

and Development Act of 2000 (Public Law No. 106-200).

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters

May 16, 2001

National Energy Policy Development Group Report

The President. Thank you all for coming. Today the Vice President and the National Energy Policy Development Group made their presentation to me and the Cabinet. This is an extensive report. It provides over 100 proposals to diversify and increase the supply of energy, innovative proposals to encourage conservation, and ways to make sure that we get energy from producer to consumer.

I am really pleased with the work the Vice President and his folks did. This is a very optimistic look at America. It's tough, in that it lays out the problems; it's a direct assessment of neglect. But this great Nation of ours, because of our technology, our attitude, our adherence to free enterprise, our willingness to conserve, we're going to solve this problem. And I'm looking forward to making my case to the American people tomorrow and throughout the years.

While there are some—you know, we can't overcome the fact that we haven't built a refinery in years, and we should have. We can make sure—we can make sure that any entity will not illegally overcharge. And so I'm calling on the FTC to make sure that nobody in America gets illegally overcharged. And we're going to make sure FERC will monitor electricity suppliers to make sure that they charge rates that are fair and reasonable. The Attorney General and I will work with the FTC.

But I'm upbeat about America, I truly am. I think this is a country that is going to show the rest of the world how to deal wisely with energy.

Q. Mr. President, let me make it clearer. Are you calling on an FTC and FERC investigation, or are you plainly restating their obligations under the law already?

The President. I am calling on the FTC to take appropriate action any time there is a complaint against illegal pricing.

Q. Is there any evidence, to your mind, that there is illegal pricing now? Is there a reason for an investigation?

The President. None whatsoever. But should somebody have a complaint, it is the appropriate role of the FTC to look into that complaint.

Q. And you feel the same on FERC, sir? None whatsoever?

The President. Yes, sir, I do.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Well, actually I say that—FERC has made an analysis and has actually rebated money back to people in the State of California; they have already acted on the notion of reasonable pricing. And we expect FERC to continue to do that, to be vigilant on behalf of the American consumer.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

California Energy Shortage

Q Sir, what can you say to Californians suffering through rolling blackouts? How does your plan help them in the short term?

The President. My plan helps people in the short term and long term by recognizing the problem and by expediting energy development. And what we have done in the State of California is we've worked very closely with the Governor, to help the Governor permit plants necessary to increase the supply of energy in that big State.

Administrator Whitman and myself and Secretary Abraham heard the call of Governor Davis. He said, "Help us build plants in the State of California," and we did. And we expedited the construction of plants. And so the quicker supply gets on, the easier it's going to be for the consumers in the State of California. And we will continue to listen and work with the Governor of California. We're deeply concerned about the State of California, as we are with the rest of the Nation.

But we haven't had an energy policy. Interestingly enough, this is the first comprehensive energy policy probably ever—certainly in a long time. And I appreciate so very much the hard work. I've told the people of America, if given the chance to be the

President, we would address this problem, and we would address it in a comprehensive way.

As I say, there are over 100 recommendations—over 100 proposals. And we're going to get after it. This isn't just a report that's going to gather dust; this is an action plan, because this is an action administration.

Energy Plan

Q. Mr. President, how will your plan lead to lower prices at the gas pump now?

The President. Pardon me?

Q. How will it lead to lower prices at the gas pump now?

The President. Because we recognize that we need more supply. And when you read the report, you'll see that we've laid out constructive ways to make sure that there are more supply available.

I will tell you, there are some who advocate price controls. Price controls do not increase supply, nor do they affect demand. And this is an administration that will take a hard look at the problems. And we'll deal straightforward with the American people, with a plan that is optimistic—it is very hopeful. And it's the right thing to do. And I can't wait for the American people to hear the proposals.

It talks about the ingenuity of America. Ours is a great Nation. Ours is a Nation that can lead the world in innovative conservation measures. And we provide incentives to do that. Ours is a Nation that can explore in technologically friendly ways, and we will show the world how to do so.

But we also have got to recognize our infrastructure is old and stale, and so we've got innovative approaches to be able to move product from one part of the country to another, or natural gas, for example, from outside our borders to inside our borders. And so I look forward to good—folks taking a good look at this, because it makes eminent sense for the future of the country.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:50 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Gray Davis of California. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Proclamation 7438—National Biotechnology Week

May 16, 2001

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

For thousands of years, man has been utilizing and modifying biological processes to improve man's quality of life. Scientific advances have enabled biotechnology to play an increasingly large role in the development of new products that enhance all areas of our lives.

In the battle against disease, our ever-increasing knowledge of cellular and genetic processes continues to improve the quality of our health care. Biotechnology has contributed to the development of vaccines, antibiotics, and other drugs that have saved or prolonged the lives of millions of people. Insulin, which is vital in the treatment of diabetes, can now be produced inexpensively and in large quantities through the use of genetically engineered bacteria. In addition, exciting gains in the understanding of the human body's genetic code show significant promise in finding treatments and eventually a cure for many diseases. This technology is now central to the research being conducted on diseases such as cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, heart and lung disease, Alzheimer's disease, and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

Consumers enjoy continual improvements to the quality and quantity of our Nation's food supply. Genetic engineering will enable farmers to modify crops so that they will grow on land that was previously considered infertile. In addition, it will enable farmers to grow produce with enhanced nutritional value. We also are benefiting from crops that resist plant diseases and insects, thus reducing the use of pesticides.

The environmental benefits of biotechnology can be realized through the increased ability of manufacturers to produce their products with less energy, pollution, and waste. In addition, the development of new biotechnology promises to improve our ability to clean up toxic substances from soil