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me when we do it.

Thank you.

NOTE: The question-and-answer session began at 1:50 p.m. in the Statler Tower Building.

Nomination for Posts at the Department of Energy

May 10, 1993

The President announced today that he intends to nominate Victor H. Reis to be Assistant Secretary of Energy for Defense Programs and that he has approved the appointment of Michael Gauldin to be Director of the DOE's Office of Public Affairs.

"I am very pleased to be adding these two people to the leadership of the Department of Energy," said the President. "Victor Reis is one of our country's leading defense researchers, and Mike Gauldin has been a valuable aide to me for years. They will each play a key role in helping Secretary O'Leary to meet her goals for the Department of Energy."

NOTE: Biographies of the nominees were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With High School Students in Bensonville, Illinois

May 11, 1993

The President. Thank you very much, Brian. Thank you, Dr. Meredith. And thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I'm glad to be here at this fine high school. I should also note before I begin that one of many reasons that I decided to come here is that this high school is the alma mater of an important member of my White House staff, Kevin O'Keefe, who graduated from Fenton High School. Where are you? Where's Kevin? Stand up. He didn't have that gray hair when he was here. I met, in addition to your principal and your superintendent, I met Charlotte Sonnenfeld on the way in here, who said she was a teacher of Kevin O'Keefe but was not responsible for him in any way. [*Laughter*]

I also want to thank a number of other people who are here, including several Members of Congress over here to my left, Bobby Rush, Luis Gutierrez, Cardiss Collins, and George Sangmeister. I think they're all here. And I want to thank Richard Dent of the Chicago Bears for coming. Stand up, Richard.

I also want to—is Michael Cruz over there? Is he here? No? Where is he? Here he is. Come here. This young man was on the President's town hall meeting with students. Did any of you see it? Did you see that? And he became a television star because he is a good student. He goes to school in Chicago, and he said he was worried about the safety of the schools and the streets. And he asked the President to try to make all the schools safe for students in every part of America, no matter how tough the neighborhoods were. And I was really proud of him, so I invited him to come here today. I think you ought to give him a hand. [*Applause*]

I know we've got students from other schools here. Where are you, all the students from the other schools that are here?

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Hey, hey. [*Laughter*] No, no, today's the day when you're supposed to welcome them here.

I want to say how very glad I am to be back in Illinois where I met so many people who shaped the thoughts and the feelings that I carried into the Presidential campaign last year. People who asked me to fight for their families and the future of their children, to help to fix our economy, to create more jobs, to bring the terrible budget deficit down, to deal with the health care and education challenges facing America. A lot of what I learned in that campaign last year I learned from talking to

people on the streets in the cities and towns of Illinois, and I'm glad to be back.

This week, some of the Members of Congress whom I hoped would be here are in Washington working on things of importance to you. Your two United States Senators, Paul Simon and Carol Moseley-Braun, are in the Senate today because they're going to vote on the motor voter bill, which will make it easier for young people to register and vote, an issue that's been a big issue for MTV and all the MTV watchers in the country who want to make young people a bigger part of the political process. And Congressman Rostenkowski and the other members of his committee are back in Washington, working on a plan that will help to bring the budget deficit down by over $500 billion over the next 5 years, so that you can grow up in an America that is not paralyzed by a crushing debt, as we have seen in the last 12 years.

But I don't want to talk just about those issues today. I also want to talk about tomorrow, about your tomorrows and about what it will take for you to make the most of the future all of us who have already been in your place and school are trying to make.

I've spent a lot of my time in Washington, in fact, most of my time, working on the economy and the health care crisis today, because I know that unless we can bring the deficit down and invest in jobs and technology and building a strong economy, America can't be what it ought to be. And I believe that unless we attack the problems of health care security and coverage and the enormous contribution that health care costs are making to the financial problems of this country, we can never restore real security to the American family or strength to the American economy or reduce the terrible deficit of this Government so that we can bring our budget into balance. So that's what I spend my time doing.

But I also know that no matter what we do on these issues, unless each and every one of you is a productive, well-educated, well-trained citizen able to take advantage of the opportunities of the world you will live in but also able to meet the highly competitive challenges of people from all over the world who will be struggling for many of the same opportunities that you want, that nothing I can do will change your individual lives. You have to do that. And that's why the provision of excellence in education and real educational opportunities are so important.

Those of you who have been able to go to this school or the other schools here represented can leave your high school with the confidence that you've had the opportunity to get a good education. But you should know that in the world you're living in, the average young American moving into the work force will change work seven or eight times in a lifetime. And more than ever before in the history of the country, what you are able to do in your work life, what you are able to earn, will be directly related not just to what you know today but what you can learn tomorrow. In the last—yeah, you can clap for that. That's a pretty good idea. Thanks. [*Applause*]

Now, in the last 12 years, there has been a dramatic difference, a widening growing-out between the earnings of young people who have at least 2 years of good education after high school in a community college, a good training program, or a 4-year college degree, and young people who drop out of high school or only finished high school. The clear evidence is that in the world in which you will live, you will need not only to make a personal commitment to learning and relearning throughout your lifetime but to getting at least—at least—2 years of education beyond high school and hopefully more.

Now, more and more people have got this figured out. College enrollments have grown up; explosive enrollment increases at 2-year community colleges and technical schools have been seen. Young people have figured that out. But there are still some problems with it, one of which is purely financial. The college dropout rate is more than twice the high school dropout rate, and one big reason is, a lot of people cannot afford to go or, having gone, cannot afford to stay.

How many of you want to go on to some form of further education when you get out of high school? Raise your hand. How many of you think you're going to need to borrow some money or get a scholarship or have some financial help to do it? Raise your hand. [*Applause*] I think it's nice that you can be enthusiastic about that.

You know, last year in Illinois alone, almost 180,000 educational loans were made. Five million educational loans were made in America last year. Higher education is really important. It's important to you economically. It's impor-

tant for reasons far more important than that, even. It promotes personal growth and gets you in contact with things that have happened in the past and ties you into this great civilization of ours. But it's all academic, to use an appropriate word, if you can't afford to go and stay.

Interestingly enough, the cost of a college education is perhaps the only essential in a family's spending patterns that has gone up more rapidly than health care in the last 10 years. And that's one big reason that the college dropout rate has increased. More and more young people have to deal with this.

On the average, in the country as a whole, tuition fees and room and board cost $5,240 a year at public institutions of higher education and $13,237 at private schools. The cost of these educations has gone up 126 percent in the last 10 years. That means that a lot of people who try to borrow money drop out and then can't repay the debt; others borrow the money and leave college with massive debts and don't know how to repay them. Still others might prefer when they graduate to be a teacher, for example, but they're afraid they can't meet their loan repayment schedule. They might wish to be a law enforcement officer or a police officer; they're afraid they can't meet their loan repayment schedule. That's a bad case of the tail wagging the dog. People actually deciding what to do with their lives based on the crushing burden of debt they have to get an education, the purpose of which was to be free to choose to do whatever you want to do with your life. We can do better than that.

One of the reasons that I ran for President is that I wanted to change that, because I know no economic policy, no health care policy, no reduction in the deficit can change what is in your mind and whether you are able to do well in the world that you will live in. You have to do that. But my generation owes it to you to give you the chance to be able to afford to get a good college education, to go and to stay.

A couple of weeks ago I unveiled a plan to do that based on four simple principles: First, we ought to lower the interest rates on the college loans that you borrow from—that you make. I don't know how many seniors here have already looked into college loans, but if you want a college loan that's guaranteed by the Federal Government, there's a lot of paperwork involved and a lot of hassle. That's because there are a lot of extra costs in there, from middle men, from banks, and from corporations, who profit from the current loan program.

Your Senator, Paul Simon, was the first person who ever came to see me well over a year ago to say that we ought to make loans directly to students from the United States Government in a financially secure way so that we could cut out paperwork, cut out all the time it takes to apply for them, and eliminate excess profits from middle men. Every student borrower can enjoy a lower rate if we do this. And if we adopt the plan that I have basically developed in cooperation with Senator Simon and others, we can save the American taxpayers $4 billion over the next 5 years and make loans available to you at cheaper rates. I'd say that's a pretty good idea.

The second thing we have to do is make it easier for students to pay the loan back. Today, the loan repayment obligation is directly related to how much you borrow, whether you have a job or whatever your job pays. What I want to do is to give every American young person who borrows money to get a 2-year or a 4-year education after high school the option of paying the money back based on how much you make, so that you can never be saddled with a debt burden greater than a certain percentage of your income. That way, there will never be an incentive not to be a teacher, not to be a police officer, not to work with kids in trouble, not to do whatever you want to do. You will be able to pay your loan back because it will be a percentage of your income. Regardless of how much you borrowed, we'll work it out so that the monthly payment is never too burdensome. That means nobody will be able to say they can't afford a college loan.

The third thing we want to do is to give tens of thousands of you the chance to earn credit against these loans before you go to college or while you're in college or to work them off after you get out of college, not by paying them off but by serving your country in a community service program, working with the elderly, working with other kids, working with housing programs, working with things that need to be done in the neighborhood or in nearby neighborhoods, or if you do it after you get out of college, working as teachers or police officers or in other needed areas in underserved communities in America. Just think of it. We could have tens of thousands of people who

could pay off their loans entirely by giving a year or two of their lives to make their countries and their communities better.

Finally—this is the one kicker—I hope you will clap for this, too, because it's important. [*Applause*] Wait until you hear it. [*Laughter*] A lot of people don't pay off their college loans at all. There is an unbelievable default rate. We lose about $3 billion a year from people who don't pay their loans back. Now, there's a reason for that, and I'll explain it more later. But one of the things we do, if we're going to loan you the money directly, we're going to collect the money directly, too, involving the tax records at tax time so you can't beat the bill. People who borrow money, once you make it possible for them to repay it, should not be able to welsh on the loans. That undermines the ability of children coming along behind you to borrow the money. People ought to have to pay the loans back if we make it possible for them to do it. Everybody ought to have to do that.

Now, this will make it possible for millions of young people to borrow money to go to college. I don't propose to weaken the Pell grant programs and the other scholarship programs; we want to keep strengthening them. But this will make it possible for millions of people to borrow money, never have to worry about whether they'll be able to pay it back. You won't have to pay it back until you go to work. When you do go to work, you can pay it back as a small percentage of your income. You will have to pay it back and will do it all at lower cost. This will open the doors of college education to millions of Americans.

Now, you might ask yourself, "Well, if it's that simple, why is this man here talking to me about it? Why don't you just go do it?" Here's why. A lot of people are doing well with the present system. They're making a lot of money out of the present system. There are 7,800 lenders today, people making the student loans. There are 46 different Agencies that guarantee these loans against failure. Then, there are all these people who service the loans and who buy the loans in big packages in ways that you couldn't even begin to understand, probably, but they're all making good money out of the present system. It's confusing and it's costly, and the more money that goes to other things, the less money that's available to provide low-cost loans to the students of America.

Typically, the student takes out a loan from a bank, and then the bank takes the note that you sign when you get the loan and sells it to a corporation. The corporation then makes a profit by packaging the loan to someone else. And the loan is ultimately guaranteed by whom? All of us, the American taxpayers. So nobody can lose any money on it. Now, the biggest middle man in the whole thing is called Sallie Mae, the Student Loan Marketing Association. Last year, lenders made a total profit of $1 billion on student loans. Sallie Mae made $394 million. And between 1986 and 1991—listen to this; this is a group that helps us get student loans, right, which should not be a big profit-making operation—the costs of this corporation went down by 21 percent and its profits went up by 172 percent. But you didn't get the benefits of it; someone else did.

Interestingly enough, banks make more profits and more guaranteed profits on student loans than on car loans or mortgages, but there's no risk. They don't have to worry if the student doesn't pay back the loan. Why? Because the Government will send them 90 cents on the dollar. And as all of you know if you follow this at all, there's not much incentive for a bank to come recover the loan because it costs more than 10 percent of the loan to hire a lawyer and go through a lawsuit and file all the papers and do all that. So every year, the Government just writes a lot of checks to people for the loans that students don't repay. The taxpayers foot the bill, and that's all money that we can't spend loaning money to you and people like you to go to college.

The system is not very good. The lenders do well, but the people who need to borrow the money for a college education are hurt as a result. And the taxpayers get hit coming and going: not enough money made available for student loans, too much money going out to increase the deficit by paying off loans that never get repaid.

So, you might say, "Why don't we change this?" Because in the system we have, the people that are making plenty of money out of the present system will fight it. And they will hire lobbyists who make their money by trying to influence the Congress. No sooner had I even mentioned changing this system than Congress was deluged with lobbyists. The biggest organization, Sallie Mae alone, supposed to be in the business of helping you get money to go to

college, has already hired seven of the most powerful lobbyists in Washington to try to stop this process from changing.

Now, there are a lot of people in Washington who want to keep the status quo. A lot of people don't want to lower the deficit, either. How did we get such a big national debt? How did the debt go from $1 trillion in 1980 to $4 trillion in 1992? Because we cut——

Audience member. Republicans.

The President. No, because we did what was popular. It wasn't just the Republicans; they had the White House, but let's be fair. Because how do you run up a big deficit? How do you run up a big deficit? The President proposes, and the Congress disposes. And it's popular in the short run to cut taxes and increase spending, right? I mean, that's popular. It's easy. I'll cut your taxes and send you a check. That's good, right? The problem is, is that at some point you run up debt after debt after debt after debt.

So what am I trying to do? What's not popular? I'm trying to cut spending and increase taxes, mostly on very wealthy Americans but not entirely, because we all have to try to recover our financial future. And I'm trying to do it in a way that preserves some money to invest in your education and new technologies for your jobs. But there are a lot of people who are making money out of a system that cuts taxes and increases spending, and it's not very popular to raise the money and cut the spending. That's the way it is here. There are a lot of people who are doing very well out of this system.

Now, why am I telling you this? Because it is your future on the line, and if you would like to have a system in which it is easier to borrow money to go to college, 2 or 4 years, and which it will be easier to pay it back and in which more of your tax money will be spent to benefit you and your education and your future, then you need to tell your Members of Congress, without regard to their political party, that you would like to have a better future, and this is a change that you want made.

This country is a very great country. It has been around for more than 200 years because every time we had to make real changes, we did it. Now the challenges we face are very much within our borders. It really bothers me that there are so many kids every year who are lost to the future as well as to themselves because of crime and drugs. It really bothers me that so many people drop out of college and don't get the future that they ought to have just because of the money involved. It bothers me that we spend so much more than any other country in the world on health care, but we don't provide health coverage to all our people, and all the other advanced countries do. And it bothers me that we're not creating jobs for you, but we're piling up debt for your future.

I believe we can do better. But we can only do it if we'll tell each other the truth, keep our eyes wide open, and if you will say, hey, it is my future. Look, I've lived most of my life. Unless I beat the odds and live to be 94, I've lived more than half my life—or 92. I can't even add anymore. I've lived more than half my life unless I live to be 92 years old. It is your life that's on the line. It is your future that's on the line. And our job now is to open it up for you and to face the problems of this time so that you have the same chance to live the American dream that your forebears did. That is our job, and you can help us do it.

Again, let me say, I thank you for letting me come here. I look forward to answering your questions. But when I'm gone, if you don't remember anything else I said, just remember this: There's a plan in Washington to provide more student loans at a more affordable rate so that more people can go to college and stay, but we have to have the courage to change to adopt it.

Thank you very much.

Moderator. Thank you, President Clinton. We understand that you have some time where you could answer some questions from our students. So if you'd have a seat, ladies and gentlemen, and raise your hand, we'll begin by asking you some questions.

Yes?

Student Loans

Q. My name is John Snodgrass. I'm a junior from Fenton High School, and I am wondering what the Government is doing about the families that are defaulting on the student loans?

The President. Well, we try to collect it. But the problem now is that very often the people who don't pay are unemployed, or very often the people who don't pay—there's another problem with this, by the way—are people who got educations from trade schools that couldn't deliver what they promised. That is, they said, "We'll train you, and you'll be able to get a good job, and you'll be able to get a high sal-

ary." And a lot of these schools have been able to rip off this system for years because they could charm—they would get all their kids into these programs through student loans, and then they didn't have to worry about whether they finished the program or got jobs, because they already had the student loan money.

So what we're trying to do is, number one, be tougher with the schools. If they're not good schools and they're not really educating the students so the students can repay the loans, we're trying to stop those schools from being eligible for it. Number two, we're looking at ways to toughen up the enforcement.

Here's the way I want to change it so we can collect from almost everybody. If I said to you, look, I'll give you a loan and you don't have to repay it until you actually get a job so you're earning the money. And then you may borrow—let's say you borrow $5,000 and she borrows $10,000 and she borrows $20,000, and you all take jobs earning $30,000 a year, right? The people who borrowed more money would be given the option of paying that loan back as a limited percentage of their income, even though it would take them longer to pay it back. At least they would be able to make the payments, and they wouldn't be defaulting. And then if they didn't pay it back, we would know that they didn't because the Government would have the records, and we would enforce it just like we enforce taxes. In other words, you couldn't beat the bill. If you had a job and you had an income, you would have to pay it back.

But right now, we get the worst of all worlds. We let somebody else make the loan, and we tell them if it's not paid back, we'll pay 90 percent of the loan, and then after all the time goes by, we've got to figure out how to collect it. So we're doing better, but we can do much, much better if we clean out a lot of the system that's there and go at it directly.

Who had a microphone? Anybody? Yes, in the back.

Drug Policy

Q. Going back to that point you made before about drugs, I was wondering which direction the national drug policy is going, whether you want to support more law enforcement in getting drugs off the streets or if you're going to move more towards rehabilitation and education?

The President. Well, I don't think you can do one without the other. But let me say, I believe we need to increase the emphasis on education, prevention, and rehabilitation because we know that's what works. That is, for several years in the 1980's, drug use went down among most groups of young people, largely because they figured out it would kill them. In other words, people decided to change their behavior from the inside out.

Now, that does not—you can't sacrifice law enforcement to that. I think we should do two other things. Let me just run it out real quickly. The second thing we should do is to adopt law enforcement strategies that will reinforce people taking responsibility for themselves and increase the likelihood that they will move off drugs or out of the drug culture. I'll just give you two examples.

One is community policing. Thirty-five years ago there were three policemen on the street in America for every crime committed. Today, there are three crimes for every policeman. It's very hard, therefore, to have enough police to walk the streets, to know the neighbors, to know the kids, and to be a force for preventing crime. Where that has happened, it has worked.

The man I named to be the drug czar in our administration, Lee Brown, was the police chief in Atlanta, Houston, and New York City. And when he left New York, in the areas where they had put in community policing, the crime rate was going down. In some of those neighborhoods, for the first time in 30 years, there had been a reversal in the crime rate. So I think you have to do that.

And the final thing I want to say is we still have a big stake in working with our friends and allies in other countries to try to stop drugs from coming into this country. And we are in the process now of reexamining whether there's anything else we can do to reduce the flow of drugs into the country. But I'll tell you one thing, if we all decided we'd stop taking them, the flow would dry up because there wouldn't be any demand. So we can't just worry about blaming people from outside.

Go ahead. Where's the microphone? Yes?

Defense Spending

Q. A big issue that has been in the newspaper and on the news is military cutbacks. What I'm curious about is, what is being cut back in bases, arms, manpower. My curiosity is because I've

enlisted in the U.S. Army. And is it going to effect my future if I decide to use it as a career and go my 20 years or anything like that. Will it affect me?

The President. Can you all hear his question? I'll repeat the question. He said he was concerned about military cutbacks. He wants to know what the nature of the cutbacks are, how far they will go. He's enlisted in the Army. Will that undermine his ability to make the Army a career because of the cutbacks.

Let me say, first of all, you know why the cutbacks are occurring. The cutbacks are occurring because an enormous percentage of our military force was directed against the Soviet Union, and it no longer exists. A lot of our nuclear arsenal was because they had a big nuclear arsenal, and we were positioned against them, and we had planes and ships supporting that, as well as people on the ground with land-based missiles. A lot of our military forces were positioned against all the troops they used to have in Eastern Europe, which have been withdrawn, and the military positioning they had around the world. So we have been able to—in fact, we've been obligated to reduce defense spending, starting in about '86 or '87 because of the receding nature of the threat. And that's good on the whole.

Now, the world is still a pretty dangerous place, and the United States is still the only comprehensive military power. And we have to be careful how we reduce that defense spending and how much we do it.

Right now, we're doing it across the board in three areas: We're reducing military personnel with the view toward going down to a base force of about 1.4 million over the next 5 years, down from over 2.5 million just a few years ago. So that's a lot of people that have been mustered out, including all volunteers, people who wanted to serve their country, many of whom would like to have stayed longer. So the answer to your question is, if we have a smaller base force, it will be more competitive to get into and to stay in the Armed Forces. The recruitment has already been scaled back. So if you've been recruited and if you're going in under the new, smaller recruitment quotas, you'll probably have a reasonable chance to stay in a good, long while if you choose to do it. But not so many good young people will. In that way, it's kind of sad, because the military has done a magnificent job of training and educating people, of inculcating them with good values and good work habits as well as good education. So that's one of the—kind of the down sides. The second thing we're doing is closing bases, and that's very unpopular. But you can't just cut the forces and not close the bases. And the third thing we've had to do is to cut back on a number of weapons procurements, which cost jobs in the defense industry.

So, on balance, this has been a good thing, but I want you to understand there are some bad consequences to it. And one of the struggles that I expect to have constantly for the next 4 years is to try to convince people in the Congress that as we cut defense we need to be reinvesting that money in education and technology in America to create jobs to replace those lost in defense.

And thank you for being willing to serve your country.

Government Gridlock

Q. Mr. President, I think the American people have become increasingly disenchanted with the lack of progress in our Government. How are you going to convince the American people and all the Members of Congress that your programs are good ones, and how are you going to break the filibusters that have been——

The President. Well, we've only had one. We broke them all but one. Keep in mind that I've just been there 100 days, and I had 12 years of a different direction before I took office. It's hard to turn it around in 100 days. I'm actually quite optimistic.

The Congress passed the outline of the budget I presented which, as I explained earlier, is a very tough thing, you know, to bring the deficit down in a record time, the first time in 17 years under Democrats and Republican Presidents the Congress had ever passed the budget resolution within the time limit. So I think we're moving fairly rapidly.

Just shortly after I took office, Congress passed the Family and Medical Leave Act, guaranteeing people the right to take a little time off from work when they have a sick child or a sick parent or a baby is born, without losing their jobs. That had gone through 8 years of fights and two vetoes. The Congress is trying to pass today this motor voter bill, which would really open up the political process to millions of Americans. So I think we are making progress.

Now, let me also tell you that some of this stuff is really hard. I mean the reason that these things have not been done before is that we've done easy things for 12 years. What I'm asking the Congress to do are things that are really hard, and it may take a while to do it. But I'm not prepared to say, at the moment anyway, that we've lost the battle to gridlock. I don't agree with the minority of Senators who filibustered the jobs bill. But that was not just a political battle; that was an idea battle. A lot of them thought that we shouldn't spend any money on anything until we pass the overall budget which reduces the deficit, even though I knew we were going to.

My view was: We're going to pass this budget, we're going to reduce the deficit, and we've got to get some jobs in this economy. So that was an issue I didn't win on. I'm not going to win every issue I'm fighting. But I believe that we have a real chance to make this Government work, and I'm basically quite optimistic about it.

The one thing I would urge you not to do, any of you, is to put too much faith in just the day-to-day development of the news. You have to take a long-term view of this. And we've had this health care problem for a long time. We've had this economic problem for a long time. And in just a very short time we've been able to put these issues back on the national agenda and move them forward. So I think what you need to do is to remind everybody you can remind—if you want to know what you can do and what the American people can do, it's to try to make everybody think in a less partisan way, not worry about the fights between Republicans and Democrats, and think more every day about what are the problems of this country. And if you don't like what President Clinton says, what's your alternative?

In other words, let's just keep moving the ball forward. What I try to do is to put these problems high on the national agenda and try to ask people to lay down their partisan armor and look at these problems in a new and different way and keep pushing the ball forward. So if you don't like what I want to do about it, then if you're not going to support that, then come up with some alternative so we can do something. The worst thing we can do is stay in paralysis. Let's do something. That, I think, ought to be the message.

Financial Aid for Education

Q. In the past, the financial aid has been based upon a quota system for racial and ethnic minorities. I'm wondering if you're planning to continue this quota system or will it be based on talent and merit and needs straight across the board?

The President. There may be certain minority scholarship programs in certain universities. But the program that I would speak of, both national service and the student loan program, would be available across-the-board. I mean—and I believe—and the student loan program should be available across-the-board virtually without regard to income once you can guarantee that the repayment is going to be there so you don't have to worry about loaning too much money. That's what I think. I favor broad-based and inclusive programs and national service will also be broad-based and inclusive.

I think you have to make efforts to include people from all races and income groups, and I would want to see that done because we have a big stake in making sure that we close the disparity in income and race of people getting an education, because if you come out the other end of the educational system, then the income differences tend to vanish. But I don't think anyone should be excluded, and I don't want to ration this program. I want to open this program to all Americans.

Space Program

Q. Mr. Clinton, I'd like to know what your views are on the space program, if you are in favor of cutting anything or improving anything?

The President. In general, I support strongly the space program and the NASA budget. I have some problems with the space station itself for a couple of reasons. One, it's a hugely expensive program, and there's a lot of debate within NASA itself about whether the old designs should be continued, whether we need that space station design. Secondly, it's had staggering cost overruns. Every time we turn around they're coming back for hundreds of millions of more dollars. And with the deficit the way it is and all these other problems, we can't afford it. So what NASA is doing now is trying to redesign the space station and come up with a multi-year space program that I hope we can get strong bipartisan support for.

I think it would be a big mistake for America

to drastically cut back its role in space. Now I've been criticized for cutting back on the space station, but I haven't cut back the NASA budget. We have cut back the rate of increase that they want to cover all the cost overruns for anything that happens. I just don't think we can do that with the old space station design.

So we're now looking at three alternatives for the space station to take a new and modified course. But I think it would be a great mistake for America to withdraw from space exploration and from work in space. For one thing, it's one of the ways that we may find answers to a lot of our environmental problems as well as to continue to build our scientific and technological base after we cut defense. So I hope we can continue to support it.

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Go ahead. We'll take one more and then I'll take this young man's. Go ahead.

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, I was wondering with all the news about Bosnia, do you see any differences in sending troops to Bosnia where you were strongly opposed to civil war in Vietnam in the late sixties?

The President. Well, first of all, I do. That's a good question. But I have never advocated the United States unilaterally sending troops to Bosnia to fight on one side or the other of the civil war.

Let me just say what's complicated about it. There plainly is a civil war in Bosnia that is, among other things, a fight primarily between the Serbs and the Muslims but also involving the Croatians. It is complicated by the fact that Serbia, a separate country, has intervened in it, and complicated by the fact that the United Nations before Bosnia, the nation of Bosnia was even recognized, imposed an arms embargo in the area. But the practical impact of the arms embargo that the United Nations imposed was to give the entire weaponry of the Yugoslav Army to the Serbian Bosnians and deprive any kind of equal weaponry to the people fighting against them. So the global community had, not on purpose, but inadvertently, has had a huge impact on the outcome of that war in ways that have been very bad.

My position has been pretty simple and straightforward from the beginning. I think that without the United States unilaterally getting in, or without even—I don't think the United Nations should enter the war on one side or the other. But I think there is much more that we can do to induce the parties to stop the fighting, to do what we can to stop this idea of ethnic cleansing: murdering people, raping children, and doing terrible acts of violence solely because of people's religion. Biologically, there is not much difference between the Muslims, the Croatians, and the Serbians there. The ethnic differences are rooted in religious and historical factors.

Thirdly, we want to try to confine that conflict so it doesn't spread into other places and involve other countries, like Albania and Greece and Turkey, which could have the impact of undermining the peace in Europe and the growth and stability of democracies there.

So I think the United Nations, the world community can do more in that regard. That's quite a different thing than what happened in Vietnam where the United States essentially got involved in what was a civil war on one side or the other. There are some remarkable similarities to it which should give us caution about doing that. There are similarities to that. There are similarities to Lebanon. But that does not mean, just because—I wouldn't propose doing exactly what the United States did in Vietnam. That does not mean that the United States should not consider doing something more, especially if we can get the Europeans who are after all closer to it, who have a more immediate stake in it, to try to help us to stop the ethnic cleansing, the continued fighting, and minimize dramatically the risk of the war spreading.

So that's what we're struggling for an answer to. It's a very, very difficult problem.

Students and the Educational System

Q. Mr. President, what do you feel we as students can do to better the U.S. educational system?

The President. Read more. Read more. I think you can read more. I think you can establish tutoring groups in schools where the students that are doing well help those which aren't. There's a lot of evidence that by the time somebody reaches your age that you all have more influence on one another than I would on any of you. And there's a lot of evidence in schools that are succeeding that when students work with each other either in the same classroom or across grade lines, that the overall performance of the school goes up.

Interestingly enough, there are a lot of studies even showing at elementary schools that this is true and certainly true in high schools. So I think one of the things that I have seen work repeatedly over the last dozen years that I've spent countless hours in schools with students and teachers is that kind of working together.

The third thing that I think you can do is to speak out in a way for a culture of learning and for good values in the schools. I think that's important. I think if the students want a school to be a place where learning is valued and where everybody counts and where violence or drugs or other bad behavior are not tolerated, the students can have more to do with getting rid of it than anything else if it is a bad thing, if everybody looks down on it. And I think that can make a huge difference.

It's so limited what the rest of us can do to help the schools unless there is a right sort of feeling in the hearts of the young people involved. And I think anything we can do to convince all students that they count, that they matter, that we need them all, that they shouldn't drop out, that they can learn, anything we can do in that regard school by school, class by class, year by year, is going to make education in this country a lot better.

The last thing I think you can do is to decide what you think is wrong with education and how we can make it better and tell people like me about it. In other words, tell us from your perspective how we can make your schools a lot better, what you need, how we can give you a better future, what we're not doing that we could be doing. Those are the things you can do.

Moderator. President Clinton, I understand we have time for one more question.

Women in the Armed Forces

Q. Yes. I have a question about women in the military. I heard that they're going to be able to go in combat now. Is it going to become a law that they're going to be drafted also?

The President. I'm sorry I didn't hear you. Go ahead.

Q. I've heard rumors that women are going to be able to be in combat now in the military. So I'm wondering, are they going to be able to be drafted like men?

The President. First of all, men are not drafted. We have an all volunteer service. There are no draftees. Anyone who goes into the service is like this young man. The men or women choose to go. And we have a lot of people who want to go now because of the justifiably high esteem in which our military is held. I can tell you that you can talk to any career service officer, and he or she will tell you that we have the best educated, best trained, best equipped, highest morale military service we have ever had. And it also, by the way, is the most diverse one we've ever had, opening up more opportunities to women and to all members of all races that we've ever had. And yet it's the best educated, best trained, best equipped, best able military service we have ever had although it's under a lot of stress now because of all the downsizing.

The Service Chiefs in the Joint Chiefs of Staff have decided that they ought to open up some more combat roles to women, principally on combat ships. The Navy, for example—I bet a lot of you don't know this—the Navy now has three noncombat ships under the command of women, the United States Navy does.

But Admiral Kelso, the Chief of Naval Operations, had decided that some more combat ship roles should be open to women. And then there was also a decision made that women ought to be eligible to fly combat missions in the face of clear evidence that the airplanes they fly today require not strength so much as response, the capacity for quick and agile response. And there's a lot of evidence that women are at least as good in some of those functions as men, so the Joint Chiefs made that decision. That was a military decision in which I did not intervene at all. I think if the evidence supports it, it's a very good decision. But I want you to know it was made based on the evidence in the case and made by the military, and they deserve the credit.

Well, I could do this all day long. You have been terrific and I'm very proud of you, and you've asked wonderful questions, all of them were very good. I wish you well. Have a good day. And don't stop thinking about these educational issues. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 a.m. in the gymnasium at Fenton High School. In his remarks, he referred to Brian Shamie, student council president; John G. Meredith, superintendent

of schools; and Kevin O'Keefe, Special Assistant to the President. A portion of the question-and-answer session could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks to the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
May 11, 1993

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President, for that wonderful introduction and for being such a great partner in the campaign of 1992 and in this administration. I think it is fair to say that Vice President Gore has already exercised a larger role in this administration than perhaps any Vice President in the history of this country. And I hope he will continue to do so.

I'm honored to be here with Ralph Neas and with my longtime friend Benjamin Hooks. Don't you just love to hear Ben talk? I mean, really, I could hear him intone those poems from now until tomorrow morning, reminding me of the rhythms of my childhood and the faith of our parents.

I'm proud to be here with all of you tonight not only because of what you have done for the last four decades and more but because of what together we must do now. I'm proud of your commitment to civil rights. I'm proud to be here with our Attorney General, Janet Reno, who is the embodiment of that.

I thank you for the vote of the national board of the leadership conference today to support the nomination of Lani Guinier to be Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. I want to say a special word of support for Lani Guinier. I went to law school with her, and I announced at the Justice Department the other day when we announced all of our Assistant Attorneys General that she had actually sued me once. [*Laughter*] Not only that, she didn't lose. And I nominated her anyway. So the Senate ought to be able to put up with a little controversy in the cause of civil rights and go on and confirm her so we can get about the business of America.

I want to say, too, how honored I am to be here with your honorees. My friend Dorothy Height: From the freedom schools in Mississippi to the Black Family Reunion, what a guiding spirit she has been to all of us.

I want to take my hat off to Raul Yzaguirre for his leading voice. Over 20 years ago, I first came in contact with La Raza as a movement and a commitment. And I have watched them over these years help people all across the country with the practical problems of life which give real meaning to the idea of civil rights, when you can actually live in a decent house and have a decent job and know your kids are going to get a decent education and know that you're going to be treated fairly no matter what your race is.

I want to say, too, how very much I admire Justin Dart for all the work that he's done as Chair of the President's Commission on Employment of People with Disabilities and leader in making the Americans with Disabilities Act come to life. You know, Justin, every time we went anywhere in the campaign and had a rally, we always had a section for people with disabilities. Today I went to a suburb north of Chicago, in a heavily Republican community, as it turned out, to meet with a bunch of students from the high school that I was visiting and other high schools and people in the community. And we had a big section there for the students with disabilities. And I was thinking as I was coming over here tonight, a lot of those kids are where they are today because of what you did—and you ought to be proud of that—sitting in the front of the row so they can ask the President their questions and shake hands with the President; instead of being overlooked, being uplifted.

I say that to you to make one introductory point. I've been here for 100 days and a sum, fighting to break the gridlock in Washington. And sometimes I think the biggest gridlock of all is the gridlock in our minds, the hold that foolish notions have on our imaginations. I have been roundly attacked by people on the extreme right trying to make me look like some radical leftwinger because I had this crazy notion that I ought to have an administration that would have some diversity and give women as well