

settlement, Lebanon, unfortunately, is going to continue to be victimized.

Q. When do you think we're going to achieve a full, fair peace to the Lebanese people and the Lebanese territory, especially now that you're meeting with President Harawi?

President Clinton. Well, as you know, I've been working hard for it for 3 years now. And I hope and believe that if we can reestablish a cease-fire and the conditions under which violence will not recur, then we can get back to the peace process. The issues are fairly clear, and the timing is largely in the hands of the parties. But the United States is working hard. And I can't set a timetable on it, but it could be done before too long if we can reestablish the peace. But first of all, we have to stop the killing.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, on what basis do you ask for a cease-fire?

President Clinton. We ask for a cease-fire, first of all, on strictly humanitarian terms—that the people who are being hurt by this, starting when the shelling started 6 weeks ago, are innocent civilians on both sides of the border and that all these people who are being dislocated, the people who have died, they're not a part of the larger fight that's going on here.

We, first of all, want to reestablish peace. Secondly, we want to do what we can to help Lebanon deal with the problems of the refugees. The third thing we want is an arrangement so that the violence doesn't recur. And then—then—we want to go back to the peace process.

We do support U.N. Resolution 425. We do support the sovereignty of Lebanon. We don't think there should be any foreign troops in Lebanon. But history has shown us, from our point of view, at least, that the only way to achieve that is to get a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. And I have worked very hard for that. I have tried to be an honest arbiter, if you will, of the positions of both sides. I have done everything I could to that end, and we are still working. And we will continue to work for that.

Q. Mr. President, the view in Lebanon and in the Arab world is that your administration

was very slow in intervening to stop the carnage last week, that the United States had not even sent condolences to the victims, to the families of the victims, until it was too late. What is your view of this?

President Clinton. Well, all I can tell you is, the moment I heard about the fighting, I instructed the Secretary of State to immediately try to achieve an end to it and to protect the lives of the people involved—the minute I heard about it.

We were—as you know, our whole foreign policy team was in the Far East. And I instructed the Secretary of State to leave our mission—we were going to Russia for the nuclear summit—and fly directly to the Middle East to try to reestablish a cease-fire and stop the killing. And as soon as I had an opportunity to publicly comment on it, I expressed my profound condolences to the people who were killed—the minute, the first opportunity I had to say something about it.

I am sorry that the people feel that way, but the important thing is to stop others from being killed and help people put their lives back together and restore some sense of normalcy and peace. And that's what I'm trying to do.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to the Service Employees International Union Convention

April 24, 1996

Thank you for that wonderful welcome, and thank you, Dick, for that fine introduction. I really enjoyed working with you, and I want to congratulate you on the many years of service you have given to your great union. I look forward to working with your new president, Andy Stern. I know he has also made a tremendous contribution as your organizing director, and I wish him every success.

I want to also acknowledge your secretary-treasurer, Betty Bednarczyk, and my wonderful Secretary of Labor Bob Reich. I know that you enjoyed his speech, and I thank him for his work on your behalf.

And finally, let me thank SEIU for one of its greatest gifts to America, John Sweeney. Because of John's leadership, and because of your commitment, labor is back. I know in this political season, some people aren't too happy about that, but I am delighted.

I am proud that in 1996 the voice of organized labor, the voice of working men and women from all across our country, will be heard in our national debate. I welcome your voice. America needs to hear it. And I promise you this: You will be heard.

You know, in a way, it's hard to believe that SEIU is celebrating its 75th anniversary, for you stand out as America's most dynamic and innovative union, a shining example of labor's revival. Not only has SEIU given renewed hope for millions of union members, you've also pioneered new ways to organize both workers in low-wage industries and workers in fast-growing industries like health care.

Of course, we all know your contributions to America stretch far beyond collective bargaining. From civil rights and family and medical leave to the minimum wage and the fight to save Medicare and Medicaid, SEIU has been a leader in the struggle to achieve economic and social progress for all Americans.

In many ways, we're on a shared mission. Four years ago our economy was drifting with high unemployment, a deficit twice as high as it is now, and very few new jobs. I took office determined to change our course, to cut the deficit in half in 4 years, to invest in education and training, to shrink and reform the Government so that it works better and costs less. Our Government is now the smallest it's been since 1965, but it's still strong enough to protect workplace safety, pure food, clean air and water, to help Americans to get the education and training they need, to help grow the economy and to protect our seniors through Medicare. And I'm proud of that strength. You helped to get it there, and you helped to keep it there, and I thank you very much.

In 1992, I told the American people that if we carried out our economic plan, two things would happen, we'd get 8 million new jobs and the deficit would be cut in half.

Well, just a couple of weeks ago, we learned that our economy has already created 8.5 million new jobs, nearly all of them in the private sector. And last month the Congressional Budget Office said that by the end of this year the deficit will be less than half of what it was when I took office. Over 8 million new jobs, the deficit cut in half.

Those are two important commitments you helped me keep to the American people. We also have the lowest combined rates of unemployment and inflation in 27 years. Our auto and telecommunications industries are now leading the world again. We have a 15-year high in homeownership, and we have finally halted the decade-long slide in real hourly earnings.

But let's face it, we all know this is a record to be proud of, but to build on, not to sit on. Too many Americans still are working harder just to hold on. We have to do more. We have to continue to focus on the concerns of working Americans, the concerns they have about their own families' economic security at a time when the country is undergoing profound economic transformation, a transformation every bit as momentous as the shift from farms to factories a century ago.

As I said in the State of the Union, one of the main challenges we face is to make sure that this new economy with all of its opportunity doesn't leave behind people who are willing to work for their own opportunities. We need to make sure that every American can be a winner in this time of economic change, to make sure that every American has access to education and training and good health care and secure pensions. And we absolutely have to get wages rising again in our country. We have got to do that for working people and working families.

That's why I fought for the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act. That's why we have dramatically expanded the earned-income tax credit, to give tax cuts to more than 15 million working families with incomes under \$28,000. That's why just after I took office I swept away my predecessor's anti-worker, anti-union Executive orders. And that's why, with an Executive order of our own last spring, this administration said in no uncertain terms we will not allow companies who replace striking workers perma-

nently to do business with our Government. I also want you to know that I directed the Justice Department to take all appropriate steps to overturn a recent court decision blocking that Executive order.

Now unfortunately, for the past year you and I have been trying to work with a Congress that didn't always see eye to eye with us when it came to putting in place an agenda that would make the American dream accessible to all Americans. I'm proud to say that in these battles we've had with Congress we've more than held our own. Not only have we managed to stall or defeat practically every major attack on America's working families and on the unions that represent them, we may be poised on the verge of major victories.

I challenged Congress to pass the Kassebaum-Kennedy bill, which would improve access to health care for 43 million Americans, so that you don't lose your health care when you change jobs, and you can't be denied coverage if someone in your family has been sick. Now Congress is finally moving forward with that important legislation. Yesterday it passed the Senate 100 to zero. That's the kind of thing we all ought to be doing more of for the American people.

And I want to challenge the Senate and the House to get together and pass a good version, a clean version of that bill. Pass something that can pass 100-0 again in the Senate and 435-0 in the House. And when it does, that bill will be law the minute it hits my desk.

I challenge the Congress to raise the minimum wage, which is on the verge of hitting a 40-year low. Now, you and I know that no one can raise a family on \$4.25 an hour. So if we're going to talk about family values in Washington, we ought to reinforce them in the heartland of America. Last year, I proposed that Congress increase the minimum wage to \$5.15 an hour. For a parent working full time, this 90-cent-an-hour increase would help pay for groceries for 7 months, for 4 months of rent or months of child care. Raising the minimum wage will help many of our hardest working people. Six out of 10 of them are working women, many trying to raise children and hold their families together.

I'll say again: If we're going to have family values coming out of Washington, we should start by valuing families that are working hard, staying off welfare, doing their best to raise their children. They're living by the values we say we all believe in, and it's harder for them than it is for most of the rest of us. I say it's time to give them a hand up; they don't want a handout, just a hand up.

Now Congress appears, at last, to be moving forward with a bill that would raise the minimum wage. They should do it, and they should do it without gimmicks. That's another bill I want to be the law of the land now. And I want to say a special word of thanks again to my friend John Sweeney for his hard work on this. The dignity of America's working people should be above reproach. If you work full time and you have children in your home, you should not live in poverty. We can afford this, and there's all the evidence in the world it will not cost us jobs.

Let me say next, I hope Congress will start moving right now on my "Retirement Saving and Security Act," which would expand coverage to help 51 million working Americans who are not now covered by an employer-provided retirement plan. The bill would also increase portability so workers can take their retirement savings with them and keep saving if they change jobs or lose their jobs.

And finally, I urge Congress to come back to the table and work with me to pass the right kind of 7-year balanced budget. Now in all those hours of negotiations over the winter, congressional leaders and I have come up with plans that have in common more than enough savings to balance the budget, provide tax relief for working families, and protect our values by protecting Medicare and Medicaid and our investments in education and in the protection of our environment.

We can make this a season of progress. We can get back to work and balance the budget in the right way, so we can bring interest rates down again, make homeownership more affordable, get investment in the economy and grow jobs, and still protect the things we believe in that keep us coming together as a country.

But make no mistake: I will not stand for a budget that jeopardizes these bedrock commitments to Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment. And I will not accept legislation like the T-Max, which would repeal the ban against company unions, or legislation that weakens OSHA. We can't afford to jeopardize the future of working Americans by undermining the safety and the solidarity of the workplace, and if such legislation crosses my desk, I'll do what the Constitution entitles me to do: I'll veto it.

You and your families and the millions and millions of working families just like you, you're the heart and soul of the American dream. We have to keep working together, not just to preserve what's been won, but to continue to fight for better jobs, stronger unions, higher wages, more justice, for things that will bring us together.

I honestly believe the 21st century can be the next American Century. Our children and our grandchildren can enjoy more freedom and more opportunity than any generation of Americans, if we do the right thing. If we stand up to those who would take this country backward, if we stand up for the men and women who work hard every day to build our country, we can realize the promise of this great Nation.

You know, there is a lot of talk in Washington about empowerment. Sometimes people in the other party mean giving people more choice but not caring much about whether they can exercise the choice. Well, we want empowerment, too. We want to make sure every person, every family, every community, has what it takes to make the most of their own lives and live up to their dreams. With your help, we will realize that goal.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke by satellite at 12 noon from Suite 520 of Media Technologies to the convention meeting in Chicago, IL. In his remarks, he referred to Richard Cordtz, interim president, Service Employees International Union, and John Sweeney, president, AFL-CIO.

Remarks on Signing the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996

April 24, 1996

Thank you very much, Mary Jo White, for the work you do every day. Thank you, Attorney General Reno. Thank you, Mr. Vice President. To Senator Dole and Chairman Hatch and Chairman Hyde, the other Members of Congress who are here; Governor Keating and the Attorneys General who are here and the others in law enforcement; to the members of the administration, and especially to the victims' families who are here.

I thank the families for coming today. I thank their advocates for coming. But I think we should all acknowledge that the importance of this event is embodied in no small measure by the fact that the families were willing to come here, knowing that it would in some measure force them to relive the pain that they have endured because of acts of terror. It took a lot of courage for them to endure that pain. So while this is a good day for America, we can't really say it is a happy day. Not all good days can be happy days, but every American is in debt to these families for standing up for the need for the changes that we have experienced. And I ask the rest of us to acknowledge that. And we thank you.

I also would point out that Presidents can advocate and the executive branch can enforce the laws, but this would not have happened but for the remarkable convergence of Republicans and Democrats in the Congress. The Vice President introduced those who were especially active in the leadership who are over here to my left who will come up in a moment when we sign the bill. But there are so many more Members of Congress here, for the benefit of all of you, I would like to ask every Member who is here and who worked so hard on this legislation to please stand and be recognized. Would the Members of Congress please stand? *[Applause]* Thank you very much.