

where they could live and worship and raise their children in the sweet air of freedom.

The ageless festival of Passover holds profound meaning for Americans. We began our nation's journey to freedom more than two hundred years ago, a journey that is still not complete. Now we look forward to a new century and a new millennium, strengthened by the knowledge that we, too, have been blessed by God with the vision of a land of great promise set aside for those who cherish freedom.

As we mark the observance of another Passover, let us renew our commitment to America's promise. Let us continue our journey to a land where all our people are free to pursue our common dreams—to live in peace, to provide for our families, and to give our children the opportunity for a better life.

Hillary joins me in extending best wishes for a joyous Passover celebration.

BILL CLINTON

## Remarks on Earth Day and the Community Right-To-Know Law and an Exchange With Reporters

*April 22, 1997*

*The President.* Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. As all of you know I am about to leave for North Dakota, where the people are quite literally in the fight of their lives. What they have endured is enormous; how they are enduring it is remarkable. I am going to view the flood damage to pledge our Nation's support to see that we are doing everything we can do to help them.

You know, Americans have a habit of joining together at times like this, and I think all Americans have been very deeply moved by the pictures we have seen of a town being flooded and burning at the same time, the people in North Dakota losing everything they have. I personally can't remember a time when a community that large was entirely evacuated. And we have to stay together.

I think it is appropriate, for the reasons the Vice President said, that coincidentally this trip is occurring on Earth Day, because since 1970, the first Earth Day, Americans have stood side by side against a rising tide of pollution and for the proposition that we have to find a way to live in harmony with and grow our economy in a way that is consistent with preserving our environment.

Earth Day started at the grassroots. Soon the force of neighbor joining with neighbor grew into a national movement to safeguard our air, our land, and our water. The movement led national leaders of both parties to put in place the environmental safeguards that protect us

today: the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Environmental Protection Act. In 1995, an attempt to reverse this consensus and to radically weaken our environmental laws was strongly rebuffed here in Washington and, even more importantly, all across America. And in 1996, that consensus began to be restored again.

These environmental protections have done an awful lot of good. But one of the best things we can do in Washington to protect the environment is to give people in communities all across our country the power to protect themselves from pollution. That is the mission of the community right-to-know law. This law tells citizens exactly what substances are being released into their neighborhoods. In the decade it's been on the books, citizens have joined with government and industry to reduce the release of toxic chemicals by 43 percent. Under our administration, we strengthened right-to-know, nearly doubling the number of chemicals that must be reported, making it easier for Americans to find out what toxics, if any, are being sent into the world around them.

In 1995, I directed EPA Administrator Carol Browner to find ways to expand community right-to-know even further. Today we are making good on that pledge. Today we increased by 6,100—30 percent—the number of facilities that need to tell the public what they are releasing into our environment. Today seven new industries, including mining, electric utilities, and hazardous waste treatment centers that use substances like mercury, lead, and arsenic, will now

be subject to the community right-to-know law. Today more information will be required from 700<sup>1</sup> companies already providing information under the law. It will be more accessible to Americans. And today we set in motion a process that will guarantee that all the stakeholders, including citizens, community groups, environmental groups, and businesses, will have opportunities to work together from now on to continue to improve this law.

By expanding community right-to-know, we're giving Americans a powerful, very powerful early warning system to keep their children safe from toxic pollution. We're giving them the most powerful tool in a democracy: knowledge. We are truly living up to the promise of Earth Day.

I also want to say a special word of thanks to Katie McGinty for the work that she has done on this in the White House. And I want to thank the Vice President for taking my place at the Earth Day celebration at Anacostia today to talk about community right-to-know and for all of his work on the environment.

And just let me say in closing, with regard to the comments he made about climate change and the possible impact it may have had on the enormous number of highly disruptive weather events that have occurred just since we've been here in the last 4 years and a few months, I think it is very important that we continue to intensify our Government's research efforts in this regard and that we take the very best knowledge we have and bring it to bear on a lot of the decisions we'll be having to make together as a country over the next 4 years. We do not know, as the Vice President said, for sure that the warming of the Earth is responsible for what seems to be a substantial increase in highly disruptive weather events, but many people believe that it is, and we have to keep looking into it. We have to find the best scientific evidence we have, and we have to keep searching for the answers to this. I think every American has noticed a substantial increase in the last few years of the kind of thing we're going to see in North Dakota today. And if there is a larger cause which can be eased into the future, we ought to go after that solution as well.

Thank you very much.

<sup>1</sup> White House correction.

#### *North Dakota Floods*

*Q.* Is a "Marshall plan" appropriate? Your Chief of Staff suggested yesterday it may take a "Marshall plan" to help North Dakota.

*The President.* You know, we've had—I suppose because North Dakota is not highly populated we may—we've had disasters which have affected more people. But I believe that probably this is the highest percentage of people in any State or community that I have seen affected by this. And you know, if you look at Grand Forks, you see a place that literally has to be completely rebuilt or people have to reconstitute their lives elsewhere. So I do believe that we're going to have to be prepared to be very creative here.

The Congress has shown in the past, even when it was quite costly, after the earthquake in California, for example, that we can unite across party lines to do what has to be done. We need to take a hard look at this. This situation in North Dakota is virtually unprecedented in many, many ways, and I want to go out there, make sure that I have read all the information available, talk to the people there, see for myself. And then I'll come back and, along with the congressional delegation with Senator Dorgan and Senator Conrad and Congressman Pomeroy, we'll put our heads together and see where we go from here.

*Q.* Any idea, Mr. President, on how much money it might take, and will it be there when you need it?

*The President.* I think, as I said, my experience in dealing with the flood in the Middle West and all the disasters in California, the Pacific Northwest, the floods in the Southeast, is that Congress finds a way. And I think everybody in America has been totally overwhelmed by what we have seen on television and seen in the news reports—these pictures of buildings completely surrounded by water, burning down. You know, I think it's been an overwhelming experience. I think the American people are with the people of North Dakota, and I think we'll do what we have to do.

#### *Chemical Weapons Convention*

*Q.* Mr. President, are you making any tangible headway on the chemical weapons treaty, on getting the votes for the chemical weapons treaty?

*The President.* Well, I hope so. We're working hard on it. We are working very, very hard on it. I am; the Vice President is; everyone in our administration is. I worked over the weekend some on it. We're doing the best we can to put together a strong case. I think the fact that we have come up with a package of 28 clarifying amendments that respond to 90 percent of the objections, even of the strongest opponents of the treaty, I think shows the good faith in which we have proceeded. And we've worked very hard on this, and I'm actually quite optimistic.

#### *Iraq*

*Q.* Do you have a message for Saddam Hussein and honoring the no-fly zone?

*The President.* Well, my message is that we support people in exercising their religious liberties and in living out their religious convictions everywhere in the world. And we certainly support that in the Muslim world. But we don't want to see religion, in effect, used and distorted in a way to try to avoid the international obligations that are imposed. And we intend to continue to observe the no-fly zone and continue to support the embargo until he lives up to the conditions of the United Nations resolutions.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:05 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, prior to his departure for Grand Forks, ND. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

## Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion on Flood Damage in Grand Forks, North Dakota *April 22, 1997*

*The President.* Well, first of all, let me say to all of you that I'm honored to be here with the people from our administration. Thank you, Mayor Owens and Mayor Stauss, the other mayors that are here. I thank Senator Conrad and Senator Dorgan, Senator Daschle, Senator Johnson who came in with me, and Senator Wellstone and Senator Grams who met us, and Congressman Pomeroy and Congressman Peterson who met us here, Governor Schafer, Governor Carlson. I also want to thank all the people who came with me from my administration: the Secretary of Agriculture, Dan Glickman; the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala; the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Andrew Cuomo; the Secretary of Transportation, Rodney Slater; Aida Alvarez, our Small Business Administration; and Togo West, the Secretary of the Army. I want to thank the Air Force, the National Guard, the Red Cross, the Corps of Engineers, the Coast Guard, the Salvation Army, and all the people at the State and local government and the community groups that have worked so hard on this endeavor.

Today we saw, obviously, these two communities that have been so devastated, but we know that there is a lot of other loss in North and

South Dakota and Minnesota. We're going to meet with people now, and I'm going to get a briefing from people who have, unbelievably, dealt with blizzards, floods, and fires all at the same time. I have never seen that before. And when I saw pictures of some of you stacking sandbags in a blizzard, I thought that I had bad reception on my television at first. It was an amazing thing. I don't recall ever in my life seeing anything like this. And I've been very impressed by the courage and the faith that all of you have shown in the face of what has been a terrible, terrible dilemma.

I want to say before we start this roundtable discussion that we are going to do everything we can to move as quickly as possible to do as much as can be done to help. I want to be briefed by everyone here at the table. And James Lee Witt has already talked to me quite extensively about this over, as you might imagine, a long period of time now. But I wanted to say that there are three things I'd like to announce first.

First of all, before I left the White House this morning, I authorized FEMA to provide 100 percent of the direct Federal assistance for