

Mr. King. I know you like—discussions in the White House.

The President. Everything, as you—Mr. McLarty, my special Counselor, pointed out at Ross Perot's convention, we have done almost everything he said ought to be done in the '92 campaign. And all of the comments that General Powell has made so far with regard to the issues of the day, including our efforts to deal with assault weapons and the Brady bill, have been supportive of our position.

Mr. King. Do you think he's a Democrat at heart?

The President. Well, I think at heart he's kind of a new Democrat. I think he probably is trying—would like to see the country take generally the direction that I've tried to advocate. But I don't know that because we've never discussed anything about domestic policy other than what he said. I've talked to him a lot about foreign policy matters—

Mr. King. —him to be Vice President? Or was that one of many?

The President. No, no, that's true. It was one of many, but we did. He was one of the people that I thought that should be considered based on what I knew about him. And there were many that we thought about, and I thought he should be.

Mr. King. Any closing comments on this kind of thing we did here today? Could do more of it?

The President. I'd really like to do more of it. I want to thank all of the people who called, all the people who sent their faxes, all the people that used America Online, and the E-mail and everything. I thought it was great.

Mr. King. It was great having you with us.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 3:30 p.m. at Westwood One Radio Studio. In his remarks, the President referred to Bill Gates, chairman of the board, Microsoft Corp.

Remarks at a Clinton/Gore '96 Dinner in Los Angeles, California September 21, 1995

Thank you very much. Thank you. Well, Mr. Vice President, you sure convinced me. [Laughter] One down; 110 million to go. [Laughter]

I want to thank all of you so much for being here. Thank you, Tom Hanks, for introducing Al Gore. Thank you for not introducing me. [Laughter] Somebody's talked to Al Gore about playing Tom Hanks in an autobiography. [Laughter] I want to thank young Ashley Ballard. She looked so beautiful up here, and she sang so well. I wish her well. I thank the chairs and the vice chairs and the executive committee and the host committee, everybody who is responsible for this, this very wonderful night. I thank you all for being here. A lot of you come to a lot of these things, I know, and they may get old to you, but you know it's important.

But I want to say something rather unconventional tonight about this dinner. We're doing our best to finance our campaign early and in a disciplined way so that I can spend the maximum possible time doing the job the American people elected me to do in 1992, being Presi-

dent. And it's very important. But the most important thing you can do is to take the little article and the summary of the record and leave here and make up your mind that between now and November of 1996, you're going to take every opportunity you can to talk to the people you come in contact with about what's really at stake in this election.

And I was trying to think if there was some simple and halfway hilarious characterization I could give you about what's really at stake here. I think it's fair to say that everybody has figured out this is a time of great change, and the people who would like to see someone else be elected President have an enormous and psychological advantage because they're telling you, "All you have to do to change this country is to destroy the Federal Government. It's all their fault. You know, it's just their fault. Nothing wrong with the rest of us, it's just them, those slugs in Washington." It's interesting, because nearly all of them have been in Washington a lot longer than I have. I still have a hard

time finding my way in from Andrews Air Force Base when I—[laughter]. But you know, “It’s just them. And they’re taking all of your money, and they’re squandering it on welfare and immigration and they’re just throwing it away and just get rid of them. But you don’t have to do anything.”

I have a harder burden because I think we all have to do things. I think we all have to change if we’re going to make this country what it ought to be, and that’s a very big burden to carry.

And I was making this little speech to my senior Senator, Dale Bumpers, a couple of months ago, who is one of the funniest people I ever heard. And he said, “Now, don’t you forget about that story I told you about years ago, before you go out and try to convince people we’ve all got to change.” I said, “What’s that?” He said, “You remember, the one about Huey Long in the Depression.” Those of you who are old enough to remember this know that when Huey Long was the Governor of Louisiana and later Senator and a thorn in Franklin Roosevelt’s side, his whole theory was share the wealth, that if we could just share the wealth, we wouldn’t have 25 percent unemployed, we wouldn’t have people poor as church mice, everything would be fine. But we’d have to share the wealth. And he was giving a speech one day in a country crossroads and trying to find someone to illustrate his point. And he saw a farmer in overalls out there and he recognized him, and he said, “For example,” he said, “Farmer Jones, if you had three Cadillacs, wouldn’t you give up one of them so we could go around here on these country roads and take all these kids to school every day, take them to church on Sunday?” He said, “Sure I would, Governor.” He said, “And if you had \$3 million, wouldn’t you give up \$1 million just so we could put a roof over every kid’s head and feed them three good meals a day?” He said, “You bet I would.” He said, “And if you had three hogs—” And he said, “Now, wait a minute, Governor, I’ve got three hogs.” [Laughter]

So you get the point. The problem is that in this case the hard side of the argument is the right one. I mean, I believe, I believe much more than when I became President, that when the history of this era is written, people will look back on this period and they will say this was the most profound period of change in the way Americans live and work that we had expe-

rienced in 100 years. That not since the late 1800’s, in the early 1900’s, when we moved from being a rural agricultural society to being a more urbanized industrial society, when we moved from being a country in splendid isolation, the one that had to assume the burdens of world leadership in World War I, not since then has there been such a change in the way Americans live and work; as we move from our industrial age into a post-industrial, information-technology-based society of which many of you are the world’s most glittering embodiment; as we move from a cold war period when the world is more or less organized around functioning nation-states that are divided into two opposing camps but all more or less capable of delivering basic services and sustenance to their people, into a global economy characterized by free markets and openness and rapid movement of money and management and people and technology, where there are all kinds of pressures to have global integration and a lot of pressures of economic disintegration on individual workers and families and communities throughout the world, of a world in which we think we’re moving toward peace but we still see madness everywhere. In other words, there’s a lot of good and a lot that’s troubling.

And we need a vision for what we want America to look like, because all the good things and all the troubling things are occurring in this great diverse cauldron we call the United States, every day. And my vision is that we ought to build an America for the 21st century that’s a high-opportunity place where hard-working entrepreneurs can live out their dreams, where we grow the middle class and shrink the under class, where we do what is necessary to help individuals make the most of their own lives and help families and communities to solve their own problems and where we come together across all these lines that divide us, these income and racial and regional and religious and other lines that divide us so that the 21st century can still be an American century, so that we can be the world’s force for freedom and peace and human rights and prosperity. That’s my vision.

And I think to get there we have to have a lot of new ideas, but I really believe they have to be rooted in old-fashioned American values, things that sound corny like freedom and responsibility and work and family and community, seeking the common good instead of the

short-term wedge issue that divides us politically and being willing to do things that are unpopular in the moment because you know that when your children are grown and look back, they'll look like the right decisions. That's what I think we have to do.

And just let me give you a couple of illustrations why. The Vice President talked about the economy, and I'm very proud of our economic record. We've had a very serious strategy, the first time the United States has had one in a long time. We wanted to reduce the deficit while increasing investment in defense conversion to help California and other places, in new technologies, and in education and training. We wanted a vast increase in trade. We wanted to be for free but also for fair trade. And we thought we could do some good economically.

But if I had told you on the day I was inaugurated President that after 30 months the following things would happen, would you have believed it? That we would have 7½ million new jobs, 2½ million new homeowners, 2 million new small businesses, a record number of self-made millionaires, the stock market would be at 4,700, but the guy in the middle had an income that dropped. It has never happened before in the history of the Republic. More than half the people are working harder for the same or lower wages. Why? Because that's the way the global economy affects us today. And if we want a future where we grow the middle class and shrink the under class, we have to figure out how to deal with that.

Or look at our social problems. You heard the Vice President say it's true. In every State in the country, the crime rate is down, the murder rate is down, believe it or not, notwithstanding the rhetoric in Washington, because the economy is better, the welfare rolls are down, and the food stamp rolls are down.

People are actually trying to hang together more; the divorce rate is down. Drug use among people between the ages of 18 and 34 is down. Sounds great. But underneath it, just like on the economy, in spite of a falling crime rate, the rate of random violence and crime by people between the ages of 12 and 17 is up, and the rate of casual drug use by children between the ages of 12 and 17 is up. So we've got to figure out what to do about that. We've got a lot of heart-wrenching publicity, and everybody was moved by that terrible encounter in which the child lost his life here just a few

days ago. But we've become inured to all the children that lose their lives every day in these violence-ridden places in America.

The other day we had a study come out of the Justice Department that said that two-thirds of the gang members in America felt justified in shooting someone just because they treated them with disrespect. And within a week, blaring headlines in the East of a 16-year-old boy who shot a 12-year-old, then ran over and stood over him and emptied his gun into him because he thought the 12-year-old treated him with disrespect. It turned out the 12-year-old was the neighborhood wit who made fun of everybody and lost his life for it.

Whatever happened to "Count to 10 before you say, much less do, something"? Whatever happened to "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me"? I joked to somebody in the White House the other day that if I took that approach, everybody treated me with disrespect, there would be no ammunition left in America. *[Laughter]*

It's funny, but it's not. It isn't funny. You've got a whole generation of kids out there raising themselves, getting out of school an hour or two earlier than any of us ever got out of school, no place to go, nothing to do. We have to figure out what we're going to do to help them, too, because I believe we are a community. And I think we're going up or down together. So I'm proud of the fact that the crime rate is going down. But I'm really worried about these kids because when they all get grown, if enough of them do this and the next generation of 12 to 17-year-olds keep doing what they're doing, then the strategies we have for driving the crime rate down won't work anymore. It will go up again.

In foreign policy, the Vice President litanized all the things we'd done. I'm proud of the fact there are no Russian missiles pointed at our kids for the first time since the dawn of the nuclear age. I'm proud of what we were able to do in the Middle East and Northern Ireland and Southern Africa. I'm proud of the fact that in Bosnia we may be on the verge of a breakthrough because good people now in all those factions, the Muslims, the Croats, and the Serbs, I think, have seen it is time to make a decent peace and quit killing each other. I'm proud of that.

But don't you forget: The real threat to the world today is that in an open world where

you have to have free movement of people and technology, where the Internet is full of wonderful things that we celebrated today, we all are more vulnerable to the forces of organized evil. And there are people that are preying on hatred and paranoia, rooted in religious or ethnic or racial bigotry. And they can still do bad things. They can blow up buses full of kids in Israel. They can break open vials of sarin gas in subways in Tokyo. And yes, they can find out on the Internet how to make a simple bomb that will blow up a Federal building in Oklahoma City.

So until we have a way of dealing with that, we have to celebrate our progress, but we have to realize that there have to be some changes in the way we look at ourselves and our responsibilities to get to where we want to go. I believe with all my heart that the best days of the United States are ahead of us if, but only if, we face these changes and if we do it with new ideas rooted in old-fashioned values.

Now, the big news in Washington today is the fight about the budget. The budget is more about values than it is about money. Both parties now agree we ought to balance the budget. I say, high time. We never had a structural deficit in the United States of America until 1981. Never. We quadrupled the debt of the country in the 12 years before I showed up. It's so bad that the budget would be in balance today but for the interest we pay on the debt run up in the 12 years before I became President.

We've got to quit this. Next year interest on the debt will be bigger than the defense budget. If we weren't paying so much interest on the debt, we could invest more money in California to help you overcome the big defense downsizing and what has traumatized your economy so.

So we should balance the budget. The question is how? And are we interested in balancing the budget consistent with our values? I told you what my values are. Their argument is, the people who disagree with us, is that you don't have to believe in all that, you don't have to change anything, all you've got to do is get rid of the Government. Therefore, the differences.

We ought to balance the budget, but we don't have to cut education to balance the budget. You want to know what will happen if we stop giving little kids a chance to get off to a good start in school; if the Federal Government walks

away from its responsibility to help with smaller class sizes, more computers, and higher standards; if the National Government walks away from its responsibility to give kids the opportunity to serve in national service programs, the AmeriCorps program, to earn their way to college, or get more Pell grants if they're poor or have better access to lower cost college loans like we've done? Look at California. You raised the costs of higher education. You made it less accessible. And in the teeth of a bad economy, enrollment in higher education went down here when it should have gone up. We cannot let that happen to the United States. It is not necessary to balance the budget, and it would be wrong. It would be wrong.

There ought not to be a constituency in this country for ignorance and building a second-rate economy and building a two-tiered society. And that's exactly what walking away from our responsibilities in education is.

You look at this debate over the environment—under the guise of balancing the budget, gutting the ability of the EPA to enforce the clean air law, putting on the budget all these riders, these limitations on our ability to protect our natural resources. You know, Hillary and Chelsea and I went to the West, to Wyoming, and we went to the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone National Parks this summer. We got lucky; we got to do one or two things that most people couldn't do. We got to feed the wolves in Yellowstone because we happened to be there at feeding time. But basically, everything we did there, any American family could do. They could drive a car up there and fork over 10 bucks. And all across America we have this network of parks preserving our natural heritage.

Some of these people say that in order to balance the budget we need to close half the parks or that it's okay to put a big mine right next to Yellowstone, even if we don't know how we're going to protect the water quality. Or it's okay, now that we created a California Desert Protection Act, just not to fund it and hope it will go away and die.

Now, I know that sometimes we make mistakes with the Nation's environmental laws. I thought it was kind of crazy to see that guy indicted for killing a kangaroo rat on his farm. But that stuff happened for a long time before we showed up. And under Al Gore's leadership, we've actually reduced the burden of crazy regulation. But I'm telling you something, the world

is not free of environmental problems. The world is not free of public health problems. People died just a couple years ago in Milwaukee because their water supply was poison. Children died just a couple of years ago in the Pacific Northwest from poison meat from *E. coli*, partly because the Government still inspects meat, as I said yesterday, believe it or not, the way dogs do. That's how your Government inspects meat. They touch it, they look at it, and they smell it. But we wanted to put in new regulations using high-technology equipment to stop *E. coli*, and there were people that actually voted not once but twice in the House of Representatives under the guise of cutting Government spending to stop us from doing that.

So, yes, let's balance the budget, but don't tell me that we should sacrifice the clean air, clean water, and natural heritage of the United States. It is the rightful, rightful legacy of every American to do it. It's wrong.

Look at the crime bill. The Vice President talked about the crime bill. We did some important things in the crime bill because people in law enforcement told us to do it. They said, "Don't spend all your money on prisons; spend some money to keep these kids out of trouble. Spend some money to give kids something to say yes to, something to believe in. And put 100,000 police out there on the street so they can help prevent crime as well as catch criminals."

I started the week in Jacksonville, Florida, on Tuesday morning with an African-American Democrat who was elected sheriff in an overwhelmingly white Republican county. Then he got elected sheriff because people thought he'd be a good sheriff and because there was no partisan constituency for crime.

Out here in the country, I can't find anybody for raising the crime rate. It's only in Washington that people say, "Well, that's what the Democrats put in the crime bill; we've got to gut the prevention money, and we've got to kill the 100,000 cops. And we'll just give the cities and the counties and the States a little less money and we'll give it to them in a block grant, and we don't care how they spend it. Now, we know what lowers the crime rate, but we're going to stop doing it anyway."

Well, I'm sorry, we ought to balance the budget, but there is no constituency and no conscience in doing things that you know will

interrupt the fight to lower the crime rate. That's one of the great triumphs of the last 5 years, America proved we could lower the crime rate. Before, people didn't think we could do it. Let's stop trying to undo it, stick with what works, and balance the budget and still do our justice to the streets of Los Angeles and the other places in the United States. It's the right thing to do.

I could give you a lot of other examples, but let me just mention one. There's a lot of talk about Medicare and Medicaid. And you've heard all this, and the numbers are so confusing it probably makes your head hurt. Let me tell you what the basic facts are. Medicare is a program that provides health care to people over 65. Part A of Medicare is hospital care; it's funded by a payroll tax. Part B is all of the other things you get on Medicare, and it's funded by general tax money and what elderly people pay out of their own pocket. Medicaid is a program that takes care of old people on low incomes and disabled people who need nursing home care or get care in their homes, and it provides medical care for all these poor children and their parents. You know, it's not fashionable to stick up for the poor anymore, but those kids are going to grow up and be part of our country. Why do you think the Los Angeles health care system's in trouble? Because they've got a lot of poor kids to care for.

Now, we need to slow the growth of both those programs. They've been growing too fast, and they're crowding out our ability to invest in education and technology and the future. Everybody knows it. And we need to make sure that the so-called Medicare Trust Fund that guarantees hospital care for the elderly is secure. And everybody knows that. But that's not what's going on. The congressional majority has made a decision that in order to balance the budget in 7 years and get \$250 billion in tax cuts, they have to take \$450 billion out of the health care system over the next 7 years that we thought they were going to have to spend.

Now, we should take some money out. But I'm telling you, we cannot take that much money out without charging elderly people more than they can afford—and keep in mind, three-quarters of the people in this country over 65 live on less than \$24,000 a year—we cannot do that without risking closing rural hospitals and urban hospitals, and we can't do it without hurting all those poor kids. We can't do it.

So I say, of course, let's slow the growth in medical inflation. But don't say, "The most important thing is my 7-year target, my economic assumption, my \$250 billion tax cut. I do not care what happens to the health care system, this is how much I am going to jerk out." That is inconsistent with our values. This is not about money. This is about our values.

Yesterday in Denver I was with the Little Sisters of the Poor, an order of Roman Catholic nuns who spend their whole life serving in ways that most of us could never even dream of doing. And they run a home there for elderly people that you could eat breakfast off of any morning. You'd be proud to have any member of your family there. And they are giving their whole lives to do this. But with all of their sacrifice, they cannot do it unless the rest of us chip in a little money through Medicaid to keep those folks there. And I don't know about you, but I'm glad they do it. And if we can balance the budget without gutting them, we ought to. And we can and we will, if I have anything to say about it.

I just want to make two more points because California is on the forefront of both these issues. The first is that our meal ticket to the future is our diversity. If we can learn to live together and work together and respect each other, that is our meal ticket to the future. In a global economy, who is better positioned than the United States to take advantage of the blizzard of interconnections that will be the best of tomorrow? Nobody.

So I say to you, when we have issues that are troubling, we need to solve them in ways that bring us together, not use them as wedges used to drive us apart. I'll just give you three: Welfare reform. I led the fight to reform welfare. While the Congress has been fighting for 3 years, we've given 70 percent of the States permission to get rid of Federal rules to figure out how to move people from welfare to work. I did it not because it's costing you a lot of money. The welfare budget is a tiny part of the Federal budget. I did it because it's inconsistent with American values for people to be trapped in dependency when they want to be free, because most parents in this country have to work and people on welfare should be able to work, but they ought to be able to be good parents as well. So I want to change the welfare system, and I don't mind being very tough on requiring people to work. But you have to give

them education and training and you have to give them child care, and we ought to collect the child support enforcement that people owe them as well. That's what I believe.

So we should do this together. We shouldn't look for some way to put people down; we should look for ways to lift people up. You look at the affirmative action issue, this affirmative action issue. There are problems with affirmative action. We have to fix some. We've already fixed some. But let me tell you, I have hired hundreds of people in my life. I have worked with all kinds of people. I've been in all kinds of different circumstances. And I believe with all my heart we have not yet reached the point in our country when we are totally oblivious to our gender and racial differences. And as long as we are not, as long as we see troubling reminders of what may lurk in the hearts of people that they never say, I think it is appropriate not for Government to practice reverse discrimination, not for Government to have quotas, not for Government to guarantee anything to somebody who is unqualified to receive it but for the Government to say you should be conscious, you should be aware when you make decisions of the abilities and the potential of all the people in the community without regard to their race or gender. So I say fix affirmative action, but don't throw it away for a short-term political gain until we have solved this problem.

And I feel the same way, as all of you know, because of what I said 2 years ago about immigration. I knew we had immigration problems, and I had never dealt with them before 2½ years ago. So I asked former Congresswoman Barbara Jordan to set up a commission to deal with immigration in a forthright, humane, hard-headed way to just try to talk sense and not to use it for political benefits. And we have done more than any previous administration to try to close the borders and send illegal immigrants back. We have recommended a disciplined reduction in the annual quota of immigration until we get our own low-skill workers back in the work force and until we can manage our own economy better. But let's not forget something: Except for the Native Americans that are here tonight—and I thank them for being here—everybody else here came from somewhere else, and we should never, ever forget that.

The last thing I want to tell you is this: I'll bet you everybody here has disagreed with five

or six things I've done in the last 2½ years. But one thing I have learned is that when things are really changing fast, you can absolutely not calculate what is the popular thing to do because what's popular today may look terrible 6 days from now. And what I try to do is figure out what this is going to look like when my daughter's my age. What's the 21st century going to be like for the United States? And so I do a lot of things that aren't popular. But when we do things like that, if you agree that we should keep leading, then you have to step into the breach as well and be heard.

All the political advice I got was, "Don't you be the first President in American history to take on the NRA over the Brady bill and assault weapons. Don't do it, because what will happen is they will gut you, and they will gut your Congressmen who stand with you. And all the people who agree with you will find some other reason to vote against them." And sure enough, last fall in '94, that's what happened.

I can tell you today that the Democrats would still be in the majority in the House of Representatives if they had not fought to ban assault weapons and for the Brady bill. I don't care what anybody else said. I've looked at those votes district by district, and I know what I'm talking about. That's why they lost. There were other reasons for the gain, the promise of the tax cut and all that; the Christian Coalition's great outpouring, they had a lot to do with it. But in the close races, the NRA took them down, the people that stood up for taking Uzis off the street and Uzis out of the schools, for making people check to see if they had a criminal or a mental health background. And there are thousands and thousands of people who now have not gotten guns because the Brady bill passed. There are people who are alive. There are children who are going to live because of the assault weapons ban. It was the right thing to do. And you ought to stand up for those people who did it. It was the right thing to do.

Same thing happened with Haiti. People said, "You've got to be out of your mind." Al Gore and I were 50 percent of all the people in Washington, DC, that thought it was a good idea to send our forces to Haiti. [Laughter] They said, "You'll never be able to explain this to the American people; everybody knows our national security is not at stake." You know what we said? Those military dictators came to the

United States, to New York City, stood in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, and promised to leave and let President Aristide come back.

If the United States can be lied to on its own soil in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty when we say we want every country in our hemisphere to be a democracy, how can we turn away the hordes of people who are risking their lives and dying in the seas from Haiti. How can we ever say we are the force for freedom and democracy? And so we did it. And we did it without firing a shot. And we were right. But it wasn't popular.

When Hillary was trying to decide about going to China, everybody said, "This is a really dumb idea. If you go, the people who are against their human rights practices will say you have legitimized them just by going. And then if you say what you need to do, the people that want to have stronger trade relationship will say you are wrecking our relationship." But you know what we decided? All over the world the kind of future we have depends in large measure on how we treat women and their little children, especially their little female children. Do you know—[applause]—just for an example, in all of Asia today, there are now 77 million more boys than there are girls, because little girl children are still being killed because they're not supposed to be worth anything?

I can give you a lot of other examples. And so we decided that she ought to go because she could stick up for the women and the children and especially the girl children of this world, and she could talk not only about China and not singling China out but about what's happening in other countries including our own country that isn't right. And now it looks like a great decision. But the reason it was is because it was the right thing to do, not because it was the political thing to do.

I could give you a lot of others, but I'll give you one more, because the Vice President had a lot to do with this. We were trying to decide whether to go forward with our campaign to try to stamp out, or at least dramatically discourage, illegal smoking by teenagers. And all the political advice was, "Wait til the next election is over. These tobacco companies never lose in court; they never lose anywhere. They got a double ton of money, and they will gut you, not because they will get on television and run ads saying we think kids ought to smoke but because they have mailing lists, they can write

people, they can inflame people. There are all these wonderful, wonderful Americans who grow tobacco like their families have been growing it for 100 and 200 years. But they can terrify them, and they will give them all kinds of propaganda about how you're going to drive them into the dirt, and those people will become a political force against you. And all the Americans who agree with you, they'll find some other reason to be against you. That's why people don't ever take on organized interests. So don't you be—you've already been the first President to take on the NRA; for goodness sakes, don't take on the tobacco companies, everybody else gave that one a pass."

But we knew 2 things after 14 months of study. We knew, number one, that for 30 years some of these companies have known that tobacco was addictive and dangerous and that they were consciously marketing it to children. And the second thing we knew was that 3,000 kids a day begin to smoke, and 1,000 of them will end their lives early.

So finally, we decided, how in God's name can we walk away from this? A thousand kids a day living a better, fuller, longer life is worth any amount of political sacrifice. It is the right thing to do.

There's so many other things like this that I could tell you about, but you get the idea. This is a great country. I do not want you to be upset about what you think is going on in Washington; I want you to be determined to do what you think is best for America, consistent with our values.

This debate was inevitable, as inevitable as the sun coming up in the morning, because of the depth of the changes that are going on. Because we're changing the way we work, we're changing the way we live, we have to change the way we do government. This was inevitable.

Don't you forget—we've been around for nearly 220 years now because most of the time when the chips are down, the American people do the right thing. And we come out pretty good.

I was born nearly 50 years ago to a widowed mother in a State where the per capita income was barely half the national average. My granddaddy raised me til I was 4. He had a sixth grade education. And I got to be President, not because I was so smart or so good or because I worked like crazy—because there are hundreds of people like me in this country and hundreds of people all over the world. America made that possible. America said, no matter who you are, here's a chance at an education. No matter who you are, here's a chance at a job. No matter who you are, you can run for office. No matter who you are, you can go anywhere and stand up for what you believe in. This is a very great country, and every one of you should be happy and proud that you happen to be alive at this period of profound change. If we do our job, the best is yet to come.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:32 p.m. at the Century Plaza Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to actor Tom Hanks and Ashley Ballard, who sang the national anthem.

Message to the Congress Transmitting Transportation Department Reports *September 21, 1995*

To the Congress of the United States:

I transmit herewith the 1994 calendar year reports as prepared by the Department of Transportation on activities under the Highway Safety Act, the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, and the Motor Vehicle

Information and Cost Savings Act of 1972, as amended.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
September 21, 1995.