

Why don't we—if we don't get around to this now, we will never do it. We have a couple of Members from Pennsylvania here; there are still towns in Pennsylvania that have had no economic recovery. So why don't we establish a real goal—and so we say, “Look, great, we're growing. We've got a low unemployment rate. Let's bring enterprise and opportunity to people who haven't felt it yet.” This is what we are free to do.

What they're going to say is, “Well, now, we learned we've got to be nice to everybody, and let's go back and do something else.” And I just want to remind you this guy put his neck on the line and so did a lot of the other people here, and they tried to chop it off. But enough

of us survived to see our argument tested, and we were right.

Now, should America continue to change? Should we vote for change in 2000? Absolutely. The question is: What kind of change? We've got the country going in the right direction. Now is the time to reach for the stars, not make a U-turn. Stick with this guy. He's the best.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:25 p.m. at B. Smith's Restaurant. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Laurie Stupak of Menominee, MI, wife of Representative Stupak; and professional golfer Jack Nicklaus.

Remarks at a New Democrat Network Dinner

October 6, 1999

Thank you. I hope I have Joe Lieberman's remarks on the White House television camera back there somewhere. Thank you so much, Senator Lieberman, for—we're about to start our 30th year of acquaintance, Senator Lieberman and I are. When I first met him, I had no gray hair. Now I have more gray hair than he does.

I thank Joe Lieberman and Cal Dooley for their leadership of this organization; my friend Simon Rosenberg, who has come a long way since he was in the Clinton-Gore war room in 1992. And he did a great job there. And I, too, want to acknowledge Al From and thank him for the inspiration he's given all of us.

I want to thank all the Members of Congress who are here and the candidates here who aspire to be in the House or the Senate. I want to reiterate what Joe Lieberman said, and I didn't think I could say this 6 months ago, but we now have, I believe, a reasonable chance to pick up enough seats not only to have a majority in the House, which everybody knows and even our adversaries acknowledge, but even in the Senate, thanks in no small measure to the extraordinary people who are running for the Senate seats on our side.

Now, let me say, I suppose I don't have to say much tonight because I'll be preaching to the saved. But I think it's worth analyzing where

we are and where we're going and why the New Democratic coalition is important and why it's important to us to keep faith with the ideas that got this group started, with the ideals, and to keep always pushing to tomorrow.

You know, there are a lot of people who say, “Well, this election is going to be about change, even if they think the Clinton-Gore team has done a good job or the Democrats have done a good job. This election is about change.” Well, I think it ought to be about change, too. The question is, what kind?

I was educated about this issue very well about 10 years ago. Some of you heard me tell this story before, but it's one of my favorite and most instructive political stories. When I was Governor of my State, every year in October, this month, we'd have a State Fair. And I always had Governor's day at the State Fair, and I'd go out there and give an award to the oldest person there and the couple that had been married the longest and the person with the largest number of great-grandchildren. And then I'd go in this big old shed and get me a little booth, and I'd sit there. And anybody who wanted to come by could talk.

And in October of not—it was '89, and there was a Governor's race the next year, and I had been Governor by then for 10 years. And this old guy in overalls came up to the Governor's

booth, and he said, "Bill, are you going to run next year again?" And I said, "I don't know, but if I do, will you vote for me?" He said, "Oh yeah, I will." He said, "I always have, and I guess I'll keep on doing it." And I said, "Well, aren't you tired of me after all these years?" He said, "No, I'm not, but everybody else I know is." [Laughter]

And I got kind of—[inaudible]—and I said—you know how politicians are, we hate it when somebody says something like that. So I got kind of hurt, and I said, "Well, gosh, I mean, don't you think I've done a good job?" He said, "Oh yeah, you've done a good job, but you got a paycheck every 2 weeks, didn't you?" [Laughter] He said, "That's what we hired you to do. What we've got to figure out is whether you've got anything left to do." Very instructive.

No matter how good a job you do, elections are always about tomorrow, and they should be. America has been changing and sort of reinventing itself on the great pillars of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence for over 200 years, and that's why we're still here. And this coalition came into being and the whole sort of New Democrat/Third Way movement came into being because we thought not that our party should abandon its principles but that we should break out of a shell and adopt policies that would bring us together and move us into the future.

I just want to make a few points as we look to that future. First of all, in 1992, when I went out to the people in New Hampshire and all these other States and into the country and asked then-Senator Gore to join me, and we said, "Look, we've got this vision of America in the 21st century. We want this to be a country where everybody who is responsible enough to work for it has opportunity, where no matter how diverse we get, we're still coming together in one community, where we're still the world's leading force for peace and freedom and prosperity. We want to take this opportunity, responsibility, community agenda and come up with concrete policies and ideas to get the economy moving again, to bring the crime rate down, to bring the welfare rolls down, to empower poor people, to get more young people into college, to raise the standards of our schools and have more choice and competition there. We've got some ideas. Give us a chance."

And all we were doing is making an argument. And against our argument, what the Republicans

said was what they've been saying about Democrats for 30 years, you know, "They're too liberal. You can't trust them with your money. They'll raise your taxes. They never met a Government program they didn't like. They sleep next to a bureaucratic pile of rules at night. You know, they wouldn't defend the country if their life depended on it." You know, you've heard all that stuff.

They had this sort of cardboard cutout image of Democrats that they tried to paste on every candidate's face at election time. But all we had was an argument. And things were sufficiently bad in this country—the economy was in terrible shape; the society was divided; the crime rate and the welfare rolls were exploding—that people decided to take a chance on the argument.

And then we set about trying to turn this country around and made some very tough decisions. And some of our Members paid very dearly for it for the '93 economic plan to turn this country around, for voting for the Brady bill and the crime bill to bring the crime rate down. They paid dearly. But we kept chugging along.

And about 4 years later, the people decided to give us a—they renewed our lease because they could feel things were beginning to change. And then in '98 we had a historic victory in the congressional elections because we had an agenda to keep building on it. We said, "Now give us a chance to save Social Security and pass a Patients' Bill of Rights and build and modernize schools. Give us a chance to do some things that will really make a difference here."

And now we come up to 2000, and I want to make the following points. Some of them have been made before. You need to memorize this. This is not an argument anymore. And the members of the other party unanimously opposed our economic policy; almost all of them are against our crime policy. We finally, thank goodness, reached an accord on welfare policy, after two vetoes, and that's good. But still there is this sort of partisan rancor when we have evidence that the direction we've taken is right.

This is not an argument anymore. The people in this room have been part—the Members of Congress in this room have been part of the longest peacetime economic expansion in history, the lowest unemployment rate in 29 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years, the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the first back-to-back

budget surpluses in 42 years, and the lowest crime rates in 26 years. This is not an argument anymore.

And along the way we've brought some real new ideas into American politics: the family and medical leave law, which the previous administration vetoed; doubling the earned-income tax credit; the empowerment zone program, which the Vice President has done so ably; the community financial institutions that are making loans to people that couldn't get money otherwise; the charter schools—we're up to 1,700 from one when I took office; the HOPE scholarships that have opened the doors of college, at least the first 2 years, virtually to every person in this country now; AmeriCorps, which has given over 100,000 young people in its first 5 years a chance to serve their communities, something it took the Peace Corps 20 years to do.

So we have been full, all of us, of these ideas, and we've worked along. And it's been exciting. It's not an argument anymore. So when we go into this election cycle, I want you to say, with all respect, you have to make a decision about not whether to change. Things are changing so fast, that's not an option.

Since I signed the telecommunications bill, over 300,000 new high-tech jobs have been created. We got this E-rate so we could provide discounts to rural schools and poor schools in the inner cities, so we could hookup all of our classrooms and libraries to the Internet by the year 2000, and it looks like we're going to make it.

I was out in California last weekend doing some work for our congressional and Senate candidates in our party, and I was with a lot of people. This great company, eBay—you all ever buy anything on eBay on the site? It's interesting. It's an interesting thing. Not working for the company, over 20,000 Americans are now making a living doing business on eBay. They don't work for eBay. They're just doing business on eBay. Over 20,000 people making a living, including a substantial number of former welfare recipients.

So what we've tried to do is to come with new ideas and policies that will really work, and it's not an argument anymore. That's the first thing I want to say. So say to people, "We're for change. The question is, what kind of change are you for?"

And the way I look at it, we've spent the last 6½ years trying to turn the country around and get it going in the right direction, and things are going well now. But I would like to suggest that the change we need is to say, "Okay, now we're moving in the right direction. Let's reach for the stars. Let's write the future of the 21st century. Let's imagine every challenge and every opportunity we've got out there that's really big and go get it. Let's don't change by taking a U-turn and going back to what got us trouble in the first place." That is the issue.

You can trust this coalition of people to deal with the aging of America. We're going to double the number of seniors in 30 years. I hope to still be one of them. [Laughter] The baby boomers will then be with us for at least another 20 years. We may or may not ever get an agreement with the Republicans on Social Security reform, but in good conscience, with this surplus, we must at least take the life of Social Security out beyond the reach of the baby boom generation. We have to do that.

If we don't agree on anything else, all it takes to take the life of the Social Security Trust Fund beyond the life of the baby boom generation is to commit to take 5 years of interest savings from saving the Social Security taxes, sometime in the next 15 years, and put them in the Social Security Trust Fund. If we don't do anything else, it'll take us out to 2050, and we ought to do it.

We ought to modernize Medicare. We ought to employ the most modern practices that you find in the private sector, and I think we ought to add a prescription drug coverage because if we were creating that program today, we would never create it without drug coverage. And 75 percent of the seniors in this country don't have affordable drug coverage. It will keep a lot of them out of hospitals. It will lengthen and improve the quality of their lives. It is the right and decent thing to do, and we can do it if we're also prepared to have some savings in the traditional program. We ought to take the lead in this. We should do it.

The second thing we ought to do is to keep working on the schools. We ought to have more charter schools. We ought to have a no social promotion policy. But we ought to give every kid who needs it an after-school program or a summer school program. We ought to modernize these schools, and we ought to hire the 100,000 teachers.

You know, if you ever wonder what the difference in the parties is, you ought to look at the debate going on in education now in the House of Representatives. Now, when the electorate was breathing down their throat in 1998 at the end of the congressional session, the Republicans worked with us to make a huge down-payment on 100,000 teachers to lower class size. And we gave the States money for 30,000 of them. And you ought to read the glowing statements made by such Democratic sympathizers as Dick Armev. [Laughter] In 1998, just last year, the chairman of the House Education Committee, lots of others say, "This could have been a Republican program. There is no bureaucracy here. This is a wonderful thing. We're helping these teachers."

They thought it was a great idea at election time. No electorate breathing down their throat, they have refused to fund the program anymore and taken out the dedicated funding for the teachers that's already there. This is about big ideas. We've got the largest student population, the most diverse student population in history. They need more and better trained teachers. They need higher standards. They need accountability and they need options so that the kids who aren't cutting it don't fail, but find a way to succeed. It's a huge issue.

We have the crime rate, the lowest rate in 26 years. That's very good. Does anybody think it's low enough? Why don't we have a real goal now? Why don't we adopt as a national goal that we're going to be the safest big country in the world?

If we have—we've got—you may think that's crazy, but everybody thought it was crazy when we said we'd balance the budget, too. I could never have been elected President if I said, "If you will vote for me, within 6 years I'll give you two surpluses in a row." [Laughter] People'd say, "He seems like a nice young fella. We'd better send him home and get him a little help. He's disturbed." [Laughter] "He's out of his mind."

If you don't envision this, it won't happen. Why should we say, "We've got the lowest crime rate in 26 years. It's good enough?" It's not good enough. It's nowhere near good enough. But if we're serious about it, we're going to have to do more in prevention. We already have the highest percentage of people behind bars of any country in the world. We're going to have to say there's no rational distinction be-

tween a flea market and a gun show and a gun shop. We're going to have to put 50,000 more police out there in the neighborhoods where the crime rate is still too high. We're going to have to do things that help communities that are driving their crime rates down do it everywhere.

But I think the Democrats ought to say, "We're not satisfied with the lowest crime rate in 26 years. We'll never be satisfied until America is the safest big country in the world, and we think we can help to make it that way."

I think this is important. Let's talk about the economy. It's probably the best economy we've ever had. But I'm not satisfied with it for two reasons: Number one, not everybody is a part of it; and number two, it's changing so fast, if we don't keep working we can't keep the growth going. So let me just offer you a few ideas that I think are important.

I think our new markets ideas are important. These empowerment zones are wonderful, and I want to get more of them. But it isn't fair for all the places that aren't part of it not to have some help from us to bring enterprise there.

If we've learned one thing, we've got the strongest recovery of the last 30 years, also the highest percentage of private sector jobs. We have the smallest Federal Government since President Kennedy was here. But we have not yet figured out how to bring enterprise to every community that hasn't been part of this recovery.

So for those of us who represent and live in the Mississippi Delta or in Appalachia or in—represent many of the inner-city areas or a lot of the small towns and rural areas all over this country or the Native American reservations, I have proposed a modest but, I think, important plan. What I want the Congress to do is to pass laws that give us the same incentives to Americans with money to invest in poor areas in America, we give them to invest in poor areas in Central America and the Caribbean and Africa and Asia and throughout the world. I think it is a very, very good thing to do.

The second thing I'd like to say is that I like what we're doing, hooking up all these classrooms to the Internet, and the E-rate allows us to hook them up in rural areas and poor urban areas. But if you think about it, I believe we could revolutionize the economy of these left-behind places if access to the Internet were

as pervasive as access to telephones. So why don't we adopt that as a goal, study it, figure out how to achieve it, say we will not permit there to be any digital divide. That's the policy we've taken with regard to our schools. That's what the E-rate's all about. No digital divide for our kids in the schools.

But what if their parents all had it, too? What if their parents had access to that? What if we—why should we be content with the economy we have? If we don't reach our goal, it will be a lot better than it would otherwise, and we'll keep things going. I think we ought to think of that.

Let me just mention two other things. First of all, I want to mention something that may be sort of politically impolite, but one issue in which our caucus, in my view, is still divided too often in the wrong way, and that's the issue of trade.

Here's what I think. But there's a reason for that. You see it all over the world today. There is a move toward protectionism all over the world today, even in places that are doing well. Why? Because we have not figured out how to put a human face on the global economy. Because we haven't figured out how to tell people that, sure, there will be more dynamism in this economy, but here's what we're doing to protect the basic rights of working families. Here's what we're doing to try to protect the basic integrity of the environment. Here's what we're trying to do to make sure everyone can benefit from this.

So our party needs to take the lead in pushing for trade, but for doing it in a way that says we're determined to put a human face on the global economy. Because if we don't, it's not just in America; you see this everywhere. I see it in the Europeans. I see it in Asia again. I see it—the economy is now the strongest, here, it's been in a long time, and yet, the impetus for continuing to trade is not there.

Yet, you don't have to be a rocket scientist. We've got 4 percent of the people and 22 percent of the wealth. So if we want to keep strong and wealthy and growing, we've got to do something with the other 96 percent of the people out there. And I think it's very important.

I've got this big trade meeting coming up—we all do—in Washington State, in Seattle, in December. And I hope we can try to break down some barriers in other countries. But why should people break their barriers down if they

think America's trying to have it both ways? So I think we have to go back at this.

And lastly—and I think maybe the most important thing of all for the next generation—I vetoed that tax bill that the Congress passed, the Republicans in Congress passed, because I was convinced that if I signed it we not only could never meet our obligations to our children and to our seniors and to our future in our investments in science and technology, I was convinced we would never finish the work of paying down our debt. Now, we're paying down our debt now. And if we stay on the plane that I asked Congress to adopt in the budget, we will be debt-free in 15 years, for the first time since Andrew Jackson was President in 1835.

Now, why should the Democratic Party be for that? In conventional terms, we're the more liberal party. Why should we be for that? Everybody in this room who is 40 years of age or older, who studied economics in college, was told that a Government should always carry some debt. We were all taught that. Why? Because we're living in a global economy.

You look at what happens to these countries that try to hide their money; people still get it out. Interest rates are set in a global economy. If we get America out of debt, it means that all the Americans can borrow more cheaply. If the Government is out of debt, it means lower interest rates for businesses in this country, for home loans, for car loans, for college loans. It means more jobs and higher incomes. It means when our friends overseas who aren't as fortunate as we are get in trouble the way the Asians did in the last 2 years, they can get out of trouble at lower cost. And we'll start growing again more quickly.

I believe, if we do this, it would do more than anything else we could do to guarantee a whole generation of prosperity. Whatever happens in the future, we know not every day of every month of every year from now on will be as good as the last 6½ years have been, but whatever happens in the future, it won't be as bad as it would have been if we keep getting this country out of debt.

So I hope all of you will support that. We should not do anything that undermines our ability to shoot for that big idea, a debt-free America, an America with its lowest crime rate,

an America where everybody has economic opportunity. These are big ideas, and they're worth fighting for.

So, yes, we ought to be changing. But just remember, you don't have to make an argument with anybody anymore. You have the evidence on your side. We were right. So tell them, "If we're going to change, don't make a U-turn. Reach for the stars."

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:40 p.m. in the Regency Room at the Hyatt Regency. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Joseph I. Lieberman and Representative Calvin M. Dooley, cofounders, and Simon Rosenberg, executive director, New Democratic Network; and Al From, president, Democratic Leadership Council.

Remarks on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and an Exchange With Reporters

October 7, 1999

The President. Good morning. All this past week a chorus of voices has been rising to urge the Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Yesterday our Nation's military leaders and our leading nuclear experts, including a large number of Nobel laureates, came here to say that we can maintain the integrity of our nuclear stockpile without testing, and that we would be safer with the test ban treaty. Today religious leaders from across the spectrum and across the Nation are urging America to seize the higher ground of leadership to stop the spread of nuclear weapons.

I want to thank those who are here, including Bishop John Glynn of the U.S. Catholic Bishop's Conference, Reverend Elenora Giddings Ivory of the Presbyterian Church, Reverend Jay Lintner of the National Council of Churches of Christ, Mark Pelavin of the Religious Action Center of Reformed Judaism, Bishop Theodore Schneider of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Joe Volk of the Friends Committee, Dr. James Dunn; there are others here, as well. And I would like to say a special word of thanks to Reverend Joan Brown Campbell of the National Council of Churches, as she concludes her responsibilities, for all the support she has given to our administration over the years.

And let me express my special gratitude to Senator Jim Jeffords from Vermont and Senator Byron Dorgan of North Dakota for their presence here and for their leadership in this cause.

These Americans are telling us that the debate about this treaty ultimately comes down to a fairly straightforward question: Will we do everything in our power to reduce the likelihood

that someday somewhere nuclear weapons will fall into the hands of someone with absolutely no compunction about using them; or will we instead, send a signal to those who have nuclear weapons, or those who want them, that we won't test but that they can test now or they can test when they develop or acquire the weapons? We have a moral responsibility to future generations to answer that question correctly. And future generations won't forgive us if we fail that responsibility.

We all recognize that no treaty by itself can guarantee our security, and there is always the possibility of cheating. But this treaty, like the Chemical Weapons Convention, gives us tools to strengthen our security, a global network of sensors to detect nuclear tests by others, the right to demand inspections, the means to mobilize the whole world against potential violators. To throw away these tools will ensure more testing and more development of more sophisticated and more dangerous nuclear weapons.

This is a time to come together and do what is plainly in the best interest of our country by embracing a treaty that requires other nations to do what we have already decided to do ourselves, a treaty that will freeze the development of nuclear weapons around the world at a time when we enjoy an overwhelming advantage in military might and technology.

So I say to the Senate today, whatever political commitments you may have made, stop, listen, think about the implications of this for our children's future. You have heard from the military. I hope you will listen to them. You have heard from Nobel laureates and other experts