

we can reverse the tide of climate change without all going back to the Stone Age to live, the way the other side talks—now, you’ve got a big choice here.

And every House seat and every Senate seat and this White House matters. Because, unlike some areas—I’ve got to give it to the other side, they’ve been quite forthright here, and I appreciate it. They’ve been very, very honest in saying, “I disagree with Bill Clinton. I disagree with Al Gore. Vote for us. We will repeal the 43 million roadless acres in the national forests. Vote for us. We will relax the air standards. They’re too hard, and they’re going to slow the economy down too much. Vote for us. We will reexamine all these national monuments.”

And I could give you lots of other examples. So it’s not like we don’t know what the deal is here. And that’s good, because that’s why you have elections, so people can make choices.

But I want to say to you, it’s been a great honor for me to work in the environmental area. I’m glad to know that we’ve had the strongest economy in history with cleaner air, cleaner water, safer food, and more land set aside than anybody since the Roosevelts. I’m proud of that.

But the huge question out there, hanging out there, is whether or not we will create out of this information technology revolution a post-industrial form of energy use, even for manufacturing, if we will unlock the last chemical step keeping us from using biofuels in an efficient way.

The scientists that work for the Department of Agriculture say, you know, you can’t really take ethanol too seriously now because it takes 7 gallons of gasoline to make 8 gallons of ethanol. But they are a short step away from a chemical advance that would enable us to make 8 gallons of ethanol from one gallon of gasoline.

Think about it. That would be the equivalent of 500 gallons of gasoline—500 miles to the gallon in modern cars. We’re so close. And you have to decide.

We need people in the White House and in the Congress that understand the future and are committed to making sure that we get out of denial here, or as my daughter’s generation says, it’s not just a river in Egypt. [Laughter]

And this will not be a headline issue here. Most people say this election is about the Medicare drug issue or the Patients’ Bill of Rights or whether the Republican nominee’s tax cut plan is too big, especially when you compare it with privatizing Social Security. You add them up, and we’re back in deficits. All those things are real important.

But I’m telling you, 50 years from now, our generation will be judged on whether we met the challenge of climate change. And it is not necessary for us to go in a hut and quit making a living to do it. The technologies are there, are right on the verge of there. We can increase productivity. We can grow this economy, and we can do it. You’ve got to decide. Help them get elected, and help Al Gore and Joe Lieberman.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Ruth Hunter, president, California League of Conservation Voters; Fran Diamond, member, Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board; Wendy James, president, Environmental Media Association; Rampa Hormel, honorary event chair; State Senator Hilda Solis; event hosts Carole King and Phil Alden Robinson; and Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush of Texas.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Hidden Hills, California

September 24, 2000

Well, first of all, let me tell you what I’d like to do. I like small events like this, with fewer people. And what I’d like to do—most of what I have to say about the last 8 years I said at the convention in L.A., and maybe

you saw it, and if you did, there’s nothing else I can say.

I would like to just talk for a few minutes, not long, and then just take the microphone

away and have a conversation. If you've got anything you want to ask me or you have anything you want to say or if you'd like to give a speech, just feel free to do it. [Laughter]

I want to thank you, Mitch, for what you said. Thank you, Tracy, for being so good to me, and thank you especially for being so good to Hillary. It means more to me than I can say. I'm very grateful.

I want to thank Sim and Debbie, who have been great friends to me and my family. We met them through Senator Boxer, but I cannot—I don't even have the words to say how grateful I am to you for how good you've been to all the members of my family, my mother-in-law, my brother-in-law, my nephew. I feel like a bag lady around you. It's just unbelievable. [Laughter]

Here's what I'd like you to think about. If somebody asks you tomorrow, "Why did you come here and give this money," what would your answer be? Besides, you know, you wanted to get in here and look at this unbelievable house. [Laughter] If I'd found this house when I was 6 years old, I never would have gone out of it. [Laughter] It's unbelievable.

But anyway, this is what I would like to say. When I ran for President in 1992, only my mother thought I could win. And I did it. It was not easy for me. I was very happy being Governor of my State. My family was in good shape. I was having a great time with my friends. But I had some very definite ideas about how our country ought to work and how we should change direction. And I was afraid that the country was really in trouble.

And I thought, well, even if I don't win, maybe we can move the country off the dime. And the first time I realized I had a chance to win was when I was in the snows of New Hampshire in late 1991, and I was going to a little town called Keene, up in northern New Hampshire. It's one beautiful, beautiful town. There's a beautiful little college there.

So I was asking these young people who were helping me in New Hampshire, I said—they said, "We're going to go up here and have a town meeting, but you've got to understand there are six people running for the Democratic nomination. And President Bush is at 70 percent, but New Hampshire is a basket case, and people are hurting." And I said, "Look," I said, "get to the bottom line here. How many people do I have to have at this town meeting to avoid

being humiliated?" [Laughter] And they said 50. And I said, "Well, what if we get 100?" They said, "That's a pretty good crowd." I said, "What if we get 150?" They said, "It's great"—a little town. I was fifth in the polls in New Hampshire. I had nearly negative name recognition.

But I had put out this booklet telling people exactly what I would do if I got elected, not what I would try to do. So we showed up in Keene, and 400 people showed up, and the fire marshal shut it down. And keep in mind, they didn't—they weren't coming there because they were committed to me. These people didn't know who I was. They were coming there because they heard that somebody who was serious about the problems of America wanted to talk to them and listen to them and try to change the direction of the country. And I saw those 400 people—I got on the phone and called Hillary and said, "This thing may run a little further than we think here." [Laughter] And so the rest is history.

But I say that to make the first point, which is that to a degree that is often underestimated, the Nation's business is like other businesses. It really matters if you've got a clear analysis of where you are, a clear vision of where you want to go and if you lay out what you're going to do. And it's a lot easier to do the job if you get people around you who want to be on the team, and they work like crazy. It makes a difference.

The problems of the Nation yield to efforts in the same way the problems of any other enterprise does. And I think sometimes we forget that. We think that politics is somehow mysterious or its all words or whatever. It's just not true.

And I have been very blessed and have had a great Cabinet and a great staff and people who work like crazy and who had far less destructive ego problems and far fewer sharp elbows than the previous administration had suffered from. And I think it was partly because we actually knew why we wanted to be there. And as hard as it's going to be to leave in many ways, that's the way the system is supposed to work.

And so that brings me to the present moment. The only thing I ever worried about in this election was that the American people would somehow believe it wasn't important because

times were good, that somehow the consequences of their collective decisions on election day were somehow not profound.

It's very often easier to make a good decision when you're up against a wall than it is when times are good. Nobody over 30 years old can deny having made at least one colossal mistake in their life, not because times were so bad but because things seemed to go so well, you thought you didn't have to concentrate anymore—nobody. If you live long enough, you make those mistakes.

So the first thing I want to say is, I've spent a lot of time in my life studying the history of my country. I love it very much. If you come to my office in the White House, you'll see a lot of—you'll see an original edition of the only book Thomas Jefferson ever wrote and two original printings of George Washington's Farewell Address. I've studied this country closely.

I'm not sure we've ever had a time when we've had, at the same time, so much economic prosperity, so much social progress with the absence of gripping internal crisis or external threat. So the main issue here in this election season is, what do people believe this election is about anyway?

And I must say the preliminary indications are very, very good. Witness the different responses to Governor Bush's speech in Philadelphia and Vice President Gore's. Governor Bush gave a beautiful speech in Philadelphia. It was beautifully written. It was eloquent, and it studiously avoided being specific about what he would do if he were President.

Al Gore gave a very good speech in Los Angeles, which revealed who he was. But most important of all, he said—he gave a lot of respect to the American people. He said, "This is a job interview. And unlike other job interviews, you're running for President. You have to define the job. The people want you to say what you think the job is and then what you will do."

So he said, "If you hire me, this is what I'll do." And lo and behold, he got a bigger bump out of our convention than they got out of theirs, even among people, I suspect, who weren't sure they agreed with everything he said or maybe he couldn't remember more than two or three things. He said, "This is what it's about."

So the first thing I want to say to you is, based on 8 years of experience, is that anyone who wants to be President in a dynamic time

should be flexible enough to admit that he might have been wrong, flexible enough to change course, but it really matters whether you have thought through what you were going to do with this job when you get it.

It is a great comfort when the storms come and when you're in all kind of conflict and all this political stuff is happening in Washington the way it does, and people who are in the business or around it primarily for power are pulling back and forth—if you get up every day with a very clear idea of what you said you were going to do and what you believe the country needs, it is an unbelievable asset to America.

So one good reason to be for this guy is, he actually talks about what he would do if he were President in great detail, with the benefit of a unique amount of experience. Now, this may seem self-evident to you, but you go back and look at all the Presidential campaigns in the 20th century. In New Hampshire, I knew that America was moving to this because Senator Tsongas, who was from Massachusetts next door, who won the New Hampshire primary, and I got 60 percent of the vote between us in a six-way race, and we were the only two people that put out very detailed plans of what we would do.

The second thing I want to say is, what I think we should be thinking about is how we keep this thing going, first of all. What could go wrong with this economy? How do we keep it going? How do we head off the problems, maximize the opportunities? And then what are the really big challenges out there for America? Because when you have this luxury and this kind of circumstance, you ought to be going after the big challenge.

What are we going to do when all the baby boomers retire and there's two people working for every one person drawing Social Security? What are we going to do when all of America looks like California—there's no majority race—and we have the biggest bunch of school kids we've ever had from all these diverse racial, ethnic, religious backgrounds and with different first languages. The most diverse school district, interestingly enough, is not Los Angeles or New York or Chicago; it's Fairfax County, Virginia, just across the river from Washington, where there are children from 180 different racial and ethnic groups with over 100 different native languages. And I spent a lot of time there.

What I want to say—because California has done a lot of good work in education the last few years, and I'm honored to have the attorney general and the speaker here tonight. We know something we didn't know 20 years ago, when Hillary and I started working on public schools. We actually know how to turn failing schools around. We actually know what it means to say all children can learn. I was in a school in Harlem the other day where 2 years ago, 80 percent of the kids were doing reading and math below grade level. Two years later—2 years later—in one of the poorest neighborhoods in New York City, 74 percent of the kids were doing reading and math at or above grade level—2 years.

But the one thing America has never done, ever—and there was no real penalty to it before, but there is now—we have never taken what works in some places and been able to make it work everywhere for our schools. How are we going to do that? Huge issue. There are lots of other issues. People used to make fun of Al Gore when he talked about global warming. Now all the oil companies admit it's real. We just got a study from one of the polar ice-caps that indicates the 1990's were the warmest decade in a thousand years. I think we ought to have somebody in the White House that understands that.

So there are these big challenges. I personally think we ought to keep paying down the debt until we get out of debt for the first time since 1835, because that will keep interest rates lower, and our growth in this 8-year period has been more generated by private sector growth than any economic recovery in the 20th century.

There are big, big things we can do. So that's the second thing. You can make your own list. But you think about the big things. That's what America ought to be focused on.

The third thing I would like to say, and I think by far the most important, is that we need, as a nation, to have, in my judgment, a unifying, a synthesizing view of human society and human history. I've always tried to bring people together. I ran for President because I hated what I was hearing out of Washington every night. There was nobody in Congress to get on television and get their 15 seconds at night on the evening news unless they were somehow coming up with a wedge issue that divided us.

But if you think about the way you run your family or your business or any other enterprise,

if you spent most of your time on what divided you and none of your time trying to get together, the whole society would fall apart. And yet, national politics, because it's a long way from us and operates at a fairly high level of abstraction, at a time when people don't believe you can do anything right, there's no way to make any headway politically unless you have wedge issues.

And I think one of the signal achievements of this administration in rolling back the Gingrich revolution was to reject the politics of division in favor of the politics of unity. And you know, my political philosophy is very simple and borne of my life experience. I think everybody counts; everybody ought to have a chance; and we all do better when we help each other. That's what I believe. I actually believe that. I think it's not just good morals; I think it's good economics, good social policy.

And there's an interesting book out that I recommend, written by a man named Robert Wright, who previously wrote a book called "The Moral Animal." It was widely acclaimed. It's called "Non Zero," and it's a reference to game theory. You know, a zero-sum game is one where, in order for me to win, you've got to lose, or vice-versa, like a golf match. One person wins; one person loses. Or the President's race is a zero-sum game. One of them will win; one of them will lose.

And Wright is not naive. I mean, he understands that there will be competitions and contests. But the argument he makes in this book is that as societies grow more and more complex and we become more and more interdependent, both within and beyond national borders, we have a greater and greater stake in finding ways to win together. And that, basically, he makes an historical argument for Martin Luther King's wonderful famous saying that, "the arc of history is long, but it bends toward justice."

That's the argument, and it's a very compelling argument. And I guess we all like books that agree with us. You know, we're all that way. [Laughter] But I have spent my whole life believing that we waste a lot of our lives by trying to lift ourselves up by putting other people down.

So if I could leave America with one wish, it would not be even for continued prosperity; it would be to find some way to get over all this stuff that we're hung up about, respect our differences, relish our differences, teach children

to be proud of their ethnic, their racial, their religious heritage; but somehow understand that, underneath it all, the most important thing of all is our common humanity.

And I think it is more important than ever before because of the scientific and technological advances we face. Because I'm just going to tell you, among the things you'll have to deal with in the next 20 years when I'm gone: Terrorists will be able to come across national borders with chemical and biological weapons in plastic cases that won't show up on airport metal detectors. The forces of division will be able to do things. If we don't do something about the AIDS epidemic in Africa and the growing rates in South Asia and the rapidly growing rates in the countries of the former Soviet Union, it will eventually come back around to this country where we're making real headway.

If we don't do something about the total breakdown of public health systems in poor countries around the world, all these places that we're looking for to buy our products, because we've got 4 percent of the world's people and 22 percent of the world's wealth, they're not going to have any money; they won't even have any people to buy our products. There are African countries that, within a decade, will have more people in them in their sixties than in their thirties.

So what I want to say is, look, I think the best time in human history is unfolding. I think the children in this room tonight will grow up, if we make good decisions, in the most exciting, peaceful, prosperous, interconnected time in all of human history. But nothing happens by accident. We have to decide.

Every House position matters. Every Senate seat matters, and it really matters how the White House comes out. So if somebody asked you tomorrow why you came, I hope you'll say, "Well, I think they've had a pretty good 8 years. The country is going in the right direction. I'd like to keep it going. Number two, they seem to have a pretty good idea of what they'll do if I give them the job. Number three, I want somebody that will take on big things. I don't want to blow this, certainly the chance of 50 years. And number four, I think we ought to go forward together." And that's basically the defining, enduring dream of the 20th century Democratic Party. And if I've contributed to it, I'm grateful.

But you know, this is an interesting position for me. I always tell everybody, for most of my life, I was the youngest person who was doing whatever it was I was doing. Now I go in a room, most people are younger than me. [Laughter] Now people look at me like I've got a leg in the grave. What's the next President—[laughter]. My party's got a new leader. My family's got a new candidate. I'm the Cheerleader in Chief of the country. What am I supposed to do?

I'll tell you, the thing that I really want out of all of this is just for you to make the most of it. And I'll just leave you with this one story.

I think that if I had any success, part of it was the way I was raised. I think most American people thought I was pulling—I think the people that served this dinner tonight ought to have the same chance to send their kids to college that you do. I believe that. I believe that disabled people ought to be able to access modern technology, because I don't think their bodies ought to keep them from living however much of their dreams that they can live.

I went to Flint, Michigan. I will close with this story, because this will make the point. I went to Flint, Michigan, this week to go to one of the community computer centers we're setting up around the country in low-income areas, to try to make sure that people can access the information resources for the Internet. And I got a bunch of stuff in the budget that would put a thousand of these up.

But the reason I went to Flint is that it used to be the automotive capital of Michigan, even more than Detroit. There were 90,000 automotive manufacturing jobs there. Now, there are only 35,000. They've had to rebuild their whole economy, but they have maybe the best outreach programs to the disability community in their city of anyplace in the country.

So I saw software where blind people were working on braille and putting it into the Internet, and then the computer would speak back to them, so they know that they got the E-mail right or the message right. And I saw the deaf people working on it, and the computer would write back to them so that they could see that they had gotten it right.

And this wonderful woman said to me, "You know, I get E-mails every week from a guy in North Carolina named Joe Martin, and I understand you know him." And I said, "Yes, I do know him." I'll tell you about Joe Martin,

because I think we ought to empower everybody to live like this.

In the 1980's, when I was a young Governor, I was active in something called the Southern Growth Policy Board. And it's a group of Governors and legislators and other folks, businesspeople and educators. And we worked on growing the southern economy and trying to catch it up to the rest of the country. And basically, we worked on jobs and schools; that's what we did.

One of the North Carolina delegates was this guy, Joe Martin, whose brother was the Republican Governor of North Carolina. He was a chemist, the Governor was—a chemistry professor. Joe Martin was a banker. He was young, handsome, vigorous, had a drop-dead gorgeous, wonderful wife, great family. I loved him. He was full of energy, and he was just one of the two or three best people that I ever met in this outfit. And I worked with him for a decade. And I loved being around him.

Joe Martin, while still a young man, got Lou Gehrig's disease. That's what Stephen Hawking, the famous British scientist, has. Eventually, you lose all your movement. Hawking still can move his fingers, and he uses his computer to speak.

Now, Joe Martin has no movement anywhere. Nothing moves but his eyes. I used this laser technology now that the Internet has. You sit in front of it; they focus a camera on you; it gets your eyes on the screen; then they put

the laser—it bounces off your eye. I turned lights on and off; I turned music on and off; I typed “good morning” to the people there and then pushed “speak” with my eyes and it said, “good morning.”

And sometime in the next couple of months, Joe Martin is going to publish a book he wrote with his eyes. Even more important, he can still talk to his wife and kids. And so he's still got a story. I'm a Democrat because I know everybody has got a story.

I was raised by an extended family of wonderful people. Most of them didn't have any education. Most of them didn't have any money, but they taught me that everybody had a story and should be treated with dignity, and we would all do better if we helped each other. I still believe that, and with 8 years of evidence, I think it's a pretty good argument for Al Gore and Joe Lieberman and Hillary and the rest of our crowd.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:27 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Mitchell Stein and Tracy S. Hampton; Sim Farar, treasurer, PAC for a Change, and his wife, Debra; Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush of Texas; State Attorney General Bill Lockyer; and State Assembly Speaker Robert M. Hertzberg.

Remarks on the Need for Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act in Santa Fe, New Mexico

September 25, 2000

Thank you very much. Connie, you can drink my water anytime. [*Laughter*] Didn't she do a good job? [*Applause*] I was really proud of her. Thank you.

Thank you, Greg Neal, for welcoming us here in this beautiful, beautiful center. I'd like to thank your Congressman, Representative Tom Udall, for joining us today. Thank you, Tom, for being here. And Attorney General Patsy Madrid, thank you for being here. A little bird told me this was your birthday today, so thank you for spending your birthday with us, in a worthy cause. Santa Fe Mayor pro tem Carol

Robertson Lopez, thank you for being here. I thank the members of the city council and county commission and many others who have come here. Our former U.S. attorney, John Kelly, and my college classmate, thank you for being here. I've got a lot of other personal friends here, as well as those of you who are involved in these endeavors, and I thank you.

But most of all I want to express my appreciation to the brave women in this audience who have survived the horrors and fears of domestic violence for being with us today and for being in this very public setting. Connie, I thank you