

June 19 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1996

Message to the Senate Transmitting the International Natural Rubber Agreement

June 19, 1996

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, for the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, the International Natural Rubber Agreement, 1995, done at Geneva on February 17, 1995. The Agreement was signed on behalf of the United States on April 23, 1996. The report of the Department of State setting forth more fully the Administration's position is also transmitted, for the information of the Senate.

As did its predecessors, the International Natural Rubber Agreement, 1995 (INRA), seeks to stabilize natural rubber prices without distorting long-term market trends and to assure adequate natural rubber supplies at reasonable prices. The U.S. participation in INRA, 1995, will also respond to concerns expressed by U.S. rubber companies that a transition period is needed to allow industry time to prepare for a free market in natural rubber and to allow for the further development of alternative institutions to manage market risk. The new Agreement incorporates improvements sought by the United States to help ensure that it fully reflects market

trends and is operated in an effective and financially sound manner.

The Agreement is consistent with our broad foreign policy objectives. It demonstrates our willingness to engage in a continuing dialogue with developing countries on issues of mutual concern and embodies our belief that long-run market forces are the appropriate determinants of prices and resource allocations. It will also strengthen our relations with the ASEAN countries, since three of them—Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand—account collectively for approximately 80 percent of world production of natural rubber.

Therefore, I urge the Senate to give this Agreement prompt consideration and its advice and consent to ratification to enable the United States to deposit its instrument of ratification as soon as possible.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
June 19, 1996.

Remarks at the Women's Legal Defense Fund Luncheon

June 20, 1996

Thank you very much. If I had any sense, I would quit while I'm ahead. *[Laughter]*

Thank you for that wonderful warm welcome. I thank those here at the head table for their work, Ellen Malcolm and Pauline Schneider. John Bryan, thanks for sitting up here with me and upholding gender equality. *[Laughter]* I appreciate that. And thank you for proving as, I believe, one of America's truly outstanding chief executive officers, that it is possible to do well and to do good in one's life. Thank you for what you have done. *[Applause]* Thank you.

And thank you, Judy Lichtman. You know, she was saying all that about constancy and always being there. And the truth is, I just could never bear to disappoint her. *[Laughter]* You

are a remarkable national treasure for what you have done here, and we are very grateful to you. Thank you. Thank you.

You were kind enough to mention the women who hold prominent positions in our administration and who fill the judgeships of this country, and the U.S. attorneys positions and others. There are two who came with me today who have a lot to do with the work we do on women's issues, and I would like to acknowledge them in particular, Alexis Herman and Betsy Myers. I thank them for what they have done in—*[applause]*.

I note with some satisfaction and pride that in the last 2 years you have had the Vice President speak here, and then you had Hillary speak here. And I am glad you finally got around

to me. [Laughter] I appreciate being given the chance to come.

I also appreciate, and I know Congresswoman Jane Harman, who's here with me, appreciates what you said about the Congress and the budget. John heard me say this yesterday, but about 10 days ago or so I was at one of these fundraisers, you know, that you do a lot of at this time of year. And there was a gentleman there at the fundraiser who had brought his son. His son was his companion at the fundraiser. And this young man was 10 years old. I asked him after this interchange how old he was because he was so amazing. This young man comes up to me, shakes my hand, says, "You know, Mr. President," he said, "I imagine it's difficult for you to hear a funny joke that you can actually retell in public, isn't it?" [Laughter] A 10-year-old boy. And I said, "Well, now that you mention it, it kind of is. When I was a Governor, I used to keep people laughing all the time. Then they told me it wasn't Presidential."

And he said, "Well, I heard one that I think you can use. I think it's appropriate." [Laughter] I said, "All right, what is it?" He said, "Well, you should tell people that your being President with this Congress is sort of like a man standing in a cemetery. There are a lot of people under you, but nobody's listening." [Laughter] In case you'd like to meet that young man, he's now the youngest member of the White House speechwriting staff—[laughter]—and intending to support his parents in their old age.

I am very honored to be here, especially on your 25th anniversary, to thank you more than anything else for the work that you have done for opportunities for women, for stronger families, and a brighter future for America. As many of you have heard me say so many times, I am convinced that we are moving into an age of enormous possibility for our people as we move from the industrial age to the information age, as we leave the cold war behind for a new global society that is full of its own problems but still provides people more opportunities to live out their dreams in different ways than any previous period in human history.

I ran for President because I wanted to move our country into the 21st century, meeting the challenges of this new era, protecting our values, and guaranteeing that every American who would be responsible should have the chance to pursue opportunities that would give every person, without regard to their race, their gen-

der, their background, the chance to live out their dreams, because I wanted to see this country coming together instead of being divided. And I was very tired, and I'm even more tired today, of seeing the political process used to take this incredible kaleidoscopic, diverse society to divide the American people when we ought to be working for ways to unite the American people, and because I felt very strongly that our country at the end of the cold war could not revert to its historic impulse to withdraw into our borders, that this is a time when we have to stay involved in the world, when only America can be the world's greatest source of inspiration for peace and freedom and for prosperity.

So those were the things that I wanted to do when I ran for this job, that I was determined to do when I got this job. And you have helped in that mission. You know, preserving the basic values of America and making us live up to them, that's really what the Women's Legal Defense Fund is all about. The opportunity for people to live out their own personal dreams and to build strong families and forge strong communities, that's really what the Women's Legal Defense Fund is all about.

We are still working on those things, and we are still bedeviled by some old problems. Yesterday, you may have seen in the press reports, I spent a lot of time working with Governors and other officials to try to come up with even more effective strategies to not only find the people who are burning these religious institutions—most of them African-American churches, at least one of them a mosque and, I might add, some white churches that have burned in our country in the last 18 months. There has been a big upsurge in overall burnings of religious institutions in the last 18 months. But we were also searching for ways to reach the heart of America to prevent these things from occurring, because they are a stark reminder that while we value religious liberty more deeply than any other nation in human history, the demons that haunt the human spirit in every land are not absent from America. And you have to stamp them out whenever they rear their ugly head.

I will always be very grateful, as Judy said, that the first law I signed was the family and medical leave law. And I wanted it so badly. And some of you may remember, it was a hotly debated issue in the 1992 campaign because

Congress had already passed it, and it had been vetoed once, maybe even twice, I can't remember. But the thing that struck me about it is that it was the symbol of the kind of country we should be trying to build. I am the son and the grandson of working women. I never thought there was anything abnormal about it. But I also know that the most important job any man or woman has is doing a good job of raising the children that they're fortunate enough to bring into this world.

And it seems to me that if you look at the pattern of work and childrearing and the tensions between them and the troubles so many people still have finding adequate child care and the difficulties so many people still have earning a decent living, an adequate living to raise their children, and still have time left over to spend time with their children, one of the central goals of America in the 21st century should be to enable people to succeed at work and at home. If we have to choose one or the other, we're going to be in trouble. We know now that our economy needs all these people in the work force. We know that most families, even two-parent families, need both incomes to have a good, stable life. How can we even imagine a world with even more rapid changes and more unforeseen challenges that doesn't have systems in America for people succeeding at home and at work? If we have to give up succeeding at work to raise our children, our economy will surely suffer. If we have to give up successfully raising our children just to make a living, well, the money won't be worth it.

The family and medical leave law puts this country on record as saying our national goal is to enable people to be good parents and successful at work. And I'm proud to say that a recent bipartisan panel concluded that just since the law has been in effect, 12 million American workers have been able to take time off when they had a birth in the family or a sick child or a sick parent without losing their jobs. Almost 90 percent of the businesses that were surveyed said that complying with the law costs them little or nothing. This has been good for families and good for America.

The other day we had a very impressive group of people in the White House, the children who were the designated representatives of the Children's Miracle telethon in each of the States, children who had been desperately ill in children's hospitals, and they and their parents came

to the White House. And I went downstairs to shake hands with all of them. And before I got out of the room, two of the parents spontaneously had come up to me and said, "We would never have made it if it hadn't been for the family leave law. I got to keep my job and try to help take care of my child. I don't know what this country was like before it."

And I can say to you it's amazing to me there are still people who say that we shouldn't have passed it. There are still people stubbornly saying, "Oh, there must be some way around this." There is no way around it. Our goal should be success at home; success at work. And that's what it's all about. And if it hadn't been for the Women's Legal Defense Fund, it might not be the law of the land. You were there a long time before I had a chance to sign it, and I thank you for that.

I've sought for other ways to give women and particularly families more power, more control. It is true that I have fought to protect the right to choose and reproductive rights. We also have dramatically expanded what I call the family tax credit, the earned-income tax credit, so that as we go forward today it's worth about \$1,000 to every family in the country with an income of \$28,000 or less with children in the home. Our goal is to say if we're going to preach at people to work, the tax system should not put them in poverty if they have children at home. If you work full time and you have children at home, the tax system should lift you out of poverty, not push you down into it. That's what the earned-income tax credit's all about, and I'm very proud of it. And I have opposed vociferously the attempts in the last year and a half to cut back on it in ways that would, in effect, raise taxes on the hardest pressed working families in this country. That is wrong. Success at home; success at work; don't let the Government get in the way of that. The Government should be helping that.

We also have tried to give parents more control in helping to raise their children. That's really what the crusade we've been on trying to restrict advertising of tobacco products to children is about. And it's what the V-chip was all about. And I applaud the entertainment industry for their willingness to develop these rating systems on television. I don't believe in censorship; I just believe parents ought to have some ability to raise their kids and to try to

expose them to things in the appropriate way at the appropriate time.

This is the thing that I think all of you—I think it would be helpful to all of us if we began to think in these terms. We don't have a person to waste. We need everybody's ability. We need people to have a chance to grow up and have good schools and a clean environment and safe streets and also strong families. And when I think—when I imagine what the world is going to be like 10 or 15 years from now, I know that there will be millions of people working 10 years from now in jobs that have not even been created yet. Some of them we can't even imagine.

And it will be a very exciting time if we have a system by which we can work with other freedom-loving people to fight back the security threats we face from terrorism and biological and chemical weapons and things like that and if we have a structure of community and family here at home that enables us to give people the chance to be successful at home and successful at work and children the chance to have safe streets and good schools and a clean environment. If we can do that, if we can set up that framework, there are no guarantees in life, but at least people will have the opportunities they need.

One other thing I want to say about that is that that means that this country must say that the level of crime and violence we have is simply unacceptable, and it is not unavoidable. We can do something about it.

You know, when we passed the crime bill in 1994, it embodied the central commitments I made to the American people when I ran for President. We also passed the Brady bill then. I said, "I want the Brady bill. I want the assault weapons ban. I want 100,000 police on the street. I want 'three strikes and you're out' for serious offenders, but I want funds going to communities to give young people the chance to say yes to something, to stay out of trouble before they get into trouble." That's what I think we ought to do.

And I have spent years and years going around visiting people in law enforcement and looking at these programs and trying to learn what works—first, of course, in my own State and then, when I began to travel some, around the country. And I was convinced that we can bring the crime rate down. I'd seen it happen in various communities simply by implementing

these strategies. And there were those who said that the crime bill was a fraud and a fake and wouldn't have any impact. Well, I can tell you that it's 1996 now, and we're almost halfway home on putting those 100,000 police on the street. We're ahead of schedule. We are under budget.

We have passed the assault weapons ban. And there haven't been any hunters and sports men or women lose their weapons and their bullets and all that. It was all a big smokescreen. Everybody who wants to go deer hunting is still doing it. [Laughter] But I'll tell you something, there are 60,000—let me say it again—60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers who have not been able to buy handguns because of the Brady bill's checking period.

Now the Supreme Court has agreed to review a case over the constitutionality of requiring local law enforcement officials to help make sure that a person buying a handgun is legally entitled to do so. Well, I just want to make clear I am going to do everything in my power to keep the Brady bill the law of the land. It's keeping people alive. It's a good thing. Convicted felons and fugitives and people who are a threat to the community or to their own spouses and children should not be out there, if we can keep them legally from having the handguns by a simple waiting period so that we can check whether they should have it or not. Every law enforcement organization in this country has endorsed the Brady bill. And we dare not walk away from it. It is keeping people alive.

And let me point out now, the crime rate in this country is going down this year. It is going to be the 4th year in a row that it's gone down. It's because people all over this country now have figured out community policing works, because prevention strategies work, because this whole approach works. There's more to do. We need to ban these cop-killer bullets so our police are not at risk when they're out there. But this is working. And the point I want to make to you is that we can make a difference here. We can make a difference here. Don't let anybody tell you that America is just an inherently violent country, and we have to tolerate this level of violence. It is simply not true. We can do better.

There's more to do in a lot of other ways. I thank you for support of the minimum wage. Ten million people depend on it, and we need

to raise it. I'm rather tired of being told that the only people that get the minimum wage are middle and upper middle class teenagers who are living at home with their parents who don't need it. Sixty percent of the people on the minimum wage are women workers. Many of them have children they're trying to support on the minimum wage.

We have to help people adjust to the changes in the new economy. That's why I, even though—and I appreciate what Judy said about health care, and I thank—so many of you helped Hillary when we committed the unpardonable sin of trying to give every American health care that they could afford. [Laughter] And somehow I don't think God's going to hold it against us when our final accounting comes.

But we ought to pass the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill, and we ought to do it now. We ought to do it in an uncluttered fashion. And we ought to quite fooling around with it. It's time to stop holding these good legislative measures. That bill passed 100 to zero in the Senate. And it is now being held hostage to controversial measures inessential to the fundamental purpose of the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill. We should pass it now. People should not lose their health care because somebody in their family has been sick or because they have to change jobs. That is wrong, and we can change it and we should do it.

We ought to guarantee that whenever someone loses a job or they're grossly underemployed and they need more training, they qualify for Federal help. I believe they should get a voucher they can take to their local community college. That's the "GI bill" for American men and women workers. That has been tied up in the Congress over an ideological argument, extraneous to the merits, for a year. It is time to pass that.

The Congress has a package of pension reform legislation which would make it much easier for small businesses and self-employed people to take out pensions and then to carry it with them from job to job without ever losing their coverage. That sounds like a simple thing if you happen to work for the Government and you've got a good retirement program or you're fortunate enough to be in a big company with a good retirement program. But it is a huge deal to American men and women who do not have access to this. And as far as I know, there is no opposition in the Congress to this package

of pension reform legislation. We ought to pass it, get out there, tell people you can at least save for your retirement, and you won't lose it if you lose your job for a while or you have to change jobs. These are important measures that need to pass.

And I believe that while we dare not get into some flagrant tax-cutting war until we finish the work of balancing the budget, we should give families a deduction for the cost of college tuition and a tax credit so that everybody who wants to can go to at least 2 years of education after high school, to make community college, 14 years of education, not 12, the rule in America. We need it. It would help the American economy. It would lift the incomes of millions of working women.

I also want to say that we have more to do in the area of public safety, especially on the issue of domestic violence. A lot of you were particularly active when we were working for the crime bill in passing the violence against women provisions and setting up the domestic violence operation in the Justice Department which Bonnie Campbell is doing such a good job of heading. And I thank you for that. But there is more to be done there. Violence against women is certainly no stranger in this country. It is an unwelcome intruder. And it is not a family problem, and it is not a woman problem, and let me say it is most assuredly not just a poor person's problem. This is an American problem that we have to face.

In September Federal prosecutors used that law to ensure that a man convicted of severe violence against his wife was sentenced to life in prison. The Violence Against Women Act says that victims of domestic violence should be able to seek relief in Federal court for a violation of their civil rights, and yesterday a Federal judge upheld that provision of the law as well.

Last February we launched a 24-hour, 7-day, toll-free hotline so that women in trouble can find out how to get emergency help, find shelter, or report abuse to the authority. To date, the hotline has responded to over 20,000 calls from women all across this country. Again, that's just the first 3 months; we don't have the latest up-to-date. But think of that; a lot of those people never would have even called for help before. And I'll get in my plug; the number is 1-800-799-SAFE. And I want people to keep using that number. We are working those cases and helping people.

Today we are taking the next step. I am proud to announce that our Justice Department is awarding over \$46 million to help 336 different communities in America to fight domestic violence through the community policing program. The police departments who will be receiving these grants have well-established community policing programs, strong relationships with local providers of services to victims. We're coupling the power of the police forces rooted in the community with the experience of people who have been fighting domestic violence for a long time.

And again I say, this will work. I was in San Diego recently, and let me just give you one example. Their police department has one of the largest domestic violence networks in America. They formed it in 1992, and since then, domestic violence homicides have been cut by 50 percent. You must believe we can do something about these problems, otherwise all these things just become words. I'm telling you, you can make a difference if we do the right things and we do them together. The San Diego police department is getting a grant today that they will use to start an information network with the local YWCA to give victims and service providers and police officers one-stop access to all the available help in the area, to bring the domestic violence rate in San Diego down even more, and to help victims as they work to take control of their lives back.

As I said when I announced the hotline, you know, if it just saves one life it's worth it. But it's not enough. We have to keep doing this until this is the exception, not the rule. We have to keep working on all these problems until crime is the exception, not the rule. We will never rid the country of crime. We will

never have no domestic violence. But you know what the test is? The test will be when you can go home at night, turn on the evening news, and if the lead story is a crime story, if the lead story is a domestic violence story, you are surprised instead of numb to it. That is the test. And we have to keep going until you are surprised again.

So I will close by echoing Judy's wonderful remarks. As you celebrate 25 years of progress in the lives of women and strength for the women and families of this country, I ask you to rededicate yourselves to the work yet to be done. I ask you to see this as an unfinished journey. I ask you to celebrate your achievements as evidence that you can make a difference.

Sometimes I think that when we think about our thorniest problems, our biggest difficulty is that we tend to get so weighed down by them we think that we can't change the fundamental fabric of this society. Two hundred twenty years-plus of American experience gives the lie to that cynicism. You can make things better. You can make progress. We can make a difference. You have a great 25 years, and you have got an agenda that will fill up the next few years. I ask you to embrace it with vigor and good humor and determination and courage, and we will prevail.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:55 p.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Ellen Malcolm, president, EMILY's List; Pauline Schneider, vice chair, and Judy Lichtman, president, Women's Legal Defense Fund; and John Bryan, chief executive officer, Sarah Lee Corp.

Remarks at the Presidential Scholars Awards Presentation Ceremony *June 20, 1996*

Thank you very much, Rebekah. You did a terrific job. I hope you weren't nervous; you couldn't tell. [*Laughter*] And I know your parents are here, and your teachers are very proud of you and all the other Presidential scholars who are here. I want to thank Stuart Moldaw and all the members of the commission who

have the difficult job of picking Presidential scholars. I want to thank Secretary Riley for the wonderful work he has done as our Secretary of Education, for our many years of personal friendship.

Rebekah did such a good job, we forgive you for your shameless South Carolina pride in men-