

SENATE—Tuesday, April 27, 1999

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, the true Source of spiritual, intellectual, emotional, volitional, and physical power, we need a fresh flow of Your Spirit for the work of this day. We confess our insufficiency and pray for Your power to think Your thoughts, to do Your will as You reveal it, to love unselfishly, to forgive graciously, and to act energetically with renewed strength and endurance. You have told us that You pour out Your greatest blessings on those who put their ultimate trust in You alone. You are the Rock of Ages on which we can stand, the Intervener when we are in trouble, the One who opens doors of opportunity for the next step of Your strategy for us, our Friend in life's lonely moments, and the Source of courage whenever we are tempted to give up in the battle for truth and righteousness in America.

Bless the Senators and all of us who are privileged to work with and for them. May this be a day in which we all sense Your presence and receive Your power. Through our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11:30 a.m. Following morning business, the Senate will begin debate on S. 96, the Y2K bill, with amendments expected to be offered.

ORDER FOR RECESS

I ask unanimous consent that at 12:30 p.m. the Senate stand in recess until 2:15 p.m. for the weekly party caucus luncheons.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, following the policy lunch, at 2:15 the Senate will resume consideration of the Y2K bill. Rollcall votes on amendments to the bill are expected during today's session. Votes are also possible on any other legislative or executive item cleared for action.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Mr. VOINOVICH assumed the chair.)

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

MEDAL OF FREEDOM

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, on March 17, Senator George Mitchell received the Medal of Freedom at the White House.

The day was picked especially because Irish Americans had gathered at the White House, but also Irish from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland were in attendance.

All together, with the President of the United States, we honored the extraordinary achievements of the United States Senate's former majority leader.

Marcelle and I were in attendance with great pride in watching our friend, Senator Mitchell. We were honored also to be with his wife, Heather, and other members of his family. Having served with him, I know he is an extraordinarily capable, patient, and talented person. No one else could have done what he did.

Senator Mitchell received a standing ovation for his words that evening—words that came from his heart and mind.

I ask unanimous consent that his words be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the remarks were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

REMARKS BY SENATOR GEORGE J. MITCHELL ON RECEIPT OF THE MEDAL OF FREEDOM, THE WHITE HOUSE, MARCH 17, 1999

Thank you, Mr. President, for your generous remarks, and for your commitment to peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. You are the only American President ever to have placed Northern Ireland high on our national agenda, the only President ever to have visited there while in office. The people of Ireland, North and South, know of your concern for their future; and they are deeply grateful. In behalf of peace loving people everywhere, I thank you.

I also want to thank you for giving me the chance to serve in Northern Ireland. I must admit that I didn't always feel this way. During the years that I sat and listened to the same arguments, over and over again, I had other, less charitable thoughts about you and about my role there.

It was difficult and demanding, but it also was deeply rewarding. For me to have played a part in trying to end an ancient conflict, trying to make possible a more safe and secure life for generations to come; for me to have come to know, to admire, and to love the people of Northern Ireland—these are rewards which cannot be measured, or even described.

I can only say that my heart is overflowing with gratitude—to you, Mr. President; to the political leaders and to the people of Northern Ireland; to Prime Ministers Ahern and Blair and their predecessors; to Mo Mowlam and David Andrews and their predecessors and colleagues; to my colleagues, John de Chastelain and Harri Holkeri; to my staff, Martha Pope, David Pozorski, and Kelly Currie; and especially to my wife, Heather, who was patient and understanding through three-and-a-half long, lonely years.

On an occasion like this, it is tempting for me to take a nostalgic look back on my life. But instead we must look forward, with urgency, not to my life, but to the lives of the people of Northern Ireland.

The events of the past year have shown the great promise of peace. But they also have shown that huge obstacles remain to a durable and sustainable peace. On Good Friday of last year, the political leaders of Northern Ireland showed the world the meaning of political courage. Many of these leaders are present, and I'd like to recognize some of them: David Trimble, John Hume, Seamus Mallon, Reg Empey, Gerry Adams, John Alderdice, Sean Neeson, David Ervine, Monica McWilliams and Gary McMichael.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are the heroes of the Northern Ireland Peace process. These are the men and women who deserve the medals and the applause. They are my friends, and yours. Please join me in letting them know how much you value their Good Friday agreement.

I'd like to address those leaders directly. You've heard the applause. Perhaps better than anyone, I know how well deserved it was. But even before the applause fades, the future intrudes.

Getting the agreement was historic. But, as you know, by itself it doesn't provide or guarantee peace. It makes peace possible. Whether it will be realized is up to you.

The Good Friday Agreement transformed Northern Ireland. It also transformed you. You are no longer just the leaders of your parties, or members of the assembly. You are the vessels into which the people of Northern Ireland have poured their hopes and dreams. You sought public office and with it comes power and responsibility. You have the awesome responsibility of life or death. What you do, or don't do, could mean life or death for many of your fellow citizens.

As he left London to join us at the talks last April, Tony Blair said he felt the hand of history on his shoulder. It's still there, on your shoulders.

For a moment, come back in time with me to December 16, 1997, the last negotiating session of that year. We met in the small conference room at Stormont. We had tried for two intense weeks to get agreement on a statement of the key issues to be resolved, and we had failed. We were all bitterly frustrated and deeply discouraged.