

Statement on the AFL–CIO Election October 25, 1995

There were plenty of winners in today's AFL–CIO election. The working men and women of the labor movement benefit the most. If every American got to choose in every election between candidates such as these, this country would be a better place.

I offer my hearty congratulations to John Sweeney, who has led one of the most progressive, growing, and innovative unions in America. He has been a force for inclusion and activism and has already left a deep and positive imprint on the labor movement.

The outgoing president, Tom Donahue, has been a source of strength and leadership in the labor movement for decades. Working men and women are fortunate for his many years of service, his integrity, and his dedication.

The theme of AFL–CIO convention was “Stand Up for America's Working Families.” My administration stands with John and the other newly elected officers as we work together in the months and years ahead on issues important to America's working families.

Remarks at a United Jewish Appeal Reception October 25, 1995

Thank you very much, Stan Chesley. Thank you for your friendship and for your leadership. Mr. Secretary, thank you for what you have done, along with Dennis Ross and so many others here to hasten the day of peace in the Middle East. Senator Lautenberg, distinguished foreign guests, my fellow Americans, and most of all, to Prime Minister and Mrs. Rabin and all the friends who are here from Israel, we're delighted to have you back.

It is a great honor for me to receive this award, an honor amplified by its association with the United Jewish Appeal and with all of you who contribute so much to the UJA and its mission. But it's a special honor to receive it from the Prime Minister.

As the journey toward Middle East peace advances, the courageous leadership and vision of the Prime Minister will become more clear to all the world, and they will serve not only the people of Israel but all people in our generation and those who will inherit the Earth.

This is a time of remarkable progress for peace. You heard the Secretary talk about what we hope and pray will happen when the parties to the war in Bosnia meet in the next few days. We have seen a remarkable transformation in South Africa. In Northern Ireland they have laid down their arms, and we are working and hoping and praying for peace there. But nowhere

has the progress been more dramatic and nowhere has it moved more people than in the Middle East.

We have tried to be a full and reliable partner. I am proud of the agreements that we have worked hard to bring about. I am proud of the handshakes that sealed them, handshakes I never thought I would live to see. I'm not sure he did either. [*Laughter*] I am proud of our efforts to secure the economic underpinnings of the peace.

We will continue to stand with the peacemakers. But let's be clear on one thing here: The real credit belongs to them. Could we have made peace in the Middle East had Israel not had a Prime Minister like the one who stands before us? He and the members of his government, but most of all, the Prime Minister, a man willing to risk his own political fortunes, a man who for decades had risked his own life to secure the life and the future of Israel. Could we have made it had it not been for King Hussein and had Chairman Arafat not determined that he would take a different course, if President Mubarak had not been supportive? Could we have made it if people who have already reached their mature years had not looked into the eyes of the young people of the Middle East, like the Israeli and Arab children who participated in the Seeds of Peace program?

Can we make it stick without the Jewish and Arab-American business leaders who have pledged their personal efforts to bring the rewards of peace to all the people of the Middle East, without others in the region who are now supporting it?

These are the people to whom the credit goes. It is the responsibility of the United States, at this moment in history, to do what we, and only we can do to try to be a force for freedom, for prosperity, and for peace.

Each of us still has work to do, as I'm sure you all know. It takes many backs to bear the burden of peace and the awful burden of change, many hearts to conquer hatred with humanity, many hands to build a sturdy house within which all can live on honorable terms. No one can sit on the sidelines. This work is not done.

The United States will remain a force for peace. We will continue to support those who take risks for peace, and yes, we will continue to do everything we can to minimize those risks. We will continue also and we will intensify our efforts to fight the forces of terror who would turn back the march of history. And we will continue to defend human rights and human dignity for all the people on this planet.

The road ahead will not be easy, and it will not be even. But we must remain steadfast, remembering with Isaiah that those who do the Lord's work will have their strength renewed. I believe they will mount up with wings as eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not faint.

The United Jewish Appeal and all the committed donors who gather tonight give life to Isaiah's admonition. And in the United States and Israel and throughout the world, you renew our strength. In more than 50 countries you bring hope and relief to the needy. I thank you for everything you do, for the hot meals for the homebound, the wheelchairs for the disabled, the shelter for the refugees, the comfort to the victims of Alzheimer's and AIDS, protecting the weakest among us, the newborn, the aged, the frail. To those who have lost their jobs, their homes, their way, or their strength,

you have been their strength and a second chance.

I think it's fair to say that all of us who believe that we are loved and cared for by one God, no matter how imperfect we are, know that our God is a God of second chances. That is what the movement for peace in the Middle East is all about.

I thank you for reminding all of us of that and of our obligations to each other in one community. I thank you for what you've done to strengthen families and improve education, to honor traditions and celebrate culture, to embody the values that make this country a great nation.

I thank you for this award. But let me say, more important than anything else, I look forward to our continued partnership as we struggle on behalf of peace and dignity and humanity. I leave here honored and doubly burdened by the instruction of the prophet Isaiah, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well. Prepare ye the way of the Lord." With God's will, that is exactly what we will do together.

Thank you.

I could tell you an interesting little aside here. When we were about to come out tonight, the Prime Minister insisted that I stand on his right, even though he's in the United States. In the American State Department, I am his host. Protocol dictates that he stand on my right. I told him that. [Laughter] He said, "Tonight we reverse the order." [Laughter] Then I looked at all of you, and I looked back at him, and I said, "Well, it's appropriate; after all, they may be more your crowd than mine." [Laughter]

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:30 p.m. in the Benjamin Franklin Room at the State Department. In his remarks, he referred to Stanley M. Chesley, cochairman, International Leadership Reunion; Secretary of State Warren Christopher; Dennis B. Ross, Special Middle East Coordinator; Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel and his wife, Leah; King Hussein of Jordan; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.