

as about their relationship to their God and how we can work through these things.

There are no easy answers to this. The Founding Fathers understood that; that's why they wanted us to have the first amendment. There are no simple solutions. But I am convinced that we are in a period of historic significance, profound change here in this country and throughout the world and that no one is wise enough to see to the end of all of it, that we have to be guided by a few basic principles and an absolute conviction that we can recreate a common good in America.

But it's hard for me to take a totally secular approach to the fact that there are cities in this country where the average murderer is now under the age of 16. Now, there may not be a religious answer to the policy question of whether it's a good thing that all these kids can get their hands on semiautomatic weapons. But there certainly is something that is far more than secular about what is happening to a country where we are losing millions of our young people and where they shoot each other with abandon and now often shoot total strangers for kicks, shoot at them when they are swimming in the swimming pool in the summertime.

So I believe that we have enormous possibilities. I think we have enormous problems. There will always be some areas of profound disagreement. What I would ask you today to do is to, as I said, to pray for us as we go forward, to be willing to engage in this dialog, to reach

out to others who may disagree with us on particular issues and bring them into the family of America, and to give us a chance to find common ground so that we can build a common good and do what all of us in our own way are required to do. For I believe that each of us has a ministry in some way that we must play out in life and with a certain humility but also with deep determination.

So I thank you for being here. This has been a wonderful morning for me and for all of us. And I ask you to think about these things and to be willing to continue to engage in this dialog. We have a lot of work to do to lift this country up and to pull this country together and to push this country into the 21st century. And we have serious responsibilities beyond our borders. Every day there is some good news in the press about that—some of you have been talking about the Middle East, how many times we thought we had good news and been disappointed, but better than the bad—and every day there is some frustration. So we have to go forward with a much deeper sense of shared values and togetherness toward the common good than we've had so far. That is what I seek to do and what I ask for your prayers and guidance and support and involvement, active involvement, to achieve.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:03 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting on Flood Relief and Hurricane Emily

August 30, 1993

The President. Let me say, I asked that James Lee Witt to come in this morning to provide to me and to the Vice President and to our senior staff a briefing on Hurricane Emily and what provisions we're making to be ready for that and as well as to give me an update the—how we're handling the aftermath of the flood damage in the Midwest. And as you know, there was more flooding in Iowa yesterday.

So those are the two things we're going to be talking about, and I thought I would maybe just let Mr. Witt say a word or two and then you may have a couple of questions.

[At this point, Federal Emergency Management Agency Director Witt made brief remarks.]

Middle East Peace Talks

Q. Mr. President, changing the subject for a second. The Palestinians and the Israelis appear to have some historic breakthrough involving perhaps mutual Israeli-PLO recognition. If the Israelis and the PLO recognize each other, will that result in the U.S. resuming its dialog with the PLO?

The President. Well, first, let me say I am very much encouraged by what is happening there and very hopeful. The administration has worked hard to facilitate it. But ultimately, whatever happens will have to be done by the parties themselves. If there is a new and different landscape in the Middle East, then I might be willing to entertain some questions. But I can't say now. I can't answer your question now. It's hypothetical, and it would only interfere with the discussions now going on. I don't think it's appropriate for the United States even to consider its own position here until the parties have a chance to work out a resolution of this.

Q. But the U.S. did have intervention in this, didn't it? I mean—

The President. Oh, absolutely. I don't know if I would call it an intervention, but we've certainly worked hard to be a handmaiden or whatever the appropriate term is—

Q. So you are involved?

The President. We are involved, but our position has not been at issue here and should not be discussed until the parties themselves worked out their differences.

NAFTA

Q. Mr. President, Senator Dole suggested the prospects for NAFTA would be better were you to take it up to the Senate first. Do you agree?

The President. Yes, I think I do. At least my preliminary—I haven't talked to Mr. Daley about this or to the congressional leadership. But if you mean by that there's a far greater likelihood that today that NAFTA would pass in the Senate than the House, that's clearly correct.

Q. What's going to be your strategy for winning over the House Democrats? David Bonior says that 75 percent of them right now are against NAFTA.

The President. Well, not all of them have reached a position on it. And I want to do two or three things. First of all, as I told the Governors when I met with them in Tulsa, I'd like for all the Governors who support this to ask their Members of Congress to take no position until they actually read the agreement and see the implementing legislation itself.

Remember, my position, going back to 1992, was that I was not for the NAFTA agreement as originally concluded but that I would support it if certain conditions were met. Those conditions have been met as far as our agreements

with the Mexicans. We still have to have a training program, but we're going to have the first trade agreement in history that's got strong environmental requirements and that has Mexico committing to raise its minimum wage as its economy grows.

So these are very encouraging and very different things. So my strategy for Democrats and Republicans who have not declared for but have not adamantly planted their feet in cement against, would be to ask them to read the agreement and wait until they see the implementing legislation, because that will tell them where we're going with the job training, and then make a judgment. And I think if that happens, we can prevail because, again I will say, Latin America is the second fastest growing part of the world. Mexico is just the beginning of this process. And I think it means more jobs for Americans. And I think I'll be able to persuade—

Q. Should Bonior remove his hat as your whip, and—

The President. No. I think that's a decision that the leadership in the House has to make. You know, Presidents and their Members of Congress are going to differ on some things. I heard the other day—I don't know that this is true—but I heard that so far, the Democrats in the Congress have voted for me more consistently than the last two or three Democratic Presidents. I have not checked that. That's just what I heard.

Q. You don't believe that, do you?

The President. I think yes, I think they have with remarkable consistency and very high percentages. But I think that we have an honest disagreement here. He has worked his heart out for me. This is the first issue on which we have disagreed. I think he's wrong; he thinks I'm wrong. I think in the end that my position will prevail.

Hurricane Emily

Q. I want to get this question—the people in the Carolinas are remembering still in their mind not only the devastation, of course, but the response of the Federal Government after—that they consider that largely a nightmare as well. What do you say to them to let them know that you're prepared, well prepared, in case it does, of course, hit them?

The President. I would say two things. First of all, we're here looking at this map today

trying to get ready. That's what we're doing here. And secondly, if you look at the way FEMA and the Agriculture Department and the other Departments handled the flooding in the Middle West, it's obvious that while we don't control what Mother Nature does, we're going to be on top of it with all the resources and

effort that we can possibly marshal as quickly as possible.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:13 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to William M. Daley, Chairman, NAFTA Task Force. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With Caribbean Leaders *August 30, 1993*

President Clinton. Good afternoon. Today I had the great honor of welcoming five outstanding leaders from the English-speaking Caribbean to the White House: President Cheddi Jagan of Guyana, Prime Minister Erskine Sandiford of Barbados, Prime Minister Patrick Manning of Trinidad and Tobago—Tobago, excuse me; I'm still hoarse from our luncheon—Prime Minister P.J. Patterson of Jamaica, and Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham of the Bahamas. I'm impressed by the intelligence, the dynamism, and the dedication of the Caribbean leadership.

The end of the cold war has altered the nature but not the depth of our interest in the Caribbean. Our concern for the region is firmly rooted in geographic proximity, the resultant flows of people, of commodities and culture, and in our shared interest in fighting drug trafficking and projecting our economic interests and in protecting fragile ecosystems.

As with U.S.-Mexican relations, U.S.-Caribbean relations dramatically demonstrate the absolute inseparability of foreign and domestic issues. More than ever before, our Nation is a Caribbean nation. In our discussions, we recognize the concerns that NAFTA may adversely affect the Caribbean and Central American nations by diverting trade and investment flows to Mexico. Therefore, I want to announce today that I have asked Ambassador Mickey Kantor to study the impact of NAFTA on these small economies and to consult with them on new measures to increase regional trade.

American workers have a direct interest in the prosperity of the English-speaking Caribbean. The \$2 billion in United States exports to those countries creates at least 40,000 American jobs. Our warm and productive luncheon

meeting covered many other areas as well. These nations are all vibrant democracies striving to adapt their economies to new global realities while maintaining a full respect for individual freedoms and human rights.

In the Organization of American States and in the United Nations, they consistently take strong stands in favor of the collective defense of democracy. They have all been firm supporters of multilateral efforts to restore President Aristide in Haiti. And we discussed cooperative security and economic measures to assist Haitian democracies. I thank them for their support of the restoration of President Aristide and, of course, we all enjoyed a recounting of President Aristide's swearing-in of his new Prime Minister today.

The Caribbean community will be an important building block of a hemispheric community of democracies linked by growing economic ties and common political beliefs. That will happen, I believe, in no small measure because of the leadership of the five people who are here with us today. And I'd like now to ask them each in turn to come to the microphone and say a few remarks.

And I think President Jagan is going first. He was here first in 1961. Is that right? The microphone is yours, sir.

President Jagan. Thank you, Mr. President. As you just pointed out, I was here in 1961. Those were difficult, different times. I'm happy to be here now with my colleagues jointly at this invitation of the President and to say that we definitely have problems, you in the United States and we in the Caribbean. Your problems are big; ours are critical. And I think it will be necessary for us to work closely together