

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Business Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

August 4, 1997

Helen Thomas' Birthday

The President. Before we start, I think it's only fair to note that we are observing another anniversary of Helen's [Helen Thomas, United Press International] 50th birthday. [Laughter] We wanted to give you a birthday cake with a telltale number of—

[At this point, participants sang "Happy Birthday."]

Ms. Thomas. Now may I have a press conference? [Laughter]

The President. I'm going to make a statement, and you get the questions. [Laughter]

Ms. Thomas. Thank you.

The President. Take it to the press room and cut it up. [Laughter]

Ms. Thomas. Thank you. This is painful. [Laughter]

The President. You don't make it look that way. It's painful for me, too. [Laughter]

Action on Climate Change

I'm glad to be joined today by the CEO's of 10 Fortune 500 companies who have come here to meet with me on climate change. These companies represent electric utilities, the oil and gas industry, finance, high technology, and heavy industry. They are all intimately interested in this issue and will be affected by whatever happens on it in our country and throughout the world. We want a responsible approach to climate change. We believe that the science makes it clear that the climate is changing. I want to proceed based on some fairly straightforward and simple principles.

First of all, as we get ready for the Kyoto conference, I believe there should be realistic but binding limits to emissions of greenhouse gases. I believe that we have to do it in a way that keeps our economy growing. And I believe that we ought to embrace flexible, market-based policies. I believe we should reemphasize and reenergize our efforts in research and development to find as many technological solutions to this as possible and to keep our Nation in the forefront of what is now a \$400 billion market for environmental technologies. And finally,

I believe the agreement has to be a global one. I think all nations, developed and developing, should be a part of this. So this is part of an ongoing process that I and our administration have undertaken to try to make sure we're working together with all the people who would be affected by this issue and try to reach, hopefully, a common position.

We're going to have a good meeting today, and I'm looking forward to it. And again, I want to thank all the executives for coming here and giving vent to their views.

Q. What do you think of the opposition, who says there is no such thing as global warming and that they don't agree with the scientists—some of the scientists?

The President. Well, I think that the real question is—I don't think that very many people disagree with the fact that there is climate change now. I think there's some disagreement about what the impact of it is and what the appropriate response is. There's still some debate there. But I think the scientific evidence for the fact of climate change is pretty compelling. We had that panel of scientists, including the Nobel Prize winners, here the other day, and I received a letter from—I don't know, over 2,500 of them—from scientists about it.

So I think that there's pretty clear evidence that the climate is changing and could be changing substantially. There is still some difference about what the consequences of that will be and what we ought to do about it. But I think if we follow these principles, we'll be staking out a responsible position, which will permit us to continue to grow economically and do our part in the world. After all, we have only 4 percent of the world's population, but we account for 20 percent of the greenhouse gas emissions, which you would expect since we have slightly over 20 percent of the world's output.

Budget Agreement

Q. Mr. President, how seriously are you considering using a line item veto to kill some provisions of the budget you'll sign into law tomorrow?

The President. Well, I asked Mr. Bowles to—once we got a budget agreement and it passed—to institute an intensive process to review both the spending and the tax bills to see if there were any items that would be appropriate for the line item veto. And I have not yet received the results of that review.

I support the line item veto; I did all along. And I think if we have it, it ought to be used—I believe that it ought to be used somewhat sparingly. And my experience as Governor was that once I used it a few times, I didn't have to—I didn't need to use it very much anymore. And that's what I would hope would happen.

We'll just see—you probably know more about the likely targets for it than I do at this point. I was interested in the big-picture items in the budget. We got virtually 100 percent of what I sought, and I'm elated with the budget. I think it's good for America. I think it will keep the economy growing, and I think it's a responsible thing to do. So whatever I do on

that shouldn't be in any way detracting from the terrific job that the Congress did on it.

United Parcel Service Strike

Q. Mr. President, one question on UPS. The standards for Presidential intervention are relatively high. Are you considering doing anything else to intervene to bring an end to the strike?

The President. On UPS?

Q. Yes, UPS.

The President. Well, first we urged the Federal mediator, and we got that. And we got—obviously, it didn't work. I still think the parties ought to go back to the table. UPS is a very important company to our country, and there are a lot of employees there and I hope they go back to the table. But at this time, I don't think any further action by me is appropriate.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to the National Urban League

August 4, 1997

Thank you very much. Chairman Linen and members of the board, Hugh Price. Hugh, I want to thank you for that introduction. I hope somebody got that on tape. *[Laughter]* I was embarrassed there for a while, it was so nice. *[Laughter]*

Let me say to all of you what you already know, which is that Hugh Price has been a breath of fresh air on the Washington scene. He has been a brilliant leader for the Urban League, and I look forward to his leadership for many years to come. He's not as term-limited as I am, I don't think, so we ought to keep him around for a while. I think he's been great.

Congressman Payne and ladies and gentlemen, I have many things for which to be grateful to the Urban League. The two that come most immediately to mind are Vernon Jordan and Ron Brown, and I thank you for that. And I'm delighted to see Alma here—thank you. She's already heard her quota of speeches by me, so this is great forbearance I think.

When I was Governor of Arkansas, I had the privilege of working with your local chapters. I saw firsthand how the Urban League could change the lives and the minds of people. And I want to say a special word of thanks for the support that you have given the work that we are now engaged in here for at least a year with regard to our initiative on racial reconciliation. It means a lot to me, but it also sends a strong signal to Americans that we can no longer afford to ignore the continuing racial divisions that undermine our greatness.

I might just say parenthetically what many of you already know, that this year we're spending—and with a distinguished advisory board headed by Dr. John Hope Franklin—is a year that will deal with the unfinished business of the work of reconciling and moving forward on an equal basis African-Americans and white Americans. But it also must look forward to what America is becoming. Today, we have only one State, Hawaii, which has no racial majority.