

The President's Radio Address *October 5, 1996*

Good morning. Today I want to talk about some good news about our Nation's social fabric, just the latest good news we've had about the direction of our country.

For the past 4 years we've worked hard to expand opportunity, demand responsibility, and build a stronger sense of community. Look what we've achieved together: 10½ million new jobs, unemployment at its lowest level in 7½ years, the deficit down 60 percent. And last week we learned that incomes have risen by \$1,600 after inflation since the passage of my economic plan. We've had the biggest one-year decline in poverty in 27 years. Clearly, America is on the right track.

This strategy has not only been good for our economy, it has also helped us begin to mend our social fabric. We've worked hard together to strengthen families and to give all Americans the tools to make the most of their own lives. That includes sending a strong message to young people that they must take responsibility for their own actions. That's why we've adopted a stand of zero tolerance for guns and drugs in our schools and why we've supported school uniforms, strong truancy law enforcement, and community curfews to reduce crime and promote discipline. That's why I ordered tobacco companies to stop marketing cigarettes to our children, the strongest action ever taken to protect our children against this deadly threat. And we're working to make sure young people get a clear message at school and at home: Drugs are wrong, drugs are illegal, and drugs can kill you.

But we all know that so many of our other social problems have their roots in the breakdown of our families. For decades we have seen a stunning and simultaneous erosion of the institutions that give our lives structure and keep us strong: work, family, and neighborhood. There is no more troubling outgrowth of this social breakdown than the increase in teen pregnancy and out-of-wedlock births in recent decades. We know that children who are born into homes where there is no marriage are more likely to drop out of school, get involved in crime and drugs, and end up in poverty. That's why I've worked so hard to demand responsibility

from young people and reduce teen pregnancies. Earlier this year I took executive action to require young mothers to stay in school or lose welfare payments. We mounted an unprecedented crackdown on child support enforcement, and now child support collections are up nearly 50 percent compared to 4 years ago.

We are saying to young men and young women alike, it is wrong to get pregnant or father a child until you are married and ready to take on the responsibilities of parenthood. And all across America, in our religious institutions, our schools, our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our people are banding together, teaching young people right from wrong and helping steer them on the right path. We are supporting many school and community-based efforts, especially those that promote abstinence to reduce teen pregnancy.

Today I'm pleased to report that together we're making progress. I'm announcing the new release of a report by the Centers for Disease Control showing that last year the teen birth rate went down for the 4th year in a row. And even more encouraging, the out-of-wedlock birth rate declined for the first time in 20 years. This is occurring across all racial and cultural lines. If we're going to save the American family, it is absolutely critical that we keep moving in this direction. There are still far too many children being born outside of marriage, but we are now finally seeing that it is possible for us to move in the right direction.

For far too long too many Americans believed there was nothing we could do about our most vexing social problems. They always seemed to be there, and they always seemed to be growing worse. But now it's different. Crime is down 4 years in a row, one million fewer victims. Poverty is down, the largest drop in 27 years. Nearly 2 million people have moved from welfare to work. And now this good news on teen birth rates and out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

When the teen birth rate drops for 4 years in a row and out-of-wedlock births decline for the first time in a generation, that is news we can all be proud of. Americans are standing up for our values. The American family is getting stronger, and we are making responsibility

a way of life. Our economy and our society are on the right track. If we continue to pull together to meet our challenges and protect our values, our best days are still ahead.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10 a.m. on October 4 at the Chautauqua Institute in Chautauqua, NY, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 5.

Exchange With Reporters Following Debate Preparation With Former Senator George J. Mitchell in Chautauqua

October 5, 1996

The President. Hi.

Q. Good morning.

The President. "X" marks the spot? [Laughter]

Presidential Debate

Q. Are you ready for some kind of a surprise from Mr. Dole? Everybody is talking about he may have a surprise.

The President. I expect he will.

Q. Do you?

Q. How high are the stakes here?

Q. Do you have one?

The President. No. No, I'm just—I did better yesterday. I had a—I was better in the golf in the beginning and better in the debate at the end.

Q. Did you finally beat George Mitchell?

The President. Well, I don't know. Maybe I got him to a draw, anyway. He's hard to beat.

Q. A lot of people think these things are not ever won on the substance but on people's memories of a defining moment. Are you looking for a defining moment?

The President. Not especially. I think the most important thing is—my belief is that people would like it if it were genuinely enlightening and if we were talking more to them in terms of answering the questions. And I'll do my best to try to make it helpful to the people who watch. And that's kind of what I'm focused on, making sure that when it's over they have a really clear idea of what I want to do, how it relates to what we have done in the last 4 years, how much better off the country is today than it was 4 years ago, and what we still have to do. That's the kind of thing I want to talk about. I want it to be essentially a positive thing. There will be, obviously, some clear contrast between Senator Dole and me, but my belief is that people want us to try to talk about build-

ing the future, and that's what I'm going to try to do.

Q. Mr. President, does the memo from Mr. Freeh say that there's no—

Q. Mr. President, how high are the stakes for these debates? It's kind of stopped the campaign momentum for a moment. It's got you focused. How high are the stakes for you and for Senator Dole?

The President. Oh, I think it's a very important debate because if a lot of people watch it, you know, it could affect their views. But I think the main thing for both of us is to go be ourselves and do the best we can and let the people draw their own conclusions. And if you start calculating all the other things, I think you just—it throws you off. You've just got to show up and do your best.

Press Secretary Mike McCurry. Thank you, Mr. President.

Q. Sir, there's another—the FBI—

Q. Mr. Freeh's memo—does it say there's no clear leadership in the drug policy, sir?

Q. [Inaudible]—the buildup leading up to it, though.

The President. Oh, well, it's inevitable, isn't it? I mean, you know, it's inevitable. It's a moment in which the American people have a chance to see us both, and that's a good thing.

FBI Files of White House Passholders

Q. Sir, what can you tell us about this FBI file story?

The President. I don't know anything about it other than what I saw in the paper today. I know nothing—

FBI Report on Narcotics and Law Enforcement

Q. How about the Freeh memo? Does it really say that the administration has shown no leadership in the drug war?