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Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the Agricultural Community in Fresno, California

May 30, 1992

The President. First, let me just thank Lee Simpson, the boys that I met. We had a chance to look at one method of growing. He was fair enough to tell me that others approach these things in different ways. But I must say, I've learned a lot. And it was most enjoyable, all too brief. But it wasn't just watching the computer in there; it was seeing him and his love of the soil and his boys and all the things that we talk about when we think of values when it comes to farm families. So they had a nice, neat way of making me feel at home here.

I want to thank the Governor for being with us and our very able Senator John Seymour. I mean, I'm not here on a political mission, but let me just say to you who are involved in agriculture, it is nice to have somebody in the Senate who understands the real problems facing us and then can bring that knowledge of agriculture down to the White House to be sure we are sensitive.

I had a chance earlier on with—I'm accompanied by the woman that many of you know, Ann Veneman. I thought it would be better coming to a bunch of experts in agriculture to have some brains with me. Mine are good for some things, and I think I have a feel for what we need to do in agriculture. But I certainly don't stand here as any expert. So I brought Ann in case some of you might have technical questions or where we stand on some specific initiative or other.

On the broad agricultural concepts, let me simply say I believe it's absolutely essential that we have free and fair trade. We will continue to seek access to foreign markets. We've made some progress in beef and citrus and some things into Japan. There are some big crops that are excluded; we've got to keep pushing. I want to see a successful conclusion to what's known as the GATT, the Uruguay round of GATT. And the hangup, as everybody in this room knows, the main one has been agriculture. We've made some progress working with the Europeans. And they themselves have reorganized their common agricultural policy, something that is just going to reduce the levels of subsidies.

But I just want you to know we're committed. I think I've a little better feel now for some of the problems that certain growers of certain commodities face in selling, for example, to Mexico. With Mexico I want an agreement, but I want it to be fair. I'm a great fan of Carlos Salinas, the President of Mexico. He's done a superb job. And it's not just in working towards free and fair trade; it's the fact that we're in very good sync with the Mexicans in terms of major foreign policy objectives. So I salute him. But he knows and I know that we cannot take to the Congress, and I will not, an agreement that is not based on free and fair trade. Our agricultural shipments to Mexico have increased threefold over the last few years. That's good, but we still have some problems on both sides. He has some problems with us.

On the GATT, Ann gives her expertise to this a lot. We had a meeting the other day with Mr. Andriessen from the EC. I'm told by our very able negotiator, Carla Hills, that we made some progress there, but again, I can't predict for you when either of these will be done.

The last point I'll make, and then I'll sit on my little stool and take any questions that come my way and maybe deflect a few off of here. But I feel that the United States economy is beginning to improve. California's had some very difficult times. Lot of defense problems here, as we've been able, given the demise of international communism, to properly cut back on defense. I would say to you in this very patriotic part of the State, I am not going to permit the Congress to cut into the muscle of our defense. We are able to make reductions. But now, especially in a political year with all the promises resonating out there, everybody wants to take $10 billion here or $20 billion there and spread it on some pro-

gram, and we can't do that.

I am the President, and I have responsibility for our basic national security interests. The world is much safer. This little Redskin fan goes to bed at night with less fear of nuclear weapons than his older brothers or maybe his mother and dad did, and that's a wonderful accomplishment. But I can tell you, and General Scowcroft, who's with me here today, my very able National Security Adviser, could tell you it isn't that safe a world.

So we're trying to solidify the progress for democracy and freedom that has been made. It is major heavy lifting, but we are the only ones who can do it. The United States, we are the undisputed leader of the free world that's moving down the path to democracy. So I cite that because I cannot get in the promise business of taking $10 billion or $20 billion more from every defense account, and I'm not going to do it.

In any event, I do feel the U.S. economy's recovering—you saw the growth figures yesterday—and with it will surge back the optimism that belongs to the United States of America. It's been a tough go for people, and I know that. But we are a rising Nation, not a declining Nation.

Now, with no further ado, who wants the first question? I'm told that some of you have some real broad interest in areas that might not be specifically on agriculture; so much the better. That's fine with me. Yes, sir.

Legal Services Corporation

Q. I'm an orange grower. We in the valley here, I'm in California, have a problem with an outfit called CRLA, California Rural Legal Assistance. These are the folks who seem to us to be creating answers to which there are no questions. Harassment, I believe, is one of the words. Your predecessor told us that he was going to do something about it, and I'd sure like to hear that you would take a shot at defunding the organization. I think they're out of hand.

The President. Well, let me first ask if it's a State or a local—are you talking about the Legal Services overall?

Q. Yes.

The President. Well, I don't know that we're going to defund it. What we're trying to do is to get it, through competent and sensible appointees, get it confined so it doesn't go off into the political arena, trying to make a lot of political statements and affecting legislation. That's not what Legal Services, if that is what we're talking about, is supposed to be doing. I think we still have some appointees not confirmed, but I can assure you we are not going to put any loose cannons rolling around on that deck. I hope there's been changes, but I gather we've got some work to do.

The Economy

Q. As you know, everybody's concerned about the economy, and I was wondering if you would sign this dollar bill, showing me that you would promise to try to make this dollar bill worth just as much or more as it is in 4 years from now.

The President. Yes, let me tell you something about the dollar. Let me tell you, one way to take that dollar and make it shrink is to let inflation get out of control. The cruelest tax of all is inflation. You don't see it, but you feel it. And the dollars shrink. They don't buy as much.

One of the bright spots in an otherwise gloomy economy over the last year has been that inflation is down. I want to have economic policies enacted that will stimulate economic growth. But that's got to be done without making that dollar bill shrink, and I think we can do it. Right now, interest rates are down; inflation is down. That makes us poised for the best kind of economic recovery. I'm just saying that we've got to be sure it stays down because that's the way you make this dollar come back.

When I come back 4 years from now, I think I'll be in this line of work then—[*laughter*]—it would shrink if we don't get control, try to keep control—we've got a long way to go—of spending. One of the things we're pushing for now, an idea whose time has come, that I've been for for many years is what's called a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. It disciplines the executive branch, and it darned sure disciplines a Congress that has been very, very reluctant to do anything on the spending side.

So those are just a couple of thoughts

about how we're going to keep that dollar the same size, maybe make it buy more.

Environmental Policy

Q. We've been working on a thing with the Federal Clean Air Act. And in that act of 1990, it addresses a thing called fugitive dust, referred to as PM10, particulate size. In that regulation it addresses where—it's going after farmland that makes dust, a tractor that's out there farming. And to try to control that dust, the EPA has certain deadline dates, '94, '97 and 2001, in which growers are going to have to develop control strategies to stop that dust from going in the air. That has been based on, in the Federal Clean Air Act, with research that was done that was inaccurate, totally wrong. And now we have these implementation things called a PM10 plan that every State has to submit an air agency. And yet they're not realizing, we've pointed it out, that they need to look at better science because it's very difficult to regulate dust on a tractor. Yet they're asking us for control measures that are very much—right now, there's not valid research. The USDA and EPA are hoping now to fund some money so we can do some valid research.

The President. I'm not an expert on that. Ann, do you want to just comment on his specific, and then I'll give you an answer on a broader sense. Let me give you the broader answer first.

You may have read about the Rio conference on the environment. I have withheld commitment to go there because it seemed to me that what we had to do before committing to go is to work out sound environmental policy, sound as far as the United States goes, and we are the leader because of our science and technology in international environment. So we had to work out sound environmental policy. But I also wanted an underpinning of sound economic policy. And we cannot permit the extremes in the environmental movement to shut down the United States on science that may not be as perfected as we in the United States should have it.

So I don't know the specific, I'll be honest with you, that you're talking about, that provision of the Clean Air Act. But my general philosophy is to have a good, sound environmental practice. I think we do. I think we've got something to be really proud of and to take to Rio, but also to say to them, these countries, we cannot accept standards that are not based on the soundest of science, and we cannot shut down the lives of many Americans because of going to an extreme on the environment. So that's my philosophy, and that's what we're trying to do.

Now, on this one for those of you who are environmentalists or follow Rio, I think we're coming out all right on that. A lot of the world leaders have told me they think that our fighting for that balance has been a very good thing, and we've staved off setting such rigid standards that nobody can meet. When the United States makes a commitment, it has to keep it. And we do that. Our word is pretty good, and it should be. But we can't do it and throw an awful lot of people out of work, especially when it's not based on sound science.

Can you make a specific comment on the gentleman's, do you know?

Deputy Secretary Veneman. Well, I certainly am familiar with this issue. It's been in USDA. We are attempting to help to fund the science necessary to address this problem, and I think we are committed to continuing in that effort.

Q. I appreciate that very much, Mr. President and Ann Veneman, on that because we think that that needs to be looked at very, very strongly before we continue to put industry out of business because of unsound science, because somebody didn't do their job right. And I thank you very much.

The President. Well, we're trying. I know they're going to want to raise the question that might get me in trouble, but I know, for example, on endangered species you've got some major California problems. They're national problems. We are trying to get balance and use of science and also have those hallmarks of the policy, but also the fact that a family's got to work for a living. So that one is one that has to be filtered into any agreements we're making.

Wetlands

Q. I was pleased to see that we have a wetlands preserve program just starting up,

with California being one of the pilot States. I think that that offers a way to restore wetlands and, at the same time, make a workable relationship with farming. One thing I would like to see is in the following programs, should Congress support your budget proposal, is a wider definition of the crop and land that is allowable in it. Within California much of the land that would qualify——

The President. To be a wet?

Q. Right, exactly.

The President. We've had examples of that. The first gentleman was telling me about it, and we have—I consider myself a sound and hopefully sensible environmental President. But again, I think in terms of wetlands, the manual and definition, it's gotten a little ahead of where it should be in terms of a definition of a wetland.

So we're trying hard. I just had a meeting earlier, and one of the rice growers told me about a program that they are working closely on where it really does help create wetlands. And the bird hunters and all these people who are very interested in the flyways are very happy about it. So I think there's room for innovation. I think we ought to stay with our objective and no net loss of wetlands, but we don't want to overdefine what a wetland is.

That's what I've tried to do, and again, I've taken a few shots as being too much on the growth side of that. But I don't think that's a fair shot because I think what happens during some periods, some of the bureaucrats in our regulatory agencies started defining the wetland problem in a way that really overdefines it. There was not a legitimate wetland we were trying to preserve. So we're working it. And I appreciate your suggestion.

Domestic Agenda

Q. I think most people are wondering that during your first 4 years in the Presidency I think that your main objective has been to center on the foreign affairs with the fall of international communism. With Ross Perot coming out saying that you need to address the situations with the homeless and with the deficit and all these other sort of domestic affairs, if you are reelected, assuming you are, will you be focusing your attention on the domestic affairs and not so much on the military and communism, the fall of communism, and China and Russia and all these other areas such as the Baltics?

The President. The President's responsibilities are multifaceted. One of them is the national security of the United States. It is in this field that the President really has primacy, and I'm not going to neglect that. I'm not going to neglect it because of political criticism. Having said that, it is absolutely essential that our domestic program, which is sound, be brought before a Congress that will think some new ideas.

The Congress today, in my view, thinks old ideas. We've got some problems. How are we going to help the city of Los Angeles? I think an enterprise zone that greenlines the area and cuts the capital gains rate to zero will do more to bring jobs into the hopeless areas of Los Angeles than doubling the spending on some Government programs. I have had that proposal up there for years. I've had it up there for years, and it has been blocked by, for the most part, by a hostile Congress.

So I will not plead guilty to having neglected the domestic agenda. What we've got to do is get the facts out there that there is a good one that's based on empowerment. It is based on keeping Government close to the people. It's based on less regulation rather than more. It's based on giving people a part of the action. And that goes into all kinds of subjects. It also is based on fiscal sanity.

I argue for a balanced budget amendment. It will discipline the executive branch, and it will darned sure discipline the Congress. Now it's beginning to happen. The good thing about this 4-year election dance is, it does get to focus, it brings people's focus on these major problems. I think we have a rare opportunity now to pass some of the things that would help guarantee the future of that little girl's dollar bill.

I'd like to see a line-item veto for the President. Forty-three Governors have it, and it works. Somebody said, "You don't have a domestic program." Here's a good one. Try it on for size. And they say, "Well, that's not a new idea." As far as I'm con-

cerned it's new until it's been tried. We ought to keep pushing until we get it. That gets the President then all interacting with the people running for Congress, and it gets you in there. If you believe that last point, for example, get your Congressman to say what he'll do when he goes there.

So I think we've got a good program. I'll give you one more, and then I'll stop filibustering. Education, we have a program called America 2000. It literally revolutionizes education. It creates 535 new American schools where the community and the families get involved in saying, "Here's what we think will work in Fresno. I don't care so much what's going to work in Austin, Texas," and create these new schools. We send the bill up to the Congress, and what do they do in education? They just add money to programs that have failed. We've got a good domestic agenda, and there is a significant flagship of that domestic agenda.

So what I've got to do is, one, make clear to the American people we've got it; and, two, take my case in the fall when I get into that political arena that I'm trying to stay out of at least until after our convention and say, all right, send me some Members of Congress that agree with this. Don't send people up there that come home and talk tough on law and order and crime and then go back and vote some other way.

I listened to some ads of people running to try to get into the United States Senate, and these happen to be on the Democratic side, all of them talking tough on law and order. We've got a tough crime bill that is sitting in the United States Congress because the very same people that are advertising today in California refuse to vote for it.

The good thing about an election year is, we can make that case clearly and say, look, send us some people, if you happen to think we're right, a little tougher on the criminal and little less tough on the victim of crime. Vote for them. Get our program going.

So I think we've got a good domestic agenda. I do not plead guilty to neglecting it. I think out of the 4-year process here we'll have time to get it in focus.

But look, I know that there's this feeling that we're living in a benign world now because of this magnificent victory over communism. But believe me, if you look at the Soviet Union and you see what's happening in some of the Republics, and if you look at the problems south of our border, although the hemisphere's going—the President can't neglect that. I can't shift entirely away from that responsibility.

But I take your point. I think I've got to do a better job explaining to the people. Send me Members of Congress that will vote for these kinds of initiatives. If you want to do it the old way, get them to go in and vote for the status quo. But I think people want change now. I think we can take that message of hope out there.

Wristwatch Presentation

Q. Last week you gave your watch away to Ensign Sam Wagener. You may not have realized it, but he was from Fresno. And so the Fresno Chamber of Commerce and the California Bowl Committee would like to present you with an official California Bowl watch, as a matter of fact, an official California Raisins Bowl watch.

The President. I'm a two-watch man again, but I'm telling you that I came out way ahead on the trade. That midshipman came out—he gave me—he did all right. He didn't have anything when he started. So he got my watch. But I didn't know he was from here. I'm very grateful. This is beautiful, and thank you. I accept with pleasure.

Water Management Legislation

Q. I'd first like to start off by thanking you and your administration for trying to add a little bit of sanity to the application of Environmental and Endangered Species Act by putting in people and jobs and the economy as part of the equation.

As you know, we are in the fight of our life here in the Central Valley of California over irrigated agriculture and the operations of Central Valley Project. Sir, Governor Wilson has shown historic and courageous leadership recently in announcing that there is a California solution to the Central Valley Project. Senator Seymour, likewise, has lead a courageous fight in the Senate to put aside some of the criticisms we have from some of the Democratic Sen-

ators from New Jersey who think they know how to manage water from Washington, DC, for what we do here in the Central Valley.

In the last 2 days there has been some—many call it negotiations—and discussions on the House side, unfortunately controlled by many of our Democratic colleagues who are no better for us than some of those liberal folks in the Senate.

I would like to say, sir, that if there is any doubt from the administration as to who they should look for, for whether or not these bills, as they go forward, are accepted by the leadership in California, you should please look toward Senator Seymour and Governor Wilson. I know they're going to be many mixed signals out there. But we will welcome the administration's overview and dedication to the fact that we have to balance environmental with jobs, economic, and people issues as we move forward for a solution to Central Valley water issues.

The President. The Seymour approach is far—and I'll put some names on it for you—the Seymour approach is far better, far better than Miller-Bradley. And yes, we're trying to—I don't want to be flirting around leaving any doubt. Miller-Bradley is unacceptable, unacceptable and I wouldn't sign it. We are now discussing it. We were talking about it coming up here on the plane as to how to move forward with implementation of a more sensible approach. So I appreciate your comments. It helps me understand the fervor of the feeling out here. But I'm not just saying this politically. We are not going to accept Mr. Miller's approach, seconded by Bradley.

Multilateral Trade Negotiations

Q. Mr. President, I'm a dairyman and a diversified farmer here in Fresno County. I want to thank you and your administration for pushing so hard for the successful conclusion of GATT as well as NAFTA. We thank you for hanging tough in agriculture, not giving in to the EC, the demands they have made upon us.

The concern that we have is on NAFTA, that recently the Canadians have said that they will not give up on their dairy quotas, that their dairy quotas are not negotiable. If we go ahead and negotiate a treaty where we have to give up our Section 22 and the Canadians give up none of their dairy quotas, we're put at a tremendous disadvantage. Our plea to you, sir, is hang tough on that deal.

We do want a free trade agreement. I believe that the future of American agriculture depends on international trade. But we do want an agreement that we can live with and that is fair to everybody, and hopefully, that we can hang on tough. But if they don't give, well, we don't want to give. We don't want to be put at a disadvantage.

The President. Let me comment. The gentleman makes a very good point. It's not simply Canada on dairies; it is EC on bananas, for example. And I might say the Canadian pitch on this one relates to the unity of Canada itself. They're worried that if they don't continue to protect dairies, that that gives the Quebec people kind of a shot with a lot of concentrated dairies there, pulling away from what used to be called the Meech Lake Accords, which is technical, but that was the effort by our friend, and he is a friend, Brian Mulroney, to hold Canada together.

But on your point, the difficulty that we have with the Canadian request or the request from some of our smaller friends in the Caribbean is, once you start down the road of exception, exception, exception, you get farther away rather than closer to an agreement.

So we've got problems. I talked earlier about the rice problem as it affects Japan. I mean, there's an enormous market there. When I deal with the Prime Minister, the various Prime Ministers of Japan, the push always is, "Please understand we've got enormously complex political problems on rice in the Diet, in our political legislature."

So we say, well, yes, but we can't have a successful conclusion if everybody excepts what is precious to him or her or whatever it is. So I think your point is very, very valid. And there are ways in these agreements to phase things in so people aren't hectored and harassed and thrown out of business at the outset. But the principle that you've outlined is one I believe is underlying, and I've instructed our negotiators accordingly, underlying our negotiations on

NAFTA and the GATT.

Ann, do you want to add to that? I appreciate your comments on it.

Agricultural Chemicals

Q. I'm glad to hear that you are America's environmental President because I think in this room today are America's first environmentalists. Farmers should be and are good environmentalists. We do not want to do anything that would poison the ground or poison our families. But I'm concerned about the deluge of regulation in the last decade, especially in regard to the use of farm chemicals.

I'm concerned especially about the minor-use chemicals that the chemical companies no longer wish to register. California grows over 250 different crops. Some of these crops are considered to be minor-use crops for some of the chemicals that we use. I'm concerned about the loss of those chemicals not because they are inherently bad but because the economics of the use really prohibits the chemical company from reregistering its chemicals for each of these minor-use crops.

Then we also have a problem with a major-use chemical, and that is methylbromide. As a nurseryman, we have a protocol in California whereby we cannot sell trees without following that protocol. It involves killing organisms within the soil, parasites that would eat the roots of the plants that we sell. Because of the strong phytosanitary regulations of the USDA and the California Department of Food and Agriculture, we are able to ship trees around the world. If we lose methylbromide, we will not only have the problem of not being able to ship around the world because we will have an inferior product, but we will have a problem within shipping in California because we can't meet the regulations. What can we do as good environmentalists but also as good business people to stem this regulatory tide?

The President. Let me say on that methylbromide, I'm certainly no expert on it. But I'll give you the philosophy again behind it. Decisions should be based on sound science. It is my understanding that the science is less than perfected as it relates to this chemical. It seems to me that the way to approach this problem is to be sure that the science is sound.

I would have to say, if the science proved that it was detrimental to the environment, I as President would be facing a significant problem because you cannot neglect the environmental destruction to our economy or to our country. So I think the answer is to try to move forward more fast on the science itself, as well as the alternate scientific work that's taking place.

Now, Ann knows a great deal more about this than I. Can you add something to that?

Deputy Secretary Veneman. Mr. President, I think that you're exactly right. We have to have the scientific evidence on these issues. We've certainly been trying in the USDA to work with EPA on the particular problems that face farmers as we deal with these chemical issues, and we'll try to continue to do that. Methylbromide does need additional science, and we'll participate in that to the extent that we can.

Energy Policy

The President. And I agree. I mean, I think farmers are not only environmentalists but conservationists. I think that's very, very important. I think we have to do it.

Incidentally, I would like to make a pitch for our energy bill that passed the Congress the other day, which does have some good, sound conservation in it, but also it balances out the need for this country to grow. I don't want to shift the subject away from your question, but in all these fields—and this gets back to this young man's question—in all these fields there's a question of philosophy on a lot of this stuff.

On our energy approach, we're trying to keep growth going through more energy sources and through conservation. Some would have you just do nothing on the former part of it, and I'm in a big fight, although it's not in this bill, on the ANWR, the Alaskan Wildlife Refuge. I am absolutely convinced that you can have prudent development, as we did in Prudhoe Bay, of that. And yet I'm in a big row with the environmentalists because they say, "Well, you say you're for the environment; how come you're for ANWR?" I'm saying ANWR can be developed without decimating the

environment or the species there, in this case caribou or whatever else it is.

So I just cite this because it is something in my job that you have to keep balancing, just as this guy's question was how do you balance the national security from domestic. Here's one: How do you balance domestic growth, families need to make a living, our hopefully becoming less dependent on foreign oil for a lot of reasons, and balance that with the environmental needs? And you've raised a more specific question. We've just got to keep that ethic going, and I think we can. I think we can do better on it.

Getting thrown out of here?

Q. Sir, we could sit here and talk all day long and probably all week long. We just appreciate so much your coming to Fresno and listening to our concerns. We wish you the best of luck in the near future.

The President. Let me say—thank you, Lee, very much. Let me just make this observation that you can't help but feel when you're here. We're talking about agriculture; we're talking about chemicals; we're talking about wetlands; we're talking about economic growth; we're talking about national security. These are all big issues. But I wish that Barbara Bush had been out here, the Silver Fox we call her, because I think she would sense the feeling of community and of family that we sensed when we lived in a climate not unlike this in west Texas for 12 years and long before I got wrapped up in the political world. These issues are terribly important.

But when we talk about family, you feel it when you walk into his house or his place of business and feel it just looking around this room. You get that sense this is something that is very important. And when those mayors came to me, long before the trouble in Los Angeles, and said, "The largest single concern we have about the decline in the cities, the biggest problem is the decline in the American family, the falling apart of the family."

So when Barbara hugs a child or we read to kids, it is trying as best we can to show the importance of family and the importance of the values that stem from family. I make that not as a pitch but just as a statement, because the Presidency is about issues. It's about doing your best. It's about national security, but it is also about understanding the strength of this country. And I've gotten a good lesson in that here today.

Thank you.

Note: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. at the Simpson Vineyards. In his remarks, he referred to Lee Simpson, owner of the vineyards, and Frans Andriessen, Vice President of the European Community Commission.

Remarks at the Miracles in the Sky Air Show in Fresno

May 30, 1992

I can hear you. We had a good look at the crowd there. And I want to salute Lonnie and Heidi English and I wish everybody there in the support of the Valley Children's Hospital all the best.

And I wish each of you could see this magnificent Air Force One piloted by Colonel Danny Barr. It's a marvelous airplane, and I think it represents our country very well as we go not just here but overseas as well.

I wish you well. This air show that will benefit the Valley Children's Hospital is just a wonderful thing. I salute you. I salute you all at TV 30 for their civic—I don't know how to say it, but the civic responsibility, you might say, of supporting this wonderful charity. But also you're bringing people a lot of happiness there.

So, good luck to each and every one of you. Again, to Lonnie and to Heidi who thought of this in the first place, well done. Well done. My only regret is I don't get down to see some of those shiny things we flew over.