

two centuries ago.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:42 p.m. at the Jefferson Memorial.

Remarks at a Town Meeting on Goals 2000 April 13, 1993

The President. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

I'm glad to be here with my friends Dick Riley and Bob Reich, also members of my Cabinet, at the headquarters of the Chamber of Commerce to support the effort that the chamber is making, along with its Center for Work Force Preparation, to help to examine tonight the whole critical question of how to move our young people from school to the workplace.

I want to compliment the chamber on all their efforts, recognizing that without an educated work force we can't grow this economy or remain competitive and recognizing that we all have to work together, business and Government, labor and educators, to make things happen. This satellite town meeting is a good example of that kind of working together. And if you'll forgive me a little home State pride, I want to say a special word of thanks to the Wal-Mart Corporation, headquartered in Bentonville, Arkansas, for providing several hundred of the sites for this town meeting tonight. I appreciate that a lot, as well as the sites that are provided for all the rest of you.

I have tried as hard as I could to move toward constructive change for this country. Secretary Riley talked about this being Thomas Jefferson's 250th birthday. If Thomas Jefferson believed in anything, he believed in these three things: first, in education; second, in real personal liberty, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of the press; and third, in the absolute imperative of changing as times change.

If you go to the Jefferson Memorial here in this beautiful city, which is now bedecked with all of its wonderful cherry blossoms, you will see Jefferson saying that we have to change with changing times. For us here in America that means reducing our deficit and increasing our investment and putting our people first so that we can compete in the world. We're here to talk about that tonight, about what we can do

to educate and train our people better. Unless we do that, none of the efforts that all the rest of us make in Government, even to bring the budget into balance, even to increase our investment in other things which will grow jobs, will last in the long run.

We also have to have people who can carry their load. And in a world where the average young person will change jobs seven or eight times in a lifetime, that begins with the education system and continues into the work force where education must go on for a lifetime. It's not just important what you know but what you can learn.

And if I might, I'd like to close just by emphasizing we're doing our best to try to have the most innovative partnership between the Labor Department and the Education Department and the private sector to build a good school-to-work transition. And we're trying to get off to a good start this summer with a program that would create more than 700,000 new summer jobs, including many thousands that have a strong education component so our young people can be learning and working at the same time.

Dick, I think I ought to stop there. That's a good place we can begin, I think, the discussion.

[At this point, Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley discussed the Summer Youth Challenge program and asked the President to explain the importance of educational enrichment in summer jobs.]

The President. I think it's important for two reasons. First of all, a lot of the young people we're trying to reach may have had trouble adjusting to school and learning. And while we want them to have a good experience with a real job, we also want them to continue to learn during the summer because we know from a lot of research that a lot of kids that have trouble learning in school may forget as much as 30 percent of what they learned the previous

year over the summertime. And that is a very unproductive thing for schools, to have to take up a lot of time teaching what they already taught before. Secondly, we want to help these young people progress, not only in terms of work but in terms of learning. We want to abolish the artificial dividing line between what is work and what is learning because we think that the best and most productive workers will have to be lifetime learners. And we think that this experience could maybe drive that point home and prepare these young people to succeed in school or at work or in college as they go on.

[Secretary Riley and Secretary of Labor Robert B. Reich discussed the importance of on-the-job experience combined with education. Secretary Riley then asked the President to discuss his apprenticeship proposal.]

The President. Well, first of all, let's talk about why it's important. Most new jobs that will be created in this decade will not require a 4-year college degree, but most of them will require some learning and skills that go well beyond what most people get in a high school diploma.

If you look at the last 10 years, the average salaries of young people that had at least 2 years of good post-high school education was a good salary that went up over the decade. The young people who had less than that tended to have lower wages that did not go up and, in many cases, in real terms, fell over the decade because they weren't productive, they weren't more valuable to their employers.

So we think America has a big economic interest in trying to ensure that all the young people who get out of high school but don't go on to college make a transition to work, which includes 2 years of further training either in a community college, a vocational setting, or perhaps on the job. And what I have done in this budget, as you know, is to give you and Secretary Reich some funds and some incentives to try to work in partnership with States and with the private sector to build these programs State-by-State in a way that would be customized essentially by the business community, based on the needs of the economy in any given area. It could revolutionize long term the quality of the American work force and the earnings of American workers.

[Secretary Reich and Secretary Riley discussed community involvement, academic excellence, and skills development as necessary components of school-to-work transition programs.]

The President. I think—if I might just interject one point based on my personal experience at home—the business community has a critical role to play, not simply in saying, “Here are the job skills that are needed, and here's what ought to be taught,” but also in monitoring that excellence. If you have the right sort of partnership there, the people who are paying the taxes and who are going to then be hiring the workers are not going to permit the second-rate programs to survive if they have any way to shape and influence them. So I think that's very important.

And when we try to, if you will, fill in the blanks at the Federal level, trying to set some standards and provide some funds, one of the things that we want to be sure and do is to make sure that the employer has a heavy amount of influence over the quality of these programs, because that's really what's going to determine whether the whole thing is worthwhile.

[Secretary Riley asked the President about long-term school reform proposals.]

The President. Well, as you know, back when you and I were both Governors, we spent a lot of time working on our public schools, and we tried to be very candid with our people in saying that a lot of these things were going to take some time to materialize.

I had a hand in writing the national education goals that the Governors drafted, along with representatives of President Bush's administration back in 1989. And what we're going to try to do this year with your leadership is to introduce legislation in Congress that will actually define the things that the National Government ought to do to try to help the local schools and the children of this country and the adult learners, too, meet those goals: making sure that by 2000, people show up for school ready to learn; that we get a 90 percent on-time high school graduation rate; that children at the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades are confident in the subjects they're supposed to know; that they are second to none in math and science; that our schools are safe, disciplined, and drug-free. And of course, the fifth goal—I took them out of line to say this

the last—is that we have a system of lifelong learning in this country.

And each one of those goals, there's a national role, a State role, a school role, school district role, and a private sector role. And what you've attempted to do in this bill you're going to introduce with me in the next few weeks is to define what our job is and then to give the rest of America a way of defining what their job is and seeing whether we're actually meeting the standards of quality that we need to meet.

It's very exciting. So far as I know, nothing quite like it has ever been done in the form of Federal legislation before. Not mandating and telling people what they have to do with their money, but actually setting up a framework for excellence and partnerships so that we can do our job. I'm really excited about it.

[Secretary Riley and Secretary Reich discussed the development of national skills standards. Mayor Bruce Todd of Austin, TX, then asked a question via satellite about Federal initiatives for school-to-work transition programs.]

Secretary Riley. Mr. President.

The President. I think I'll give everybody a chance to answer the question, Bruce, but let me first thank you for calling and thank you for all the great work that you're doing in Austin. I've seen some of it, and I've always been very impressed.

First, with regard to the summer program, we hope we can structure it in a way that will enable us to continue the summer program and that will move a lot of these young people back into schools under circumstances that might allow them to do some work in the private sector, too. Secretary Reich is going to try to set up a system where we create a lot of private sector jobs to be matched with the public sector jobs this summer, and we're working on that.

Secondly, in the program that I have presented to the Congress over the next 5 years, what we are attempting to do is to build in an amount of investment that's quite substantial for job training programs, for school-to-work programs, all of which give heavy, heavy weight to local community input—just the question you

asked—but do provide some Federal investment dollars, which we hope you can put with local dollars to keep people working and being trained on a year-round basis.

And I will say again, to echo what Secretary Reich said a moment ago, to try to break down the barrier between what is seen as work and what is seen as learning. An awful lot of young people actually have quite high IQ's, but actually learn so much better when they're doing than when they're reading or just listening. So we hope that the community involvement part of it will be permanent. And we hope that if the whole budget passes—and we do have 200 budget cuts, and more than 200, actually, in the budget and some revenue raisers and some new money for education and training—that we'll be able to do just what you seem to want based on your question.

Bob, do you want to say anything?

[Secretary Reich stressed the need for job creation as a prerequisite for the success of the program. Secretary Riley stated that the Goals 2000 program will involve individual State action plans. Dr. Harry Heinemann, special assistant to the president of LaGuardia Community College, Long Island City, NY, then asked a question via satellite about closer integration of school curricula with the transition to work.]

The President. I'd just like to say, if I might, one thing. I want to reemphasize this, and I don't think I'm being as clear about it as I'd like, although I think at least one of the people who will be on the second panel will be able to say it more explicitly than I. I think this whole concept of applied academics is very important. And I think that we have to basically abolish what I consider to be a very artificial distinction between what is vocational learning and what is academic learning. I think we should keep the liberal arts going. I think we should have a strong component for people who are in the vocational program.

NOTE: The town meeting began at 8:30 p.m. The President spoke via satellite from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Building.