

the most powerful force in his own home was a little dachshund named Stanley. He was a man of idealism and strong opinions, but he was genuinely open to people who had the courage to differ with him. He was a gifted intellectual, but on Sunday afternoons, he put his books aside to watch the Redskins on TV. He was a man of the arts, whose perhaps favorite artistry was his harmonica rendition of "Solidarity Forever." For all of his contrasts, there was a remarkable consistency underlying everything he thought and said and did.

Both George Meany and Lane used to say, "The role of the trade unions is to try to keep the big guys from kicking the little guys around." That was his philosophy of life. And believe me, I got my fair share of lectures about it. [*Laughter*]

He lived it when he walked the picket lines with hotel workers in Las Vegas, when he got arrested with miners in Appalachia, when he quoted the fiery words of Zapata to mistreated Latino janitors in L.A. He lived it when he stood in solidarity with the oppressed workers of the Soviet bloc or helped to tear down the Iron Curtain in Poland and elsewhere in the communist world. He lived it when he struggled for racial and gender equality, when he fought to strengthen the Civil Rights Act, when he championed the cause of women and minorities within the America labor movement, when he helped to rescue the NAACP from bankruptcy.

You could see it in his own office, where he always treated even the most junior members of his staff with the same dignity and respect

he demanded for working men and women throughout the world. He stood up for the little guy. It was his ideology. It was also his way of life.

I want to conclude today with a story that was passed along to us at the White House by one of Lane's closest advisers. After he passed away, one of the medics who came to the house took Irena aside and said, "When I first took this call, the name Kirkland didn't ring any bells. But when I arrived, I realized who your husband was. As the shop steward for my EMS unit, I want you to know how grateful I am for everything your husband did for us. He was a wonderful man, and I know that everyone in my unit feels the same way."

Well, Irena, for all the distinguished speakers who will pay tribute to your husband today, I don't think any of us could do better than that. So let me just say that I am grateful for this giant of a man, a true American hero, a man who stood up for the little guy. I hope all of us can be faithful to his admonition to do the same. It is the only way we can give him the legacy he has richly earned.

God bless you and your family.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. in Gaston Hall at Georgetown University. In his remarks, he referred to Mr. Kirkland's widow, Irena; Father Leo J. O'Donovan, president, Georgetown University; and Monsignor George G. Higgins, former director, Social Action Department, National Catholic Welfare Conference (later known as the United States Catholic Conference).

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority and an Exchange With Reporters *September 23, 1999*

Middle East Peace Process

The President. Let me say, I am delighted to see Chairman Arafat again. We have a lot to discuss, obviously, about our bilateral relations, and especially about the permanent status talks. He and Prime Minister Barak have agreed on a very ambitious timetable to have a framework agreement by February, final agreement by next September. The United States is pre-

pared to do all we can to assist them in coming to an agreement.

I would like to take this opportunity to say that we should first meet our own obligations under the Wye agreement, and I hope the Congress will give me the funding, both for Israel and for the Palestinian Authority, so that we can meet our obligations there. And we're working hard. We're into the final budget legs now, and I'm quite hopeful.

Permanent Status Talks

Q. Mr. President, what did Chairman Arafat ask you vis-a-vis the permanent status talks? Did he ask you for a more active role, more involvement, sir?

The President. We're just starting—we're getting off to a late start, so we're just starting our conversation. But you know, I've been active in this all along for 6½ years now. I intend to continue to be active, to do whatever I can to help the parties come to an agreement. If they're willing—and they must be willing, or they would not have agreed to such an ambitious timetable—then I'll do what I can.

Israel-Syria Negotiations

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—*about the Palestinian-Israeli track? Prime Minister Barak said just yesterday, any time, any place, for the Syrians to resume negotiations. There has yet to be any positive response there. What's your sense of what the hangup is there, and what can you do to try to move that along?

The President. Well, we're working on it, and I actually am quite hopeful.

President's Involvement in the Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, is there a chance that you'll visit the area, to give it a push on both tracks?

The President. I would do anything that would be helpful to facilitate the agreement. Right now, I'm not sure that would be the most helpful thing. I would do anything I could to facilitate the agreement.

Palestinian State

Q. The question of the state of Palestine, Mr. President, are you willing to spend more

capital and secure your legacy as the President of the United States who achieved the Palestinian state and the peaceful settlement of the Middle East?

The President. Well, I'm certainly willing to do anything I can to achieve a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. The question of the state, as you know—that was a very well-worded question. Congratulations. [*Laughter*] But the question of the state is one to be resolved in the permanent status talks that have just begun, so I think they will resolve it. I think, obviously, that the two sides will make an agreement on that, or there won't be an agreement.

Press Secretary Joe Lockhart. Thank you, pool.

Q. Mr. President, what can you tell us—

Q. Mr. President, in your U.N. speech—

Israel's Role in the Peace Process

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—*what can you tell us about the performance of the Israeli side so far in the last one month?

The President. I'm encouraged. I think you should all be encouraged by the work that they've done together.

Press Secretary Lockhart. Thank you, everyone.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:10 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Proposed Education Appropriations

September 23, 1999

The House Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations subcommittee today passed a partisan bill that would seriously undermine our efforts to strengthen public education, protect workers, and move people from welfare to work.

This bill is proof that America's highest priority—improving our schools—remains the Republican Congress' lowest priority. The bill

eliminates our effort to hire quality teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. It denies hundreds of thousands of young people access to after-school programs, fails to improve and expand Head Start, cuts the successful America Reads program, cuts educational technology, and eliminates the GEAR UP program, which helps young people prepare early for success in college. It fails to give public schools the resources