

Jan. 10 / Administration of George Bush, 1992

The Economy

Q. Mr. President, don't the unemployment figures show you that the economy is in fact getting worse?

The President. No, I don't think that. But they are certainly unsatisfactory. And what they show is, we need growth. And we need to stimulate growth in a sound, fiscally sound way and not through some way that will set the economy back by shooting interest rates, long-term rates, up through the roof. And by that I mean things that are going to recklessly break this budget agreement. They show that the economy has been sluggish. They show that people are hurting. And they show that we need to

get going now with a growth agenda that will do short-term that which it can do; a lot of the suggestions are more long-term. And I think they show that, I hope they show that wherever we can make progress on expanding markets abroad, we ought to do it. And that's one reason I'm satisfied that we have made real progress on this trip. I think it will help in that situation.

Thank you all very much.

Note: The President spoke at 9:15 a.m. upon arrival at Andrews Air Force Base in Camp Springs, MD, from his trip to Asian/Pacific nations. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mario Cuomo of New York and Premier Li Peng of China.

Remarks to the President's Drug Advisory Council

January 10, 1992

Thank you all very much for that welcome, and thank you, Bill Moss, especially, and thank you for the job you did as Chairman in launching the Drug Advisory Council.

I'm delighted to be home. And you've got to admit, when I get the flu, I do it in a very dramatic—[laughter]—way. But it was so embarrassing. [Laughter] But I do feel well, a little bit jet-lagged. We just flew 12 straight hours from Tokyo. In fact, we got here before we took off, if you look at the international dateline. So, you will excuse me if I'm a little bit tired. But my health is good, and I am so grateful to so many across our wonderful country and then also in Japan who, I think, thinking I was a little more seriously sick than I was, expressed their concerns. And I just want to say thanks to everybody who did that.

I am delighted to be here. I did not want to go off to Camp David without stopping by this very, very important meeting. And I'm glad to be here with so many hard workers. I want to single out, of course, Bob Martinez, the former Governor of Florida, who is in charge of the fiercely committed fighters in our battle to lead America away from drugs. You heard from one of

these earlier when David Kearns, representing Lamar Alexander—David, our outstanding executive there at the Department of Education. And in addition, we are very fortunate in a Government sense to have the leadership of Attorney General Bill Barr, who is working closely with Bob Martinez, with Lou Sullivan, our very able Secretary of HHS, intimately involved in all of this. And we are trying as a Government to meet this scourge head-on.

But I believe that the answer lies right here. I know it lies with the leadership from Jim Burke who is sitting here at my left. As many of you are aware, Jim's done an outstanding job unleashing the power of the media through this Partnership for a Drug-Free America. There is no way that Government itself could do what this individual has done in getting the message, antidrug message, out across this country. We are very, very grateful to him.

I also am sitting next to another tireless worker, very successful man, Alvah Chapman, who just took this on to organize this meeting, organize this crusade all across the country, providing all of us with the vision and leadership this whole coalition movement represents. So, my thanks to him.

I was told by Jim, coming in here, of the many successful efforts going in the communities represented here and then some that aren't even represented. And so, I want to thank all who have come from all across this land to explore this idea of community coalitions gathering momentum. And if you needed any inspiration—I didn't get to hear her; maybe she hadn't sung yet. But I've heard her many times. She's been our guest up at Camp David. If you need a little momentum-gathering, try Sandy Patti on for size because she is magnificent.

Well, let me just say, it is a pleasure to be back, and it was a great trip. Ten fascinating days in the Far East talking and listening and learning, working hard for the objectives that we all share of trying to get this country moving through expanding our exports markets, assuring our friends also that we are going to stay actively involved in the Pacific. You know, given all the changes in Eastern Europe and the hope that is about now because of people that had hated each other over the years, been ancient enemies, now talking in the Middle East, some in the Pacific area thought that we've just forgone our interests in that part of the world. So, I wanted to convince those leaders there that we will fulfill our security responsibilities to that critical area, and we will stay actively involved with that area, our largest trading partner incidentally.

But I came here today because I really believe that what you do is vitally important to the well-being of our country. And I wanted to just say this to you: Your Nation recognizes the critically important work of your community antidrug coalitions, and your Nation is very, very grateful to each and every one of you.

We are working hard, all of us, all of you, to blast the curse of drugs off the face of our map. Our antidrug effort is one of the highest priorities of any domestic initiative in the Federal Budget. In 1992, our budget proposal called for \$11.7 billion for the drug war, an increase of 82 percent since the beginning of our administration and an 11-percent increase since the previous year, one of the largest in the entire overall budget.

In our war, you know the answer, and I understand and think I know the answer,

we are seeing results. I'm not sure the entire country understands this yet, Jim and Alvah, but I believe we are seeing results. For 1990, we exceeded our goal for reducing overall drug use. We'd hoped for a decrease of 10 percent between '88 and '90, and it fell by more than that. I believe the figure was 11 percent. Occasional cocaine use went down 29 percent when we'd set a goal—I think again, trying to just think positively, I think the goal we had set in our minds was 10 percent.

For 1991, figures show we've even more dramatically exceeded many of our goals, particularly in areas like adolescent cocaine use. You know and I know there's a problem. It's a horrible thing to think about, adolescent cocaine use. But it's out there, and it's tough. And we are making headway. We'd hoped to reduce that by 30 percent since 1988, and it's fallen more than 60 percent. So, what you're doing is working. What you're doing is having an effect and saving the lives of children.

But let's face it, much remains to be done. More than 12.5 million, 12.5 million Americans currently still use drugs; 1.9 million of them currently use cocaine. And adolescent drug use has fallen, but still more than 1.3 million of our kids currently abuse drugs.

We're also committed to toughening the drug laws. We devote more effort to fighting drugs than to any other single area of crime. But we cannot do it alone. We need Federal drug laws that are on the side of the people. We need a bipartisan effort to help law enforcement protect our present and ensure our children's future. As I said 2 years ago when we announced the drug strategy, with this drug problem we face the toughest challenge in decades. We face the challenge not as partisans but as a Nation.

As we've said time and time again, we cannot win the drug war through law enforcement alone. I'm convinced we can do better on law enforcement, and I salute those who are out there enforcing our laws. But we can't win it through law enforcement alone. We've got to have effective treatment programs, and we need national action.

More than 2 years ago we established this President's Drug Advisory Council. America was lucky, very, very fortunate to gain the wisdom and vision of these distinguished American leaders who share our goal of ridding this Nation of the devastation caused by illegal drugs. I want to give very special thanks today to our Council members who work tirelessly to mobilize the enormous power the private sector can wield in the war against drugs. Look at this head table, look around, look at the names of the people, the men and women who are serving, and you'll see we've got very busy, successful people giving of themselves to help others.

In addition, every one of you here today are frontline soldiers in our war. You lead this country's local efforts to reduce drug use in the workplace, schools, and neighborhoods. We've got a good program. I was briefed by Al Casey and others not so long ago, and Jim was up there, in Camp David on this drug-free workplace concept. And we're making headway. Still a ways to go, but a very fundamental and important part of our work.

You organize your communities into coalitions. The key to healing this Nation is found at the grassroots level, being what I call a Point of Light, holding your hand out to a neighbor. And this audience today certainly exemplifies in the finest sense the willingness of one American to reach out and help another.

As Americans hear your stories, they realize that there is an alternative to drugs, and its name is hope. They hear stories of people like Brad Gates, the sheriff in Orange County. So concerned was he about drug deaths that he created the "Drug Use is Life Abuse" program. With the business community, he launched a massive drug education effort targeted at area youth. And the program works because it changes people's attitudes, gets to the fundamental attitude change towards drugs.

And so does Tad Foote's. When he saw how drugs were destroying his community, he gathered top business leaders like Alvah Chapman and others, the busiest, the most successful, and they formed the Miami Coalition, a broad-based community organization. And it was dedicated to tackling every

aspect of the drug program, divided it into eight task forces. They've convinced over one-third of all Miami businesses to adopt drug-free workplace policies and employee assistance programs, and they have closed down 1500 crack houses. Now, that is success, and that is due to the voluntary effort all the way.

The point is simple: No community, none at all, has to accept drug abuse. Americans don't have to live in fear. Drugs and so many other social problems can be driven from every community, if every community cares enough to reach out and try.

Americans deserve a lot of credit for their individual and collective efforts. But we still have much to do. There are casualties in this war. We live in an age when tens of thousands of drug-affected babies are born each year. Therein is the real tragedy. Hold in your arms one of those babies, and you just can't help but have a broken heart. We live in an age when one out of every 4,000 American teens dies by his own hand or at someone else's, and too often drugs play a part, a fundamental part, in these tragedies. We live in an age when the scourge of drugs has cheapened life and threatens to erode the moral fabric of this great Nation of ours.

Well, you've set an example, summed up by the antidrug banners created by citizens in Albuquerque that read, "It's easier to build a child than repair an adult." With that kind of tough-minded dedication, we will win. We will make a difference. Each and every one of you is making a difference, and may God bless you all for that.

Thank you very, very much. And thanks for that warm welcome.

Note: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. at the J.W. Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Jim Burke, chairman of the Partnership for a Drug-Free America; Alvah Chapman, Chairman of the National Coalition Committee of the President's Drug Advisory Council; and Albert V. Casey, Council member.