

Let me say again that this terrible incident reminds me of a lesson I have learned in working for peace throughout the world in the last 3 years. The real differences in our world are not between Catholics and Protestants, Arabs and Jews, Muslims, Croats, and Serbs; they are between those who embrace peace and those who reject it, those who look to the future and those who are blinded by the hatreds of the past, those who open their arms and those who are determined to keep clenching their fists.

We all have to choose. The people of Northern Ireland have chosen peace. They do not

deserve to have a small group choose bloodshed and violence and wreck the peaceful life they long for. And the people of Great Britain do not deserve to have this violence wreaked upon them. We will not stop in our efforts until peace has been secured.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:47 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, prior to his departure for Iowa City, IA.

The President's Radio Address *February 10, 1996*

Good morning. Today I want to talk with you about our families and our future—a future of great possibilities and strong challenges, challenges we cannot meet with Government alone, but we can't meet them by letting people fend for themselves, either. We have to go forward together.

In my State of the Union Address, I outlined our seven biggest challenges for the future, challenges we must meet if we are going to make the American dream available to all our people and unite our country around our shared values.

Those seven are: strengthening our families and giving our children better childhoods; providing better education for all Americans; enhancing the security of working families through access to health care, lifetime education and training, and secure pensions; fighting crime and gangs and drugs until crime is the exception, not the rule, in America again; protecting our environment; maintaining our world leadership for peace and freedom; and continuing to reform and reinvent our Government so that it does a better job at less cost in helping our people to make the most of their own lives and solve our problems together.

Our first and in many ways our most important challenge is to strengthen our families and improve childhood for all of our children. Our children are shaped by many forces, first and foremost by their parents, but also by other relatives, schools, places of worship, their peers,

their communities, and the larger economic and social forces of our time.

If the first years of a child's life go right, with engaged, caring parents to love and encourage them, to teach them right from wrong, it can mean the difference between a lifetime of fulfillment and a lifetime of frustration and disappointment. It can also mean the difference between an America prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century and an America that is not.

These days, most parents are working harder just to make ends meet; so it's an even greater challenge to spend the time, the energy, the concentration necessary to get children off to a good start. And it's a tougher job because our children are subject to so many outside forces that can undermine their growing up.

Sadly, too many of our children are growing up without parents; others are abused or neglected by their parents; others have parents who simply don't know how to be strong positive forces, the kind of forces every child needs in his or her life. Too often, these parents become shadows on the outskirts of their children's lives.

We know that when parents are absent or abusive the results can be tragic. Recently in Chicago a 5-year-old boy was held 14 stories above the pavement by a 10-year-old and an 11-year-old, and dropped to his death. The boys who did the killing were essentially parentless, with both fathers in prison. In New York, a

6-year-old girl was beaten and tortured to death by her own mother.

We know neglect can be bad, too, and not just in physical ways. Just this week, another national study confirmed the destructive impact on children of being permitted to watch excessive violence on television for hours and hours a day, year after year after year. Beyond that, we all know of the threats to our children outside the family. We must do a better job of dealing with these challenges.

The sad fact is that while the overall crime rate is going down, crime among juveniles is still going up. While the overall drug use rate is going down, drug use among our children is still going up. When we lose these children, we suffer terrible individual losses and more; we lose a piece of our shared future.

I know today's parents face tough challenges. This information and technology revolution in the new global economy we're experiencing is transforming the world to a degree seldom seen in history. Many of these changes are good, but let's face it, many of them put extra tremendous stress on America's parents, financial and otherwise.

That's why we've worked hard to help parents in building strong families and bright futures for their children with things like the Family and Medical Leave Act so parents won't have to sacrifice their jobs when there's a baby born or family emergencies; with investments in Head Start and immunization so our children get off to a healthy start; with the earned-income tax credit, which this year will cut taxes for working families with incomes of less than \$27,000 so that no families with full-time workers and children will be in poverty; with record amounts of child support collected; and with successful new efforts to make our streets and schools safer—100,000 more police, things like the Brady law, which has now kept 40,000 criminals from getting handguns.

Just this week I signed the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which gives the parents the V-chip so they can take greater responsibility for their children's lives and help them to kick the degrading influence of excessive television violence and other inappropriate programming out of their house.

Now we're working hard to pass bipartisan legislation to prevent insurance companies from

dropping people when they switch jobs or when their family members or they have preexisting health conditions. A sick child is enough weight on your shoulders without threatening the family's insurance. We're trying to pass welfare reform which supports both work and childrearing. And we ought to raise the minimum wage. No parent can raise a child on \$4.25 a hour, though millions are trying to do just that.

Government will continue to do its part. But governments don't raise children; parents do, and no program can ever replace parents teaching their children right from wrong and helping them to grow into strong, self-confident citizens. We can give you the V-chip, but you have to use it. We can make dads send checks to support their children, but a check is no substitute for a parent's love and guidance. We can continue to improve our schools, but what happens in the classroom depends in part on what happens at home, before and after school. We can pass laws to help families, but families must help themselves with parents respecting each other, keeping violence out of the home, challenging each other to work harder to stay together. Divorce may be easier than staying together for parents, but usually it's tougher for the kids.

So to every parent I say: Turn off the TV more. Get to know your child's teacher. Spend time together. Read and learn together. Above all, teach your child right from wrong. If parents do their job and the rest of us, including Government, do our part, America's future will be assured because we work together.

The Bible asks: "If your child asks for bread, would you give him a stone? If he asks for fish, would you give him a serpent? If he asks for an egg, would you give him a scorpion?" Our children are what we give them, what we teach them. We dare not forget that basic truth. Their lives and our common future depend upon it.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 8:15 a.m. in the Oval Office for broadcast at 10:06 a.m.