

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Luncheon in San Francisco, California

September 20, 1997

Thank you very much. First let me thank all of you for coming. I'm sorry we were a little late getting here. Maybe we were just a little slow on the uptake after yesterday. I think you know we had another stop to make before we could come up. But I'm very grateful to you for being here.

I thank Alan Solomont and Dan Dutko for being here and for their work for our Democratic Party. Thank you, John Goldman, and all the other cochairs of this event.

This has been an interesting weekend for Hillary and for me, and I'm actually glad to be here. And when Mayor Brown said what he did—I think I came to California in my first term more than 30 times. I don't know if I can come out here anymore. *[Laughter]* If I come out here anymore, Willie will have me paying taxes in San Francisco. *[Laughter]*

But I do want to say that I'm very grateful to the people of this State not only for the support that I have received—Al Gore and I were fortunate enough to carry California both in 1992 and by an even bigger margin in 1996—but also for the work that was done by Californians with our administration which made it possible for us to help California to make the comeback that is now evident to everyone.

It was always clear to me that this State, which was effectively the sixth biggest economy in the world and had 13 percent of the population of America, had to make a big economic comeback in order for America to come back. This State which has so much racial and ethnic and religious and other kinds of diversity has to be able to prove we can live and work together in order for America to be able to live and work together. So I feel very much rewarded by the experience that Hillary and I and the Vice President and others have had not only personally but by what we have been able to achieve together. And I thank you for that.

You know, Hillary told you we went to this seminar last night that was chaired by Bill Perry and Warren Christopher about the expansion of NATO, something that I do feel quite passionately about. But it was ironic that Strobe

Talbot was there giving the speech, our Deputy Secretary of State, because the very first time I ever saw Stanford was in February of 1971 when he took me there to see the woman who is now his wife. I still remember everything we did. I remember the movie we saw. It made a very profound impression on me.

But we were talking last night about the world we're trying to build and leave our children, and that's what I'd like to ask you to think about. You know, the Scripture says, "Where there is no vision the people perish." Whether you believe that or not, it is perfectly clear that no change occurs that is positive unless someone has imagined it. And at a time when things are changing anyway, when the way we work and live and relate to each other and the rest of the world is very much in flux, it is absolutely imperative that we have citizens and leaders who can imagine the future in a different way, so that we can shape it in the way that we want our children to find it.

The reason I'm thinking about it is, we were talking about that last night in terms of the world. I said, one of the things I admired about President Yeltsin is he has a great imagination. He can imagine a future for his people very different from the one they have endured. In 27 years in prison, Nelson Mandela could have just shriveled up inside, but instead he bloomed like a flower in the desert and he came out full of imagination about new and different ways to bring people together who had literally been butchering each other for a long time. The great thing about the former Israeli Prime Minister, the late Yitzhak Rabin, is that he could imagine a future in the Middle East where he made peace with people he had spent his whole life fighting.

So if you think about where we are here as a country, I am profoundly grateful for the results which have been achieved. I am glad we've got the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years. I'm glad we've got the lowest poverty rate ever recorded among African-Americans. I'm glad we've got the biggest drop in inequality among working people, in the last 2 years, we've seen in decades. I'm glad that the crime rate

has gone down every year I've been President, and we've had record numbers of reductions in people on the welfare rolls. I'm glad for that. I'm glad for the fights that we made.

Sometimes I think it's easy for people who are reporting on current events to forget that there is quite a difference here in who stands for what. The family and medical leave law, for example, has enabled millions of people to take some time off when their children are born or someone in their family gets sick. One party was overwhelmingly for it; the other party was overwhelmingly against it, although there were some Republicans, thank God, who stood by and helped us.

The same thing is true on our efforts to expand health care coverage. In this last budget, \$24 billion in the balanced budget is allocated to help provide health insurance to half the kids in this country who don't have it. Does anyone really believe that would have happened had it not been for the Democratic Party? The answer is a resounding no. I can tell you; I was there.

We had the biggest increase in investment in education since 1965—in a generation—the biggest increase in helping people to go on to college—of all ages—since the GI bill was passed 50 years ago. You can now get a \$1,500 tax credit for the first 2 years of college, which opens community college to every person in the country; more Pell grant scholarships; more work-study; other tax credits and deductions for all the other years of higher education for Americans of any age. We have finally created an environment in which we have opened the doors of college to all Americans who are willing to work for it.

This is a stunning achievement. It will change the future of America. No one can seriously argue that it would have happened had it not been for our party. That was the contribution we made to this balanced budget agreement. That was our driving passion. And so I say to you, there are consequences to the outcome of elections that affect people, that we can too easily forget.

And as you look to the future, in spite of all these good results—that's the point I'm trying to make—this is not a time for America to sit on its laurels. Why? First of all, because everything changes. But the rate of change today is so breathtaking—yes, so we balance the budget, and we have invested in our future, and

we've expanded trade. But what are we going to do tomorrow to keep this economy going until everybody who needs a job or a better job or an education has a chance to participate in the economy?

Well, one of the things we have to do is keep expanding trade. I want Congress to give me the authority every previous President for the last 20 some years has had to expand trade. I do not want the Europeans, in effect, to have a bigger foothold in Latin America than we do, in Chile and Argentina and Brazil and Venezuela. That would be a terrible mistake. Two-thirds of our trade growth—two-thirds of our trade growth has come from our neighbors, from Canada to the southern tip of South America, in the last year. We dare not walk away from that.

I want to keep working on education until every school in America looks like the one that I visited today in California, where every school is like a charter school, in the control of the parents, the students, the teachers, and the principal; where redtape is low and expectations are high and the school only stays in business as long as it does a good job. That's the only way we're going to save public education in a modern world. And we need to have that kind of result. And we need to keep working until we get there.

So there is a lot still to be done. The world still is not properly organized, although we're getting there, to deal with the security threats that our children will face. I hope to goodness by the time I leave, we'll really be able to say there's no reasonable prospect of a recurrence of a nuclear-dominated world where people will really be in fear of one country dropping a nuclear weapon on another. I hope we'll be there. And we're working hard with the Russians to get there, and with others. But we will have to face the fact when I leave office in January of 2001 that the open borders we're creating and the open commerce we're creating and the explosion of technology we're seeing makes it possible for the organized forces of destruction to wreak havoc among decent people of the United States and throughout the world. And we must be organized to deal with terrorism. We must be organized to deal with drug traffickers. We must be organized to deal with people who purvey ethnic and religious hatred into the butchery of hundreds of thousands of people, whether it's in Africa or Europe or any

other place in the world. We have to be organized to deal with that.

There's lots to do. And I just want to say that I started with a vision. I wanted to be able to say when I left office that every child in this country would have the opportunity to live up to his or her own dreams and capacities if he or she were willing to work for it. I wanted to be able to say that we were still the world's leading force for peace and freedom and prosperity in the world. And I wanted to be able to say, that amidst all of our increasing diversity, we were coming together as one America, respecting, even celebrating our differences but bound together by things that unite us, more importantly.

And every day I fight against the things I think will undermine that, and I fight for the things I think will advance it. And all you have to do is to go back to the fight on family leave and the budget fight in 1993, the fight for the assault weapons ban, for the Brady bill, for 100,000 police on the street in 1994, the fight against the contract on America in 1995, the fight against taking the guarantee of medical care away from our poorest children, the fight against taking away all that Federal aid to education that was helping us to advance oppor-

tunity—just go through every single decision that's been made in the last 5 years—most of you who have come here to help us could have made more money in the short run helping the other party. You came here because you thought we needed to go forward together and because you shared that vision.

I'm here to tell you that we need to keep on with that vision because we, in spite of all the good times, we dare not rest. We have too much to do, too many people to lift up, and too many new bridges to cross before we get to that new century. And thanks to you, we're going to be able to do it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:50 p.m. in the Postrio Restaurant at the Prescott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Alan D. Solomont, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; Dan Dutko, chair, National Victory Fund; John Goldman, dinner cochair; Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr., of San Francisco; former Secretary of Defense William J. Perry; former Secretary of State Warren M. Christopher; President Boris Yeltsin of Russia; and State President Nelson Mandela of South Africa.

Remarks at a Saxophone Club Reception in San Francisco

September 20, 1997

Thank you very much. I'm always uneasy when Hillary is up here about to introduce me. I never know what is really going to be said. [Laughter]

You know, we—it's the world's worst-kept secret that we took our daughter to Stanford over the weekend—[laughter]—and bid her goodbye yesterday. And so, from, like, 6 o'clock on, Hillary and I are officially overseeing one of America's empty nests. [Laughter] And I've been thinking about how I was going to fill it. I was thinking about maybe I would get a dog to go with Socks, you know. [Laughter] When I heard Hillary talking, I thought that Willie was going to move in with us. [Laughter] Mayor, I love you, but they need you here. They need you. [Laughter]

I love to come to San Francisco. I love the community. It was wonderful; we got off the highway and were coming up from—we came up from Palo Alto and were coming up through the streets, and I now know—I've made that trip so many times from the airport that I know every block. And there's a little marker on every block, and I see the neighborhoods change. And I look for the people to change in the street. And I can always sort of measure how I'm doing by whether it's the same good response in every block, and then when I'm not doing so good there's a difference. [Laughter] And once I was doing so poorly, there was no difference in any of the neighborhoods the other way.

But I always love coming here, where the people are so expressive and so alive and so