

Apr. 20 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Leaders of Andean Nations in
Quebec City, Canada
April 20, 2001

I want to thank you all for coming. It is my honor to host what I think is a very important meeting between the members of the Andean coalition and my country. I wanted to visit with the leaders face to face. I met President Pastrana before; it's good see him again. I have talked on the phone to some of the leaders. I want to assure the leaders here that our Nation looks forward to working with you, particularly when it comes to trade and commerce.

I want to assure the leaders that Plan Colombia means more than just the country of Colombia—I know that's of concern to the President of Ecuador—that we've got plans for all the countries in the region. And it's not just on helping to fight drugs. It's on making sure that the economies remain strong, that the infrastructure for education is in place. It is in our nations' interests that we cooperate together.

And so I appreciate the leaders for being here. It is my honor to host this discussion. I look forward to a very frank and honest exchange of areas where we can cooperate and, if there are some problems, areas that we can work together to solve the problems.

So thank you all for coming. *El honor es mio.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:51 p.m. at the Loews le Concorde Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to President Andres Pastrana of Colombia and President Gustavo Noboa of Ecuador. Prime Minister Javier Perez de Cuellar of Peru and Presidents Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil, Mireya Moscoso of Panama, Hugo Banzer of Bolivia, and Hugo Chavez of Venezuela also participated in the discussions.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Central American Leaders and an
Exchange With Reporters in Quebec City
April 20, 2001

The President. I want to thank the Presidents from some of the Central American countries for coming here. It's my honor to say, once again, hello to the President of El Salvador, the President of Panama, and the President of Honduras. Thank you all very much. I look forward to wide-ranging discussions on the benefits of trade, the need for us to continue to think about how best to have in place measures that

will help in the case of future natural disasters, ways to continue to cooperate on issues of trafficking of people and arms and drugs.

So I look forward to a very fruitful discussion. I'm honored you all are here. *El placir es mio.*

I'll try to answer a few questions. Sandra [Sandra Sobieraj, Associated Press], have you got something?

Quebec Demonstrations

Q. Sir, the protests have really flared up outside. What do you have to say to the protesters?

The President. Well, if they are—if they're protesting because of free trade, I would say I disagree. I think trade is very important for this hemisphere. Trade not only helps spread prosperity, but trade helps spread freedom. And so I would just disagree with those who think that trade—somehow trade is going to negatively affect the working people and people for whom hope doesn't exist in some places. So we need trade, and I am convinced that the leadership that I met with agrees. And we can work together, because they understand that working together, we can bring prosperity throughout our entire hemisphere.

Secondly, I would hope that those out there expressing their opinion realize how important it is for the United States and Canada and Mexico to extend our agreements beyond our borders, to Central America and South America, where it's important to keep our neighborhood intact and to have a strong neighborhood. And these are our neighbors. I grew up in a world where if you treat your neighbor well, it's a good start to developing a wholesome community.

So I understand some people don't like trade; I just strongly disagree with them.

Trade Promotion Authority

Q. Mr. President, what are you telling summit leaders when they ask you how likely are you to get fast-track?

The President. Well, first of all, they understand that trade promotion authority, or fast-track, will be very important for us in order to make sure that we can fulfill our hopes to have a free-trading hemisphere. But we also can and will discuss bilateral agreements or agreements with groups of countries. So it's a dual-track strategy.

I hope Congress understands the hope and promise of trade promotion authority. It's important for the President to have

trade promotion authority. It will make it a lot easier for us to complete the agreements that we're all discussing here in summits such as this.

Press Secretary Ari Fleischer. Final question.

Q. Mr. President, when you met with the President of Brazil—

The President. You again.

Q. Yes, it's me again—and the other Andean leaders, were they—just following up on fast-track, the fact that you don't have fast-track, did they express that as a concern?

The President. Well, not really. They were more interested in, one, our commitment to the neighborhood. Secondly, they were—we spent a lot of time talking about drugs and drug trafficking, and I assured them I understood that our Nation must do a better job of reducing demand and, at the same time, working with the Andean nations to eradicate supply. An issue that came up, and one that I was aware of, is that Plan Colombia could have the opportunity to spread the problems to neighboring countries outside of Colombia. And therefore, we have to put together an Andean initiative which recognizes that and, thirdly, that relations are—that we must have relations beyond just drug eradication. In other words, that we've got to work together to make sure the education systems in our respective countries fulfill their promise, that legal reforms are needed in some parts of the world.

And so we had a very wide-ranging discussion, and I was most pleased, by the way, that the President of Brazil joined in the discussion, because it was—I thought it was a very good signal of his understanding the importance of the Andean region. And he plays a very—his country plays a very important part and a very important role in that part of the world.

Q. Thank you.

The President. You got your wish. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 5 p.m. in the Montcalm Room at the Loews le Concorde Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Presidents Francisco Flores Perez of El Salvador, Mireya Moscoso of Panama, Carlos Flores of Honduras, and Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil. Prime Minister Said

Wilbert Musa of Belize and Presidents Miguel Rodriguez of Costa Rica, Arnaldo Aleman of Nicaragua, and Alfonso Antonio Portillo of Guatemala also participated in the discussions. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Summit of the Americas Working Session in Quebec City April 21, 2001

Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. *Amigo y amigos*, it's an honor to be here. First, Mr. Prime Minister, I want to thank you for your warm hospitality, and I want to thank all those folks in your government who have worked hard to make this conference a success. My fellow Presidents and Prime Ministers and leaders of our hemisphere's 34 democracies, it is a great honor to be here.

We have a great vision before us, a fully democratic hemisphere bound together by good will and free trade. That's a tall order. It is a chance of a lifetime. It is a responsibility we all share.

Quebec City is a fitting place for us to begin. Many of the great cultures that have shaped our hemisphere converge in this city. Before Champlain ever sailed the St. Lawrence, he sailed the Caribbean, visiting Mexico and Colombia, Puerto Rico and Panama. As a matter of fact, he was one of the first to propose a canal from the Atlantic to the Pacific so that trade may prosper. During the 400 years since Champlain's travels, our hemisphere, united by geography, has too often—too often—been separated by history of rivalry and resentment.

But we have entered a new era. The interests of my nation, of all our nations are served by strong, healthy, democratic neighbors and are served best by lasting friendships in our own neighborhood. My country, more than ever, feels the ties of

kinship, commerce, and culture that unite us. And I'm proud to have the privilege so early in my administration to meet with all the leaders of this hemisphere's democratic countries.

Our task is to take the vital principles shaped at Miami and Santiago and translate them into actions that directly benefit the people we answer to. I'm here to offer my own ideas. I'm here to learn and to listen from voices—to those inside this hall and to those outside this hall who want to join us in constructive dialog.

The single most important thing we will do here is to reaffirm that this summit is a gathering of, by, and for democracies, and only democracies. Today, freedom embraces the entire hemisphere, except for one country. And we look forward to the day when all this hemisphere's peoples will know the benefits and dignity of freedom. José Martí said it best: *La libertad no es negociable*.

We also understand that democracy is a journey, not a destination. Each nation here, including the United States, must work to make freedom succeed. Elections are the foundation of democracy, but nations need to build on this foundation with other building blocks such as a strong judiciary, freedom to speak and write as you wish, efficient banking and social services, quality schools, secure ownership of land, the ability to start and own a business. We