

to Barbados Governor General Sir Clifford Husbands and his wife, Lady Ruby Husbands; Prime

Minister Owen Arthur of Barbados and his wife, Beverley; and President Rene Preval of Haiti.

## The President's Radio Address *May 10, 1997*

Good morning. This morning I want to talk about the responsibility we share to protect our children from the scourge of violent crime and especially from crime committed by other young people. We've all worked hard over the last 4½ years to prepare America for the 21st century, with opportunity for all, responsibility from all our citizens, and a community that includes all Americans. Because of these efforts, America's children face a brighter future. Economic growth is the highest it's been in a decade. Unemployment is at its lowest level in 24 years, with over 12 million new jobs. Last Friday we reached an historic agreement to finish the job of balancing the budget, to keep our economy thriving, with the biggest investment in education in 30 years, tax cuts to help pay for a college education for all Americans, and health care coverage for 5 million children who have no insurance now.

But with all these advances, our children cannot live out their dreams if they are living in fear of gangs and guns. That's why I have worked so hard to reverse the tide of crime. We passed a tough crime bill that's putting 100,000 new community police on our street. We passed the Brady bill, which has stopped over 186,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from buying handguns. We banned deadly assault weapons. We initiated the biggest antidrug effort ever to make our children's schools and streets safe, drug-free, and gun-free.

This strategy is working. Serious crime has dropped 5 years in a row. But sadly, crime among young people has been on the rise. According to a report by the Justice Department's juvenile division, unless we act now, the number of juveniles arrested for violent crimes will more than double by the year 2010. That means we must launch a full-scale assault on juvenile crime based on what we know works.

This February I sent legislation to Congress that would declare war on gangs, with new prosecutors and tougher penalties. It would also ex-

tend the Brady bill so that someone who commits a violent crime as a juvenile is barred from buying a gun as an adult. It would require that child safety locks be sold with guns to keep children from hurting themselves or each other. It would help keep schools open after hours, on weekends, and in the summer to keep children off the streets and out of trouble.

This is a tough and balanced approach based on what is actually working at the local level. In Boston, where many of these efforts are already in place, youth murders have dropped 80 percent in 5 years, and not one child has been killed with a gun in over a year and a half.

Unfortunately, this Thursday the House of Representatives passed the juvenile justice bill that falls far short of that promise. The House bill is weak on guns, and it walks away from the crime prevention initiatives that can save a teenager from a life of crime. And as drafted, it would actually only reach a few States with the good it does do.

The House bill does not ensure the new antigang prosecutors we desperately need to pursue and punish violent juveniles. It does not support efforts such as Boston's Operation Night Life, where police and probation officers make nightly visits to the homes of young probationers to make sure they live up to the strict rules of their probation. The bill does not fund anticrime initiatives to keep our schools open later and on weekends so young people can stay under the watchful eye of parents, educators, and community leaders instead of on street corners where the most common influences are bad ones. We know juvenile crime peaks right after the schoolday ends. We've got to engage our children during those hours, to steer them away from gangs.

You know, just a couple of weeks ago, I sponsored the Service Summit in Philadelphia, along with all our former Presidents and General Colin Powell. The summit was dedicated to giving every young American a chance to make

*May 10 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1997*

the most of his or her life, enlisting millions and millions of volunteers to guarantee children a healthy start, access to basic skills, a mentor, a safe environment, and the chance to serve themselves. Republicans and Democrats alike applauded this summit. It highlighted successful efforts to guarantee children a safe environment.

Now, this bill the House passed ignores the real spirit of the summit, its bipartisanship and its focus on what works. The plain evidence of what is working right now to save our children is nowhere apparent in this bill. It's the same old tough rhetoric without any prevention, without any change in the environment to make it harder for gangs to function, or without real toughness in every State in America. Perhaps most troubling, the House bill rejects my call to cut off young people's access to guns, now the third leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 13 and 24. We must begin with the simple precaution of child safety locks. It's heartbreaking when a gun owned by a law-abiding parent is used by a child to hurt themselves or others. According to a National Institute of Justice survey, 185 children died in 1994 because of accidental shootings. Now, if we can have safety precautions to prevent children from opening bottles of aspirin, surely we can have the same safety precautions to prevent children from using guns.

Extending the Brady bill is critical as well. If you commit a violent crime as a 17-year-

old, you should not be able to buy a gun on your 21st birthday. I challenge Congress to pass a real juvenile justice bill, one that's tough on gangs and tough on guns and is serious about the kind of prevention efforts we know will work.

To me, a juvenile justice bill that doesn't limit children's access to guns is a bill that walks away from the problem. Not a single hunter would lose a gun because of child safety locks. Not a single law-abiding citizen would be denied a gun if we extend the Brady bill to those with violent juvenile records. But countless young lives would be saved if stolen guns became useless guns and if lawless juveniles became gunless adults.

If Congress really wants to get tough on juvenile crime, then it's time to get tough on guns and take them out of the hands of violent juveniles. We've come a long way in the last 4½ years. But to really make sure we prepare our children for the 21st century, we have got to give them a safe and orderly environment where they can make the most of their future and of the world they will soon inherit.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 2:50 p.m. on May 9 aboard Air Force One for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 10.

## Address to the People of Central and South America

*May 10, 1997*

Good morning. I'm speaking to you today from Bridgetown, Barbados. I'm proud to be the first American President to meet with Caribbean leaders in the heart of the Caribbean. This was not a meeting between Caribbean nations and the United States, it was a meeting among Caribbean nations including the United States.

We are charting a roadmap for how we can work together for the benefit of all of our people as we move into a new century. Today, every nation in the Americas but one has embraced free elections and open markets. This hopeful moment gives us real opportunities to improve the lives of all our people, but it also

demands that we work together to bring the benefit of change to all our citizens and to band together to meet the transnational threats that respect no borders.

That's what the Partnership for Prosperity and Security in the Caribbean that we signed today is all about. It lays out an ambitious action plan to expand trade with the Caribbean; to launch the Caribbean clean energy initiative to better protect the environment; to create a Caribbean scholars program so students have access to specialized training; to support the banks that make low-interest loans readily available to workers, farmers, and women's groups; and to deepen