

important the minimum wage has been to making sure people have a decent standard of living in this country.

You know, I saw something recently that brings home the need for an increase in the minimum wage more than anything else that I've seen in recent months. I was watching a news special on television, and they went down South to a town that had a lot of minimum-wage workers. There they interviewed a remarkable woman in a local plant who was working for the minimum wage. They said to her, "You know, your employer says if we raise the minimum wage, then they'll either have to lay off people or put more money into machinery and reduce their employment long term, and you could be affected. What do you say to that?" And the woman just threw back her shoulders and smiled and said, "Honey, I'll take my chances."

There are a lot of women and no small number of men out there who are in that situation. Some of them are raising their kids on the minimum wage. The truth is we have looked at all the arguments, pro and con. There is really no evidence that a raise in the minimum wage will cost jobs, but we do know it will make more people want to move from welfare to work. We do know it will reward work. And we know if we don't raise the minimum wage, next year it will be at a 40-year low, once you adjust for inflation.

That's not my idea of the 21st century economy. My idea of the 21st century economy is

Americans working hard, working smart, well-trained, well-supported, competing and winning in the global economy, doing the kinds of things the UAW is doing today, not driving down the minimum wage so that more and more people work harder and harder just to fall into poverty. That's wrong, and we need to turn it around. We need to give everybody a fair shot at the American dream.

In closing, let me say that our work here requires a partnership with you, so that we'll be ready to compete and win in the 21st century, so that we don't raise the first generation of Americans to do worse than their parents, so that instead we begin to grow the middle class and shrink the under class again. The future of our Nation depends upon rewarding the efforts of workers like you. You and your families are the heart and soul of America, so we have to work together to preserve not only what has been won but to fight for the jobs, the incomes, the justice, the American dream of the future. We can do it. We can do it.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke by satellite at approximately 5:45 p.m. from Room 459 of the Old Executive Office Building to the UAW convention in Anaheim, CA. In his remarks, he referred to Owen Bieber, outgoing president, and Steve Yokich, incoming president, United Auto Workers.

Statement on the Retirement of Lane Kirkland *June 12, 1995*

American workers and workers around the world owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Lane Kirkland. For nearly five decades, he has been a catalyst for international democracy and a guiding force for workplace fairness, dignity, and innovation.

His record of achievement rivals the great labor leaders that came before him, and his ideas and accomplishments will benefit working

families for generations to come. He served with distinction during some of the toughest times for American workers and brought creativity, a laser-like determination, true grit, and an unparalleled intellect to his job as president of the AFL-CIO.

Hillary and I wish him the very best for the future and will always be grateful for his strong support, keen advice, and valued friendship.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for Les Aspin June 13, 1995

I would like to begin by thanking all the people who have spoken before. Each of them has given us a little slice of the incredible, complex, rich person that Les was. I think he would have liked this service. I think somewhere he's saying, "Gee, I guess I did all right."

I always identified with Les Aspin. We were policy wonks. We sometimes worried more about our workload than our waists. And on occasion, we forgot that in this complicated world, how things appear are sometimes almost as important as how things are. But I will never forget that the essence of him was truly extraordinary. And I am in great debt to the contribution he made to my life and to the work of this administration.

One of my favorite pictures that has been in the press since I've been in office is one of Les and I walking across the White House lawn. I had my arm around him, and we looked like we were deep in thought. You know, what I was really telling him is, "You have to stop working so hard, lose some weight, loosen up." [Laughter] If the Presidency is preeminently a place of the power of persuasion, I failed on that occasion. [Laughter]

A friend once described Les' idea of a vacation as thinking about defense in a different setting. [Laughter] Once when he did take a few days off, he sent a postcard home to his staff. On the front, there was a picture of a beach; on the back he had scribbled, "Why are you wasting time reading postcards?"

Those of us who had the privilege of being close to Les Aspin know that he was not only exceptionally brilliant, he was iconoclastic in the best sense. That was a great benefit now as we go through this period of transition from the cold war into a new and exciting but still troubling world.

He was always questioning the conventional wisdom and always refusing to be bound by it. He was a good teacher. I learned a lot from him. I remember the first time I came to see him, I was the Governor of my home State and not a candidate for President, a curious person. And when I left his office after our first talk, I was utterly exhausted. I thought I had finally found somebody with 4 times the

energy I have. Through the years, I sought him out more and more. And in 1992, he, more than any other person, was responsible for the fact that in our campaign we determined that both parties would be strong on defense.

Les Aspin did a lot of different things in a lot of different ways. He showed sophistication, and then he showed the lack of it. But, as has been said in different ways today, everyone who really knew him never doubted one thing, that his first and foremost concern was to do whatever would make this country stronger and safer and better. That is what he cared about above all else.

As the cold war wound down, he played a critical role as chairman of the Armed Services Committee. But as my Secretary of Defense, he was finally able to put his remarkable knowledge and passion and vision for defense policy at work to reshape our forces to the demands of the 21st century. The blueprint he took the lead in drafting will guide us into that new world. It will guide us for decades to come. And all of us will be in his debt.

After he left the Defense Department, we continued to talk, and I continued to be amazed by his incredible openness to service, by his incredible passion for the issues with which we were all called upon to deal. And he answered the call to serve again as the head of our Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, a post that is not much known outside of Washington but is of profound importance to the future of this country. Then he agreed to serve on the Armed Services Commission on Roles and Missions. He did all these things no matter what else was going on in his life, no matter what had happened to him, with incredible good humor and grace and passionate devotion.

It has been said that true patriotism is not short, frenzied outbursts of emotion but the steady dedication of a lifetime. By that standard, Les Aspin was a true and remarkable patriot who made a dramatic positive difference to the United States and all the people who live there.

We will miss him terribly, but as you heard today, his legacy remains all around us in the streets of Beloit, Racine, Kenosha, throughout southeast Wisconsin—how he loves that place.