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Remarks at the National Public Radio Reception

March 3, 1995

Thank you very much, Carl. I have all these notes, and then I have all these things I really want to say. [*Laughter*] What can I tell you—I'm just sort of an NPR-kind of President. [*Laughter*]

President Kennedy, many of you will remember, in 1962, hosted a dinner here of the Nobel Prize winners, and said it was the most stunning array of talent ever to dine in the White House since Thomas Jefferson ate here alone. Well, tonight you did Thomas Jefferson one better. You joined him with Abraham Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt and Harry Truman and Mark Twain and George Bernard Shaw and Click and Clack. [*Laughter*] And you all did very well.

I want to tell you that Hillary and I are particularly grateful that you spared us from all the things you said that were not true and from the things you said that were. [*Laughter*]

I thank you for giving America this wonderful history lesson of the White House. Those of you who may or may not have known, the things they told you were really true, all those wonderful little history lessons, everything except what Jane Curtain said. This is ''Friday Night Live.'' [*Laughter*]

I am honored to have all of you here at the White House as we celebrate NPR's 25th anniversary. You should know that NPR is alive and well in the real White House. We are members of both the NPR stations in Washington, DC, Hillary and I are. And when we lived at home in Arkansas, Hillary helped to bring the full range of NPR programming to our State. In fact, we woke up every morning to NPR at 6 a.m. We had one of these little radios that ticks on, and instead of an alarm clock, we had NPR. Some days it was so soothing, we didn't wake up. [*Laughter*] But still it was a lot better than talk radio. [*Laughter*] At least on those days we did wake up, we were able to eat breakfast. [*Laughter*]

Let me say that there were a lot of interesting things said tonight. And I have to shorten my speech because of all those things you heard about, nature's call and how there was only one restroom in the White House for the longest—[*laughter*] Well, guess what? There's still no restroom on this floor. So just take a deep breath, I'm nearly done. [*Laughter*]

Public radio stations are partners in America, partners in things that are worth doing. They offer reading services to the blind, town meetings on violence, information on health care and voting. They team up with schools and libraries. They help our children learn. They bring more than issues and news, from live classical and jazz performances to radio drama and, of course, that car advice. And you get it all for 29 cents a citizen a year, about the price of a day's newspaper.

I know it's fashionable today to condemn everything public, but it seems to me that public radio has been a good deal for America. You know, I've done a lot of work here as President trying to build up the private sector, and we've got a lot more people working in it than we had 2 years ago, and I'm proud of that. But we're having this great debate in Washington about what the role of the Government should be as we come to the end of this century, and I'm glad we are. But I think it's important that we not forget that we have some great challenges here. How are we going to get into the next century with a country where everybody still has a chance to make it? And how are we going to deal with all this diversity in ways that bring us together instead of tear us apart? And how are we going to learn enough as citizens to make good decisions about those issues that don't fit very well into the screaming and the clamoring, cutting us up in little pieces and making our blood boil in-

stead of our hearts open and our heads clear? NPR can play a role in all that, for 29 cents a person a year. It's a good deal.

I'm glad that one of the many fights we're going to be waging this year for ordinary Americans is the fight to preserve National Public Radio.

Hillary and I are deeply honored to have every single one of you here tonight, honored by the generosity, especially, of our performers who came here, who have been so gifted and who have shared their gifts with us tonight. We thank you for doing it, and mostly we thank you for the purpose for which you have done it. We thank you for caring about your fellow Americans, who really need this great institution to be here 25 years from now celebrating the 50th anniversary of National Public Radio. Let that be our dedication on this wonderful night.

God bless you, and thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:05 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Carl Kasell, newscaster, NPR News. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

March 4, 1995

Good morning. I always like to hear from young people across our country. After all, they're at the heart of our efforts to build America up, to face the demands and the challenges of the 21st century. The responsibility of my generation is to leave those young people a better world and to make sure that they're prepared to succeed in that world.

I was especially touched by a letter I recently received from a 15-year-old girl named Melissa, who lives in a small town in the Midwest. Even though she's only 15 and she lives in America's Heartland, she's a recovering drug addict. She's been drug-free for 2 years now, but she still sees other children going down the road to drug abuse, and she's very worried.

This is what she wrote to me: "It seems there's just not enough help, and when there is help, there's not enough money to do what needs to be done. Let's help this problem so it's not so big for the next generation." We ought to listen to Melissa. From our smallest towns to our biggest cities, millions of our children face the temptation of illegal drugs every day in their schools. Surveys show that unfortunately more and more of our adolescents are using illegal drugs. Kids today are somehow not getting the message. They are beginning once again to think that it's all right to use drugs, that they're not really dangerous. But they're wrong. Too often, they're dead wrong.

Now, think about what this means for our communities and for our country, for all the rest of us. Illegal drugs go hand in hand with violence. They foster fear. Schoolchildren stay home by the thousands every day because they are afraid. And in this kind of environment, even the best behaved young people have a tough time learning. That means our standards of education are being undermined by drugs and violence. And that hurts our ability as a nation to compete and win. So we all pay a price.

The first line of defense, of course, has to be in our communities, with our parents and teachers and our neighbors, other role models in law enforcement and the religious community, telling our young people in no uncertain terms that drugs and violence are wrong and helping them to stay away or to get off. I know that.

But we here in Washington have a responsibility, too. All of you know there's a big debate going on in Washington now about what the role of the Government ought to be. The Republican contract says we should cut just about everything to pay for big tax cuts that go mostly to upper income people. Well, I think we should cut Government. We have. There are over 150,000 fewer people working here than there were when I took office. I think we ought to reduce the burden of unnecessary regulation, and we are.

But I think we need a Government that's lean and not mean, one that offers opportunity and challenges people to be more responsible, one that's a partner in increasing opportunity, empowering people to make the most of their own lives and providing more security for our people. The fight against drugs and the fight for safe schools does all of that.