

Remarks at the Democratic Congressional Dinner

May 23, 1995

Thank you, Senator Daschle, for your leadership and your stirring introduction and your wise predictions. [*Laughter*] Thank you, Congressman Gephardt, for your leadership and your steadfastness. Congressman Matsui, Senator Dorgan, Senator Kerrey, and Congressman Frost, thank you for taking on the burden of our campaign committees and the hard work of recruiting our candidates and raising our funds and rebuilding our majorities. And thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for being here.

I thank all the Democratic Senators and Members of the House who are here, and many Members of Congress who are former Members of Congress who are here. If you will forgive me, I'd like to ask for a moment of applause for the memory of a former Member of Congress who is not here, Les Aspin, one of the finest people I ever knew. [*Applause*]

This has certainly been an interesting time, hasn't it? [*Laughter*] What's that old adage that we should—somebody should spare us from living in interesting times. It is a great honor and a great obligation for us to have the chance to serve in an interesting and profoundly important time, a time of great change, great opportunity, great dislocation, great difficulty, and great challenge for the people of this country and, therefore, those of us who wish to serve them.

At a time when many are so preoccupied with their own difficulties, it is difficult to sort through the blizzard of information and disinformation they get, even to understand what it is we are trying to do, much less to grasp how it will affect them. But I think, more and more, as time goes on now, the choices before the American people are becoming clearer, and I trust the direction we must take is as well.

We now hear the folks in the other party claiming great high ground for wanting to reduce the deficit and asking us to help. You remember how much help we got from them in the last 2 years? And I would remind you, those of you who voted for that, to remember that by their new 7-year calculations the 1993

budget plan that the Democrats adopted, without any help or even so much as serious discussion, cut the deficit a trillion dollars. They predicted the world would come to an end. Instead, the recession came to an end, and we had lower unemployment, low inflation, a booming stock market; first time in 20 years we've had unemployment among African-Americans below 10 percent; highest number of high-wage jobs in 6 years; a real sense of change in the economy, according to all the numbers.

But that hasn't filtered down to a lot of Americans yet. And that's what I want to talk to you about tonight. What are we doing here? Why are we Democrats? What do we hope to achieve? How do we communicate with the American people? And what does it all mean?

Well, the first thing I want to say is that we should just be grateful that we've had the chance in the last 2 years to do the right things. And we should understand if we failed, either through our own limitations or because of the circumstances of the time, to communicate what we had done to the people of this country, the fact is that in the light of history, the last 2 years will be viewed as a time when we got the deficit down, regained control of our economic destiny, actually invested more in our people and in their education and in their future, and made a serious effort to have the American people move into the 21st century with the American dream alive and well and with our security better protected at home and abroad.

In the last 2 years, we had the most productive time in terms of a partnership between the President and Congress in the last 30 years. And what was done in the crime bill, in the trade legislation, in the family and medical leave law, in act after act after act, was good for the American people. And we should be proud of that, and we should talk about it. And we should move forward.

We should also say to our friends in the other party, we do not intend to do you the way you did us, even though you were richly rewarded for doing it—[*laughter*]—because, unlike you in the last 2 years, we care so much about this country, we'll work with you. But you have to remember what we stand

for, and you have to be willing to deal with what we stand for.

They are learning a little lesson now with their budget proposals and the real meaning of their contract on America, of what all people in public life learn, and that is that there are limits to calls for sacrifice. *[Laughter]*

My senior Senator, Dale Bumpers, he loves to tell a story about Huey Long being out on a country cross—is he here? I heard somebody clapping; I thought he was clapping. *[Laughter]* He loves to tell a story about Huey Long being out on a country crossroads speaking to a group of people about—in the Depression—about how we needed to share the wealth. And he spotted a farmer he knew, and he said, “Now, brother Jones, as hard as times are, if you have three Cadillacs, wouldn’t you give one of them up so we could go around and take up all the little kids in the country and take them to school during the week and to church on Sunday?” And he said, “Sure, I’d do that.” And he said, “If you had \$3 million, wouldn’t you give up a million dollars so we could feed all the people in this county and put a roof over their head?” He said, “Of course, I would.” He said, “And if you had three hogs—” He said, “Now, wait a minute, I’ve got three hogs.” *[Laughter]*

You think about that. We might have had some difficult cases to make in the last 2 years, but we never had to try to argue with a straight face why we ought to cut Medicare and Medicaid for elderly people in nursing homes to pay for a tax cut for people who have done very, very well in the 1980’s and 1990’s, and will do well in the 21st century. At least we didn’t have to make that case.

On the other hand, it is important for us to participate and to be a part of changing this country for the better. The Democrats are a positive party. We win by promoting hope over fear, by promoting unity over division, by promoting progress over the status quo. And fundamentally, the difference between our party and the other party is still that we believe in the potential of every human being, and we believe that every person has a right to be protected from oppressive forces that would weigh him or her down, and every person has the right to be

empowered to make the most of their own lives.

We believe in “cut and invest,” not “slash and burn.” We believe not in trickle-down, but in growing the middle class and shrinking the under class. We believe not in cutting people loose in a market-only world that is a cold and hard world but in having a partnership between the people and their Government and the private sector that grows the economy, creates jobs, and also makes sure everybody has a chance to stake out their piece of the American dream. We believe that the power of the Government ought to be used to elevate people. We believe that we should have a partnership with business that challenges them to train their workers and treat them right but challenges us here in Government to create policies that will enable us to succeed at home and abroad. And we have done that. And we will continue to do that.

Now, what are some examples of that? Well, the Commerce Department is one. Sometimes I think the reason our friends on the other side of the aisle are so anxious to eliminate the Department of Commerce is they are absolutely livid that a Democratic Secretary of Commerce has gotten more jobs for Americans abroad than all the Republicans in the last several decades.

We believe you can cut Government and make it work better for people. What are some examples of that? The Small Business Administration has lowered its budget and dramatically increased its loan volumes to women, to minorities, and to white males all at the same time. And nobody unqualified got a loan, and America is stronger as a result of that kind of effort.

We believe America has more than one kind of deficit. Yes, there is a budget deficit. We know all about it. It’s a lot lower than it was before we went to work on it. And yes, we want to bring it down again. If, in fact, by bringing it down we could lower interest rates, put money into the pockets of ordinary Americans in the business sector, and invest and grow and get more jobs in this economy, that’s what we ought to do. But let’s not pretend that nothing we do here is worthwhile. We also have an education

deficit in this country, and we have to address that as well.

And it isn't popular to say anymore because there is this sense that all of the money we spent on poor people is wasted, but that's just not true. And whether we like it or not, an increasing percentage of the babies that are born in this old world, in this country, are poor. And they need food to eat, and they need medical care and medicine for their bodies, and they need an opportunity to get off to a good start in life. And if we don't give it to them, we may balance the budget for the next 5 years, but in 15 years we'll have the "awfulest" deficit you ever saw, and we'll be spending it all on prisons and drug rehab programs instead of education and training and job creation.

Something else that isn't popular to say—today it's all the rage, if you ask any American what should you do to balance the budget, they'll say, "Cut foreign aid." But a recent poll has done us a great service. It's told us what the American people really mean. They were asked, "Well, how much money is in foreign aid?" The American people say, "Fifteen percent of the budget." "How much is too much?" They say, "Ten percent is way too much." "What's about right?" "Five percent." "What's too little?" "Under 3 percent." "How much do we really spend?" "Just a little over one percent." [*Laughter*]

So this matters, folks. It matters to our ability to grow in the 21st century whether these countries that have embraced democracy and free markets are going to be given a little bit of help now, most of which immediately benefits us, by the way, to have their people get a good education and a good job and encourage American investment and become people who can buy our products and our services in the 21st century.

The Democrats believe, in short, that we have a budget deficit and an education deficit, that we need a thriving free market that is vigorous and competitive, but that the Government has a role to play in partnership with that market to help us abroad and to strengthen us at home, and that if we can grow the middle class and shrink the under class and keep a healthy economic environment, the rest of us will do very well indeed.

I am proud of the fact that in the last 2 years we've had more new businesses and more new millionaires created in the United States than at any comparable time in the history of our Republic. I am proud of that. But, let's not kid ourselves. One of the reasons that we had difficulty in 1994, having both the White House and the Congress, is that millions and millions of Americans are out there working harder today than they were 10 years ago for less money. Millions of Americans go home every night from work and sit across the table from their children and their spouses and wonder if somehow they have failed. They hear all this stuff about the glories of the global economy and all these things about the glories of the market. And they read all these things that I say about how we've gotten the deficit down and got the jobs up. And all they know is, they're in it tight, and they're scared, and they're concerned about the future. And they wonder if anybody's still on their side. They wonder if anybody really cares about them.

Did you see the story of the young woman who brought her sister and her mother to see me, whose husband was—her father, the young girl's father, was on the picket line at the Bridgestone strike? And because her father was on strike and because they'd been replaced, this family had to pick up their own health insurance, as the law now provides. And so she missed out on her trip to Washington until Jesse Jackson ran into this young girl and paid to bring her family up here, because this girl and her sister were diabetics. And they were paying \$600 a month for health insurance while they were unemployed. That's true all over America today.

There are people out there who just want to know that we are on their side, that we are still fighting for them, that we still believe in them, and that we're going to make America work for them. And they're entitled to know that.

I'm very proud of the fact that the crime rate has come down in this country now in both years I've been President. I am proud of that. And we've worked on that. But before we get carried away, let me remind you that the rate of violent, arbitrary crime by teenagers against teenagers is still going up, because we've got all these kids out there

who are disconnected and they need to know somebody cares about them. And they need to know that they don't have to resort to violence, they don't have to resort to a gang, they don't have to leave school and do something terrible to feel like they're a part of something that will get them through to tomorrow.

This is not all that complicated. Oh, I know we're living in a new and different and exciting time, and I'm the biggest policy wonk in town. *[Laughter]* But when you strip it all away, we, the Democrats, have got to be there to say you can have economic growth and social justice. In fact, you cannot have economic growth over the long run without justice.

Do we want to make folks on welfare go to work when they can? You bet we do. Do we want to be able to reexamine our programs? Of course, we do. Do we want to be able to shed unnecessary bureaucracy? Yes, we do. Our administration has shrunk the Federal Government more than the folks that were here before us, and we will do more. We will do that. But let's not forget: Why are we doing all of this? Why are we here? Because we believe we can make a difference to the future of this country. And there is no other reason.

So I say to you, you should be of good cheer. We have a lot of things to do. We've taken a lickin', and we're—as Mark Twain said, “The reports of our demise are entirely premature.” *[Laughter]* But the most important thing is, we have a chance tomorrow to go out and do something good for America. And we're going to do it. We're going to do it.

We're going to prove that you can reduce the deficit, that we can bring this budget into balance over a period of time without ignoring the investment deficit in our people, without gutting the environment, without destroying our future, without forgetting our obligation to grow the middle class, to shrink the under class, and to give our people some hope and decency and dignity in life. We're going to prove that you can do that. We are. They are. The Members here are. We're going to do that for America, and we can.

So you go home tonight, you just remember, one of the biggest problems with Wash-

ington is most of our headlines and most of our conversation is consumed by process and conflict within the Beltway. And when we talk about people beyond the Beltway, we're normally talking about them in terms of the latest poll numbers: Who are they for this week? What are they saying this week? The fundamental reality of those people's lives has not changed all that much yet. And we have to give them a strong economy, a decent sense to empower themselves through education, a real commitment to a Government that serves everybody and not just the special interests, and does not forget the poor, because the children are the poor in this country, the children are the new poor in America, and they will be not children before you know it.

And we have got to find a way to solve all these problems together. The biggest problem we face today I sometimes think is that there aren't any simple answers to complex challenges. But there are answers. There are answers. And I have the privilege to go all over the world in your behalf. And I can tell you that nearly anybody would gladly trade places with where we are now at this point in our history. And that's because—so I say again, be of good cheer, but don't forget why you're here.

Yes, we want to win elections, but we want to win elections for a purpose—because we believe you can attack the budget deficit and the investment deficit, the education deficit, because we believe we can make more millionaires and grow the middle class and stop this awful two decades of stagnant and declining incomes and increasing inequality, because we believe most poor people will go to work and do the right thing, given the opportunity and the responsibility to do so, because we believe we have a responsibility to the national security of this country in terms of making our streets safer at home and America safer abroad. And we are making progress on all those fronts.

So I say to our friends across the aisle: We will be your partner. We will not walk away from you in spite of our experience in the last 2 years. But we will come on our own terms with our own values, putting the American people first.

Thank you, God bless you, and good night.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 p.m. at the Washington Hilton.

**Message on the Observance of
National Missing Children's Day,
1995**

May 24, 1995

Greetings to everyone observing National Missing Children's Day, 1995. I am pleased that so many Americans are joining together to improve safety and reduce crime in communities across the country.

In the wake of the tragedy in Oklahoma City, we have drawn strength from reaffirming our commitment to protecting our children—making their well-being and security our highest national priority. Until we have done everything in our power to help young people lead happy, productive lives, we cannot say that our country is prepared for the great challenges that lie ahead.

The devastating effects of child abduction threaten our hopes for a brighter future. It is a tragedy that occurs daily and causes untold anguish to the families and children involved. I commend the many caring organizations who have dedicated their resources to raising public awareness of child abduction and to protecting young people from victimization. Your efforts are serving to return many children, safe and sound, to their families and homes.

Hillary and I join you in offering our prayers for all missing children and their families, and we wish you the best for a memorable day.

Bill Clinton

NOTE: National Missing Children's Day was observed on May 25.

**Message to the Congress
Transmitting the Report on
Aeronautics and Space**

May 24, 1995

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit this report on the Nation's achievements in aeronautics and space during fiscal year 1994, as required under section 206 of the National Aero-

navitics and Space Act of 1958, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2476). Aeronautics and space activities involve 15 contributing departments and agencies of the Federal Government, as this report reflects, and the results of their ongoing research and development affect the Nation as a whole in a variety of ways.

Fiscal year 1994 featured many important developments and changes in U.S. aeronautics and space efforts. It included 7 Space Shuttle missions successfully completed, 15 Government launches of Expendable Launch Vehicles (ELVs), and 4 commercial launches from Government facilities. Among notable developments in the ELV area were the launch of the Deep Space probe, Clementine, initial use of the Titan IV Centaur upper stage, and the first launch of the Taurus launch vehicle. Highlights of the Shuttle missions included the highly successful servicing mission for the Hubble Space Telescope (HST), which replaced several faulty parts and installed a sophisticated package of corrective optics to compensate for the spherical aberration in HST's primary mirror. Also, the flight of the Space Radar Laboratory began to provide information on environmental change, and a mission with a Russian astronaut, Sergei Krikalev, as a member of the crew signalled the beginning of a three-phased cooperative program in space between Russia and the United States.

In a year of tremendous accomplishments for the international Space Station, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) developed an initial set of specifications that included Russian elements as part of the design. Russia's agreeing to join the 12 original participating nations as a partner resulted in the expansion of the existing Shuttle/Mir program into Phase I of the international Space Station program, which officially began with Sergei Krikalev's flight on the Shuttle. All of the partners held a successful systems design review in Texas in March, and in June Russia and the United States signed an interim agreement on the Space Station and a \$400 million contract for Russian space hardware, services, and data. In August, the program completed a vehicle architecture review and in September, the Space Station Control Board ratified the recommendations it included. The redesigned