the deficit to half what it was when I took office as a percentage of our income. That's been done, and it's nearly, in real dollar numbers, half of what it was. Now, we've had a lot of success with our reinventing Government program. We know—I know a lot more about how the Federal Government and the budget works than I did the day I showed up here. I believe we can take it into balance. But we've got to do it in a way that permits us to invest in education, invest in technology, and do right by people that have a right to rely on things like Medicare and Medicaid.

Q. Mr. President, you know that eventually you'll have to work out this budget dispute with Congress, assuming that they can't override your veto. Instead of going through the veto scenario and tip-toeing right up to default, why don't you just invite the Republican leaders over here and work it out ahead of all of that?

The President. Well, let me say again, when I proposed this budget, before they even voted for their budget resolution, I had my hand outstretched. My hand has been outstretched ever since, in all kinds of public and private ways. And I believe—frankly, let me say, that I believe the same is the case of the vast majority of the Democrats in the Congress. I believe we'd like to have a huge bipartisan vote for the right sort of balanced budget.

But at every turn, what have I been told? "We'll be glad to talk to you, but we're not changing anything. If you don't change our deficit, we just won't pay the debts of the United States. We'll abandon a 200-year history of honoring our obligations to pay our debts."

So that really is not a question that should properly be directed to me. The Congress has to finish its business, and they will make a decision. They know exactly where I stand. They know what my principles are. And now the American people know that the philosophy that I have, the ideas that I have, the values that are in my budget also turn out to be very good for the economy and good for reducing the deficit.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 105th news conference began at 4:15 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House.

Statement on the AFL–CIO Election

October 25, 1995

There were plenty of winners in today's AFL–CIO election. The working men and women of the labor movement benefit the most. If every American got to choose in every election between candidates such as these, this country would be a better place.

I offer my hearty congratulations to John Sweeney, who has led one of the most progressive, growing, and innovative unions in America. He has been a force for inclusion and activism and has already left a deep and positive imprint on the labor movement.

The outgoing president, Tom Donahue, has been a source of strength and leadership in the labor movement for decades. Working men and women are fortunate for his many years of service, his integrity, and his dedication.

The theme of AFL–CIO convention was "Stand Up for America's Working Families." My administration stands with John and the other newly elected officers as we work together in the months and years ahead on issues important to America's working families.

Remarks at a United Jewish Appeal Reception

October 25, 1995

Thank you very much, Stan Chesley. Thank you for your friendship and for your leadership. Mr. Secretary, thank you for what you have done, along with Dennis Ross and so many others here to hasten the day of peace in the Middle East. Senator Lautenberg, distinguished foreign guests, my fellow Americans; and most of all, to Prime Minister and Mrs. Rabin, and all the friends who are here from Israel, we're delighted to have you back.

It is a great honor for me to receive this award, an honor amplified by its association with the United Jewish Appeal, and with all of you who contribute so much to the UJA