

The President. Well, first of all, as to the jury verdict, I have nothing to add to what I said after the last jury verdict. We have a system here in this country which I think we should all respect. The only people who heard all the evidence were the people who were sitting in the jury box, in both cases. And civil trials and criminal trials are very different in different ways. So I have nothing to add to that. I respect the jury verdict.

And in terms of the way Americans see the world differently, generally based on their race, that troubles me, and I spoke about it at some length at the University of Texas last year when we had the Million Man March here in Washington, and I was down there. I think the only answer to that is for us to spend more time listening to each other and try to put ourselves in each other's shoes and understand why we see the world in different ways and keep trying to overcome that.

I would say that even though it's disturbing, we have succeeded so far in managing the world's most multiethnic, diverse democracy better than a lot of countries that are smaller than we are with fewer differences within them. And we just—this is a work that's never done—that our different attitudes, our different viewpoints in some ways are the great strength of America, but if they're too—if we're too estranged, if the divide is too great, then we can't hold the country together. And we just have

to keep working on it. And I intend to—I've worked on it hard for 4 years; we're talking about what else we might do.

But in terms of the jury verdict, that's the system we have in America. It's over as far as I'm concerned. We need to get on with other things. But we always need to be working to try to bridge these divides between us.

Budget Negotiations

Q. Mr. President, what are you hoping to achieve in the budget talks today? What are you hoping to achieve in budget talks this morning?

The President. The next step of what we talked about—what I talked about at the State of the Union. I think we have got an enormous opportunity here to do great things together, because I think there is a consensus all across the country and among both parties that we have a lot of great challenges, some significant, indeed, unparalleled opportunities. And the whole system is kind of tending toward movement instead of paralysis again. And that's a good thing for America. And I'm going to do what I can to keep it going this morning.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House prior to a meeting with bipartisan congressional cosponsors of the "Campaign Reform Act of 1997."

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders

February 11, 1997

First, I want to thank Senator Lott for hosting this. I thank the Speaker and Senator Lott and the leadership for inviting us to come down here and meet with the bipartisan leadership today. I think it's a very important first step after the State of the Union Address. It indicates we want to work together.

We'll discuss a lot of issues, I'm sure. I just want to emphasize, too, I think it's imperative that we pass a bipartisan balanced budget this year. And I think it's imperative that we find a way to work together on education reform, and we'll be talking about how we can do that.

There are many other things, but I want to emphasize those two above all.

The reception that I received in Maryland yesterday was a reception for the importance of education standards and educational opportunity in America as we move into this new century. And so I'm optimistic, I'm hopeful, and I'm gratified to be invited to be here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. in the President's Bill Signing Room at the Capitol. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Screening of Excerpts From the Film “Thomas Jefferson”

February 11, 1997

Thank you. First of all, I know I speak for all of us when I thank Ken Burns and all of those who made this magnificent film possible. Thank you, especially, Jack Smith, for your work in making it possible and sponsoring it.

If you think about what Ken Burns has given to America with “The Civil War,” “The West,” “Baseball,” and “Thomas Jefferson,” I think Mr. Jefferson would be very proud of you, Mr. Burns. And I know we all are, and we thank you so much.

I think every American President has been inspired by Jefferson’s ideals, affected by his decisions, fascinated by his character. Two of my most prized personal possessions are an original printing of the “Notes on Virginia” and a printing of Daniel Webster’s marvelous eulogy to John Adams and Thomas Jefferson delivered in Faneuil Hall in August of 1826. And from time to time when I feel some sense of despair, just for the heck of it, I take them down and open the pages and start reading.

I always thought that the fact that both of them died on the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence was the best evidence the modern world has on the question of whether God is. It is impossible to believe this happened by accident.

And so, I ask all of you to leave here tonight with a sense of gratitude to Thomas Jefferson but also with the firm conviction that the thing he was most right about was in leaving us a system that would always be in the act of becoming, that his unshakable belief that the future could be better than the present extended even to himself and to his contemporaries, to their failures and to their successes. And that is what we must always believe. You make a better present if you think about the future being brighter and if you really believe in the potential of every single human spirit. Thomas Jefferson did, and so should we.

I hope you’ll now join us in the State Dining Room, and you’ll all be able to talk about what you liked most about the movie. But let me say again, we’re gratified to have you all here. Hillary and I have looked forward to this evening for a long time, and we are especially grateful for all of you who had any part in this magnificent gift to the people of the United States.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:45 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ken Burns, producer of the film, and Jack Smith, president, General Motors Corp.

Remarks on Receiving the Final Report of the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security and an Exchange With Reporters

February 12, 1997

The President. Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President. Secretary Peña, Secretary-designate Slater; Senator Lautenberg, thank you for your support and involvement. And a special thanks to all the members of this very distinguished Commission for the work that they did.

This report lays out a clear plan of action to ensure that America’s airways and airplanes will remain the safest and that our passengers

the most secure in the world well into the next century.

Our aviation infrastructure is just as important to us today as the great railroads were in the 1800’s or the interstate highway system became in the second half of the 20th century. Just as they made us competitive in the economies of the 19th and 20th century, a modernized national airspace system will determine our ability to compete in the 21st century.