

me about some issue or another that you were interested in and involved in, committed to. But I am especially grateful to him for his support for education and the education initiatives that we have put before the American people—his family is the living embodiment of that commitment—and for his support for economic expansion through trade. I think the people of New Orleans understand, without regard to party, that if we're going to keep growing our economy and lifting incomes and finding more for more people to do, since we're only 4 percent of the world's people and we enjoy 20 percent of the world's wealth, we have to sell some more to the other 96 percent of the world out there. And I am very grateful for his support on those issues.

I can also tell you he's done a great job with this Africa trade bill, which I think represents an enormous opportunity for America in the years ahead, both in economic opportunity and in opportunity to build friendships and partnerships in a part of the world that too many of

our people have ignored for too long, which is very, very important to the future of the globe.

Hillary and I had a wonderful trip to Africa not very long ago, and Bill went on the trip, and he did you proud. You would have been very, very proud of that.

So for all those reasons, I am here for my old friend, for a gifted public servant, for a supporter of the things that I believe in are right for America in the 21st century. I'm glad you're taking good care of him, and I hope you always will, because he sure takes good care of you.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:43 p.m. in the Imperial Ballroom at the Fairmont Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Marc H. Morial of New Orleans; Lt. Gov. Kathleen Blanco of Louisiana; Representative Jefferson's wife, Andrea; and former Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in New Orleans July 20, 1998

Thank you. Now you shamed me, and I can no longer make fun of you—[laughter]—Sheriff Lee. What he was afraid is I was going to say that he had offered to take me hunting and take you, and he said that he would provide the game. [Laughter] And I said, if you took me, you'd all be safe because I'd be blamed for it, no matter what happened. It would be great. [Laughter]

Let me say, I'd better get out of town because I'm really beginning to enjoy myself here and—[laughter]—and you know, it's just been wonderful.

First of all, let me thank a lot of the people who are here. I want to thank Len Barrack who came up here before me. I know most of you don't know him, but he is a Philadelphia lawyer and a gentleman and wonderful human being. Like Congressman and Mrs. Jefferson, he has five great children, and like Congressman Jefferson, he overmarried. You can't imagine—here's a guy with a busy life and a lot to do, and he could be home in Philadelphia. And

every night he's somewhere else in America trying to help rebuild our party and make sure we're victorious in November. And I thank you. Thank you very much.

I never want to speak again in Louisiana without thanking the people of this State for voting for me twice for President and voting for me overwhelmingly in the primary in 1992 and giving me the chance to serve. And it is a real joy to me to see you doing so well and to see the young leaders coming in.

I can tell you would be very, very proud of the mark that Mary Landrieu is making, not only from what you know here in Louisiana, but if you were in Washington and you heard it the way I hear it from the Senators, they believe that she is a fine Senator with an unlimited future, and so do I.

And I can't say enough about your mayor. New Orleans is getting a national reputation for saving its children, for putting its economy back in order, for showing the right face to the world,

for bringing people together, for being a genuinely progressive city in the best sense. And, Mr. Mayor, I thank you for what you're doing, and I'm always proud.

I want to thank your State party chair, Ben Jeffers, and all the other people who've been active in the Democratic Party. I can't say enough in terms of thanks to Ray Reggie and to Congressman Jefferson for doing this tonight. I also want to thank them for the people who are here. I know there are a lot of younger people here tonight that I have not met before. There are some former Republicans who are here tonight that I have not met before, and I thank you.

You know, I always tell my Republican friends in Washington that, being a Southern Baptist, I believe in deathbed conversions, but I hate to wait that long. *[Laughter]* So I feel somewhat encouraged that I won't have to wait that long for some of you.

I thank my longtime friend and our Transportation Secretary, Secretary Rodney Slater, for being here with me tonight—a great friend of the people of Louisiana.

And let me just recognize one other person. We're just 11 seats from winning a majority in the House of Representatives and being able once again to put progress over partisanship in America. And I believe that Marjorie McKeithen will be one of those 11 victories, and I thank her for being here today. Let's give her a hand. *[Applause]*

Jeff talked a little bit about how we tried to change the Democratic Party. I think it's worth all of us, because we're neighbors and friends, going back to where we were a few years ago and thinking about those circumstances. Most of my Republican friends in the late eighties and early nineties thought there would never be another Democratic President in their lifetime, because they thought we kept shooting ourselves in the foot, and because they thought they had developed a kind of a cardboard cookie image of us that they could always present to the American people, and because they thought that they could always sort of divide every issue into the liberal position and the conservative position, and the conservative position was always right, the liberal position was always wrong. And at a very high level of rhetoric with a lot of emotion and a lot of heat and as little light as possible, they could turn every election into one where the voters didn't

think, and their emotions carried them to ratify their governance.

The thing that bothered me about that, as a Governor of a State that went through all the turmoil of the eighties, just like all of you did, that—I kept reading the newspaper every day, just like all of you, and I heard all those debates in Washington, just like all of you. And most of what I heard didn't make a lot of sense to me, because I didn't know anybody who talked that way or who thought that way. Most of the people that I knew, whether they were Republicans or Democrats, we all had fights over the issues, but we understood there was some core things we had to do in my home State, and we did it; we worked together.

And I thought, well, maybe it was just something in the water, maybe that Washington is so far away from the people that you have to communicate in more abstract terms. And I do think there's something to that. You have to elevate the debate and make it more general to some extent.

But the truth is this country was in trouble in 1992. And if it hadn't been, I would not have been elected; I think we all know that. I think we all know that I had the great good fortune to bring to the American people some new ideas and a new direction at a time when they were open to hearing it. And otherwise, the Governor of a small Southern State, as my distinguished opponent often dubbed me, would not have had a chance to become President.

But I'd like to review with you just for a moment what those ideas were, because I think it's worth pointing out what they were. We believed that, first of all, we had to ground our party in the values that made our country great and the values that our party embodied when we were the leading party in America; that we were for opportunity for everybody, we were for responsibility from everybody, and we thought we had to build an American community of everybody; and that this country wouldn't work if we couldn't do those three things; and that, basically, the debate which was going on in the early nineties in this country, I thought, was largely irrelevant to the real problems of real people when we had unemployment high, crime rising, welfare rising, incomes diverging, the country showing uncertainty around the world, and great difficulties.

On economic policy it seemed to me that we had a lot of people talking about how terrible

Government spending was, while they quadrupled the debt of the country, which I thought was a pretty neat trick. It seemed to me that what we had to do was to close the gap between the two positions and say, "We can't stop investing in our people, we can't stop investing in education and science and technology and all this research, because that's the future of the country, but we've got to do it in a way that eliminates this deficit." And when I said, I think we ought to invest more and still cut the deficit, and that if we cut out unnecessary programs and reduce the size of Government, we could do that; if we eliminated unnecessary inflation in some of our programs, we could do that, a lot of people thought we were nuts. But actually, it turned out we were right.

On education, I said, I'm all for spending more money on education, but we also have to lift the standards of excellence and accountability. Today I came to New Orleans in part to speak to the American Federation of Teachers, and probably more than any other single educational organization over the last 15 years, they have constantly echoed that theme. And they deserve a lot of credit from the American people for always saying, "Hey, we want to be held accountable, and if we're not good at what we do, we shouldn't be in the classroom, and we're not afraid of accountability, but we expect you to invest in our children and our future."

On matters of the environment, it always seemed to me that if we got into a position where we had to choose between preserving our environment and growing our economy, we were going to be defeated before we started, because in the end, if we use up our environment, we won't have an economy, and if we have to ask people to give up their right to make a living, then there won't be any support for a clean environment. So we said our environmental policy is going to be designed to improve the environment as we grow the economy.

On crime, it seemed to me that the further away you got from the streets where crime occurred, the more politicians, despairing that they could do anything, talked tough but did nothing. So I said, yes, we ought to punish people more if they deserve it. But we also ought to give local law enforcement officials the tools they need to prevent crime in the first place and give these kids something they can do to stay out of trouble in the first place.

On welfare, the debate in Washington in 1992, before I showed up, seemed to be between those who said we ought to make every able-bodied person work, and if they can't take care of their kids, that's just tough; and those who said there's no way to do that, so we just have to keep the same old system, as bad as it is. I thought that was a foolish choice.

So we said, the position ought to be every able-bodied person should work, but we should never forget that everyone's job, most important job—everyone's most important job, even the President, if you have a child, is being a good parent. So we can't make people sacrifice their children. So we're going to make people work, but we're going to give them child care and the support their children need for medical care so you can be a good parent and a good worker. That's what all of us want to do. That's what we should want poor people to do as well.

I haven't won all my debates in the Democratic Party. Mr. Jefferson and I are still fighting the debate on trade, because some people still believe that if you expand trade, well, inevitably you will empower people who will despoil the global economy and weaken workers around the world. It seems to me that when countries get richer, they're more likely to lift the conditions of their workers, and wealthy countries do better by the environment than poor countries do. So my belief is we can expand trade and improve the conditions of people around the world.

And I want to thank Bill Jefferson for sticking up for that position. I know that's good for the Port of New Orleans. The truth is it's good for the rest of America, because we're only 4 percent of the world's population, we have 20 percent of the world's income; if we want to keep it—the developing world is growing at 3 times the rate of the already developed countries. You don't have to be a mathematical genius to figure out that if you want to keep your income, we 4 percent have to sell something to the other 96 percent. And we've got a real interest in their growing.

Therefore, Bill Jefferson's interest in Africa, his support of the Africa trade bill, his support of our outreach to the Caribbean and to Latin America, these things are very, very important. And the support that he and Mary and others have given to our attempt to get some funds into the revitalization of the Asian economies

is profoundly important. If you want the American economy to keep growing, then please support our efforts to get growth back in Asia. That is the only way for us to continue to grow over the long run.

So anyway, we said, "These are our new ideas." And a lot of people said, "Oh, they don't believe in anything, because they're not completely liberal; they're not completely conservative." That's the last refuge of a scoundrel, you know, if you have to think, just accuse the other people of having no conscience, no convictions. And I say, yes, we have very strong convictions, but we have new ideas. Only foolish people stay with yesterday's ideas in today's circumstances facing a different tomorrow.

And so we have vigorously pursued those ideas in the Democratic Party, not abandoning our principles but building on our bedrock principles to meet the needs of America in the 21st century. And while the American people deserve most of the credit for any good thing that happens, there is definitely a connection between the policies we have followed and the results which have ensued.

We have the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, the smallest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years. We're going to have the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years. We've got the lowest inflation in 32 years, the highest homeownership in history. And by the way, under a Democratic administration, the Federal Government is the smallest it's been in 35 years. This is working. This is working.

More to the point, one big reason that you ought to elect Marjorie and that what you're doing for the Democratic Party is important is because we are committed to making the tough decisions over the long run, to putting the progress of the country ahead of short-term partisan advantage. I'll just give you a few examples.

We've got to reform the Social Security and Medicare system so they'll be there for the baby boomers under circumstances that don't bankrupt our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren. We have to do it now. We are committed to doing that in a way that is fair and balanced to all generations.

We have got to continue working until we can say with a straight face, yes, we've had the best college education in the world for a long time; now we've got the best elementary and secondary education for all of our people.

We have got to continue to come to grips with the fact that we have more and more Americans in managed care. And that's a good thing if you're getting rid of waste in the system, but it's a terrible thing if people can't have emergency room care when they need it, can't have specialists when they need it, when you have literally disastrous, heart-breaking circumstances, which is why we have so many Republicans all across America and the American Medical Association and a lot of other people supporting the Democratic Party's position for a Patients' Bill of Rights that will protect the health care interests of all of our people.

Well, you get the idea. We're trying very hard to pass legislation to protect children from the dangers of tobacco. We don't want to bankrupt the tobacco companies; we want to get them out of the business of marketing tobacco to our children. And it's a profoundly important thing.

And we're prepared to make tough decisions, to make principled decisions, to put the progress of the country ahead of the partisan divide. We have to do this. And so I ask all of you to renew your dedication; I thank you. But remember, what makes a successful country in times like this is not all that different from what makes a successful company or community or family endeavor. If you look at the whole history of America, at all dynamic change eras, when things were really up in the air, as they are now, we have grown stronger and stronger and stronger, and we're now the longest lasting democracy in history, because we have done what the Founding Fathers told us to do.

They set up this very flexible system, rooted in bedrock values, that said, in every age and time, you must first of all deepen freedom and extend it to all law-abiding people. Secondly, you must seek to widen the circle of opportunity, what they called the pursuit of happiness. Thirdly, you must recognize that you cannot do this alone, and this is maybe the significant difference between the two parties today. And I say that, having eliminated more Government programs, more Government regulations, and reduced the size of the Government more than any Republican President in the last 50 years. Still, remember what the Founders said: We are forming this Government because alone, we cannot protect, pursue, and enhance life, liberty, and happiness. That's why we got together, because in the nature of things, we can't do all these things all by ourselves.

Maybe the most important thing we've done is to try to redefine the role of Government. The old debate was Government's the problem versus Government's the solution. Our position is Government is neither. Government is a glue that binds us together. And the job of Government on the edge of the 21st century is to create the conditions and give people the tools to make the most of their own lives; to solve their problems in their individual lives, their family lives, their community lives, their business lives; to be good for the American people as stewards; and to be a leading force in the world for peace and freedom and prosperity.

And so finally, I would say that the third mission is, after freedom and opportunity, is that we are constantly forced to redefine our National Union. And that is the difference, the critical difference between the two parties today. I do not believe that we can be what we need to be unless we still believe that our eternal mission is what they said it was 220 years ago: to form a more perfect Union. Nobody—you won't find anybody in America that likes our diversity anymore than I do. I love our racial diversity. I love our ethnic diversity. I love our religious diversity. I love our cultural diversity.

That's why I love to come to New Orleans, right?

But what is important is—and what makes it possible to enjoy all that is that underneath it all, at the bedrock, we are bound together by common values and a common understanding that we are going into tomorrow together. And the only way we can make the most of this phenomenal opportunity we have is to do it.

So I ask you to go and impart that message to your friends and neighbors. Help us to strengthen our party. Help us to continue to move forward. Help us to get the message to Washington, "The American people want progress over partisanship," and the Democratic Party—far more important, the American people—will go strong into that new century.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:24 p.m. at Emeril's Restaurant. In his remarks, he referred to Sheriff Harry Lee of Jefferson Parish; Leonard Barrack, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; Representative William Jefferson's wife, Andrea; Mayor Marc H. Morial of New Orleans; Ray Reggie, event coordinator; and Marjorie McKeithen, candidate for Louisiana's Sixth Congressional District.

Remarks Announcing New Nursing Home Regulations and an Exchange With Reporters

July 21, 1998

The President. Thank you, Secretary Shalala, and Nancy-Ann Min DeParle, and the advocates who are here. I wish your mother were here, Secretary Shalala. I have met her, and even a skeptical press corps would believe your account of her in full if they could see her.

The duty we owe to our parents is one of the most sacred duties we, as Americans, owe to each other. Nowhere is that duty more important than when a family makes the choice to move a parent into a nursing home. When that time comes, all of us need to know that all our parents will be well cared for.

Today, more than 1.6 million Americans live in more than 16,000 nursing homes nationwide. When the baby boom generation moves into retirement, the number will rise even higher.

By 2030, the number of Americans over the age of 85 will double, making compassionate quality nursing home care even more important.

At their best, nursing homes can be a Godsend for older Americans and their families, providing a safe haven in times of need. But at their worst, they can actually endanger their residents, subjecting them to the worst kinds of abuse and neglect. For nearly 6 years, as Secretary Shalala said, we've worked hard to give our most vulnerable citizens the security and health services they need to live in peace and safety.

I am committed to honoring the great social compact between the generations, first, let me say, by reserving every penny of the budget surplus until we save Social Security first. The