

Remarks to the Annual General Session of the Democratic National Committee in Chicago  
August 30, 1996

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, you just heard a speech from the part of our ticket who got the most sleep last night. *[Laughter]*

I asked Al last night, after the convention adjourned and I was just drained, you know—and you all were so wonderful to me, and I thank you very much—but I said, “Gosh, I wish tomorrow we were getting up and taking the kids to the aquarium and the zoo and just kind of looking around Chicago, a wonderful town; I hadn’t spent any time here. Why are we going out on that bus?” *[Laughter]* “Why are we doing that tomorrow?” Totally deadpan, you know, just like he did in the speech, he said in his version of the macarena, you know, that dead stare—*[laughter]*—he said, “Because we do not wish Senator Dole to win the election.” *[Laughter]* So I said, “Okay, when I get up tomorrow and my back hurts and I’m whining around, you remind me of that so I can be in a good humor.” *[Laughter]*

Rabbi, Reverend Barrow, ladies and gentlemen, I just want to echo, if I might for a moment, a lot of what has been said and make two brief points about our party and our future. First, I want to thank Don Fowler for a lifetime of devotion to our party and for doing the hard work—out of the limelight and keeps going. I want to thank B.J. Thornberry and the staff at the Democratic National Committee who have worked hard to bring our party back.

I thank Chris Dodd for his tirelessness and his eloquence. By the time he got through nominating me the other night I felt like a real President. *[Laughter]* I thought it was quite wonderful, and I thank you, sir.

I want to thank Marvin Rosen and Scott Pastrick and all the folks that have worked so hard in raising our funds that for a year enabled us to be on television debating the different visions of the future that we and our opponents have.

I feel deeply indebted to you, Debra DeLee, and to all the people who worked on the Chicago convention—a lot of people left the White House, volunteers came from all over the country. They did a wonderful job. I said before how very much I appreciate what Mayor Daley

and Maggie did and the magnificent job that Bill Daley did in mustering a broad base of support for the Democratic Convention in Chicago, and I’m very grateful to them.

I’d also like to remind you all that we had a lot of support and help from the entire State of Illinois, and I’d like to thank the chairman of the Illinois Democratic Party, Gary LaPaille, and all the Illinois Democrats for the support they gave us. Thank you, sir. Thank you all.

I thank all the Members of Congress for being here. And all of you—some of you here—Joel Ferguson I see—were on the train with me. I thank you for riding the train. That was one of the great experiences of my life, and I think everybody who was on there enjoyed it.

Reverend Jackson, I thank you for what you said at the convention, for what you said about the First Lady, and I thank you for being there with your son. You know, I saw Congressman Jackson and his father, and I watched them together, and I thought, family values. I thought, family values. It was a beautiful thing.

I thank Mayor Archer for being here and for your great speech, sir, and for the example you have set in Detroit. If you can get \$2 billion of private sector commitments to invest in the inner city of Detroit, we can do that everywhere in America, and we can put the people of this country back to work and give people a future.

I don’t know if Mayor Brown from San Francisco is still here, but I thought he was here before, and I thank him for being here. He was one of our most eloquent spokespeople on television. I saw him from time to time.

I wanted to say two things. First of all, I want you to know how I felt, not only as a President, as a Democrat but as an American, about our convention. I had two responses to it. First of all, our friends in the other party, they had a very successful convention in San Diego, but there was a difference in theirs and ours, and I was really proud of it. We were proud of our platform, proud of our record, proud of all of our leaders, and glad to put them before the American people. But more importantly, we did not try to hide the fact

that we have differences but that those differences can be constructive.

If you're not going to ever have a debate and a difference of opinion, what's the purpose of getting together? If we all knew the truth, there would be no point in talking. If there was nothing to learn, there would be no point in listening.

And the one thing I have to tell you, over the last 20 years of public life, where I've had the opportunity now to work for 20 years on the great issues that are still before us today—can you reform education so that everyone achieves excellence; can you develop the right mix in a criminal justice system so that you not only catch the people who should be caught and sent to prison but you actually find a way to reduce crime by preventing it in the first place; can you find a way to change the dynamics of the welfare system so we end the 30 years steadily growing isolation of an economic under class in America—what I have learned is that we all need a little humility here. If these things were easy, somebody would have done it already.

That's why I was so upset to hear our teachers condemned at the other convention. You know, they ought to try it sometime. They ought to try it sometime. Most of our children turn out fine; most of them learn a lot; most of them are doing great; a lot of them are doing great against all the odds.

But when we embark on this great enterprise, we should not only have confidence and energy, we should have a little humility. And that humility should make us welcome the chance together as a party and to express our honest differences, and then to explain to the American people why we're still Democrats and why we're still moving forward and what it is that we agree on, which is what our platform is all about.

I'd give anything if—I know political platforms are sort of out of date—I'd give anything if we could convince 20 or 30 or 40 million Americans to read that platform. It's not very long. And it says about all we need to say about why we're not a party of the past but a party of the future. And I just want you to know I'm proud of you, every one of you, and grateful to you.

And so I ask you to go out to the American people with that sense of confidence and hope and also honest humility. We came in here on a train. We're going to fly out of here and

get on a bus. But by train or bus, we're still going to have the same message: We are on the right track to the 21st century, and we are going to build that bridge to the future, and we're going to do it together.

And let me just say one or two things. The Vice President went over the substantive issues, but if you think about it, we have to keep the economy strong, and then we've got to offer educational opportunity to everybody if everyone is going to have a chance to participate. That's our opportunity agenda, and it's a good one.

We have to keep the crime rate coming down, but we have to find a way to prevent crime in the first place. We have to try to change the welfare system with this law, but in order to do it there have to be jobs there in the first place. And let me say, I have seen with these empowerment zones that if we put a lot more of them out there, we can get more investment into our cities.

I can see with our brownfields initiative—that's a strange word to a lot of people—but the truth is we can't invest in a lot of our cities because there are environmental problems. If we clean them up, in many cases the investments that can be made will be less expensive in some of our high unemployment areas; in other areas, we can help in that way. We can give employers incentives to hire people on welfare. All those welfare checks can now be used to help create jobs in the private sector.

But the thing that I think is most important for us to say is what I said last night: Welfare for years has been a political football. Everybody had an opinion about it, even people that never talked to anybody on welfare, had never been in a welfare office, had never seen how any of these programs worked. Their sense was right—their sense was right, that somehow we had isolated a group of people in our country that we weren't bringing back in. That was true. But a lot of the specific things people said about it were dead wrong, starting with the fact that most everybody who is trapped in dependence is dying to be independent and wants to be out of it.

Now there is none of that left. No person can fairly argue the welfare issue one party against another. No person can fairly say, "I'm a politician. I'm going to get you to vote for me by condemning poor people who just want a handout." That's over. No one can do that anymore. All that stuff that people said just sort

of on automatic for the last 20 years, it is over now. And if you hear anybody saying it now, you can say, "When's the last time you hired somebody? What are you going to do? What is your responsibility? We have changed this. Get off the dime. Let's go to work. Let's do this."

This is going to be a great opportunity for us to bring that message. I know that it was Reverend Jackson who first said to me the line I said to America last night, which is that the greatest market for our country are all the underemployed and unemployed people in America. If you brought investment back into the isolated rural areas and the inner cities of America and gave people there the chance to work and earn a good living, they would buy more American products than any country that we can presently open a market to in the next 2 or 3 years. That is the important message here. That's a very important message.

Now, I leave you with this thought. This is the beginning of the campaign, not the end of it. I want to get in there with everyone else who said that. I don't know how many sporting events I've watched in my lifetime—a golfer I admire blow a several-shot lead—not maybe blow it, maybe somebody else just played better that day; a basketball team 20 points ahead lose the lead in 8 minutes and lose the game. Any contest is not over until it's over. And this is a contest, and it's not over. It's just starting.

So I want you to share this message. And I do want you to help us register more of our voters, but I want you to help us get the people to vote who should. The thing that encouraged me about the train trip was that I felt that there's no way that many people could have come out with that level of interest, enthusiasm, and commitment unless they felt again that there was a connection between what we were doing in Washington and how they were living in the heartland. That is the connection we have to keep alive. That is the connection that drives people to the polls.

But it is critical that people know that we're building that bridge to the 21st century, that we're going to meet our challenges, and we're going to protect our values. Our party was founded by Thomas Jefferson. I think it's important to note that Thomas Jefferson was succeeded by Madison and Monroe, that by the time John Quincy Adams got ready to be President, he was not part of the party of his father.

Everybody had to be part of Jefferson's party. They just had two different factions. Then we had Andrew Jackson who was a more populist part of the party that Thomas Jefferson had founded.

I'm making this point for this reason: if this party represents most of the people, embodies the values of this country, and is always willing to take on the new challenges, we can be the party that we were in our beginning. We can be the party that we were for Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman. We can be the party that we were for John Kennedy and President Johnson. We can be the party we started to be with President Carter, and circumstances intervened there. We can do that if we have that kind of discipline.

I was reading that magnificent book about the Lewis and Clark expedition and all the people in the other party who were against Thomas Jefferson buying the Louisiana Territory. And Thomas Jefferson said, "Well, I'm for limited Government but, my goodness, this is America, this is our future." So he spent the equivalent of one year of the Federal budget to buy Louisiana. Can you imagine what they'd do to me in Washington if I spent the equivalent of one year of the Federal budget on anything? A whole year of the Federal budget he spent to buy Louisiana. If he hadn't done it, I wouldn't be here today. *[Laughter]*

You think about that. I say that to say we must always keep our eye on the future. We should be proud of what we have done. We should be proud of what we have done, but we can't undo yesterday. We can be proud of our accomplishments, and we have to find a way to let our failures go because we can't undo it. And we've got to focus on the future.

So if you will help me in these next 68 days, we'll take this message to the people. Yes, we're on the right track, but we're not stopping the train. We're going on. We're building that bridge to the 21st century. We're building it for all Americans, and we want all Americans to join the Democrats and get the job done.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:49 a.m. at the Sheraton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Rabbi Herman Schaalmau and Rev. Willie Barrow, who delivered the invocations; Donald L. Fowler, national chairman, B.J. Thornberry, executive director, Senator Christopher J. Dodd, gen-

eral chairman, Marvin Rosen, national finance chairman, and Scott Pastrick, treasurer, Democratic National Committee; Debra DeLee, chief executive officer, Democratic National Convention Committee; Joel Ferguson, businessman and former Michigan State University trustee; civil

rights leader Rev. Jesse L. Jackson and his son, Representative Jesse Jackson, Jr., of Illinois; Mayor Dennis W. Archer of Detroit, MI; and Mayor Willie Brown of San Francisco, CA. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

## Remarks on Beginning a Bus Tour in Cape Girardeau, Missouri August 30, 1996

*The President.* Thank you so much. Ladies and gentlemen, first of all I am thrilled to see you here in such large numbers and with such enthusiasm. It's good to be in Cape Girardeau. It's not the first time I've ever been here, but it's the first time I've ever been here as President. And the last time I was here as a private citizen, I just stopped and got a Coke and nobody came out to see me. It's pretty nice to be here with 30,000 of our best friends. Thank you. Thank you.

I want to say a word of thanks to some folks who haven't been recognized yet, but I used to do this, and they're the people that provided our music. They're over there in those hot uniforms: the Southeast Missouri State Band, the Cape Girardeau Central High School Band, the Jackson High School Band, the Fredericktown High School Band, the Farmington High School Band. Thank you for the music. Thank you. You were great, and we appreciate you.

Thank you, Governor Carnahan, for being my friend and being a great leader for Missouri, for creating jobs and advancing education and moving people from welfare to work. I want to say one thing about Mel Carnahan. While there was a lot of political rhetoric in Washington about welfare reform, Mel Carnahan developed an idea, a plan to help move people from welfare to work. We approved it. He's implementing it. And I want you to know there are, in addition to 10 million more Americans at work, there are 1.8 million Americans fewer on welfare than there were the day I became President, thanks in part to the leadership of people like Mel Carnahan.

Thank you, Emily Firebaugh, for presenting yourself as a candidate for Congress, for undergoing the rigors of the campaign, and for understanding what is at stake. Ladies and gentlemen,

what she said is true. And what I said to the convention last night is true. Last year there was, and this year there has been, a competition of balanced budget plans. Let me remind you that they always talked about balancing the budget, but when I became President, the debt of this country had been quadrupled in 12 years. We cut it by 60 percent in 4 years. And you would have a surplus today if it weren't for the interest we have to pay on the debt run up in the 12 years before I became President.

And so, I said, "Here's a balanced budget plan. It has a tax cut to pay for education and childrearing. It's targeted to middle class families. It invests in education. It invests in the environment. It invests in research and technology for the future. It protects Medicaid for the elderly in nursing homes or poor children, for families with members with disabilities. And it protects Medicare. Take it."

They said, "No. Here's a balanced budget plan. It cuts Medicare too much. It cuts Medicaid too much. It divides Medicare into a two-class system. It removes the guarantee of Medicaid coverage for people in nursing homes, for families with disabilities, and for poor children. It cuts education. It cuts the environment. It lets companies raid \$15 billion of their workers' pension funds. And it raises taxes on the hardest working, lowest paid working people with children in this country. You take that, or we'll shut the Government down."

I said no. I said no. But as I said yesterday, I have done my best to change the politics of Washington, DC, to make it more like life in Cape Girardeau. I am sick and tired of Washington taking up the headlines over who's to blame. I think the question is not who's to blame; it's what are we going to do to make America  
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