

curement, we've got to keep in mind that production lines for planes and tanks and ships cannot be turned on and off like water from a faucet. We've got to keep our technological edge, keep our R&D focused on the next generation of weapons that you'll need to succeed.

In conclusion, I just want to turn now to a final challenge, one that begins with a hard-won truth that shines through this century's great conflicts: America is safest at home when we stand as a force for stability in the world. In many respects, reaffirming this truth in our new world may be the greatest challenge of all because the history of this century reveals in the American character a desire to see in every hard-won victory a sign that America's work in the world is done. Such an urge is not unusual in democracies. It's a trait found in nations more interested in the quiet joys of home than in the glories of conquest abroad. But it can be devastating in a world that still holds dangers for our interests and ideals.

Winston Churchill made this point the theme of the last volume in his epic history of World War II. He called it, "How the great democracies triumphed and so were able to resume the follies which had so nearly cost them their life." Once more, our challenge is to avoid the folly that Churchill warned of, to remain engaged in the world as a force for peace. We will do it with your help, through the leadership you pro-

vide. Today, John Paul Jones would say, "The measure of a ship is not its guns but its courageous men and women." Your courage, your integrity, your ability to lead, these are the qualities on which our Nation's security depends.

More than once this century, America has proved its mettle. More than once, we've come late to conflict and turned back mortal threats to freedom. But as a Nation, we have yet to prove that we can lead when there is no enemy on the doorstep. We have proved and proved again we can win the war. Now we must wage the peace.

Once again, to this wonderful graduating class, I wish you well. I wish you Godspeed. And thank you all for this warm welcome. May I thank the families that have labored in sweat to provide this wonderful day for these wonderful midshipmen, now to be ensigns or lieutenants. Welcome, congratulations to the class of 1992. And may God bless the United States of America, the freest, greatest country on the face of the Earth. Thank you very much.

Note: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. at the Navy/Marine Corps Memorial Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Laurence Garrett III, Secretary of the Navy; Rear Admiral Thomas C. Lynch, Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy; and Midshipman 1st Class Robert Boehning, an honorary graduate.

Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion With the Mount Paran Christian School Community in Marietta, Georgia

May 27, 1992

The President. Thank you, Dr. Walker, and all of you for taking your time. But what I wanted to do is just say a couple of brief remarks and then listen to you.

Tomorrow there's a report coming out on the schools. It's an NAEP report. I think it will be announced by the Education Department. And it's got some troubling statistics in it, conclusions in it about kids: too much television; not enough reading, parents reading to the kids, kids doing reading,

And I just wish Barbara were here because she spends a great deal of her life encouraging families to read together and teachers and kids to read together. But this report is going to say that we've got a long way to go.

Having said that, I am told that this school sets a pretty darn good example for the rest of the State, community, and Nation really in terms of parental involvement, which we think is absolutely funda-

mental, and also in terms of teacher-kid relationship. So what I want to do is to hear from you as to how you think it's working.

We think in America 2000 we have a good, strong education program. It puts emphasis on school choice. When I got out of the Navy a jillion years ago—it's on my mind because I was at the Naval Academy graduation today; did not go there, but when I got out of the service we had the GI bill. You could choose whether you wanted to go to whatever school. Similarly, in some of the grant programs for higher education you can choose. We think choosing public, private, religious schools makes all schools better. Competition never hurt anything. And we think it is a good way to go. So choice is a part of our America 2000 program. And then part of it is simply, in a revolutionary way, redesigning American education. But not dictating from Washington: Say here's a community; you come up with what you think is best for your community. Here's an urban area, and you all decide what you think is best.

And so this is our approach, and we've got a great Secretary of Education, Lamar Alexander. Dr. Roger Porter, over here, is with me in the White House, is an expert on not only what we're trying to do but I think on American education. So if you ask me questions I can't answer later on in the question-and-answer period, I'll just simply turn to Roger.

But I'm told that it works for you, that you're getting good results. And I'd like to know from all of you, board members, students, whether that conclusion is correct, and if so, why.

Jim—I met your headmaster down there. I don't know whether we have an order here, but maybe he's a good one to start it off.

[A participant said that competition is good for education, as demonstrated in Japan.]

The President. This is the point, ironically, that Benno Schmidt, who just left my university, Yale, yesterday to work with developing brand new schools, revolutionary schools, made on one of the television shows this morning, the point that choice breeds competition, and competition leads to excellence in the schools that are chosen.

And then those that aren't, I am told by education officials in Minnesota and elsewhere, upgrade themselves.

How do you feel about all of this? Not on just this subject, but any. What do you want to share with us about your educational experience?

[A participant said that competition and parental involvement are key elements.]

The President. Is there a special way in which you involve parents, or is it kind of an enhanced PTA way of doing it? Again, I think one of the things that this report tomorrow that Lamar Alexander will be announcing said is that we just have got to find more ways to get parents and kids involved. We're talking here about mainly, I think, Roger, out of the public schools, this report is based on findings; but parent involvement with kids, homework, reading, particularly reading. This relates largely to reading, this report that will be out. And we're just not performing as a Nation.

But do you all have very active parent participation at the school, or is it just encouraging parents at home to do more with the kids. Who can pitch in on that one?

[A participant described parental involvement in the classroom and teacher involvement with the family. Another participant discussed parents' purchases of school equipment.]

The President. Some schools in the public school system really do strive for that. It doesn't have quite the same feeling, but they have much more active parental relationships than others. And I'm told that those make a tremendous difference.

Who else?

[A participant said that teachers send home parent information packets regularly. Another participant said that teaching moral values in schools was important.]

The President. And I keep saying this, but I'll repeat it to you all. I said it in the State of the Union. When the mayors from these National League of Cities came to see me, some from gigantic cities—Los Angeles, Tom Bradley was one of them—to small, almost towns, to medium-sized cities like—I think of Plano, Texas, which is fairly small—

and united, Republican, Democrat, liberal, conservative, about the root cause of much of our urban decline was the diminution of the family, the decline of the American family.

And yes, we get criticized for raising it, but we're going to keep on talking about that and trying to encourage family participation. We've got this family commission, this commission on the family, and they will be reporting in a few months, looking at legislation to see if there's anything in the legislation that encourages through financial incentive a husband and wife to live apart, for example. We can't have that anymore. They're going to be looking at all kinds of things to come in with recommendations as to how to turn around this decline in the American family, the falling apart of the family structure. And I will keep on talking about it, and I think it's something that the American people are sensitive to and want to find ways to help.

And so we'll keep trying. And when Barbara goes out and hugs a kid and talks about reading to children, I think this is the way you strengthen families. If a kid comes home from school, no matter how impoverished the neighborhood, and picks up a book and sits with the kid and they read back and forth, that helps. And there's no question about it. And it might not be as sophisticated as some of our critics would like to have it, but it's fundamental. And it's good, I think. And so, when I sit there in the diplomatic entrance of the White House in what, okay, is somewhat show-biz reading to kids, it's supposed to send a signal that this is a good thing to do.

What were you going to say?

[A participant asked if the role of schools would evolve in response to increased family instability.]

The President. One of the national goals is to have learning take place in a safe and sound environment. I think a lot of schools are way out in front; I assume this is one of them in terms of no drugs, for example, in terms of getting the place safe. I expect you don't have a day-to-day gun problem in this school. Regrettably, other schools do. And so, one of the six national goals is to have a safe and sound place for people to

live.

So I do see evolution towards that end. I am not pessimistic about all this. Unfortunately, in terms of our national education bill, we got socked in the House of Representatives by people that wanted to do it the old way, the way that has failed. That does not want choice, for example, and that wants to have it all mandated out of some subcommittee in Washington. We don't need that. I think the country has seen that doesn't work. So, with our new American schools concept for example, we're saying to communities: You figure it out. Marietta, Georgia, might have somewhat different requirements than downtown Chicago.

And so this is the approach we're taking. And I do see a favorable evolution towards these ideas, but I'm not sure, given the recalcitrance in Congress today, that it's going to happen overnight. We're going to keep pushing because I think the six goals, you know, are sound: Math and science. And you know, nobody's too old to learn; it gets into your whole feeling of adult education. Tests, volunteer, but nevertheless standards so a parent can tell how his or her kid adds up to others across the country. These are good. Knowledge in the key five subjects, that's another one of the goals.

So I think the education goals that were set by Governors, including Georgia's, in a very constructive role a few years ago are valid and sound. And what we're saying is give the communities and private schools, public schools, religious schools the flexibility from Washington to achieve these national goals. And I think it's sensible. And I think we got a long way to go before everyone in the country's behind this, but I think it's evolving in an evolutionary way.

[A participant said that parents, rather than outside sources such as television, must set moral guidelines for children.]

The President. Let me just amplify what you've said here because I think that's great. You mentioned television. This report that's being issued tomorrow will say that the American students spend little time reading for pleasure or as part of their schoolwork, rarely visit the library, and watch television on average more than 3 hours a day. It will also go on to scientific-

ly state that those that watch it 2 hours or less do better. And 2 hours is a lot of TV, but I mean, that is a conclusion of the report. Now, who turns the set off? Probably the parents or some counselor saying, "Look, here's what happens to you if you don't," or whoever gives out the homework. Those are things that I think are vital.

[A participant asked about tax breaks for private school tuition and said that parental involvement is a key to student success.]

The President. That's a good point. I think we do have to face the fact that some parents can't afford tuition, but they can afford to have an environment that encourages the kind of values we're talking about. We've got to strive to that.

[A participant said that parents should be involved in their children's education and schools should not have to fulfill the role of parents.]

The President. I think it's a very good point, and that's why parental involvement in public schools is very, very important. And where it is so hopeless, where it is so disrupted, you do have schools, programs like Cities in Schools run by a guy named Bill Milliken, where they actually have to go in some of the really tough city areas and get city officials who almost adopt a kid. That kid isn't in school, go to the house and find out why the child wasn't there. Was the single parent on drugs, and if so, how does society help give that kid a chance? The theory being every kid, no matter what situation, has to have somebody who knows his name and cares about him.

And that is something that I don't think is a problem here, quite obviously, but it is a problem in some schools. And I think we hope that in this encouragement of family involvement, it will take some of that burden away. But where it still remains, we have got to find ways to have every kid have a mentor, every kid have someone who cares about them, lifts them up, brushes them off when he gets hurt, sends him off to school.

[A participant said that teachers' involvement in students' lives is important.]

The President. I think that's true. Yet I think we have to say, and I expect the teachers here would say, that there are teachers in the public schools that do give the kids that. So I know you know that, but it's a very valid point, Brian, that you're making.

I think of the guy that just was in to see me the other day. I don't know if any of you saw the movie "Stand and Deliver," Jaime Escalante teaching calculus to these kids. I was out and watched him in school. He was a super guy. But here he is teaching kids that are disadvantaged. They come to him with no special privilege. They're largely Hispanic. Some of them have a poor grasp of English when they come there, and yet he is such a teacher that he just makes it come alive. And it is very exciting to watch him and to listen to him and to be inspired by him. And so I guess what I'm saying is we need more Jaime Escalante in all schools. And yet, I'm not arguing your point.

[A participant said that home, school, and church need to work together.]

Participant. Mr. President, we'd like to have you here for the rest of the afternoon. But your people are giving me signals and you signals.

The President. So, thank you all for giving me your time. I'm just sorry I talked so much and didn't give everybody a chance. Thank you.

Note: The President spoke at 5:14 p.m. in a classroom at the Mount Paran Christian School. In his remarks, he referred to Paul L. Walker, senior pastor, Mount Paran Church of God; Roger B. Porter, Assistant to the President for Economic and Domestic Policy; Benno C. Schmidt, president of Yale University; James R. Heyman, headmaster, Mount Paran Christian School; and William E. Milliken, president of Cities in Schools, Inc.