

Budget Proposals

Q. Senator Dodd says it may be time to drop all proposals for a tax cut right now and to focus instead on deficit reduction. Are you willing to drop your middle class tax cut proposal if the Republicans drop theirs?

The President. Well, first of all, I believe that we can pay for something in the range that I have proposed with a dramatic—[inaudible]—deficit reduction. I think you could—I think we can achieve that. But I—I want to—that's my position, but I want to have a chance to meet with these folks today and hear from all of them, and we'll be talking more about this.

I believe that what I recommended is the right course. I'm prepared to hear from anybody else who's got any other ideas. My concern is, I don't want to see us just jump off the deep end on Medicare cuts without understanding what the implications are to pay for huge tax cuts which we plainly can't afford and which mostly go to upper income people. I do not believe that we can fix Medicare unless we have some idea of how the system is going to be reformed and what the consequences will be. And I don't believe that we should be eviscerating the education budget and making it harder for people to go to college and stay there, for example.

Now, other details and other issues—I'm going to review their proposals and evaluate them, and then we'll be glad to work with them and go forward.

Japan-U.S. Trade

Q. [Inaudible]—go in effect today. [Inaudible]—when you meet with Prime Minister Murayama you'll be able to resolve this matter and avoid a trade war with Japan that could affect security and other strategic interests as well?

The President. I certainly hope that we'll be able to resolve this. And as you know, we—the way this issue works—the Trade Ambassador, Mr. Kantor, will announce the details of what we propose. They won't actually go into effect if we can avert the disagreement with the Japanese. But if you look at the special problem of autos and auto parts and how long we have labored over them and how reasonable the United States has been for years, even for more than a decade, I believe that this is something we have to go forward on. The Japanese Government has acknowledged that we have important security interests and other interests in common and that we cannot let our entire relationship be left by this. That is a welcome observation by them, and I agree with them. But we can't anymore deny this or sweep it under the rug. We've got to go forward; we're going to do that.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:04 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, prior to a meeting with congressional leaders. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the National Performance Review May 16, 1995

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President, Secretary Reich, Mr. Dear, to our friends from Maine, all of them, for the fine work they have done. Congresswoman Norton and members of the DC City Council and others who are here, we're glad to be in the District of Columbia and in one of the most interesting workplaces I've been in in a while. I want to thank the folks who work here for making us feel welcome and for taking a little time off from work to let us come in and interrupt the flow of events. I'm sure that's not a terrible burden. [Laughter] I want to thank Mr. Gawne for having us here.

Mr. and Mrs. Gawne made us feel very welcome when we came in, and they didn't waste much time in establishing the productivity of their leadership by pointing out that they have 6 children and 14 grandchildren, and most of them are here today. [Laughter] I'd also like to say a special word of appreciation to the Vice President's reinventing Government team who worked so hard on this. Elaine Kamarck is here and many others who worked so hard on it; I thank all of them.

We have taken this business of trying to make the Government work and make sense very seri-

ously. We have worked at it steadily now for a good long while. We think it's one of the most important things we can do to make the American people believe, first of all, that their tax dollars are not being squandered but instead are being well spent and, secondly, to fulfill some important public objectives.

Protecting the health and safety of our country's workers is an important national value. It's something we should all share. From the Triangle Shirtwaist fire back in 1911, which galvanized the conscience of our Nation, to the fire in Hamlet, North Carolina, in 1991—which I remember so very well because 25 poultry workers were killed there and thousands and thousands of people work in the poultry industry in my home State—we have recognized that we have a special responsibility as a people to ensure that workers are not put in undue jeopardy. We don't believe that anyone should have to endanger their personal health or their very lives to make a living for their families, to live a life of dignity.

But still, in spite of all the progress that has been made, over 6,000 Americans every year die at work. That's 17 a day. And about 50,000 more people die each year from exposure to chemicals and other hazards in the workplace. Six million Americans are injured, and the injuries alone cost our economy over \$100 billion a year. So it is obvious that we still have work to do and that to whatever extent we can reduce death and injuries in the workplace, we will not only improve the quality of life in this country, we will also reduce the cost of these terrible tragedies in ways that strengthen our economy.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has been at work in this cause since it was created with bipartisan support in 1970. Since that time, workplace deaths have been cut in half. Cotton dust standard has virtually eliminated brown lung disease. Deaths of construction workers from collapsing trenches has been cut by a third. There have been many achievements that all Americans can be proud of. And today, we should reaffirm that commitment.

But we also have to recognize that like other Government regulatory agencies, OSHA can and must change to keep up with the changes and the times. We also recognize that any organization that is established and gets going in a certain direction, if it's not careful, whether it's in the public or the private sector, can wind

up pursuing prerogatives that strengthen its organization rather than fulfill its fundamental mission.

That was the brilliance of the story that the Vice President told about what the Maine OSHA people did and how they changed, not only replacing yesterday's Government with a new Government that fits the needs of an information age that is less bureaucratic and that recognizes that the way we protected workers' safety in the last 25 years may not be the best way to do it in the next 25 years but also recognizing that, frankly, sometimes the rules have simply become too complex, too specific for even the most diligent employer to follow and that if the Government rewards inspections for writing citations and levying fines more than ensuring safety, there's a chance you could get more citations, more fines, more hassle, and no more safety.

So we believe that in this, as in every other area, we have to constantly innovate. And we're announcing these initiatives today.

Let me say to you that of all the things we've done in reinventing Government, this one has a particular personal meaning to me because of the experience I had for so many years as the Governor of my State. We were one of 29 States, first of all, that had a partnership with OSHA. And we worked hard to help implement the worker standards that the National Government set with State people who worked in partnership with manufacturers, because in the 1980's, when manufacturing was going downhill in America, we were increasing manufacturing employment in my State, partly because we had that kind of partnership.

I was interested in it from a human perspective because I spent so many hours, countless hours, in literally hundreds of factories in my State talking to the people who worked in the factories, watching what they did. And finally, I became personally acquainted with it because for several months in one year I was Governor, I took a day off a month to work in manufacturing operations. That will give you a clear perspective about wanting to be safe in the workplace. I worked in a food processing plant. I worked in a joist manufacturing operation. I helped to make refrigerators from 3 p.m. to midnight one night on a Friday night. And I even worked in an oil refinery. And it gave me a keen appreciation, first of all, for the need of people who are operating these things to be

treated in a fair and sensible way by the Government so people could make a living and they could make a profit; and, second, for the absolute imperative for people to be able to work in a safe and secure environment.

Unless you've ever seen one of those huge metal stamping machines come down on a piece of sheet metal, you can't imagine what it was like to think about the days when people had to put their hands under those machines with no guards, knowing one mistake would be the hand would be gone forever. Unless you've actually seen things like that, it is hard to visualize what is at stake here.

We believe in this country that you can do the right thing and do well. We believe that is a general principle that we have to have throughout the economy. Mr. Correll, here from Georgia Pacific—I've been in every single one of his operations in our home State. And they have done some remarkable things. I believe you can do the right thing and do well. And we have to see day-in and day-out that we have a Government that makes sure we're all trying to do the right thing and that we can do well at the same time.

That is what we are trying to do today, saying to businesses, you have choice. You can put in place a health and safety program that involves your workers and that tries to find and fix hazards before an accident happens, and OSHA will be a partner. There will be reduced penalties or, in some cases, no penalties at all. You will be inspected rarely, if ever. You will get help when you want to comply. But if a business chooses not to act responsibly and puts its workers at risk, then there must be vigorous enforcement and consequences that are serious when violations are serious.

This new approach is not an abstract one. We have seen it. It works in Maine. If it worked in Maine, it will work everywhere else. To borrow a phrase from politics: I hope when it comes to worker safety, as Maine goes, so goes the Nation.

Secondly, we need to make sure that worker safety rules are as simple and sensible and flexible as they can be. You've already heard the Vice President say that OSHA will now allow plastic gas cans on construction sites. That may not sound like a big deal, but it's absolutely maddening if you're on the other side of a dumb regulation like that. Until now, OSHA required that work site first aid kits be approved by a

doctor. That doesn't make a lot of sense. So, from now on, you can buy one at the drugstore.

This is just a downpayment on the things that we intend to do. As part of the page-by-page regulatory review I ordered earlier this year, on June 1st, I expect to see dozens and dozens more rules on my desk ready to be discarded or fixed, including hundreds of pages of detailed standards that have literally been on the books unchanged since the early 1970's.

The third thing we intend to do is to extend our reinvention to the way men and women on the frontlines work with employees and businesses to promote safety. I'm interested in results, not redtape. The Vice President says that all the time. We're determined to make that the rule of the land in worker safety, in the environment, in every other area that we can possibly extend it to.

We're interested in prevention, not punishment. It would suit me if we had a year in this country where OSHA did not levy a single fine, because if that happened, we'd have safer workplaces, more productive businesses, we'd be making more money with happier people going to work every day.

We are going to redesign OSHA's offices, five of them every quarter, to produce safety, not just citations. We're cutting the time between the complaint by a worker and the resolution of a problem in half. We're focusing inspections on the gravest hazards. Already if a construction site has a strong health and safety program, inspectors are limited to the biggest hazards, lasting a few hours, not a few days. Now we'll expand that to other industries as well.

We want to use common sense and market incentives to save lives. Last year, the OSHA office in Parsippany, New Jersey, had an idea: Rather than finding a hazard, writing a citation, fighting for months about it, why not give the employer a financial incentive to simply fix it on the spot? That leads to more safety and much less hassle. Lives are already being saved there, too. And today, we are determined to expand this so-called quick fix program nationwide. There really are some quick fixes when you're dealing with stale bureaucracy, and we intend to find them all and put them into effect. Giving employers a choice, commonsense regulation, commonsense enforcement: that will be the new OSHA, the right way to protect the safety of people in the American workplace.

But even as we take these steps, we have to recognize that there is a very different approach at work here in Washington. The leadership of the new Congress is mounting an assault on our ability to protect people in the workplace at all. Responding to the entreaties of powerful interests, they are ready to throw the baby out with the bathwater and, in so doing, to put at risk the health and safety of millions of ordinary American workers. They're not trying to reform the system of worker protection as we are but instead to dismantle it and, therefore, to destroy our ability to pursue its fundamental purpose.

The budget proposed in the Senate would cut in half the funding for worker health and safety, decimating enforcement, research, and even compliance assistance, something that I've found in my own personal experience to be the most important thing of all with employers of good will. The House budget would even eliminate outright the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. They say they don't want redtape, but this is an agency with no inspectors, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. They say we should be guided by better scientific evidence in our work, and I agree. This agency exists solely to give us better evidence to guide our work. The Safety and Health Institute does important work, it doesn't cost a lot of money, and we ought to preserve it.

The regulatory legislation moving through Congress, which was literally written by lobbyists who then wrote speeches for the Members to explain what it is they were introducing and supporting, would tie worker protection efforts up in knots. It would override every health and safety standard on the books and let special interests dictate the regulatory process. They have proposed freezing all Federal regulations and have gone after the worker protection standards with a little bit of extra gusto. They don't want rigorous reform. It looks to me like they want rigor mortis. *[Laughter]*

Now, I am the last person in the world to stand up here and defend some dumb rule, regulation, or practice or people who say that people who are elected come and go; we'll be here in this agency forever; you do it our way or not at all. But we have proved, we have proved that most Federal employees want to do the

right thing, that they want the American people to do right and to do well. We have proved that we can change the culture of bureaucracy. And we're going to do more of it.

So we should reform. We absolutely should. But we should not roll back our commitment to worker safety. Remember, there's still a lot of folks out there working in situations that are dangerous. And not every workplace can be made 100 percent safe. I know that. And workers have a responsibility to take care of their own safety and to be careful and to be diligent. I know that. But we have a public responsibility that all of us share as Americans to work for safer workplaces.

If we take that seriously and we apply ourselves to the task in the way the Vice President and the Secretary of Labor have outlined today, if we follow the example of the fine OSHA leaders, business leaders, union leaders like those we recognized in Maine today, we can do what we need to do. We can do what we need to do and still pursue the public interest.

We do not have to grow the American economy by going back to the time when we acted as if worker safety doesn't matter. It does matter. It matters a lot to people. And just because the Government has been slow on the uptake in the past, and every now and then somebody makes a mistake and overreaches, doesn't mean we can walk away from our fundamental public duty.

So let's continue on this path. Let's change this thing. Let's make it work. Let's lift unnecessary burdens and keep making sure we're committed to the health and welfare of the American workers so we can do right and do well.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:48 p.m. at the Stromberg Sheet Metal Works, Inc. In his remarks, he referred to Joseph Dear, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health; Robert Gawne, CEO, Stromberg Sheet Metal Works, Inc., and his wife, Patricia; Elaine Kamarck, Senior Policy Adviser for the Vice President; and A.D. (Pete) Correll, chairman and CEO, Georgia-Pacific Corp.

Remarks on the First Anniversary of the School-To-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 in White Plains, Maryland
May 17, 1995

Well, Nancy, you may not be famous yet, but you're a lot more famous than you were 5 minutes ago. *[Laughter]* I wish I had thought of that Michael Jordan line; I'd throw the whole speech away. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank Nancy and Lorrie and the other students who showed me around this fine place and showed me what they do here. I thank you for that. I thank Secretary Reich and Secretary Riley for the work they have done to put this school-to-work partnership together with the Education Department and the Labor Department. I thank Senator Kennedy for his sponsorship of this legislation and your Congressman, Steny Hoyer, for the work he did to pass it. I'm glad to see Mr. Pastillo here, and I thank him and all those who have worked so hard on this. I'll never forget the conversation I had with the Ford CEO, Alex Trotman, about this issue in the White House not all that long ago, in urging more corporate involvement in business sponsorship of the school-to-work concept. President Sine, I thank you for being here and for the work that all the community education institutions in America are doing to help prepare young Americans to succeed in the global economy. They may be the most important institutions in the United States today, and I thank you for that. I want to thank all the State and local officials from Maryland who are here. Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend and Senator Miller, I'm glad to see you. And I know that, Governor McKernan, you shouldn't feel alone, there are lots of Republicans here today—*[laughter]*—county commissioners, members of the House of Delegates, county officials here, the sheriff, and others.

This ought not to be a partisan issue. And I thank you, sir, for your leadership. He wrote a fine book about it, which Mr. Pastillo referenced in his introduction. And Governor McKernan sent me a copy of it, autographed it, and I read it. And I thought if my dear mother were still living, she would wonder which of us were more successful, because she always thought whether you wrote books or not was a real standard of whether you'd done anything in life. *[Laughter]* So according to my

mother's life, you've done something very important. And we are very grateful to you, sir, for the leadership you have given this movement all across America. The United States needs desperately for every young person in this country to have the opportunity that these young people have had. And thanks to you and your efforts, more will have that chance. I thank you.

I would also like to thank our host here, Automated Graphics. Thank you very much for having us here. We are grateful, and we appreciate it.

I want to say a little about this in a larger context. What we are doing here today to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the school-to-work program is really adapting to the information age in the 21st century one of the oldest traditions in the United States. Just imagine, for example—here we are in Maryland—what if we were here 200 years ago? You would be a young person living in a settlement in Maryland called Port Tobacco, which was then a big town around these parts. You'd be in a promising new country. George Washington would be your President. John Adams would be your Vice President. Pretty good lineup. *[Laughter]* And everybody would be optimistic. And most people would be like Nancy, they'd get up at 5 a.m. or 5:30 a.m. every morning and go to work. If you wanted a better job, you'd probably leave the country and come into town, where you would walk down a main street and you would look at the people who were working. Two hundred years ago, you'd see a blacksmith, a carpenter, and of course, a printer. If you wanted to learn how to do those jobs, you'd simply knock on one of the doors and hope that in return for hard work, you could get a craftsman to teach you those skills. That's the way it was done 200 years ago.

And for a long time, that's the way it was done, as one generation kept faith with the next. Well, we know that we can't exactly do it that way anymore, but if you think about it, that's what the school-to-work program is all about in modern terms for the modern economy. And it's very, very important.