EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH GERRY ADAMS

November 11, 2010
Belfast, Ireland

Interviewers

Russell Riley
James Sterling Young, chair

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TRANSCRIPT

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Young: Would you talk about why the visas were so important?

Adams: Let me give you an idea of what was happening in Ireland at that time, if I may. And by that time, I mean the late 1980s. Since the late 1970s, some of us in the Sinn Féin leadership had been discussing strategy and conflict resolution and how we would build a political party and just construe a whole review on an ongoing basis, of how the struggle was being prosecuted here. I particularly long to tell all of that, but one of the things that we were fairly certain about was that any successful struggle needed to have an international dimension to it. What the British had done was to box in and then to spell out their own view, propaganda view, of what was happening here. So we moved quite quickly, from the late 1960s and very early 1970s, from being a civil rights-type struggle about partition, about the role of the British troops on the streets when they came in, in 1969, "Bloody Sunday" it had been termed. . .

Young: Yes.

Adams: . . . to the British basically saying that whatever happened here was an internal matter for the government of the United Kingdom, and essentially it was presented as gangsters and criminal elements and all of that sort of thing. So as we looked at how to develop the international dimension, and this was in tandem with developing all sorts of other aspects of our struggle, we looked to America, because the strongest element in the Irish diaspora was in America.

There were also organizations there like Clan na Gael and Noraid, there were individuals who had been interested in Ireland, and there were campaign groups and a whole plethora of different activism, for justice, for democratic rights, and so on. That came to the attention as we started to get engaged in talks, indirectly and through all sorts of very convoluted processes, with the Irish government on one hand and the British government on the other hand. Most famously with John Hume of the SDLP [Social Democratic and Labour Party].We didn't necessarily tell others until much later that we were in talks with the other. But John was a big friend of Teddy Kennedy.

Young: Yes.

Adams: John had traveled to the States—jeepers, it was about the very early 1970s—and had met with Teddy. By the late 1980s I had been party leader for some years and we had produced a number of policy documents, a scenario for peace and towards a lasting peace. We were shifting our organization very significantly, and that came to the attention of some people in Irish

America, mostly famously Niall O'Dowd, who was the publisher of the *Irish Voice* and *Irish America Magazine*. I met with Niall and we'd been doing quite a lot of work in the States, and he saw shifts in what was happening here, just below the surface. We had worked out ourselves that we needed a sort of antiapartheid movement in America, which we hadn't got, by the way.

Young: Yes.

Adams: But that's what we saw as a useful way to go. So a guy called John Dearie, a fairly well-known Irish American, during the Presidential election season after which Bill Clinton was elected as President, John organized a conference in New York to which he invited the Presidential hopefuls. He asked them—or he and others in the audience asked them—would they support an end to discrimination here, would they support measures to highlight collusion between British forces and lawyers, would they support a visa for me, and other issues? And Bill Clinton said yes. So Niall and a few friends then came together and formed a group that eventually came to be called Americans for a New Irish Agenda.

Young: Yes.

Adams: So when Bill Clinton was subsequently elected and they met with him and with his advisors, to their surprise he said he would continue with the commitments that he had made. He actually made a pretty strong statement at that time. One of the sad relations—

Young: Could you remember when that actually was? He made the commitment, an election commitment, when he was running for the Presidency, in New York.

Adams: Yes.

Young: After he got in, I understood that he turned down a visa.

Adams: No, he didn't. No.

Young: In April.

Adams: Well, what happened was he made a—and I can check this out. In fact, I can give you some notes on the story because I just read through the stuff last night and this morning. He signed up to a fairly advanced statement, but then what happened was Bill Flynn was one of the group of people. There was Bruce Morrison, Niall O'Dowd, Joe Jameson, Chuck Feeney famously, a guy called Bill Lenihan was there from the labor movement, along with Joe Jameson, and you had a sort of an amalgamation, a very informal amalgamation of corporate America, political America, and the labor movement.

Young: Yes.

Adams: So the visa wasn't being dealt with, the labor lobby—and Bill was the head of a number of groups, but one of them was a foreign policy committee [the National Committee on American Foreign Policy]. They decided that they would organize a conference in New York and Niall had put it up to the White House because the whole thing was just going back and

forth. One of the things that Clinton did quite early was that he appointed Jean Kennedy Smith as Ambassador.

Young: Yes.

Adams: And of course Jean Kennedy Smith is Teddy Kennedy's sister. That was a very significant appointment because one of the main people in the infancy of the process was a man called Father Reid, Alec Reid.

Young: Alec Reid, yes.

Adams: What Alec Reid had done, and he deserves great credit for this, right below the radar and sometimes against the background of awful atrocities and deadly actions, he would be going to you, for example, but he would never take no for an answer. He'd get past your officials; he'd go back and he'd go back. By the time Jean Kennedy Smith was appointed, Alec was in the same room as the Irish Taoiseach and was talking to all sorts of senior people all over the place. So he met with Jean Kennedy Smith and they hit it off. They became soulmates really. He's a very good man, a really good pastor, and a brilliant human being. So it wasn't just like a formal or a stage, political, or even conflict resolution process. Father Alec Reid was going out and talking, and going for dinner, discussing matters, and so forth.

So when the issue of the visa came up, Bill Clinton had to come to a decision. And his system was conflicted on this. The head of the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], the head of the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], and three or four very senior officials all opposed the visa.

Young: Not to speak of the State Department.

Adams: Yes, right. In fact, a good example of this is Jean Kennedy Smith. When we put in for the visa, we made a formal request for a visa. We had just had this conference that Bill and his friends had organized, and Jean Kennedy Smith wrote a letter of endorsement, endorsing the visa, but senior officials in her department, in her office wrote objecting to the visa.

Young: Yes.

Adams: So here you have the Ambassador being supportive and her own staff, who presumably would be subordinate to her, were taking a different position. Teddy then starts to come into the fray because John Hume clearly had been briefing him all along in the course of the process. Some of the main people in the Clinton administration were people who had worked with Teddy Kennedy, Nancy Soderberg, for example, and others. But certainly Nancy would be the most prominent of those. So I just presumed that there were all sorts of back channels going on. If somebody got a formalization from source A, then the Nancys of this world would go on to Teddy and Teddy could go on to John Hume, or Teddy could go on to Jean Kennedy Smith and Jean Kennedy Smith could go on to Father Reid, and so on.

Young: And Jean could go to Ted too.

Adams: Oh, absolutely. Well, that's the point I was going to make. It was a two-way process, because Jean played a brilliant role in all of this and she deserves great credit right through the

process. Not just around these high spots, but right through the whole ups and downs, she was in there lobbying and having a quiet word and being broadly supportive.

So the visa was obtained, and John Hume and I went. We all did our thing, and then went back again. The visa—it's often struck me that it was such a small thing. It was a visa for 48 hours, I think, to New York City. Really, in the scheme of things, it arguably wasn't huge, but it was symbolically very big, because U.S. foreign policy, up until that point under previous Presidents, had been broadly speaking in support of the British position. With respect to John, while John did good work in the States, the Irish government didn't press on any of the big issues of the day; it had no strategy. There was no clear, set program of work. A lot of the work in the political establishment in the upper echelons of Irish America was seen, I think quite rightly, as being anti-Republican, anti-Irish Republican.

Young: Yes.

Adams: Also, the Irish government famously lobbied against the Birmingham Six. The Irish government lobbied against the MacBride Principles campaign for fair employment here. So there was the beginning of an emergence of what I refer to as this broad anti-apartheid-type movement, that included all of these people from the pro-Irish Republican, blue collar dimension, with Irish Americans through to the elites. They were all in support of, basically looking at was there a possibility of a peace process? And foreign policy in relation to the issue of Ireland was changed by the decision of the Clinton administration.

Young: Right.

Adams: I think the President's instinct was right on this, but he himself will tell you that a quiet word from Teddy Kennedy, what you should do, Mr. President. Chris Dodd also, who was a very big buddy of Teddy's, made the same call. So the President called it against the advice of his senior officials and also against some powerful others, like Tom Foley, who was the Speaker of the House and leader of the House, and Tom was against us. Later on he told me that it was a mistake.

Young: He did?

Adams: Oh, yes, he did. He was a very nice man. So there was a huge uproar over this. Some of the British press described it as the biggest crisis since Suez. For me, this was all a bit over the top. Now, if you then fast-forward a wee bit, from the point of view of Ireland and the broad Republican constituency, this showed that we did have some clout, that our argument within Republicanism was that you can only use armed struggle if there's no alternative. But if there was an alternative, why on earth would you be involved in anything other than peaceful and democratic means to achieve your goals? So here was the first break in the insular and boxed-in, ongoing purely armed dimensions. There were other developments here in Ireland at that time. Sinn Féin was growing. Hume-Adams, an agreement between myself and John Hume, was published. It became clear that we were engaged in talks of some sort with some of the main players.

So what we then proceeded to do was to try to find not just the alternative, because we had some sense that those of us who were dealing with this whole issue—myself and Father Reid had continued to work on different concepts, and John Hume and I had come up with what was called the Hume-Adams Agreement—we looked at this as the putting together of a jigsaw puzzle. So one part of the jigsaw clearly was Irish America, which now had the attention of the White House to some degree, and John Hume. We had the Irish government in the frame and we needed some sort of a program or a mission statement or a series of commitments. So we then spent some considerable time trying to negotiate that act. Out of those deliberations came the Downing Street Declaration.

Young: Yes.

Adams: By this time, Albert Reynolds was the Taoiseach. Albert came at this totally differently from any of his predecessors, because Albert was a "can-do" guy. He famously described himself as a single-sheet person, who just wanted the thing on one sheet, and then he could call it. He came at this very energetically. There was a bit of a head of steam building up in Ireland around some of these concepts, but the Downing Street Declaration was far short of what was required.

Young: But it was a step.

Adams: It was an important step, but not significant enough. And to go off on a tangent for a second, I've often said to people, in terms of negotiations, that had we done what we were told at the time, there would never have been a Good Friday Agreement because they were telling us that the Downing Street Declaration was the best thing since sliced bread. It was said that it was the resolution for all our problems, and clearly it wasn't.

Young: Well, was part of the significance of Al Reynolds' close involvement, later in the visa thing, was that a sign that the Irish government was now taking a proactive position, or had those signs come earlier?

Adams: No, when Charlie Haughey was the Taoiseach he refused to authorize meetings. He did eventually end up meeting with Father Reid, and Father Reid would have a high regard for him. He did authorize meetings between his party and Sinn Féin—I was part of that process—but he didn't do anything. When Albert came in, Albert moved. Haughey was very cautious. You also have to remember, in fairness to him, that the atmosphere at that time was entirely in support of British policy and strategy. I mean, they're all in the same cradle. The Irish government would have put it in different terms, but all of the bad things that happened in terms of censorship, denial of people's rights, internment, shoot to kill. The Irish government was mute in all of those issues because it had bought into the defeat of "terrorism," as it was described. It would have been a big thing for Haughey to have broken that cycle. I think that he lost an opportunity to do it because he was being fully briefed on what was going on.

However, Albert came in, looked at it in a very practical way, saw there was a chance, and then went looking for that. I remember when he went to negotiate with me—he wasn't meeting with us at the time but subsequently some of his officials did, but Father Reid was the conduit. A lot of the Irish government position in terms of negotiating with the British, they figured out or tried

to figure out what the British would settle for and then negotiate to that point, whereas our position was, we negotiate for what is our national interest.

Young: Yes.

Adams: And when you think you've exhausted that, you can then make a judgment as to whether you can settle or move on. So Albert said that the British won't agree to much, and we said OK, that shouldn't stop you from pressing. I remember him telling me that when they agreed to the Downing Street Declaration and before they went out to do the television report outside Downing Street, he was in a little dressing room, getting ready to do the TV stuff, and [John] Major came in, presuming the whole thing was over, and tried to get another change. So they negotiated right to the wire.

Now, the Downing Street Declaration was seized upon and the seesaw battle that was going on. The British were on the back foot because of Hume-Adams and the visa and so on. Now they had an agreement with the Irish government and they went on the offensive, and the offensive included trying to get America and Irish America onboard, behind the two governments and against the Republicans. We continued to work away, trying to get this jigsaw puzzle together, and we got to the point, in about '93 and into '94, where we thought we had the makings of the jigsaw. We had firmed-up commitments.

Young: You had Jean here. She was, by that time, supporting the visa. Was that right? Soon after she arrived?

Adams: Well, the visa was a done deal. This is subsequent to all of that. As I said, she came out and wrote a letter in support of the visa, but we were now at the point where we were looking for both commitments from our friends who had formed the group that got the visa, and they made those commitments. We had John Hume, who had made his commitments. We were looking for a more advanced commitment from the Irish government and we decided to go for a series of choreographed statements to set the mood.

Young: Yes.

Adams: So John and I made a statement saying we thought we had the basis to proceed. Albert made a statement saying that he thought there was room for progress and the basis for progress, and the Irish government stood by to help. The Irish Americans made quite an advanced commitment, which included Chuck Feeney volunteering to fund a mission by Sinn Féin in the States.

So we then decided that we wanted to send Joe Cahill to the States. Joe Cahill was a senior member of the party, an elderly man. He would have been in his very late seventies at this time. He had first come into public note in 1942, when he was sentenced to be hanged here for an incident that occurred just a half a mile from here, when a police officer was shot dead. There were six IRA [Irish Republican Army] volunteers all sentenced to death. One of them, called Tom Williams, was subsequently hanged and the rest of them were reprieved. There was, by all accounts, a big campaign to get them all reprieved of the death sentence. Joe subsequently was arrested running guns from Libya, a huge shipment of weapons caught off the coast of Ireland. So he was a well-known figure.

Of course the offer of the visa was rejected, they said no. Then Jean got back on to Teddy. And Teddy, the first time he told this, and he told me this numerous times, said that when the President came back to him and said, "Did you see this guy's CV?" Teddy said, "Well, I never told you that he was an altar boy."

Young: Yes.

Adams: So this went back and forth.

Riley: Why was it important for you to send him? You said that you decided it was important to send him, why was that?

Adams: Two reasons. One was to give ample proof to the Irish Republican constituency in Irish America that things had changed. So there was no better way to do that than for Joe Cahill to arrive. He was an iconic figure in most circles. He had been deported from the States. He had gone to the States some time before and had been deported, and in a very high-profile case, he was held in the detention center in New York and so on. So if there were skeptics out there or if there were people who thought this was a surrender or they were being sold out, there was no better man to tell them what the story was than Joe Cahill, and no better example of proof that things had changed, that there was a new dispensation and everybody was going to be treated on that basis.

It was ridiculous that Irish Republicans couldn't visit the States. Not that we had any entitlement to visit the States, but as I've said many times, American citizens should have the right to hear information and then form an opinion. The British were there, the Irish government was there, the unionists were there. The only people who were excluded was the Irish Republican cadre.

Young: So this was—Irish America had not needed to be persuaded away from support from IRA towards support for a peace process.

Adams: Well, they needed proof that—well, a section of Irish America. The children of the famine, way back to 1847, when a million people left the Sinns. The children of those people founded the Féinian movement.

Young: Yes, sure.

Adams: The Féinian movement subsequently went and established the 1916 uprisings, actually raised the new republic. The Irish Americans founded and supported the campaign for agrarian reform here, supported Eamon de Valera. There's a lineage going right back over a number of centuries of a section of Irish America. Other sections understandably may have opposed all of that, and some people harbor resentment with people who just could hardly get out from whatever difficulties they were in and start a new life. There's a consistent connection between that Irish Republican section of Irish America and armed or radical militant campaigns here and there, and they needed persuasion. But there was another dimension to it, which was that we were meeting with the IRA leadership to support all of this and to end their campaign. The issue of Joe Cahill's visa became a little test, although it was never intended to be the case.

Young: Yes, of course.

Adams: Because it just came, it was sneaking up on us. Joe wasn't in the best of health so a guy called Pat Treanor was to travel with him, just as a companion. Pat—you couldn't write this—had been arrested by the RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] some time before, and on his way to the barracks in the RUC vehicle, the IRA attacked the RUC vehicle that Pat was in, by complete coincidence, and Pat was wounded. It was just one of those flukes. So Pat sprang into notoriety because of this fluky situation. Pat should have had no problem getting a visa, but he was stopped from getting a visa even before the Joe Cahill decision had been taken. So there was a really frenetic—I remember talking—by this time, I'm talking to Albert Reynolds and Father Reid is camped out with Jean Kennedy Smith, and because of the time gap, all of this is going on.

Because a lot of our conversation would have been on the phone and all the phones were bugged and so on, Father Reid and I fell into this little code, which was, do we need the Holy Spirit? He would have said, "Do we need the Holy Spirit?" He and I are big fans of Gaelic football and hurling, which is an Irish game. So I would have said, "No, the Holy Spirit's on the sideline," or "We have the Holy Spirit in backs," or "The Holy Spirit is playing in forwards." In other words, if he was in the backs, we were in the defensive position; if he was in the forwards, he was—

Young: On the offense.

Adams: A few times, humorously, I would have said to him, "The Holy Spirit has transferred to the other team. "Or I would have said to him, "The referee has sent the Holy Spirit off. He's been penalized for fighting." So Father Reid informed me continuously over years, at different pivotal times, particularly around this effort to get Joe the visa. He would be phoning me in the early hours of the morning when we were all waiting. We had met the IRA and the IRA had said OK, give us another day or two to think about this. And we just knew that while it wouldn't have been a tipping point, it would have been a very significant thing.

Young: Yes.

Adams: So Father Alec would have been going to see Jean Kennedy Smith, phoning me back, and saying, "Do you have any word on how the Holy Spirit is getting on?" And I would have said, "The Holy Spirit's going bad, and how are things going on your end?" He'd say, "The Holy Spirit is playing a stronger game here." And Teddy was the pivotal one again in terms of the Joe Cahill thing. Because of this relationship that had built up between the different players, between his sister and her influence and his input into the Clinton administration. And again, we got word that Joe had the visa.

Young: Al Reynolds called Jean, who was vacationing in France, about this visa.

Adams: That's right. She came back; you're right, absolutely.

Young: She came back.

Adams: Yes.

Young: And she went to work. It's interesting that in the United States, this visa did not raise any publicity at all. It was your visa that was the big deal.

Adams: I joked that I was like John the Baptist, in terms of the visa, that Joe's was actually more significant, even though, as you say, he just slipped in and was there for a week or two.

Young: When I was interviewing Ted—I had several interviews about Ireland with him—he was not in favor of a visa when he came over to visit Jean that Christmas.

Adams: Yes.

Young: You knew that?

Adams: Yes, I knew that.

Young: His account of—he thought we were coming over for a social visit and he said, "This is not on my schedule." Jean had organized all of that, and he went away convinced.

Adams: Jean deserves great credit for all the work that she did. The next development was that the IRA called its cessation.

Young: Cease-fire.

Adams: Then, subsequent to that, I went on a coast-to-coast tour here in the States. It was a very high-profile tour.

Young: You had to get clearance.

Adams: Yes.

Young: Because you couldn't raise money, or you couldn't do this.

Adams: There was a whole protracted process. Again, the Kennedys, interestingly enough. . . .

Young: I think Ted told the White House to rescind that.

Adams: Well, there were two dimensions to it, or perhaps three dimensions to it. Part of the commitment from the group we were working with in Irish America, which we called the Connolly House group. Connolly House is the headquarters of Sinn Féin here in the city, and that's where we met them on a number of occasions. They actually have a different title, it escapes me just now, but they certainly used the title Americans for a New Irish Agenda. I just can't remember whether that was subsequent to the election of Bill Clinton or before. Part of the deal was that the White House would normalize its relationship with Sinn Féin.

Now, the British government response to the IRA cessation was dreadful. John Major said that it turned his stomach to think of talks that Republicans had to go through a process of decontamination and so on. The Irish government, for their part, did talks with John Hume and myself. That was a big news story, and presumably it was also a big news story in the States, where everybody could feel, to a large degree, vindicated by what had emerged. But the process of normalizing the relationship between Sinn Féin and the White House was one that the British

fought every inch of the way. They fought against the visa and now they were fighting against all of these other things.

In the meantime, as that was proceeding, the Unionists were invited into the White House and we weren't. We were not allowed into the White House. Again, the British complained about us having the right to fundraise, where everybody else could fundraise. Interestingly enough, we could fundraise in Britain. It was a ridiculously contradictory position that they had. And Teddy came in and fought all of those battles; the right for me to go and travel, the right to fundraise. Chuck Feeney had been true to his commitment to fund an office and we appointed a representative.

Riley: Did Senator Kennedy object to the White House inviting the Unionists in to visit?

Adams: No, I don't think he did, and neither should he have. I don't know, but I would think he—I wouldn't think so, because one of the positive dimensions of this change in U.S. policy was to expose all of the players to a different political reality.

Riley: I see.

Adams: Fairly early on, I saw that it was a good thing that the Unionists could go to the States. There was also, as it emerged, the possibility—it didn't work as well as it might have—that the Unionists might be a bit more relaxed over here, and might be able to engage in some sort of talks with ourselves. The significant part of that was that the first meeting between ourselves and the Loyalists happened in the States, on the margins of another event.

But coming back to the big coast-to-coast tour, which was in October, we started it in Boston. I remember it was during an election. Teddy greeted us and was very gracious. That was the first time I had met with him, though of course I knew him from his television persona and so on. He and his wife Vicki [Reggie Kennedy] met me at the Boston airport and took us out for the day. We did a series of events. I briefed him with details and he asked me numerous questions about what was happening.

At the same time, we were pressing the White House to normalize the relationship; there had to be some evidence of the normalization between us and them. I've always made the point that, diplomatically, I have no right to go to the States and I have no right to expect anything. It's not my country, you're there as a guest, and so on, but U.S. citizens, as I've said earlier, do have rights and do have the right to information and the right to make informed judgments. And certainly those who support justice and freedom in Ireland should have the same rights as those who want to support the union with Britain and so on.

So the Kennedy factor—I knew Robert Kennedy's daughter; she was married to Paul Hill. Courtney Kennedy [Hill].As we were going through Washington, they invited us to spend the night at Hickory Hill. So as we were travelling, we'd been back and forth between ourselves and Niall O'Dowd and the White House, and we concocted a solution to this problem, which was that the Vice President, Al Gore, would speak to me by telephone and we would have a discussion. Why was this important? It was important because the British were refusing to talk.

So it was important, from our point of view, to both expose that in a way that was therapeutic; and to begin the process of normalizing relationships.

Remember from the first visa, the issue of the broadcasting ban was exposed. The issue of me being barred from traveling to Britain, even though I was a Member of Parliament, was exposed. Both these crazy, repressive actions were eradicated. The British moved out of embarrassment. When it was an internal matter for the people of the United Kingdom then, nobody knew about it, but once it became very public—because my visit was a very high-profile visit—then journalists in the States were just totally and absolutely incredulous that I couldn't be interviewed.

We were also being depicted as terrorists and the devil incarnate, and because you were able to string together three sentences and articulate your case, all of these issues were dealt with quickly. We thought that the issue of talks with the British could be accelerated by getting talks with the administration. So the Al Gore phone call, and the fact that it took place in Hickory Hill, just because of Robert Kennedy's involvement—a very iconic figure, I'm a huge fan of his—was also, I think, probably not lost on the White House, even though it was a coincidence.

Young: In October of that year, '94, Ted was in a very difficult reelection campaign in Massachusetts, where it looked for a while as though Mitt Romney would win his seat. He became very intensely involved in that campaign. Maybe that is one reason why he wasn't very much in evidence in Washington when you were there.

Adams: We weren't in Washington in any—how can I put this? We weren't on Capitol Hill, we weren't around. He was involved in re-election campaign—and I used to joke that we helped him to win the election, because we arrived in the middle of it.

Young: That's right.

Adams: We travelled to Springfield, Massachusetts. Later that evening, with Congressman Richard Neal, we met a huge crowd of Irish Americans, mostly people from Kerry. My very first greeting from those people was in Irish. These are people who had actually left the Blasket Islands, off the west coast of County Kerry, and here they were in this very verdant, beautiful part of Massachusetts, thousands of miles away from home. To be greeted in Irish was, for me anyway, just proof of all the connectedness between Ireland and Irish America.

But Teddy was reelected. Where he really came into his own publicly was when the IRA cease-fire broke down. The IRA cease-fire broke down about 18 months or so later. I'm not 100 percent certain when, the British still hadn't engaged in all-party talks, and Teddy came out very clearly and demanded talks. Very clearly. What we fell upon, arising from some of these experiences, was what we'd later come to call "independent initiatives." Even though the British weren't progressing all-party talks, if Albert would go and make some statement, take the initiative, or if Bill Clinton would do something, if John Hume would do something, then it showed that all was not lost, that we still had friends and we still had influence, and we still had the ability to develop peaceful and democratic ways. I think that was probably Teddy's best time in terms of—you know, the cease-fire had broken. There was a huge IRA bombing offensive in Britain.

Young: Yes.

Adams: Teddy was nonviolent. He had lost two brothers to violent actions. He was a supporter of John Hume. He never pretended to be a supporter of Sinn Féin; he was always a supporter of John Hume. He and I got on well, but that's aside. For him then to come out in the wake of this huge blast in London and to say there should be talks, the British government should be talking to the Republicans. And he stuck with that.

Young: Yes.

Adams: Even though it was all heaped on top of him, that he was a supporter of "terrorism." He wouldn't have become a figure of vilification in the States but certainly here, this was pointed up as a terrible thing for this man to be. But he was right.

Young: He was quite consistent throughout this.

Adams: Oh yes, absolutely. And when it came to the restoration of the cessation, the fact that Teddy, who had been known in Irish America to a large extent, in terms of being anti-IRA, was saying there should be talks. This was hugely important, especially when it then came to persuading people that the problem was Major. We had to test him, we had to give him a chance, and we had friends in court. John Hume was still there and the Irish government was still. Peace, obviously, was a very popular concept, and not peace at any price but peace that people could see, that would be durable and bring justice and bring rights and so on.

So I think that period of '96 and through whatever time for him was involved, and Teddy becoming more confident in terms of his facing up to the British and spelling it out. And then the Clinton visit here became a catalyst for movement, the economic envoy being appointed, and the economic conference being held. My first talk with a British official, which was Patrick Mayhew, who was the British Secretary of State for North Ireland, again happened in the States. That's again, I think, proof of the influence of the pressure that could be put when the White House was focused. I was visiting the States quite often, and increasingly by now we were able to fundraise. Irish Americans were able to come to events, and in many ways they became almost celebrations.

I don't know whether you would agree with this, but I think other coincidences that happened, like Riverdance, or just things that were happening. The beginning of the Celtic Tiger, the peace process, all these things lifted morale. They all showed a different side to Ireland and gave people cause for hope and belief in themselves. You now had, for the first time certainly in recent times, right across both the Republican Party in the States and the Democratic Party in the States, agreement on Ireland. There was no division. People who were opposed on every other issue were coming together and supporting the peace process. Quite powerful Senators, and Teddy would have been the foremost of those, were able to agree on numerous issues to do with economic regeneration, equality, human rights.

Young: Yes.

Adams: You're into a whole process of getting talks. And then the Americans come to play a huge role, because out of that comes Senator George Mitchell. Far from it being an internal

matter for the government of the United Kingdom, the whole situation is increasingly internationalized. We have senior people coming from the Nordic countries; we have commissioners coming from Canada, looking at policing, looking at arms, looking at human rights. The Unionists are resisting the talks. The relationship that developed between Blair and Clinton becomes important; the relationship that developed between me and Martin McGuinness and Blair becomes important. By now we're meeting with Bill Clinton fairly regularly. We have to call on Teddy Kennedy, Chris Dodd, and others fairly often.

Riley: But there were a couple of episodes. You talk about the favorable momentum of some of these external factors, but there were some difficult episodes too, like Stormont. Excuse me, I got my terminologies wrong, but there were some instances where the Senator was opposed to allowing you to come into the country because there was IRA activity.

Young: Well, he wouldn't meet with you, that's after the [Robert] McCartney—

Adams: Yes, he never—

Riley: McCartney and the Canary Wharf, I guess were the two things that I was—

Adams: No, he was OK on Canary Wharf. I don't mean he was OK on Canary Wharf, don't get me wrong.

Riley: But you called him.

Adams: He obviously disagreed about Canary Wharf, but as I said earlier, in the back of that, he argued for talks and was consistent with that.

Young: Yes.

Adams: The only time that he—and he never—to my knowledge, I'd be very surprised it was the case—he never deviated from the position about the visas and so on. What he did do on the back of the murder of Robert McCartney, he refused to meet.

Young: Yes.

Adams: That whole case is one in which it was alleged the IRA were involved. The IRA were not involved. Individual Republicans, perhaps even IRA volunteers, may have been involved, but any suggestion that the IRA either conspired as an organization or as a unit or as a group, why they killed this man, why they needed to cover up his killing, was just wrong. And I can understand why his sisters would allege that, because that's clearly, in the context of both the circumstances in which the guy was killed and then the attempt, because I had run into a brick wall in trying to get people to go to the place and give evidence and so on. I just hit negatives. Now, it became a cause célèbre for the British and for others, and Teddy Kennedy and other people in the White House, or other people in government, had met with the families. So when it came to my going there at some point, Teddy had made it clear that until this issue was resolved we wouldn't be meeting.

Riley: OK.

Adams: Now, he changed that subsequently.

Young: Maybe this was just a symbolic step he made to keep the focus on the talks. Keep the talks going, don't go backwards.

Adams: Well, whatever the rationale, and he and I talked about it subsequently, the fact is, he did meet with me.

Young: OH, yes.

Adams: And we continued. I've always found the guy very charming, good fun. He introduced me to a dimension of Irishness that I hadn't been aware of, and it's one that I'm very intrigued with: the ability to stand up and sing a song. You go to a political meeting and Teddy gets up on the stage and he tells three or four jokes and he sings a song. I couldn't think of being able to do that, or Martin McGuinness or anybody else. Even Albert Reynolds, you couldn't imagine him.

Young: Oh no, he loved to sing.

Adams: And he was singing old-time Irish songs, which are great songs, and parlor house songs. So I loved the guy. I thought he was absolutely brilliant in terms of just his energy. I hugely admire his work. If you come from here—and I've read a wee bit about this—you could end up having sort of a stereotypical view of Americans, you know?

Young: Yes.

Adams: And then you go there and you discover it's very diverse and the Kennedys are radical. His statement for healthcare, his passion. This family, which is quite a powerful family, totally went into public service, totally unique and working on behalf of deprived people, vulnerable people, working people. So even though he's a Democrat and he's fighting with a Republican, he understands. He might describe the Republican in colorful language if he's talking privately, but he also understands that the Republican has his point of view, and part of the job is to try to see if there's any common ground, to get towards your objectives. How do you get somebody who disagrees with you to move somewhere in the same direction with you?

So the Robert McCartney murder was a dreadful event. It was hugely frustrating for us, and that's not to say anything at all that doesn't underpin the gravity of what happened and the huge loss to the family, but it's bad enough being blamed for something where you may be, because of your position, politically held to account. You can rationalize that, right? You can take that onboard. But when something is down to individuals doing something dreadfully wrong, and then there is the whole struggle. It's far from me to be involved in barroom brawls or to be—so then it becomes a central thing, and it was exploited unmercifully by the elements in the British government who were looking for justification to roll back and look for excuses not to keep going. But thankfully, you can see the progress that has been made, even from then. Now we have a government, now we have a functioning executive, now we have a Good Friday Agreement.

Riley: Forgive me, because I jumped in the timeline with my question unintentionally, but you were talking about the Good Friday Agreement and his role in the development of that, and I want to make sure we get that amply covered.

Adams: Well, the big work that was done by those who were on the right side of all of this was in the years in which it was necessary to try to break out of the box and bring together some sort of a level playing field, and then essentially it's up to us. It's up to the people here to work it out. I must have met Teddy dozens of times and I know that he made—and I asked him to—a lot of phone calls. I know that he spoke to people on the side. I know that he went to senior British representatives numerous times, on numerous issues. This isn't just haggling and groveling stuff, this is the tedium of making progress. I think he very largely understood this, given his record in the Senate, that to get something done you do it through the mundane and boring minutia. I can give you dozens of examples where he intervened at different points in the process.

Young: But quietly.

Adams: Well, it wasn't necessary to do it other than quietly.

Young: No.

Adams: If he knew that the British Secretary of State was going to be on Capitol Hill, he would get a phone call from Teddy Kennedy saying, what's the story, what do you want me to say to him, what's happening? At different other times, when there were issues of contention between us, where you could go to Capitol Hill or you could phone him and you could say to him, would you intervene here, is there somebody you could talk to? Can you talk to the White House? And these could be about a rights issue, it could be about some part of the agreement that was being neglected or wasn't being acted on, or it could be about the Unionists, of having a quiet word, of flattering the Unionists or trying to bring the Unionists into that space of getting them party to it. So he did that numerous times.

Young: Yes. He would call anybody. He did a lot of that throughout, in all matters, and he had a very large Rolodex, as we would say.

Adams: Absolutely.

Young: A very large one, and a good staff too.

Adams: Yes, I was going to say that. The other thing that I found—obviously he's a very senior politician—but the amount of staff, possibly to focus on an issue and his interest in global issues. I was very interested in the whole health issue, so on quite a few occasions—I'm interested in social issues anyway—I was just very taken by the efforts. And on the issue of immigration as well, he even played a very positive role in terms of all of that. But his interest in other parts of the world and what was happening, and I suppose the desire for America to be seen and to be a catalyst for progressive change, to be a good global citizen, I think is very much part of his legacy.

I mean, I couldn't pay enough praise to Jean Kennedy Smith in the course of all of this, again, when the big agreements are made. We'd work on the peace process every day, and there are still aspects of the Good Friday Agreement that haven't been implemented, but they don't catch the media. The media's eyes are somewhere else, so you are down to the mundane, just dealing with it quietly and diplomatically or aggressively, depending on your mood. Jean continued in that role for ages and ages, of just being somebody you know. You knew that if you kept her briefed up, that when she was meeting the Irish government in her capacity, she would just say quietly, but what about—you know, why wasn't something done?

Y**oung:** And she's very direct.

Adams: Oh, yes. Smashing woman.

Young: She also listens?

Adams: Yes.

Young: She's got a very good ear.

Adams: Oh no, she's a brilliant woman, just brilliant.

Young: One wonders if she hadn't been appointed how much more difficult things might have been.

Adams: Well, you see, I have often pondered—well, I haven't often pondered but I used to ponder—we were working on some of these issues for two decades and then all of a sudden, it works. And you often say, well, why didn't this work in '74? Why didn't it work in '83? Lots of people could have all sorts of explanations for that, have a story, have an objective; their analysis could be to blame the Republicans or to blame the British. But it's back to the old Shakespearean thing: There's a tide in the affairs of men. We had this convergence of people and OK, the principals, like John Hume or myself or Tony Blair, Albert Reynolds, Bill Clinton, but it's also the Alec Reids, it's the Jean Kennedy Smiths.

You couldn't underestimate the importance of people becoming personally committed or developing personal relationships and understanding that the other person is sincere and genuine and positive and progressive. So, if Jean Kennedy Smith had not been there, arguably, certainly in terms of the Joe Cahill visa and her having the ability to lobby her brother, and her brother then intervening, arguably Joe wouldn't have gotten the visa. Now, would that have meant there wouldn't have been a peace process and so on? No, it wouldn't, but it wouldn't have happened when it happened, and we wouldn't be as far advanced as we are now. So I think Jean's role is one that needs to be highlighted.

Young: I agree with you. I've interviewed her several times, and in fact, I'm seeing her next week.

Adams: Would you give her my kindest regards? Please do.

Young: I'll do that. I asked her before I came over, I said, "What should I ask Gerry Adams?" She said, "Ask him if he was always for a united Ireland." And she's going to want to know what your answer for that is when I get back.

Adams: Yes, absolutely. It just doesn't make sense, apart from our entitlement as a people to shape our own future. You could lose this island in the State of Maine or lose it in one of your Great Lakes. We're only six million people. To be divided, to have competing systems, it's just mad. So I would say she asked you that question jokingly, but tell her I said absolutely.

I remember one time we were just coincidentally at—it might actually have been Riverdance, but whatever it was, the promoters of the show brought us into the green room during the break and there was Jean Kennedy with a friend of hers, and the two of them sang for the 20 minutes of the break, ragtag tunes and old show standards. A presenter came in the break and said the green room was as entertaining as the show that was on the main stage.

Also, among my prize possessions I have a fine painting that Teddy gave me, of a watercolor of his boat. This was after the McCartney sort of.… I read his book and I thought he was very generous in terms of us, in terms of the Sinn Féin people. Obviously, the book features Ireland, it features—well, you've read the book, I presume. But I thought when I read it that he was very generous, but also very modest about his own role.

Young: Well, it was a subject of great pride with him. I asked him once in an interview if he saw any lessons to be learned from this long struggle and its successful culmination in Northern Ireland and the Middle East, or conflict resolution elsewhere in the world, and he looked at me and said, "Ireland is not the Middle East." But then he went on to talk about that what you have here, what you didn't see then in the Middle East, was responsible leaders who were willing to lead, to take risks, to exercise leadership. He said Ian Paisley and the other people who made this come off were basically responsible. They could conflict, they had differences, but they knew how to lead and accomplish something that had something in it for everybody, as the alternative to senseless.

Adams: I've often said of the Middle East and the resolution of all of those matters that you have a process there, waiting for leaders, because on my visits there, people I met in Israel and people I met in the Palestinian territories, all of them could actually sketch out what this outcome was going to be. They all knew, but there are no leaders there to deliver.

I think Teddy's point is a very pertinent point. One of the big lessons I learned in terms of all of this was that we had to actually create space, and those who supposedly wanted the most change, we had to create space to get the unionists to be in places where they don't necessarily want to be. But my thesis is that people respond to the political conditions in which they live, or to social conditions. If you want to change the way people come to something and the way people think, then you have to change the conditions. You can't blame the people, but if you change the conditions, then people will think in a different way.

I think that's essentially the job of politicians, and what it comes down to is this notion of the people have rights and it's not conditional, it's not—you know, it isn't that the minority should have rights but the majority shouldn't; it's just people have rights, and that's the big thing I like

about the States. If you treat people on the basis of equality and you treat people decently, people respond and will have ownership and a sense of belonging and a sense of responsibility, and certainly pride and patriotism and common interest, public interest. If you treat people as if they didn't have rights, they won't feel valued and they respond—it's as old as human nature, and they respond in whatever they think is an appropriate way. So the job of politicians is to be changing the political conditions all the time.

The other thing that I like about—I'm a big fan of the Kennedys and I've read a lot of Robert's—I'm very impressed by his writings and John F. Kennedy too, of course, but Teddy talks a lot and writes a lot about the American dream, the voyage; it's a continuing process of renewal. I think that's it in terms of Ireland, this continuum. When you're younger you might not think this way, this doesn't penetrate you yet. I used to think that with all these grievances, it was only a matter of bringing them to the attention of the establishment and they'd be so shocked that they'd correct it. I learned painfully that there's a continuum of struggle, whether it's on a big national issue like ours or whether it's on writing the healthcare, and it might take five, ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years, but that's how it's made. The election of President [Barack] Obama, people looking at it might get a paragraph in a book but it comes on the back of the kids, a century of struggle. A breakthrough on health, the new relationship between Ireland and Britain, which has been developed with the change in Anglo-American relationships in Ireland, is now taken as a fact. It's not only taken as a fact but is also seen as a good thing.

Young: Yes.

Adams: And what was seen as an entirely bad thing 20 years ago is now, you know. One of the times that I went to South Africa after apartheid was ended, I said half-jokingly that I couldn't find anybody who was for the apartheid. Similarly in this situation, we could get to a point here that you won't be able to meet anybody who remembers all the bad stuff. Everybody will be proponents of the new dispensation, and that's good.

Young: Looking back over the years that he was in office, Ted used to talk about something he called the "march of progress." He didn't exactly use the analogy of cycles, of coming back, but you make some great strides, some important strides, and then you don't make many important strides but you find small things to keep going, to keep the continuity. Even as a minority, when your party is in the minority, sometimes he was very effective.

Adams: He also had a great practice now. He clearly had the influence to do this, but I've often thought about here in terms of social and economic issues. There's a lot of poverty here. On the health stuff or on other issues, he would bring in all these experts.

Young: Yes.

Adams: And you know, I am just hugely taken by that. Clearly because of who he was, he'd get the very cream of whatever the expertise was, but I'm very taken by the notion that I couldn't be expected, or shouldn't be expected, to resolve this problem, but you and you and you and you can.

Young: What would you say? What would *you* say? And he listens, then he puts in some questions, but it's mostly listening. There are colleagues of his in the Senate—including adversaries in the Senate—who would say that whenever he took on an issue and pursued it, he made it his business to know more about that issue than anybody else in the Senate. That was part of the study, making up his mind as to how he can handle this, but also becoming deeply informed about it, so he could master all the issues. It drove his staff crazy sometimes, but he would do that, and that started very early with him. I asked him one time, where did you—and he said, "Well, my brother used to do that."

Adams: That's a good point. Obviously, the man was very clever and great, but really that's a perfect example for anybody who wants to be following through a process of change.

The other thing I wanted to say is that I love dogs. I was never on a sailing boat in my life. I would kayak but not sail, but I love dogs. I've had a dog since I was five years old.

Young: Well, you have that in common with him. He's had dogs forever, and I considered it—the dogs were always in the interviews and sometimes audibly. Sometimes he would be talking to them, and you listen to the tape.

Adams: Very good, playful. Tell me this now, because I have to really go. Is there anything we haven't talked about or touched on?

Young: I think it's fine. Do you have anything else?

Riley: I only wanted to ask one additional question, and that is that there is a different political environment after 2001. You've gotten used to working with the Clinton administration, partly through Senator Kennedy's ambassadorial role. Did his role in this change after the [George W.]Bush White House comes in? Are you in need of a different kind of interface with the American political system after the Republicans take over?

Adams: The funny thing about it is that the big lift was done by Bill Clinton in the first term.

Riley: Right.

Adams: Bill Clinton continues to be engaged. He was down here a month ago and he continues to be updated and so on. But there was this commonality of approach on the Ireland issue, from both the Republicans and the Democrats. So George Bush continued to engage on Ireland, but the style was different. Bill Clinton would arrange to see you and maybe you were scheduled for half an hour, and two hours later you could still be with him. He maybe more informed than the most senior officials here, because he has the same approach of detail. George Bush, you would see him for 15 minutes; but they continued the process. Where Teddy was also important was in connection with the Irish government, because sometimes the Irish government lagged behind on the process.

As Sinn Féin became more successful here, then the Irish government, some Irish governments, took a less benign view. Of course, Albert went out of government, which was a big loss to the process, and the next man coming in, John Bruton, didn't have enough knowledge or savvy. In many ways, it was useful to get Teddy Kennedy to talk to Irish government officials. So while he

did enjoy relationships with the Republicans in the States, which was important to get somebody in there who was informed, equally, at different times when there was turbulence here with the government in Dublin not pressing ahead, he was good. The very fact that he would even ask the question, or the fact that he would go to the Irish Ambassador and say what's the story around such and such? Even if he didn't do anything else except ask, that went right back into the systems. And even yet, President Obama wouldn't be as much engaged, but Hillary Clinton at present—part of our success is the cause of all of this, you know. There are other places that need to have more than we do at the moment; the Middle East, as you mentioned, and other parts of the world.

So what I would say in terms of all of this is that there are constants. And it isn't always the big event or the big act. That might be the point for the new year and so forth. It's more the quiet briefings, keeping people up to date, the right signal being sent, having friends in court who when somebody is talking nonsense, they can very gently say, no, we're not; that's not the way. That's the role that Teddy Kennedy played for all of that period, from when I first met him in '94, right up until his death.

Riley: Got you. OK, James?

Young: That's fine.

Riley: Thank you very much for your time.