Ireland that peace could actually break out there, I found my notes from a campaign speech given in 1993 by an American politician. This is what he said then about his earlier career as a federal judge:

"In that position, I had great power. The one I enjoyed exercising most was when I presided over what are called naturalization ceremonies.

"They're citizenship ceremonies. People who come from all over the world who had gone through the required procedures now gathered before me in a federal courtroom, and in that final act I administered to them the oath of allegiance to the United States. And then, by the power invested in me under the Constitution, I made them Americans.

"It was always a very emotional and moving ceremony for me because my mother was a Lebanese immigrant and my father was the orphan son of Irish immigrants.

"My parents had no education. My mother could not read or write English. And they worked—my mother in a textile mill, and my father as a janitor—all of their lives, to see that their children had the education and the opportunity they did not have. . . .

"And after every one of those ceremonies, I spoke personally with each of the new citizens. I asked them where they came from, how they came, why they came. Their answers were as different as their countries of origin. But through those answers ran a common theme best summarized by a young Asian man who, when I asked him why he came here, responded in slow and halting English.

"I came here," he said, "because here in America everybody has a chance." A young man who had been an American for five minutes summed up the meaning of our country in a single sentence.

"Many of us, most of us in this room, derive great benefits from our citizenship. And most of us are citizens by an accident of birth, not by an act of free will.

"With those benefits come responsibility, and foremost among those responsibilities is

our obligation to see to it that those who follow us, the generations yet unborn, have opportunity, have hope, have the right to a good, decent life, a good job, a good-paying job, the opportunity to feed, clothe, house and educate one's children in the best way possible."

Much, too much, has been written in recent years about the politics of values. That 1993 speech expressed straightforwardly the values of an American politician—George Mitchell, Democrat from Maine, former Senate majority leader—who, over the past 22 months, through a combination of heroic patience, consummate prudence and a near-unique ability to publicly submerge his own ego, has crafted the peace plan for Northern Ireland.

Politics is the peaceable resolution of conflict among legitimate competing interests. That is what Mitchell brought to Belfast from Waterville, Maine, after working his way through Bowdoin College and night law school at Georgetown University. A committed partisan, he helped run the two losing national campaigns of his mentor, Sen. Edmund Muskie of Maine.

Neither a plaster saint nor politically invincible, Mitchell himself ran in 1972 for the chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee and lost to Robert Strauss of Texas. In the Watergate election of 1974, when Democrats swept nearly everything, Mitchell still lost the governorship of Maine to an independent. When Muskie left the Senate in 1980 to become secretary of state, Mitchell was chosen to succeed him.

At the 1987 Iran-contra hearings, Mitchell gave a civics lesson to the nation, as he bluntly advised the grandstanding Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North to "recognize that it is possible for an American to disagree with you on aid to the contras and still love God and still love this country as much as you do.

"Although He is regularly asked to do so, God does not take sides in American politics. And in America, disagreement with the policies of the government is not evidence of lack of patriotism."

British Prime Minister Tony Blair was indispensable to the peace agreement. So, too, was Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern. And the courageous Protestant and Catholic leaders in the North. President Clinton, against the jaded opposition of the foreign policy establishment and over the objections of his own State and Justice Departments, took the bold risks for peace. He has been a leader.

But it was the son of George and Mary Saad Mitchell of Waterville who was to grow up and remind us in Easter week 1998 that politicians can also be peacemakers.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, May 20, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,502,138,799,604.60 (Five trillion, five hundred two billion, one hundred thirty-eight million, seven hundred ninety-nine thousand, six hundred four dollars and sixty cents).

One year ago, May 20, 1997, the federal debt stood at \$5,346,368,000,000 (Five trillion, three hundred forty-six billion, three hundred sixty-eight million).

Five years ago, May 20, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,287,296,000,000 (Four trillion, two hundred eighty-seven billion, two hundred ninety-six million).

Ten years ago, May 20, 1988, the federal debt stood at \$2,523,014,000,000 (Two trillion, five hundred twenty-three billion, fourteen million).

Fifteen years ago, May 20, 1983, the federal debt stood at \$1,288,467,000,000 (One trillion, two hundred eighty-eight billion, four hundred sixty-seven million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,213,671,799,604.60 (Four trillion, two hundred thirteen billion, six hundred seventy-one million, seven hundred ninety-nine thousand, six hundred four dollars and sixty cents) during the past 15 years.

U.S. FOREIGN OIL CONSUMPTION FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 15TH

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, the American Petroleum Institute's report for the week ending May 15, that the U.S. imported 8,562,000 barrels of oil each day, an increase of 728,000 barrels over the 7,834,000 imported each day during the same week a year ago.

Americans relied on foreign oil for 57.3 percent of their needs last week. There are no signs that the upward spiral will abate. Before the Persian Gulf War, the United States obtained approximately 45 percent of its oil supply from foreign countries. During the Arab oil embargo in the 1970s, foreign oil accounted for only 35 percent of America's oil supply.

Politicians had better give consideration to the economic calamity sure to occur in America if and when foreign producers shut off supply—or double the already enormous cost of imported oil flowing into the U.S.—now 8,562,000 barrels a day.

RESPONSE TO VACANCY CLAIMS

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to respond to a floor speech my good friend and colleague Senator LEAHY recently delivered. In that address, Senator LEAHY once again brought attention to the so-called vacancy crisis that is facing our Federal Judiciary. Now, I don't blame Senator LEAHY for that. After all, that is his job. He needs to press us a bit to move judges for the Clinton Administration. And indeed, we had some disconnects in the past that prevented us from holding hearings on perhaps as many judges as we would have liked.

That having been said, I am pleased that Senator LEAHY and I have worked out some of the kinks in the process and have worked together to ensure that qualified nominees are confirmed. Similarly, I am happy to report that I have worked over the last few months with White House Counsel Chuck Ruff to ensure that the nomination and confirmation process is a collaborative one between the White House and members of the Senate. I think it's fair to say that after a few bumpy months in which the process suffered due to inadequate consultation between the White House and some Senators, the process

is now working rather smoothly. I think the progress is due to the White House's renewed commitment to good faith consultation with Senators of both parties. I also want to compliment Senator LEAHY for his willingness to work with me to get hearings scheduled for nominees. Let me take a moment, however, to correct some of the pernicious myths that persist on the subject of the confirmation process.

Quite simply, contrary to what you may have read in the popular press, there is no general vacancy crisis. So far this year, the Senate has confirmed 26 of President Clinton's nominees. We have confirmed a total of 62 Judges this Congress, in addition to a number of Executive branch nominees. In fact, 266 active Federal Judges, or roughly 35% of all sitting Article III judges, were appointed by this Administration. As of today there are 768 active Federal Judges. What does that number mean? It means that there are currently more sitting federal judges hearing cases than in any previous administration. In fact, since becoming Chairman, I have yet to cast a vote against a single Clinton judicial nominee.

Just as a matter of comparison, at this point in the 101st and 102nd Congress when George Bush was president and Democrats controlled the Senate, there were only 711 and 716 active judges, respectively. Thus, we have 50 more sitting federal judges today than we did in 1992, yet some would have us believe that our federal courts are being overwhelmed by a tidal wave of cases.

Keep in mind that the Clinton administration is on record as having stated that 63 vacancies is virtual full employment of the federal judiciary. The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts lists the current number of federal judicial vacancies as 76, a far cry from the "nearly 100" I have heard some claim. In fact, by the administration's own admission we are 13 judges away from a fully employed federal judiciary. Which begs the question: if we are only 13 judges away from full employment how can we be mired in a vacancy crisis? Only 13 judges out of 843 authorized—I think it is time to put the vacancy crisis argument to rest.

Moreover, let's compare today's vacancy level of 76, with those that existed during the early 1990's when the Democratic and Republican parties' fortunes were reversed. In May of 1991, there were 148 federal judicial vacancies. One year later, in May of 1992, there were 117 federal judicial vacancies. I remember those years. I don't, however, remember one comment about it in the media. I don't recall one television show mentioning it. I don't recall one writer writing about it. Nobody seemed to care. Nobody, that is, except the Chief Justice of the United States, William Rehnquist. Back then, in his year-end report, he called upon the Democratically controlled Senate to confirm more judges, much like he

did this past year. Yet no one seemed too concerned about the Chief Justice's comments back then. Now, when we have a Democrat in the White House, all of a sudden it has become a crisis when we have virtually half the vacancies today that we had in 1991. And it becomes a crisis even though the Chief Justice's message is virtually the same now as it was back then.

I also think it important to note that at the end of the Bush Administration, there were 115 vacancies, for which 55 nominees were pending before the Judiciary committee. None of those 55 nominees even received the courtesy of a hearing, however. Compare this to the 65 vacancies remaining at the end of President Clinton's first term. I think there is quite a difference.

Some have mentioned a deliberate effort among Republican members of the Senate to unduly delay the confirmation of Judicial nominees. Nothing could be further from the truth. The judiciary committee has in fact processed nominees at a remarkably fast pace this session. Of the 25 nominees currently pending in the Judiciary committee without a hearing, 10 were received since April. Today, there are only 5 nominees pending on the Senate Floor, and I expect that we will vote on their confirmations before the session ends.

A good deal has been said by critics with regard to the vacancies on the Second and Ninth Circuits. It is true that these two circuits have had unusual difficulties. It should be mentioned, however, that nominations to the Ninth Circuit were held up to decide whether the Circuit should be split or not. Now that a commission is in place to study that issue, we have been able to move a number of Ninth Circuit nominations. In fact, we have confirmed more judges to the Ninth Circuit—three—than to any other circuit. Of the five Ninth Circuit judges still pending in the Senate, two have had hearings and one is pending on the floor. We received two of the other nominees only this session. And there are still vacancies remaining on that circuit—two vacancies of which have not even received a nominee. And one of those vacancies has been open since December of 1996.

This represents a failure not on the part of the Judiciary Committee but on the Clinton Administration. President Clinton's failure to nominate judges expeditiously has in fact slowed the process, as the committee is left with an increasingly smaller base of qualified nominees to hold hearings on. In fact, fewer than half of the current vacancies have nominees pending, with many of those having incomplete paperwork. Rather than succumbing to the petulance of finger pointing, we all would be better served by an administration committed to sending us qualified nominees as expeditiously as possible.

Now, we also acknowledge that there have been problems with confirming