

TWO BIFFOS CELEBRATE ST. PADDY'S DAY



Given that today is St. Paddy's Day, I thought I would remind you all of the cutting edge journalism I provided last May when I reported from the home of Barack Obama's Irish forebears, Moneygall, County Offaly. (Obama's hometown paper is just now catching up and they don't even have such a swell photo, taken by my father-in-law with the bustling metropolis of Moneygall in the background.)

As I reported then, Offaly is not only mr. emptywheel's home county, but also the home of Ireland's Taoiseach (pronounced "Tea-shack"), Brian Cowen.

There's a slur used for Offaly men in Ireland (Cowen is, as I understand it, sort of proud of it): BIFFO, or, "Big Ignorant Fucker from Offaly).

As luck would have it, the BIFFOs running both countries of which I am a citizen got together today and—just now catching up the cutting edge reporting I did last May—they spoke of their mutual ties to Offaly.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Hello, everybody. Happy St. Patrick's Day.

I just want to say that we are incredibly honored to have the Taoiseach here, and his entire team. This is an affirmation of one of the strongest bonds between peoples that exist in the world. You know, when you think about the history of Ireland and the enormous impact it has had on our own history, and the fact that you've had people from Ireland who have shed blood on behalf of this country's independence and its freedom, that it has had probably as much impact on our culture and our

traditions as any country on earth.

The bond and the friendship that is felt between the United States and Ireland is something that I think everybody understands, but as the Taoiseach just mentioned, we can't take for granted and we have to continually build upon.

And so this visit gives us an opportunity to talk about some of the very important bilateral issues that we face; also to talk about some of the global issues that both the United States and Ireland want to take leadership in. We are grateful for the lasting friendship that exists between us.

I, personally, take great interest on St. Patrick's Day because, as some of you know, my mother's family can be traced back to Ireland – and it turns out that I think our first Irish ancestor came from the same county that Taoiseach once represented. So we may be cousins – (laughter) – we haven't sorted that through yet. But even if by blood we're not related, by culture and affinity, by friendship and mutual interest, we are certainly related. And this gives us an opportunity to just continue to strengthen the incredible bonds that we have between the two countries.

So thank you so much.

Q Will you visit – President, will you visit –

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I hope so.

TAOISEACH COWEN: Can I first of all thank President Obama and Secretary of State and all his team for the wonderful welcome here to the White House. As President Obama has said, it's a great tradition here in the United States for

a warm welcome for Ireland, and we deeply appreciate that welcome. And as I said, in area of contribution, since I came to America over this weekend, this relationship is based on substance, it's based on a very engaged America working with a contemporary, modern Ireland, helping to shape our history at home and helping us to contribute so much more by reason of our unity of purpose and our common values. And it is a great day for the Irish in America today, and I'm very conscious of that.

More than 44 million of our 70 million diasporas of the world are residing in the United States of America. And all of us, my own family, have reason to be very grateful to this country. **After all, it's gone down the generations further as we've progressed – and thankfully go home and marry childhood sweethearts and end up with Taoiseachs coming over here to meet a man whose forebears, as he said, was in my electoral district (inaudible).** But since we're not related – before coming to Ireland, the only thing I can say to him is he's not going to share a slate with me over there, because I can't compete with this man even in Ireland. (Laughter.) Because he would be very, very welcome.

And we look forward to an excellent discussion, as I said, on issues of mutual interest. And we are deeply grateful and appreciative of the wonderful access that our country is accorded on this great day for Ireland. And he reminds us, of course, that we are not simply an island nation, but a disperse global family – and nowhere is that more celebrated than is this great country.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Just one last point

that I would like to make, and that is
although I think it's wonderful that he
visited the Oval Office and Washington,
what you're really missing out on is the
South Side Irish Parade in Chicago –
(laughter) –

To all the BIFFOs and other Irish at heart, I
offer you my new favorite St. Paddy's Day
greeting: May you be graced with trolls who will
help you find the only Beamish on tap in Boston.