

Major General Hinton. Mr. Sykes is here, sir, and of course, he already has 400 refugees on board.

Chris Sykes. How are you, Mr. President?

The President. I'm fine.

Mr. Sykes. Okay. It's been a great exercise—

The President. Well, I really appreciate the way you've worked with our military to organize and design the camp. And I want to thank CARE and all the NGO's that are working there.

Exactly how many are there now?

Mr. Sykes. We've got exactly 409 now, and we'll be receiving another 500, which we're in the process of receiving as you speak.

The President. Well, that's good news. I think it's good for them—go ahead.

Mr. Sykes. Yes—we're moving right ahead on schedule, and we should be able to speed up our rate of reception. The initial influx has come in from Kukes, and we're prepared for any influx from Macedonia, as well.

The President. Well, that's great. I think we may have a little influx from Macedonia. The situation there is not the best, and we've got a lot of pressure. So I hope we can really do a good job of getting as many people as possible there.

Mr. Sykes. Well, sir, we'll keep this camp going on schedule, and we're looking for sites for two more camps right now.

The President. That's great. I know they need all the help they can get. They've taken a lot of folks, and I know a lot of them are in homes, but I think from here on out we're going to have to have more camps and good ones.

Mr. Sykes. Yes, sir. We've got a good contractor here helping to build these camps, and we'll keep trying to find the right sites.

The President. Well, I appreciate it. I know it's tough work, but you're doing something really important. And it will be temporary, but it may be a while. And so we've got to do the best we can. And I'm very grateful to both of you.

Mr. Sykes. Thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you, Chris, and thank you, General. It's good to hear your voice. Take care.

Major General Hinton. Thank you, thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Bye-bye.

NOTE: The teleconference began at 9:40 a.m. The President spoke from the Oval Office at the White House to Maj. Gen. William S. Hinton, Jr., USAF, Commander, Joint Task Force Shining Hope, and Chris Sykes, camp manager, CARE, at the Camp Hope refugee site, located 60 miles from the city of Fier, Albania.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Luncheon in Seattle, Washington May 14, 1999

Thank you. I couldn't help but thinking when Jack was up here talking and saying all those wonderful things, that Joe Andrew had just said that we would win every election in 2000, from dogcatcher to President. And my immediate reaction was, that's not such a great distance. [Laughter] That's because I spend too much time in Washington. [Laughter] Now, when I'm in Seattle, it feels great.

Let me first of all say how grateful I am that the Governor and the mayor are here. Thank you both for coming; our State party chair; your former mayor and my good friend,

Norm Rice, and his fine wife. I thank our officers for coming out here to Washington. And Jack, to you and Ron, my long-time friend, and Ted and Ben and the others who are here who have helped so much, Mr. Marshall and others, I thank you all.

I was thinking when I got on the airplane today—you know, when a politician tells you a true story, your immediate reaction is, it couldn't be true—[laughter]—but this is a true story. The first time I ever came to Washington, when I was running for President in 1992, I came rather late. I'd been out there running

for quite some time, and I was nervous as a cat. And I knew that Senator Tsongas had been here a lot and had built a lot of support. And I really wanted to make a good impression, and there was this event planned, and we had a very nice crowd.

And I came into the airport in my modest little plane, and, coincidentally, the Seattle police force, under Mayor Rice, who has been trying to pay me back ever since—[*laughter*—they were practicing how to provide security and rapid transportation to dignitaries. So here I arrived, you know, as President Bush used to say, a Governor of a small southern State—[*laughter*—in an airplane not quite as grand as the Boeing I fly in today. [*Laughter*] And I look up—I swear, there were more than 50 motorcycle police officers there. [*Laughter*]

And we go, and you know, I know how MacArthur felt with his ticker-tape parade in New York City now at the end of the war. And we're going in, you know, and I've got this little 2-car motorcade—[*laughter*—and 50 motorcycles. I mean, I couldn't breathe. I thought, my God, there won't be a person in this town that votes for me. [*Laughter*] And sure enough, I lost the primary in Washington State. [*Laughter*] And I've often thought it was because of those—it was quite a grand thing, you know. I don't have 50 motorcycles today when I go anywhere. [*Laughter*]

But the Seattle police were well-trained, and they've always been very polite to me, and I never will forget it, though. Every time I land on the tarmac, I get a little nervous. [*Laughter*]

Let me seriously say the people of Washington State have been very good to Hillary and me and the Vice President, to our administration, in two elections, in 1992 and 1996. We suffered a terrible setback here in the congressional elections in 1994, and then made up a great deal of ground in 1996 and 1998. And I think we will more than make up the rest of the ground in the year 2000, thanks to people like you.

I would like to just—you know, I just made myself a few notes here on the way in. Sometimes I don't even do that. But I've got some things—I don't get to come here as much as I'd like, and I would like to say a few things.

When I made the long trip out here the first time in 1992, I did so with some mixed feelings, because I had a job I loved in a place I loved and my family was doing well and things were

going great for us. But I was very concerned that our country was drifting and divided, that we had all kinds of problems, and that no one seemed to be offering a clear vision about what kind of country we were going to be in the 21st century and how we proposed to get there.

And I had in my own mind a very simple idea of the world I wanted our daughter to grow up to live in. I wanted 21st century America to be a place where there was opportunity for every responsible citizen, where we were joined together, across all the lines that divide us, into an American community united by our common humanity and where my country was still the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and prosperity.

In short, I wanted to find a way to take advantage of the two great things that are happening in the world today, the explosion of technology and the increasing interdependence of people across national lines—both of which are perfectly embodied in this room, in this city, and in this State—in a way that would give everybody a chance to participate in it and give us a chance to let go of the problems that besiege us.

And it seemed to me in order to do that we had to move beyond the old political debate in Washington. And so I went around the country saying, "I believe if we're committed to opportunity and responsibility and community and to being a 21st century democracy, then we have to find a way to reward entrepreneurship and build the middle class and help the poor work themselves into it. I believe we have to find a way to grow the economy and protect the environment.

"I believe we have to find a way to help people succeed at work and at home, because everybody's most important work is still raising good children. I believe that we have to find a way to reform welfare that requires able-bodied people who can work, to work; but doesn't require them to sacrifice their responsibilities as parents because they can't afford child care or health care.

"I believe we have to find a way to reduce the crime rate, not simply by better enforcement but also by better prevention. I believe that we have to find a way not only to increase the quantity but the quality of education. I believe we can expand trade and lift the environmental and labor standards of the world instead of driving them lower. I believe that we can

be a force for peace in the world and still be willing to use force if it is the only way to achieve legitimate, indeed, compelling objectives.”

I believed all that. I also believed that we could do it with a Government that was markedly smaller, but more active, if we focused on what a 21st century mission would be. And for me, it is overwhelmingly the mission of establishing the conditions and then giving people the tools to solve their own problems, but not alone—working together.

Now, all the work that those of us in our administration have done in the last 6 years has been a labor of love to try to take those basic ideas and make them real, working facts of life in America. And I am profoundly grateful for the results. I literally get up and try to live with the spirit of gratitude every day for the good things that many of you have played a large role in bringing to our country: the longest peacetime expansion in our history, over 18 million new jobs, the lowest minority unemployment rate we have ever recorded, welfare rolls about half of what they were before, a 25-year low in the crime rate, the highest homeownership in history, over 90 percent of our children immunized against serious childhood diseases for the first time ever, dramatic progress in the quality of our air and water, more land set aside in perpetuity under this administration than under any administration in the history of the country except those of Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt.

We’re almost there with our goal of hooking up all our classrooms to the Internet by the year 2000. We have now over 1,000 and will soon have 3,000 charter schools, which I think are the most exciting new innovation in public education. There was one when I became President. We have 100,000 young people who have now served in AmeriCorps, serving their communities as service volunteers. It took us 4 years to get to 100,000; it took the Peace Corps 20 years to get to 100,000 volunteers.

I am grateful for the work we’ve been able to do in the world to help our friends when they’re in trouble, to try to reform the global financial system, to be a force for peace from Northern Ireland to the Middle East to Bosnia and now in Kosovo. And I am grateful that I had the chance to serve in this job at this time to bring these changes and for the role our Government had, as well as for the role

all of you and others like you all across America had.

But I am here today to tell you that the important thing is the ideas—the ideas. If we had the right ideas rooted in the right vision and we had the right attitude about our work, then we can continue that.

You know, I won’t be on the ballot in 2000. It’s the first time in a long time I haven’t been on a ballot. But it is terribly important to me that everyone in America understand that this, on the one hand, didn’t happen by accident, but on the other hand, is not dependent upon any person alone, including the President. What matters is that we have the right ideas based on the right vision and that we have the right attitude about our work.

There was a wonderful article in the *Christian Science Monitor* in the last couple of days, which pointed out that even though I have had what some people might characterize as a fairly tumultuous 6½ years—[laughter]—I had enjoyed more stability in my Cabinet and senior staff than most other Presidents have. There is a reason for that. The people that work on our team know why they’re there. They’re not there to occupy offices or sit at certain places behind certain name cards at tables or wonder who is leaking on whom in the paper the next morning. They’re there because they passionately believe in what we are doing, and they understand that this is a job. It is not about political positioning; it’s about putting the people of this country first and having a vision of where you want to go, having guiding ideas, and making them real. That’s why I’m here. That’s what I want you to understand.

When somebody asks you why you were here today, tell them it’s because you like what happened in the last 6 years; we’ve got a lot more to do, and the vision and the operating ideas of the Democratic Party should continue to guide the United States of America. That is what I believe.

We’ve got a lot of things to do. We’ve got to deal with the aging of America. We’ve got to deal with Social Security and Medicare and long-term care, and people have to be able to save more for their own retirement. We have to continue to tend to the world economy, and I badly want to prevail in my argument that we must use this surplus in a way that both deals with the aging of America and pays down the debt of the country.

My plan, in 17 years, would give us a debt that's the smallest percentage of our economy we've had since before World War I broke out. And that means lower interest rates, less dependence on foreign capital, higher investment, higher growth, more opportunities for people in high-tech havens like this and in small rural towns like those I represented for so many years. It's very important.

We still haven't come to grips with all the challenges of education. We cannot pretend that we can be the country we want to be until we can offer a world-class education, not just in our universities but in our kindergarten through 12th grades, to all Americans. We still haven't done everything we have to do to help people balance work and family by a long shot. We need to do more with child care; we need to do more with family leave; we need to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights. We have a lot of things we have to do.

We have big environmental challenges. Several of you discussed environmental issues with me today. I'm very proud of the livability initiative we have, to try to bring environmental issues into the practical lives of people in urban communities; and the lands legacy issue we have, to try to add more lands to the permanent legacy of the United States. And I will continue to try to persuade my friends in the other party in Washington, DC, that the crisis of climate change is a real issue that demands a real response from the United States, and that we cannot expect others to do their part unless we're ready to do ours.

But the most important issues we have, I would argue—and if we get this right, the rest of it will work out all right; people in this room will solve half the problems that are out there—the most important thing we have to decide is what kind of country we are going to be. In the last several days, couple of weeks, the headlines have been dominated by two pieces of sobering news—notwithstanding the Dow going to 11,000 and having 18¼ million jobs and all of that. One, of course, was the tragic killings in Littleton; the other is the ongoing conflict in Kosovo.

I would like to just say a couple of words about that, kind of picking up on what Ron said. I talked with Hillary for a long, long time about what happened in Littleton. And we had a family conversation about it, too. And we talked with Al and Tipper Gore about it, be-

cause they've worked on a lot of these cultural and family issues for years.

And then I talked with people all around America. I have to tell you, I do not believe that there is a single thing for us to do; I think there are a lot of big things for us all to do. When we had our meeting Monday to say that we're going to have a national campaign against violence against children, Pam Eakes was there, and I want to thank her for the wonderful work she's done with Mothers Against Violence.

I think that you have to understand that we live in a world where there are a lot of people who are alone even when they're in a crowd, where there are a lot of children who never knew they were the most important person to anyone. And when you have large numbers of vulnerable people, then things that other people can't imagine would be problems can be big problems. So if it's easier for a kid in America to get an assault weapon, whereas it's impossible in most other countries, and you have a higher percentage of vulnerable, disconnected kids, more bad things will happen. If it is easier for a child in America to play an interactive video game where you score by how many innocent people you kill, and you have more vulnerable kids, then it's more likely to have a bad impact.

If we have 300 studies now which show that hours and hours and hours a week after years and years and years and years of watching sustained, indiscriminate violence makes young people less sensitive to violence and to its consequences, if there are a larger number of disconnected kids, then it will have a more destructive impact than in other countries.

So all of us—not pointing the finger at anybody—we've got something to do to rebuild this web of support to build that village that Hillary always talks about it takes to raise a child. There are things for families to do, things for schools to do, things for communities to do, things for the gun industry to do, things for the entertainment industry to do, things for Congress to do.

I hope Congress finally, next week, will get around to passing that bill that closes the loophole on background checks for gun sales at gun shows. They did pass yesterday, in the Senate bills, to raise the age of handgun ownership to 21 and to close the loophole in the assault weapons ban, which has allowed the sale of large ammunition clips if they're imported since 1994. They voted for that, and I applauded them.

But we need to pass all these common-sense measures. We've moved a long way since we had Democrats from Washington State losing elections in 1994 because they voted for the crime bill, with the assault weapons ban, and the Brady bill. We've come a long way. The voters in Florida—not exactly a raving liberal State—voted 72 percent to close the gun show loophole on the ballot. So we're moving in the right direction.

But I don't want to see our attempts to save our children turn into chapter 57 of America's ongoing culture war for someone's political advantage. What I want to see is to see every single segment of our society stand up and say not, "It's someone else's fault," but, "What can I do?" And let's work through it.

How we deal with this issue—you know, we had all those school killings last year. We did a lot of things. We sent out these wonderful handbooks to every school in the country, and they're very, very good. And people were horrified by it, but somehow, when Littleton happened, I think it finally, like, broke a dam in the psyche of America. I think finally people said, "My goodness, this really can happen anywhere."

And we cannot—we owe it to those families and those children who perished not to let this opportunity pass from us and not to let it disintegrate into finger pointing. Everybody needs to just stand up and say, "Okay, what can I do?"

But we have to be honest about how every one of these things—look, I can make a case that no single thing—whatever you say the problem is—I've heard all these arguments. I can stand up and debate you and say, "No, that's not the problem; something else is the problem." And I've heard it all. And you know, I could take either side in the guns-versus-culture argument.

But the truth is, start with the facts. There are disconnected children in America, some of them in crowds every day. There are a higher percentage of them in our country—for whatever reason—getting killed every year than in other countries, in spite of all of our prosperity and all of our intelligence and all of our technology and all of our everything else. It's a fact. It's a human fact.

And all the things that happen to a person in life, and all the opportunities that are present or absent, they all have an impact. And we need

to unpack it and quit saying it's not our problem, and just have everybody show up and say, "Well, what can I do?"

If there was a fire down the street today and we heard the fire bell ring, every one of us would walk outside; we'd walk up to the firemen and say, "What can I do?" That's the way we ought to look at this. It ought to be an occasion for bringing this country together.

We were talking at lunch, here. I was down in Texas a few days ago with the daughter of James Byrd, the man who was dragged and dismembered to death in Texas, trying to help pass the hate crimes legislation there. And I hope we can pass it in Washington, and the "Employment Non-Discrimination Act." Why? Because it will make a big statement about what kind of people we are and what our level of mutual respect for people who are different from us is.

And you ask me, "Well, what has that got to do with Kosovo?" Let's just move into that.

It is the supreme irony of this new millennium—I mean, here we are. We've got all these folks here from Microsoft and Boeing, first one place and the other, and everybody's got all these great—you know, all of you are more technologically literate than me, doubtless. But isn't it ironic that you can simulate virtually every problem in the world with a software package. You can do things and communicate with people in ways that already are unimaginable. And within 5 years, there'll be things that we're not even thinking about now. And these will be accompanied by breathtaking advances in the biological sciences, as the mysteries of the human genome are unlocked. And then the interaction of computer technology and the genome project will be completely explosive in ways that I can't even imagine.

Isn't it ironic that in this world we're going to live in, where we'd like to think, "Gosh, you know, we'll finally run the average life expectancy up to 120 years, and we'll all be flying around on safe, fast planes, and we'll be able to get into cars that won't have traffic jams because we'll be able to program them all, and they will all run right. And what a fabulous world it will be. And we're now building an economy that actually requires less energy, not more—if we do it right—so we're not going to have to burn the planet up after all."

We have all these grand dreams for our children's future, and it is threatened by the oldest

problem of human society, which is that we have a hard time getting along with people who are different from us—because we're afraid of them. And once we get our crowd together, it's easy for somebody to stir us up and turn our fear into hatred. And once we start hating somebody, then it's easy for somebody else to come along and turn our hatred into violence.

And there's a little of that in the reported accounts of Littleton. There was certainly that in the death of James Byrd or in the death of Matthew Shepard. And it is the thing that most bedevils the world in global politics today.

What is consuming the world today? Fights over technology? Not on your life. What happened in Rwanda? Why is the Northern Ireland conflict unresolved? What are they fighting about in the politics of the Middle East today? What are the Balkans about? Who gets the right to sell Apple computers? Whether somebody represents Microsoft in Belgrade? That's not what they're fighting about, is it?

They're fighting about religion and ethnicity and imagined history and old slights—real and imagined. That's what the whole thing's about.

And I ask you to think about that. Look at Seattle. Next time—just walk down the street, here. That's what you want America to look like, isn't it? Look around this room here. That's what you want America to look like, and that's what you'd like the world of your children to be like.

Now, I don't ask all these ethnic groups, many of whom are still very poor and early on experiencing their democracies—anywhere—to like each other. Don't even ask them not to fight. But I do not think it is too much to ask, as we have first in Bosnia and now in Kosovo, that there be no ethnic cleansing and slaughter, or to recognize that if that becomes an acceptable basis of behavior in the world, especially in Europe right at the doorstep of our closet allies and trading partners, that it bodes very ill for the future. We made a terrible mistake with the bombing of the Chinese Embassy, and I regret it more than I can say. I talked to the President of China today and told him that. But you can see that on CNN.

What you do not see on television is the tales told by the refugees of the little village where 15 men had a rope wrapped around them and were burned alive because they happened to be Albanian Muslims, of all the young girls that were systematically raped because they hap-

pened to be Kosovar Albanian Muslims and because the people who were oppressing them knew that even though that is horrible in any culture, it is especially awful in theirs.

So I say to you: The reason I talk about all this stuff all the time and the reason we have joined with our NATO Allies and we're doing what we're doing in Kosovo is, I don't want to let the promise of the 21st century be overcome by the oldest poison in human society's history. And America is about to get it right.

The framers of the Constitution knew when they said all of us were created equal, endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—they were smart people. They were not dummies. They knew we were nowhere near living that.

You go to the Jefferson Memorial and you see one of Thomas Jefferson's great quotes: "When I think of slavery, I tremble to consider that God is just." They knew that. Well, we're about to get it right. And that's why we have to fight to give all our children a safe future. That's why we have to fight against the last vestiges of discrimination, and that's why we are right to stand with our NATO Allies against ethnic cleansing and manslaughter in Kosovo. It is the world we want our children to live in.

I want to close with this story. A couple of days ago, I had 19 Indian tribal leaders in the White House representing the Dakotas and Montana, the northern high plains tribes. They are the poorest tribes in America. And you can imagine that their geographical position doesn't make them very well positioned to get a lot of new and modern investment. You want to put a data center there, they'd be glad to have it.

So anyway—and I got a lot of my Cabinet there, and they asked if we could sit in a circle in the Roosevelt Room, as was their custom. And so we did. And the tribal leaders, each in their turn, got up and talked, and they talked about housing and education and economics and all of that. And then at the end of the meeting, their spokesperson, a very tall man whose name was Tex, believe it or not, the chief of his particular tribe, he pulls out this scroll, and it is a proclamation where the tribal leaders are signing an endorsement of the United States position in Kosovo. And he said to me, "We know

something about ethnic cleansing. And America has come a very long way. And we think we should stand with you.”

And then another young tribal leader asked if he could speak. And he stood up; he had a beautiful Indian silver necklace on. And with great dignity he said, “Mr. President, I had two uncles. One of them was on the beach at Normandy; the other was the first Native American fighter pilot in the United States military. My great-great grandfather was slaughtered by the 7th Cavalry at Wounded Knee. I now am the father of a young son. We have come a long way from my great-great grandfather to my uncles to my son. I love my son more than anything. But because of the distance we have come, I would gladly have him serve to save the people of Kosovo from having their culture and their lives destroyed.”

And there was not—you couldn’t breathe in this room because we knew that this dignified man representing people with all kinds of problems was the living embodiment of everything that this country ought to be. And his people were here first. All the rest of us are latecomers.

So I say to you: The best politics for our party is to do what is right for our children and our country for the new century.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. in the Kirtland Cutter Room at the Rainier Club. In his remarks, he referred to event chair Jack J. Spitzer; Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, and Wayne C. Marshall, regional finance director, Democratic National Committee; Gov. Gary Locke of Washington; Mayor Paul Schell of Seattle; Paul Berendt, chair, Washington State Democratic Party; former Mayor Norman B. Rice of Seattle and his wife, Constance; King County Executive Ron Sims; event cochairs Ted Johnson and Ben Waldman; Pamela Eakes, founder and president, Mothers Against Violence in America; Renee Mullins, daughter of murder victim James Byrd, Jr.; President Jiang Zemin of China; Tex Hall, chairman of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation (the Three Affiliated Tribes); and Gregg Bourland, chairman, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

Statement on Senate Action on Gun Control Legislation

May 14, 1999

I am deeply disappointed that, by the narrowest of margins, the Senate has refused to close the gun show loophole while creating other dangerous loopholes to our gun laws. If the Senate’s decision is left to stand, it will be easier for criminals to get guns and harder for law enforcement to do its job. Criminals will be able to get guns at gun shows and pawn shops,

no questions asked, and Federal law enforcement won’t be able to ensure gun sellers’ compliance with laws or to trace firearms later used in crimes. If the Senate wants to do right by the American people, it will once again bring up the Lautenberg amendment, when all Members are present, and close the gun show loophole once and for all.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Portola Valley, California

May 14, 1999

Walter, I’d like to say something that I think a lot of us who’ve known you for many years could have been thinking. We laughed about how you’ve always been for losers and now you’ve had a few winners. But one of the rea-

sons that we love you and admire you is that you stuck by the people with whom you agreed, whether they won or lost. A lot of people don’t do that anymore; we appreciate that.