

Remarks to the Hispanic Alliance for Free Trade

May 9, 1991

Thank you very much. And some of that has to do, I think, with my fibrillating heart—[laughter]—but it's all right. I just came back from Bethesda and really got a wonderful report. I won't go into the clinical assessment, but it's great. I just take something to do with the thyroid, and the heart is perfect. So, I'm very lucky, very, very lucky.

I came over to talk to you today about an issue that is really of vital concern to me and, I think, of our country. And I have some talking points here, but let me just put them away and speak from the heart. I see my friend the Ambassador here, and I have great respect for him. And I might say I have enormous respect for President Salinas of Mexico.

And he is taking that country that we all love and moving it in a direction that we can all admire. And it would be a terrible tragedy if we took this Fast Track authority from Mexico and pulled it away and turned it down. I think it would send an outrageously bad symbol, not only to Mexico but to the countries to the south. We've got a real opportunity while I'm President to build stronger relations with South America.

I've been down there; I've talked endlessly to the Presidents of the various countries. Just the other day, Gus, Carlos Andres Perez of Venezuela was in. He doesn't benefit from a free trade agreement with Mexico, but he said: You cannot let this fail. The signal that this would send through our part of the world would just be unconscionable.

And so, I am committed to this. And I'm committed to it not just because it's good for Mexico. I'm the President of the United States, and all of us are citizens of the United States—Gus, that leaves you out—[laughter]—but we've got to do what's in the best interest of the United States. And this is in the best interest of the United States.

And I can understand the concerns about the environment, but as Ambassador Hills

tells you, we have good answers for that. Mexico is moving on their own. Carlos closed down PEMEX refinery, an enormously difficult political move for him. And yet, he did it. And many other businesses that were polluting have closed down. And the way to help with pollution on the border is to raise the standard of living down there so people can have more money to put into these things that we hold near and dear to our hearts.

And so, I approach this on a foreign policy basis as thinking that it's essential. And I approach it in terms of our own economy as thinking it's essential. We think it will create jobs. I am offended, frankly, by some of the advertising I've seen that I honestly find discriminatory. And I don't like it, and I'm troubled by it. I can understand a labor union person wondering whether it's going to cause drops, but I think we have good answers for it. And I think the answer is it will add to American jobs. And I'm going to keep working with Carla Hills to get that message out to the United States Congress.

But I really wanted to come over to exhort you all to sally forth to the Hill up there—you've got many friends up there—and use your best influence in the best tradition of persuasion of the Congress to make them understand that the Fast Track authority will create jobs, it will open up more trade between countries, it will raise the standards of living along the border on both sides, in my view, and it's going to be a wonderful thing. And I want our administration, indeed, to be firmly committed in terms of free trade, because history shows it results in prosperity.

And so, this is where we stand. And I thank you all very, very much for your interest in it. And do exactly what Carla Hills tells you to do. Thank you all very much.

Note: The President spoke at 10:19 a.m. in the Old Indian Treaty Room of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Gustavo Petricoli Iturbide,

Mexican Ambassador to the United States; President Carlos Salinas de Gortari of Mexico; President Carlos Andres Perez of Venezuela; and U.S. Trade Representative Carla A. Hills.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar de la Guerra of the United Nations May 9, 1991

Iraq

The President. Welcome everybody.

Q. ——— police force in northern Iraq?

The President. We're not taking any questions today. Thank you very much. The Secretary-General might want to, but I——

Q. Are you hoping that all of the American forces will be out of Iraq soon?

The Secretary-General. Well, I think that that is the wish of our American friends, and as well as the wish of the United Nations.

The President. That's for sure.

The Secretary-General. I think the stations in Iraq are properly settled, but I think we have to be patient.

Q. Are you in favor of a police force—a U.N. police force in northern Iraq?

The Secretary-General. That's what we are going to discuss with the President and with his collaborators. But today I have received a very clear rejection from the Iraq Government. They do not want a United Nations police presence in the area. Right now, as we——

Q. They don't want the U.N.?

The Secretary-General. They don't want the U.N.

Q. That's par for the course, isn't it? I mean, so what? [*Laughter*] Does that mean you have to comply?

The President. Well, listen, we've got to get to work here. We've got to get to work. I want to discuss all this with the Secretary-General.

Q. Does that mean you have to comply?

The President. And we will discuss all this and then figure out what to do.

Q. Did it come from Saddam?

The Secretary-General. Well, I think—I have a special envoy there, Mr. Goulding, and he was the one who received from the Minister of Foreign Affairs the negative reaction.

Note: The exchange began at 11:05 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A reporter referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Secretary-General referred to Marrack Goulding, U.N. Under Secretary-General, and Foreign Minister Ahmad Husayn Khudayir al-Samarra'i of Iraq.

Remarks Following Discussions With Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar de la Guerra of the United Nations May 9, 1991

The President. I want to welcome you to the White House today. I discussed with you many of the issues on the world's agenda. In a moment I'll mention some of the challenges, common challenges we face, but before, permit a personal observation.

I think back to the times that we worked

together as Perm Reps up there 20 years ago, and I still wonder how it is that I ended up with the easier job. [*Laughter*] But the problems that arrive at your doorstep often are the product of years of violence and strife. It falls to you to find, through so much hatred and bitterness, the