

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:52 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Edward G. Rendell, general chair, and Jess Hay, former finance chair, Democratic National Committee; Mr. Hay's wife, Betty Jo; Bill White, former chair, and Billie Carr, executive council member, Texas State Democratic Party; Mr. White's wife, Andrea; former Texas Land Commissioner Garry Mauro; former Secretaries of the Treasury Lloyd Bentsen and Robert E. Rubin;

Secretary Bentsen's wife, Beryl Ann (B.A.); John Eddie Williams, Jr., managing partner, Williams and Bailey law firm, and his wife, Sheridan; former Gov. Mark White of Texas; entertainer Red Buttons; musicians Mary Chapin Carpenter and Billy Ray Cyrus; and Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush of Texas. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Wim Kok of The Netherlands

September 28, 2000

Netherlands-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, why did you invite the Prime Minister? Is there something the United States can learn from Holland? [*Laughter*]

President Clinton. I think there are a lot of things we can learn from Holland. Let me say, first of all, it's a great honor for me to have Prime Minister Wim Kok here. He's been an outstanding leader of Europe as well as The Netherlands, and we've had a very good relationship for 8 years now. And I have admired him for many years.

I always tell everyone that it was he, not I, that was the first real Third Way leader in the world. And if you look at the success of The Netherlands in keeping down unemployment and trying to balance work and family and dealing with the challenges that countries all over the world will face in the 21st century, it's hard to find a nation that's done more different things well. And so it's a great source of honor and pride for me to have him here today and just to have a chance to thank him for the years that we've worked together.

I'd also like to say how grateful I am for the strong support that he and his nation have given to our allied efforts through NATO, to end ethnic cleansing in the Balkans. And we've just been talking about the elections in Serbia, and I'd like to have him say what he feels. But from my point of view, they had an election; it's clear that the people prefer the opposition; and I think we should all say, in unequivocal terms, as soon as there's a democratic government over there, the sanctions should be lifted.

Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Kok. Well, first of all, I would like to say thank you to President Clinton for inviting me here. He was too kind, as far as The Netherlands and the Dutch Prime Minister are concerned. But I considered the President and still consider the President as a great leader of the United States who, in spite of the enormous difference in size between the United States and The Netherlands, has always been attentive and interested in developments in Europe and in our country. And this indicates that even between the very big and smaller countries, there can be really an excellent relations.

Now, on the Balkans, it was not easy for all of us, of course, to participate in the airstrikes that were necessary in order to bring an end to the genocide that was happening there. And what happened now, a few days ago in the elections, is an extremely clear signal from the electorate that they want to get rid of Milosevic. And this is, I think, the right moment for us to indicate that from the moment on when the opposition would take over that leadership, sanctions have to be lifted, because the sanctions were never directed against the people. They were not directed against the population. They were directed against their wrong leadership.

So this is a very important moment. We still have to see what will happen in the next few hours and days in Serbia. But that double message should be very clear. The people said, "We want to get rid of Milosevic." And we say, "As soon as there will be a new leadership, the sanctions will be over."

Narcotrafficking

Q. Mr. President, what do you make of the fact that Holland is still the biggest importer of ecstasy pills into this country?

President Clinton. Well, we're going to talk about that. I think we've had good cooperation, and we need to tighten our cooperation. There are things we can do about it. But part of it is a function of the fact that Holland is one of the great trading countries of the world, massive ports, and opportunity. And we just have to work harder to shut off the opportunity. I think we'll work together and do that.

Yugoslav Elections

Q. Mr. President, should Milosevic step down rather than participate in a second—rather than go forward with the second round of elections? Should he step down now?

President Clinton. If you looked at the—there are conflicting election reports. The opposition had people in each of the polling places, and they produced some pretty persuasive documentation that they won, Mr. Kostunica won. And the National Election Council had no opposition representation, met in secret, and has not documented its results. But as the Prime Minister said to me before we came out, even they certified 49 to 38; that's a pretty huge margin of victory in a national election.

But I thought the case the opposition made based on their actual numbers, poll place by poll place, were pretty persuasive, especially since it hasn't been refuted by the national commission.

Q. Did you talk about sending Dutch troops to Eritrea?

President Clinton. We haven't talked about anything else yet. We mostly just talked about Serbia. We're going to lunch and talk about the rest.

Tobacco Lawsuit

Q. Mr. President, judges dismissed half of the Government's lawsuit against the tobacco industry. Is that a disappointing blow to the Government?

President Clinton. I'm going to have a Cabinet meeting later, and I'll answer all the domestic questions then. Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 1:20 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Yugoslav opposition candidate Vojislav Kostunica. Prime Minister Kok referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Cabinet Members and an Exchange With Reporters

September 28, 2000

Budget Negotiations/Tobacco Lawsuit

The President. Is everyone in? Good. Well, as you can see, we're about to have a Cabinet meeting, the primary purpose of which is to discuss the budget negotiations that will be going on now until the end of Congress.

Two weeks ago I met with congressional leaders in this room, and we pledged to use the short time left in the fiscal year to do some important things for the American people, to resolve our differences on a host of issues, to put progress over partisanship.

Since then, the Senate has passed normal trade relations with China legislation, and I applaud that. But beyond that, nothing has been

done to finally raise the minimum wage, pass hate crimes legislation and a real Patients' Bill of Rights, pass a Medicare prescription drug benefit for our seniors, to enact the new markets legislation. The leadership promised action, but so far the results don't show it.

Now there are just 2 days to go in the fiscal year, and only 2 of the 13 appropriations bills have passed that are so necessary to keep our Government running. Still the Congress hasn't provided the funds to help build and modernize our schools, to continue to hire 100,000 new qualified teachers for smaller classes in the early grades, to improve teacher quality and strengthen accountability so that we can identify failing