

apology. He's got four wonderful children and a fine wife, and he's done a lot of wonderful things in his life, and I hope he'll be able to go on and do some more wonderful things. And as far as I'm concerned, that's why we have a criminal justice system: people get punished; they pay their price; and they're supposed to be able to go on. He got punished and paid quite a high price, and I hope he'll be able to go on with his life now.

President's Health

Q. How are you getting along on those crutches?

The President. I'm doing great. These are my stealth crutches. [Laughter] I think really they were developed as an offshoot of B-2 technology, see, and I like them quite a lot. [Laughter]

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, prior to a Cabinet meeting.

Remarks at the Radio and Television Correspondents Association Dinner April 10, 1997

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Members of Congress, members of the press, fellow sufferers—[laughter]—I would like to thank the Radio and Television Correspondents Association for inviting me this evening. I want to give Terry Murphy a special thanks for the kind introduction, and also, given my condition, I'd like to give a special thank-you to the Ridgewell Catering Company for bringing me here tonight. [Laughter] Enough laughs.

I have come here tonight to speak about a topic of perennial concern in Washington, something we never get around to doing anything about. And that is the close, some would even say cozy relationship, between the rarified elite who make public policy and those who report on it. And on that topic, just let me say this: Congratulations, Andrea. [Laughter] You know, that fella standing next to you in the newspaper photos a few days ago—[laughter]—he looked exactly like Alan Greenspan, only exuberant. [Laughter]

I want all of you to know that, until recently, I had planned out a really dramatic entrance to this dinner. [Laughter] And then, George Bush stole my thunder. [Laughter] I mean, look at this: This guy is 72 years old; he jumps out of a plane at 12,000 feet; he lands without a scratch. [Laughter] I fall 6 inches, and I'm crippled up for 6 months. It's ridiculous.

Now, as you might imagine, my injured knee adds complications to my schedule. In fact, you

know, just when I was on the way over here tonight—[laughter]—as you have seen, my Press Secretary, Mike McCurry, just handed me a note. According to wire reports, former President Bush has just bungee jumped off the Seattle Space Needle. [Laughter]

That reminds me—I was supposed to make another announcement tonight. Mr. Murphy has asked me to tell you that the Radio and Television Correspondents Association has decided to adopt the practices of the Democratic National Committee. [Laughter] That means you can all pick up your \$1,000 refund checks on the way out tonight. [Laughter]

You know, I'm getting a little sick of these fundraising stories. [Laughter] But here I am, I'm doing the best to do the job the American people sent me here to do. But with all this ruckus in Washington these days, we have to work harder and harder to sort of be heard through the din. So my staff worked up a few new ideas that we thought might break through. I want you to be the judge. After all, it's your din. [Laughter]

Here are the suggestions: Take a cue from the TV show "Ellen." Start a rumor that in the last Presidential press conference of the season, my character will become a libertarian. [Laughter] Announce that we've discovered signs of life on Mars. We already tried that, and some of you bought it; I couldn't believe it. [Laughter] Announce that I will fight

Evander Holyfield—anytime, anyplace. [Laughter] Here's the Vice President's suggestion. Sign an Executive order hiring people on welfare to install computers in our Nation's classrooms, to E-mail messages to neighborhood watch volunteers, to use their cell phones to call 100,000 community police officers, to remind the one million literacy tutors to show up for work. [Laughter] If all else fails, push myself down a flight of stairs. [Laughter] As you know, that's the one we decided to go with. [Laughter] It worked for a while, and I would do it again. I may have to. [Laughter]

Thank you very much, Mike. [Laughter]

Ladies and gentlemen, you will be pleased to learn that former President Bush—[laughter]—has just successfully jumped the Snake River Canyon on a rocket-powered motorcycle. [Laughter] Now he's just taunting me. [Laughter]

You know, one of the results of being bummed up for awhile is that I've gotten to watch a lot more television than normal, and I spent a day in the hospital just sort of channel-flipping, "surfing," that's what you call it now. And I was amazed at the way all these different channels struggled to accurately but uniquely cover my surgery. [Laughter] C-SPAN, of course, provided live, uninterrupted coverage of my injured knee—[laughter]—while C-SPAN 2 devoted full coverage to my other knee. [Laughter] Within an hour of the accident, CNN had composed ominous theme music—[laughter]—and put up a graphic, "Breaking News, Breaking Knees." [Laughter] I knew it was going to be a major story when their "Headline News" devoted a full 5 seconds to it. [Laughter] MSNBC immediately proclaimed itself the state-of-the-art global interactive command center for all leg-related news. [Laughter] ESPN broke into the North Carolina-Colorado basketball game with a breathless bulletin that Greg Norman was just fine. [Laughter] PBS kept interrupting coverage of my knee for pledge drives. [Laughter] For every \$100 donation, you got a commemorative X-ray of my leg. [Laughter] Bob Novak went on "Crossfire" to argue the positive aspects of debilitating knee injuries for Democrats. [Laughter] And then, there was MTV. All they wanted to know was, did I wear a hospital gown or pajamas? [Laughter]

Press Secretary Mike McCurry. Another one.

The President. Thank you, Mike. [Laughter] Ladies and gentlemen, President Bush has just

had himself manacled, placed inside a padlocked trunk—[laughter]—and submerged off the coast of Kennebunkport. [Laughter] The clock is ticking. [Laughter] Our prayers are with him. [Laughter]

Anyway, I'm back on my feet, and I'm working for the American people. Congress is back in session this week. That came as a surprise to people in Washington who didn't know it was away. [Laughter] Things have been so slow this year, C-SPAN is actually showing reruns of the 104th Congress.

We can't get agreement to change the consumer price index; that's the hangup on this whole budget deal. And there are Democrats and Republicans in the House—they're scared to death of it. But you know, a small change in the CPI could shave billions of dollars from the deficit, add years and years to the life of the Social Security Trust Fund.

Now, I know this is a complicated issue for some people, and I've been looking for some simple way to explain it. And so, consider how we might re-index some other statistics. For example, a report said last month that we Americans are the heaviest people in the world. Working together, reaching across party lines, we can change all that. [Laughter] Instead of 16 ounces to a pound, we'll say there's 20 ounces. [Laughter] That way, a person who weighs 200 pounds would weigh 160 pounds. Think about it: overnight, Democrats and Republicans can make America the thinnest nation in the world. [Laughter]

Let me tell you, I'm doing the best I can, but actually I'm kind of hurting. The worst thing about this injury is it's hard to stand for long periods of time, and about this time I start to get tired. So I'm going to sort of sit down with a confession. When I signed that Executive order banning cloning research, it was too late to do anything about an experiment or two that had already been started. [Laughter] But one of them has come in handy in moments like this.

"Bill," would you mind? [Laughter]

[At this point, "Saturday Night Live" comedian Darrell Hammond joined the President at the dais and made brief remarks impersonating the President.]

The President. I have to take this over before it gets out of hand. [Laughter] God knows, I can't afford to jeopardize my relationship with

the press corps. [Laughter] But I want to thank you, “Bill” or “Mr. President.” By the way, I wrote up a to-do list for you for the next couple of days. As usual, there’s the morning jog; you have to do that now. [Laughter] Tomorrow at 3:30 p.m., I have a conflict. I have a root canal appointment and a press conference in the East Room. I know it’s going to hurt, but would you mind doing the press conference? [Laughter] No, wait a minute. I couldn’t ask anybody else to do that, even me.

Actually, I enjoy these press conferences, and I enjoy coming here every year. I thank you all for what you’ve done to sustain our democracy for nearly 225 years. Our country is still a work in progress, and I look forward to building on that progress with you. I even look for-

ward to these dinners, and I really wouldn’t want to send anyone else in my place. So I want to thank all of you for having Hillary, me, and me here this evening. [Laughter]

In closing, let me say, we must find common ground. [Laughter] We are going to build that bridge to the 21st century. [Laughter] I do have to refer you to Lanny Davis on that one. Ya-da, ya-da, ya-da.

Good night, and thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:28 p.m., at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Terry Murphy, chairman, Radio and Television Correspondents Association; and newlyweds Andrea Mitchell, NBC News, and Alan Greenspan, Chairman, Federal Reserve Board.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the American Society of Newspaper Editors

April 11, 1997

The President. Thank you very much. And thank you, Bob, for reminding me of my best line from the speech last night. [Laughter] George Bush got the last laugh—[laughter]—12,000 feet, not a scratch. I fell 6 inches; I’m hobbled for 6 months. [Laughter]

I’m delighted to be here. I want to thank you for having me and congratulate this year’s writing award winners. I missed last year, and I’m sorry I couldn’t come, but the Vice President told me all about it. And because he came here, I had to listen one more time and look one more time at all those pictures from his days as a long-haired reporter for the Nashville Tennessean. [Laughter] This is what it’s really like. I don’t mind learning about global warming and high technology and everything, but I had to learn all about the newspaper business all over again. [Laughter] I hear that speech about once every 3 months from him.

You know, times have changed remarkably since Will Rogers said, “All I know is what I see in the papers.” Today, we live in a world with 500 channels, literally hundreds of thousands of web sites exploding all the time—we’re trying to develop the Internet, too—but still, the role that you play in informing and educat-

ing Americans and in helping them to make the right kind of choices is terribly important.

I want to talk today about one of those choices that will have a profound effect on all of our lives and the lives of our children in the next century, and that is the choices we must make to sustain America’s leadership in the world.

Four years ago I came into office determined to renew our strength and prosperity here at home. But I also believed that in the global society of the 21st century, the dividing line between foreign and domestic policy was increasingly an artificial distinction. After all, our national security depends on strong families, safe streets, and world-class education. And our success at home clearly depends on our strength and willingness and our ability to lead abroad.

The conviction that America must be strong and involved in the world has really been the bedrock of our foreign policy for the last 50 years. After World War II, a generation of far-sighted leaders forged NATO, which has given us a half century of security and played a strong role in ending the cold war. They built the United Nations so that a hard-won peace would not be lost. They launched the Marshall plan