

some of the harsher aspects of the Republican revolution of the last 5 years, immigration, for example.

But on other issues, it's either blurring, like, where are they, really, on affirmative action and choice—not really clear—and on some places, you know, downright hostile to the position that I believe is sort of the Third Way position, including on civil liberties, like the hate crimes legislation or on consumer protections like the Patients' Bill of Rights or, most profoundly, on these gun issues.

So the question is, are the architects of the revolution in 1995, the contract on America, the heirs of Newt Gingrich who are still basically in control of the Congress, all of whom were early—almost all of whom, almost 100 percent—early endorsers of Mr. Bush, is this an umbrella under which they can be protected from the rainstorm of public opinion until they get to where they can do what they want, or is it something different? I think the record is decidedly mixed on that.

Childhood Poverty

Mr. Brownstein. I was going to ask you about Bradley criticizing you on child poverty, not doing enough to reduce childhood poverty. That was the—

The President. I don't think anybody's done enough to reduce childhood poverty. You have to keep going. But if you look at the minimum wage, doubling the earned-income tax credit, and what we've done—we've immunized 90 percent of the kids for the first time in history, and we've got the lowest minority unemployment rate ever recorded and the lowest Hispanic unemployment rate ever recorded—I think we've made more headway than anyone imagined we could when we started.

But it's a very difficult problem.

NOTE: The interview began at approximately 8 p.m. en route from East St. Louis, IL, to Rapid City, SD. In his remarks, the President referred to Gov. George W. Bush of Texas. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 8. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks in a Discussion on Youth Opportunities in Los Angeles, California July 8, 1999

The President. Thank you. Please sit down. We're running behind now. I've got to get to be more businesslike. Since Alexis has been so fulsome in her kind comments, that was an example of Clinton's second law of politics: Always be introduced by someone you've appointed to a high position. [*Laughter*]

Let me say to, first, our host here in Representative Maxine Waters' district, we're delighted to be here. I want to thank all of you who made it possible for us to come to this beautiful facility. Let me say I am doing something today I never thought I would ever do, for those who have been on the tour with me; I came to Los Angeles to cool off. [*Laughter*] It was 100 degrees in Washington when we left; it was 100 degrees in Appalachia; it was 100 degrees in the Mississippi Delta; it was 100 degrees in East St. Louis; it was only about 94 on the Indian reservation yesterday; and it was over 100 in south Phoenix. So I came to Los

Angeles to cool off, and I thank you very much for that.

I want to thank Secretary Daley and Secretary Slater who are here; and Reverend Jackson, thank you for making this tour with us and all the business leaders who have been with us. I want to thank Congresswoman Millender-McDonald. We were just over at the transportation academy in her district, and I enjoyed that very much. Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez, thank you for being here. Congressman Xavier Becerra; and Congressman Paul Kanjorski, who came all the way from Pennsylvania, has been on every step of this tour, and I thank him.

Governor, thank you for making us feel welcome, and Yvonne Burke, thank you, and I'd like to thank all the business leaders and all the leaders from entertainment and athletics and other things that are here today.

I will be very brief because I want to hear from the young people here. I have believed from the beginning of my tenure as President that, in order for the American economy to really work and in order for the American society to work, every American should believe that he or she had a chance to be a part of it. And we've worked on this for some time. And you heard Alexis talking about the economic statistics: we now have the longest peacetime expansion in history, the lowest minority unemployment rates ever recorded. But everyone knows that there are still substantial numbers of people in our distressed urban and rural areas and on our Indian reservations that basically have not been part of this recovery.

In Watts, for example, the unemployment rate has dropped by almost 50 percent but is still three times above the national average, just for example. And so it seemed to me, several months ago—and I talked about this in my State of the Union Address way back in January—that there was a way to tap the enormous feeling that a lot of our business leaders have that they've done very, very well in a stock market that's more than tripled in 6 years and a strong economy and that they ought to give something back with the idea that it would actually be good economics to give something back.

Those of you who follow the business news know that, every time the Federal Reserve meets, there's all this tense speculation: Will they raise interest rates or not? Well, what does that mean to these young people here with their yellow T-shirts on? It is that most economists believe that there is a limit to how low the unemployment can go and a limit to how high the economic growth can go, before you have so much inflation that you have to stop it, which kills the economic recovery.

Now, how can you keep it going? How can we keep this recovery going, never mind all these kids we're here to hear about, just for those of you who have done well in the stock market? How could you keep it going? The easiest way to keep it going is to go to places where there aren't enough jobs and there aren't enough consumers, and create more of both: create more business owners, create more workers, create more consumers. That's all growth completely without inflation.

It allows America's economic expansion to continue, so there's a real sense in which, every time we hire a young person off the street in

Watts and give him or her a better future, we are helping people who live in the ritziest suburbs in America to continue to enjoy a rising stock market, and it proves beyond any doubt that we are all in this together, that we're all better off when the least of us do well.

And also, we have a chance here that we've never had before, at least in my lifetime, certainly not since the American economy began to unravel in the late sixties. We have got a chance to actually build an economic infrastructure in the inner cities and in rural America that will restore something like a normal economy to places.

There will always be—some times are pretty good; some times won't be so good. But what we want for every American is to live in a community where at least he or she has the same shot everybody else does.

Now, the first 3½ days, what we spent focusing on is how to get money into isolated places. That's basically what we've been focusing on. And we talked a lot about the things we've been doing since 1993. We've had wonderful business leaders from all over America, by the way, of both parties—this is not a partisan issue anyplace but Washington, DC, and I hope it won't be there—saying, "Hey, this is good business. This is a good deal. We want to be a part of it." And we talked about this new markets legislation I have proposed which would give tax credits and government-guaranteed loans to people who would invest to give equity to people to start businesses in the inner city and in rural America.

And basically what I've asked the Congress to do is to give businesspeople the same incentive to invest in America they get to invest today in poor communities in Latin America or Asia or Africa or the Caribbean. I don't want to take those opportunities away. I just want American communities to have the same shot at the future.

So now, what we're here today to say is that, even if we do all that, in the world we're living in, there is a high premium in an information society placed on knowledge, skills, what you know today, and what you can continue to learn. One of the young people I saw today is about to join the United States Army, once in a gang, was working a computer program in which he was able to match someone in Russia who wanted to buy tires with someone in Colombia who

wanted to sell them, and he could get a commission off of it in between. Well, I just give you that as one example. I saw a lot of other—I saw two young people who were designing automobiles that would be less wind-resistant and, therefore, would operate at higher rates of efficiency.

Another young man who was mixing sound, so that if I—he told me, if I sang a song flat into his microphone, he could tune it up so I'd sound just fine. [Laughter]

All these things make this point, and that's why we're here, to finish, in a way, with the most important thing of all: We can put in place the financial networks; we can create a lot of jobs; but our young people—and 60 percent of the young people, men and women, young men and women in the most distressed areas of America are neither in school or at work still. And so we can do all of these things and provide these investments, but if our young people don't have the opportunity to learn and to continue to learn and to continue to get training for a lifetime, we won't be able to do it.

The first place I went in Appalachia, 57 percent of the people who live there never finished high school. It's very remote. But there's a man there that expanded a firm that does business with all the high-tech companies in the country from 40 to 850 employees by having all of his present employees do a continuous job training on every new person they try to take out of the hills and hollows of Appalachia.

So there is no place, even in rural America, that can escape the reality that we must train and educate our young people if we really want this to work. So that's what we're here about.

I thank Secretary Herman for this youth opportunities initiative, and all of you who are participating. So Alexis, why don't you take over, and let's hear from our folks.

[At this point, the discussion began.]

The President. Let me just say, Mel Farr, who is a former all-pro football player from Detroit, is becoming the largest automobile dealer in America, and it's just worked out. One of the announcements we made earlier on our tour is that he has a lot of big financial institutions who've agreed to buy his car loans in bulk, which will enable him to expand all across America and put minority-owned dealerships in every community in this country.

And for people who have modest incomes, you know, he has adapted this sort of car leasing proposal; you remember, this started a few years ago when people stopped buying cars and started leasing them and leased them 3 years. Mel will lease people cars, give you leases for as short a period as 2 months. But if you don't pay, you can't make off with the car; he's got a device that will turn the car off. [Laughter] So he soon will be responsible for the widest distribution of car ownership in America with the largest number of cars that won't run. [Laughter]

This is actually a brilliant thing, because he's giving people a chance to have cars they never could afford otherwise. He's recognizing that people who don't have a lot of cash income have to live from month to month; and he's doing it in a way that is giving people a chance to run dealerships who never could have run them before, and they will all train people and hire the kind of people that Toyota center is training.

So thank you, Mel, for a brilliant thing you're doing.

[The discussion continued.]

The President. Thank you. Let me just briefly say in closing, first of all, I want to thank all those who have participated and those who are here who have not said anything but, by the power of their example, are doing a great thing for our country. We have advocates here; we have investors; and we have those who are examples, particularly these young people who have spoken.

To me, this is the best of all endeavors because it is the morally right thing to do and it is in the self-interest of every American who participates in it. I believe—I listened to these young people, and I read the notes on their lives before I came here. You know, things happen to people in life, and the good things and the bad things, especially to our children, are not evenly distributed. And yet, among all the poor people in America, there are people who could help us find a cure for AIDS, a vaccine; there are people who could help us to—I talked to one of the young men earlier who developed composite parts for cars that would be as strong as steel and weigh a thousand pounds less and get 80 miles a gallon, or 90. There are people who could solve every problem out there. The

talent and the human spirit are evenly distributed across racial and income lines.

But things happen to people, and things happen to communities. In our inner cities and a lot of our rural areas, the economic bases that once made them organized, thriving, and successful evaporated, and we did a lousy job as a country of replacing that. We were slow off the uptake. And in other places, like our Indian reservations, arguably, there never was an economic basis that would be self-sustaining.

So what we do here is to say that this is not something the Government can do alone, but the Government should do its part. And this is not something the private sector can be expected to do unless we provide the training and the support for the young people and provide the framework within which we lower the risk of these investments as much as is prudent.

But we have to remember the human element in all this. We were in East St. Louis yesterday, visited a Wal-Mart store in one of the most distressed inner-city areas—I mean, Walgreens store, this beautiful Walgreens store—30 employees. The manager of the Walgreens store was a 24-year-old African-American girl that grew up in that community and got out of college and was just good at what she did, and that company believed in her enough to give her a chance at the age of 24 to run a store with 30 employees. An example. You're an ex-

ample. You're an example. You're an example. All of you are examples.

The rest of us, who basically had a lot of luck and good fortune in life—you know, we all like to believe we were born in log cabins we built ourselves, but most of us were helped along life's way and we had a lot of luck to get where we are, and most of us, with all the bad things that happened to us, end life ahead of where we would be if all we got was what we just deserved. And we should remember that.

And we should think about these children and remember that it is in the interest of America—the talent and the gifts and the richness of their souls and their spirits are evenly distributed. But things happen to them or things happen to the place where they happen to be born or where they happen to live now, and we can make it better. If we can't do it now, with this economy as strong as it is, we'll never get around to doing it.

So when we leave here, we should remember that, and we should do it. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at noon in the Founders' Library at Southwest College. In his remarks, he referred to civil rights leader Jesse Jackson; Gov. Gray Davis of California; Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Los Angeles County supervisor, second district; and Walgreens manager Angela Tennon.

Remarks to the National Academy Foundation Conference in Anaheim, California

July 8, 1999

You know, Hazel, you might consider just skipping that hotel business and going right into politics. *[Laughter]* I want to thank all of you for your welcome, and I thank Hazel and her fellow winners behind us for reminding us of why we're here. Mayor Daly, thank you for making me feel welcome, and Secretary Daley, Secretary Slater. Representative Sanchez, we're delighted to be in your district and to be here with other Members of Congress who are here.

I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to my wonderful friend, our former Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, who is here with us today and supporting this endeavor.

Since this is the last event for me in this weeklong odyssey across America to our—what we called America's new markets, I'd like to say a special word of thanks to the folks on the White House staff who made it possible, including my National Economic Adviser, Gene Sperling, without whom this never would have occurred.

And I want to say a special word of thanks to Reverend Jesse Jackson, who worked with Sandy Weill on the Wall Street Project, went to Appalachia before it was fashionable, who always believed that poor people were smart, wanted to work, and had a right, a moral right