

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.

It is fitting that the Vice President is leading this effort. One of the great legacies of Al Gore, Sr.'s service in the United States Senate was his leadership in building our interstate highway system. The mission to modernize and improve our airspace system for the challenges of the next century is every bit as important and historic, and I thank him for the work he has done.

I also want to commend the members of this Commission for first taking on the task and especially the family members of the victims of airline disasters, those serving on the Commission, those who wrote to us, those who testified before us about how to improve our interaction with families in the aftermath of disasters. Out of their personal tragedy they have made a valuable contribution to all of us.

The recommendations in this report are strong, and we will put them into action. We will use all the tools of modern science to make flying as safe as possible. We will bring our air traffic control system into the 21st century, and we will do it by converting to space age satellite technology. We will also change the way we inspect older aircraft, to include an examination of wiring and hydraulic systems, all to ensure that every plane carrying passengers, regardless of its age, is as safe as it can be.

We are doing all these things so that we can cut the fatal accident rate by 80 percent in 5 years—in 10 years—and so that by the year 2005 our air traffic control system will be the finest in the world. We are also taking steps to improve security for all American travelers.

I want to say a word about two of the report's most important recommendations on accident reduction and security. First, it's important to note that air travel is still our safest mode of transportation and America has the lowest accident rate in the world. We have to keep it the lowest and keep working to improve. The FAA and the airline industry have been partners in this effort for years. Today I am pleased to announce that NASA will join them. NASA has agreed to dedicate up to a half a billion dollars in research and development budget over the next 5 years to help make sure we do achieve our accident reduction goal.

Second, aviation security is one of the major fronts of our three-part counterterrorism strategy. On September 9th, I accepted the Commission's 20 initial policy recommendations on security. We acted quickly to implement these rec-

ommendations. We have begun installing 54 bomb detection machines in America's airports. We are training and deploying over 100 bomb-sniffing dog teams. The FAA is hiring 300 new special agents to test airport security. And the FBI is adding 644 agents and 620 support personnel in 1997 to counterterrorism efforts.

We are taking action to make our people more secure. But we cannot afford to rest. The balanced budget I submitted to Congress last week contains \$100 million for future aviation security improvements, as the Commission recommends. I urge the Congress to provide this critical funding. This unprecedented Federal commitment reflects our resolve to do everything we can to protect our people and to prevent terrorism.

Again, let me thank the Vice President and the Commission for this remarkable report. Your work should give the American people confidence that air travel in the 21st century will be better and safer than ever before.

Thank you very much.

The Vice President. Mr. President, I think we're going to have a chance to visit with each of them. I want to just note that every single member of the Commission signed the final recommendations. And it was unanimous on every section, with the exception of one dissent in one part of the report from one Commissioner. Every member of the Commission has signed it.

American Airlines Labor Dispute

Q. Mr. President, on aviation, if American Airlines and its pilots can't come to an agreement by Friday, are you inclined to use your power to declare a national emergency and therefore avoid the disruption of a strike? *[Laughter]*

The President. You're going to have another shot at me tomorrow, you know. *[Laughter]* First of all, today I want to say this and just this. This issue has huge implications for our country and, in particular, for specific parts of our country. I have been following it very closely. Today I want to say that the time has not expired, and I want to encourage the parties to make maximum use of the mediation board process. That's what ought to be done today, and that's all I have to say about it today.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Statement on Campaign Finance Reform Legislation *February 12, 1997*

In my State of the Union Address, I said that delay would mean the death of campaign finance reform, and I called on the Congress to act by July 4, 1997. Passage of effective finance reform must be a priority for this Congress, but we will succeed only if citizens all across the country make clear to elected officials that change is urgent and that public support

is broad and deep. Project Independence can help break the logjam that has blocked reform for so long. By building support for the McCain-Feingold and Shays-Meehan campaign finance reform bills, Project Independence will give citizens a voice as we work to reform our politics and renew our democracy.

Remarks at the Funeral of Ambassador Pamela Harriman *February 13, 1997*

We gather in tribute to Pamela Harriman, patriot and public servant, American Ambassador and citizen of the world, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and sister, and for so many of us here, a cherished friend. She adopted our country with extraordinary devotion. Today her country bids her farewell with profound gratitude.

Hillary and I have often talked about what made Pamela so remarkable. It was more than her elegance, as unforgettable as that was. It was more than the lilt of her voice and her laughter, more even, than the luminous presence that could light up a room, a convention hall, or even the City of Lights itself. It was more than her vibrant sense of history and the wisdom that came to her from the great events she had lived and those she had helped to shape, from the Battle of Britain to the peace accord in Bosnia. I think it was most of all that she was truly indomitable.

One day the train she was on to London was bombed twice, during the Blitz. She simply brushed off the shards of glass, picked herself up, and went to the office to do her work at the Ministry of Supply. She was 21 years old.

More than 40 years later, all of us who knew her saw the same resolve and strength again and again, most tenderly, in the way she gave

not only love but dignity and pride to Averell who, as long as he was with her, was at the summit, even to his last days.

In 1991, she put her indomitability to a new test in American politics, forming an organization with a name that made the pundits chuckle because it did seem a laughable oxymoron in those days: Democrats for the Eighties. For members of our party at that low ebb, she became organizer, inspirer, sustainer, a captain of our cause in a long march back to victory. She lifted our spirits and our vision.

I will never forget how she was there for Hillary and for me in 1992: wise counsel, friend, a leader in our ranks who never doubted the outcome, or if she did, covered it so well with her well-known bravado that no one could have suspected. Today I am here in no small measure because she was there.

She was one of the easiest choices I made for any appointment when I became President. As she left to become our Ambassador to France, she told us all with a smile, "Now my home in Paris will be your home. Please come and visit, but not all at once." [*Laughter*] It seemed she had been having us at her home all at once for too many years. So a lot of us took her up on her invitation to come to Paris. After Hillary and I had been there the