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Remarks at Carl Sandburg Community College in Galesburg, Illinois

January 10, 1995

Thank you for that wonderful and warm welcome. It is wonderful to be here. Thank you, Dr. Crist, for making me feel so much at home. Thank you, Congressman Evans, for coming down, and Congressman Poshard, delighted to see you. And Mayor Kimble, thank you for making me feel welcome here. The representatives of Knox College and Blackhawk Community College as well as Carl Sandburg Community College, I'm glad to see all of you here.

I'm glad that Secretaries Reich and Riley came with me, and I understand they have already spoken, which makes anything I say perhaps redundant. [*Laughter*]

I met a college president the other day. He looked at me and said, ''I've got a lot of sympathy with you. Being President is just like running a cemetery. You've got a lot of people under you, and nobody is listening.'' [*Laughter*]

I want to begin by saying how very, very happy and proud I am to be here today. I believe as strongly as I can state that community colleges represent the very best of America in 1995 and where we need to go as a country with all of our institutions, community based, flexible, committed to quality, opportunity for everyone, with a real sense of community. I'm honored to be here, and I'm honored to have all of you here.

I'd also like to recognize the people who were with me just a few moments ago who participated in our little roundtable, who have had some experience with this institution. I'd like to ask all of them to stand up that were in my private conversation because I want to thank them. [*Applause*] Thank you. They're employers of people who came out of this community college. They're students. They're former students. They're people who have taught here. They are a picture of America.

I came here to talk about America, about where we are and where we're going. And I don't think we could have picked a better place. This place is so steeped in our national history, just as this community college is so representative of the best of our present and our future. The Underground Railroad came through Galesburg, and as all of you know and as you saw just a few moments ago, over 135 years ago, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas met here for one of their famous debates. How'd they do just a few minutes ago? [*Applause*] Thank you. I met them outside, and they were still arguing about who really won. [*Laughter*]

I identified with what President Lincoln said. He performed so brilliantly in those debates, but he lost the Senate race anyway. And he said that it hurt too much to laugh, and he was too old to cry. And then he said something I have always kept with me. In fact, I've got a copy of the exact quote on the wall in my private office in the White House. He said after Douglas defeated him for the Senate, he was walking home, and it had been raining that day and the path was muddy, and one of his feet slipped and hit his other foot and knocked his footing out from under him. But just before he fell, he righted himself and he smiled, and he said, ''This is a slip and not a fall.'' Well, I think we all ought to try to keep that in our own minds as we deal with life's challenges and adversity.

The Lincoln-Douglas debates, as you just heard for a few moments, were about the course of our country and the proper role of government in a time of great change. In 1858, of course, the issue was slavery. Lincoln believed that it was a national issue. Long before he believed the Government could abolish slavery, he at least believed the Government could stop it from expanding. Douglas believed it was not a national issue; that it should just be up to the States or the territories. If they wanted to keep slavery, they could vote for it and then come on in to the Union.

The Republican Party was born out of a conviction that even though we are a country deeply devoted to limited government, there are some things that the times demand national action on and that at that moment, the times demanded first, national action to stop the spread of slavery and then national action to stop slavery.

About a half a century earlier, the Democratic Party was born in the Presidency of

Thomas Jefferson, who passionately believed in limited government. I was driving across the beautiful Illinois farmland today, feeling very much at home thinking about how Jefferson loved being on his farm more than he liked being at the White House, and how he wanted to limit government. But when he became President, he knew there were certain things that he had to use the power of the National Government to do because the times demanded it.

He bought the Louisiana Purchase, $15 million—peanuts, really, to us for all that land. I like it because it included Arkansas. So if he hadn't done it, I could never have been an American, much less President. [*Laughter*] But at the time it was a stunning, sweeping thing. The price of Louisiana was the entire budget of the National Government for a year. Can you imagine what you'd think of me if I wanted to spend that much on any piece of real estate? [*Laughter*] But he did.

Both believed in limited government. Both approved of action by the National Government to meet the demands of the time, to do what the people needed. Our Founders established this great country under a Constitution that limits government. Mostly it limits what government can do to private citizens and gives us a lot of elbow room to think what we please and say what we please and go where we please and worship God as we please. It also limits government in other ways, dividing it at the State and local as well as the national level; the President, the Congress, the courts. But it was set up to allow all of us to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. And it was set up with enough flexibility so that over time we could have the kind of government that we needed as a people, not the kind of people that the Government needs but the kind of government that we need as a people.

Now we're at another great sea-change period of American history. Everyone knows we are moving from an information age—I mean, to an information age from an industrialized age in which all organizations were bigger, more hierarchical, more bureaucratic, to a time which is more flexible, more rapidly changing, more full of opportunity and uncertainty. And so we will have to have some changes in what we expect our Government to do, but we have to be clear about our purpose.

I think our purpose has to be to keep the American dream alive for all the people in this country into the 21st century and to make sure we cross the threshold of the next century still the strongest country in the world, still a force for freedom and peace and democracy at home and around the world.

Every American who works hard and obeys the law should be able to get ahead in this new world. It should not be a province of opportunity for a few. To get that done we face enormous challenges. Most of the people who are at a community college know better than I that for the last 10 or 15 years the majority of our people have worked longer and longer work weeks for the same or lower wages, that in the last year alone over a million Americans in working families lost their health insurance.

This is quite a new phenomenon for us. From World War II until 1978, the American economy grew, and all income groups grew at about the same rate that the American economy did. So we were rising together. For the last 15 years, the top 20 percent of Americans had a dramatic increase in their income; the next 20 percent, a modest increase; the next 20 percent were stagnant; the bottom 40 percent had declines in their incomes. We're talking now about working people, not people who are on welfare.

So if a lot of Americans, about half of us, are working harder for lower wages—and actually, we also know now, sleeping a little less at night—it's no wonder that there's a lot of stress in this country. We also know that this is a time of great change. It's not just the workplace that's changing; the nature of our communities are changing. Our families are under great stress. Life seems to be too random and too insecure for too many people. And yet, we have to admit there is no country in the world that has remotely an economy as strong as ours, as full of opportunity, as full of hope.

So what's the trick to bridge the gap, to make sure that everybody who wants to do the right thing has a chance to make that leap into the economy of the future and suc-

ceed? That must be the mission of the United States in these last 5 years of this century.

I told these folks that were good enough to spend about 45 minutes visiting with me that I probably enjoyed it more than they did because before I became President, when I was a Governor, I did this sort of thing all the time. I knew that my mission was to generate more jobs and increase the education and skills of our people. And I lived in a place that was small enough where it was more possible for people to talk about political life in nice, calm terms, instead of what normally tends to dominate the debate today. But I couldn't help being just overcome almost in my admiration for their individual stories, which wouldn't be all that much different from your individual stories.

I ran for President because I wanted to do just what you clapped for. I do not believe that we have to go into the future taking advantage of all these opportunities for some and letting others fall behind and becoming more divided. But I think, as I have said now for more than 3 years, we must do three things. We've got to have a new economic policy designed to help the American people compete and win in a global economy in which the Government is a partner with people in their private lives and in private business in expanding opportunity.

In the first 2 years, that meant that we had to cut the deficit because we spent the 1980's dealing with our economic problems, trying to spend our way out of them and exploding the deficit. Now, I know that's not very popular. It's kind of like going to the dentist. Everybody's for going to the dentist, in general. Did you ever see anybody who wanted to do it in particular when it came their time to go to the dentist? That's the way the deficit is. Everybody says—you take a poll; people will say, "Yes, cut the deficit." But then we have to do the things to do it. It's not very popular. It's like going to the dentist. So I had a drill in your tooth the last 2 years. But we cut the deficit by $700 billion, thanks to the help of those two gentlemen. And that's $11,000 a family. That's not a small piece of change.

And we expanded trade, and that was controversial. A lot of my best supporters said, "Why are you trying to do all these trade deals. The more we trade, the more we have low-cost products from low-wage countries coming into America, putting pressure on American wages." That's true, but it's only half true. Now, if we don't do anything, that's happening. That's been happening for years. And it is true that some of our people have either lost their jobs or can't get wage increases because they're competing with products overseas, produced by people who work for wages we can't live on. That's true. It's also true that when we sell things to other countries, on balance the people who make the things and the services we sell to other countries make wages above the national average. So if we don't do the trade deals, we'll get the downside of the trade war. The reason I fought for the trade agreements was so we could create more high-wage jobs in America by selling more world-class American products around the world. And it's working. So we need a new economic policy. We've got to sell. We've got to produce. We've got to be productive, and it has to be a partnership.

The second thing we need is what I called during my Presidential campaign a new covenant, a new approach to our society. It was then, it has been for 2 years, and it will always remain my contract with you. But it's about more than a tax cut, although cutting taxes are part of it. I believe what this country needs on a national basis is what I see at the community college here. What those of us in the position to do so ought to be doing is expanding opportunity but only for those who will exercise the personal responsibility to make the most of those opportunities.

You build a community with opportunity and with responsibility, with rights and responsibilities. You can't have one without the other and last for a long time. You can't have people being responsible all the time and never getting anything for it. Pretty soon they get tired. But neither can you have people getting things all the time and never giving anything back. Pretty soon the well runs dry.

So that's what we've been trying to do. That's what the crime bill was all about. We cut the Government bureaucracy over 5 years by 270,000 people and gave all the money back to local communities to hire police, to build prisons, to drug treatment pro-

grams, to do things that would lower the crime rate at the grassroots level for people who use the money right and were responsible.

That's what I hope this welfare reform debate that we're ginning up again after a year will be all about in Washington. I do not believe that most Americans really want simply to reduce welfare so that we can punish poor people. I think what most Americans want is a welfare system that puts an end to welfare, that puts people to work and lets them be responsible parents instead of just having kids. I think that's what we want.

And that's why we have invested so much in education, because education by definition is part of a covenant. You cannot educate somebody who will not be educated. All you can do is throw the lifeline of opportunity out there, and someone either does it or not. They either exercise their own responsibility or not.

So we worked to expand Head Start and to set standards that are great for our Nation's schools and to have new partnerships for young people that don't go to college to get further education. And we reformed drastically the college loan program so we could cut the costs and string out the repayments and make it something that could really be used by people instead of just another headache. And that's all made a difference I think. So a new economic policy, a new covenant, a new social policy.

The third thing we've tried to do is to give you a different kind of Government, to have the Government in Washington change, the way the economy is changing, to have it be smaller, yes, but also more effective; to literally reinvent Government, to use the Vice President's phrase, by cutting the bureaucracy to its smallest size in 30 years but increasing our ability to solve problems that the Federal Government needs to solve. There are 100,000 fewer people working in Washington, DC, or for the Federal Government today than there were on the day I was inaugurated President, but we have solved a lot of problems that were left too long. And I would just give you one or two examples.

Small business people used to have to fill out a multipage form that took them hours to fill out to get an SBA loan. We've taken that down to one page, and you can get an answer in 3 days now. So that's an example of what we're trying to do to reinvent the Government.

I don't know if the Secretary of Labor mentioned this, but at the end of last year, we reformed the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation—that's a mouthful. That's the group in Washington that's supposed to keep your pension well. And it's going to help save the pensions of 8.5 million Americans whose retirement was at risk after years and years and years of hard work.

There are problems the Federal Government still should be solving. And when the floods were raging here—the 500-year flood—up and down Illinois and Iowa, after years in which the Federal Emergency Management Agency was to go to the Federal Government and everybody complained about it, I think you saw by the way they showed up and the way they performed that it is working now. It is effective. It is doing its job.

So we're moving in these directions. But it is not enough. What are the results of the first 2 years, not from our point of view in what we did but from your lives. Well, we have 5.6 million more jobs, and that's a good thing. And the unemployment rate has dropped very low by historic standards, although not low enough to suit me. It's still dropped quite a bit, by more than 2 percent. And 5.6 million new jobs is nothing to sneeze at.

And manufacturing jobs went up in every month in 1994 for the first time since 1978, which means that manufacturing is not inconsistent with the information age. It helps our manufacturing come back when we increase productivity and use computers and educate our workers. So that's good; that's all good. But most folks still haven't gotten a pay raise out of this recovery. Many people are still worried about losing their jobs. Another million Americans lost their health insurance. Why is that? That is because the wages are still set in an environment that is highly competitive because of technological changes and foreign competition.

So if we want to raise incomes, the only way you can do it is to get more high-wage jobs in this country, take less out of working

people's pockets, or increase their education and training. There is no other way to do it. And that's what we have to do. So what I want to do now is—we worked hard to get the fundamentals fixed for 2 years—I want to spend 2 years working on lifting incomes and prospects and optimism and real hope for the future among people who are carrying the load in this country. That's what we can do. And that's what the middle class bill of rights is all about.

I might as well have called it the bill of rights and responsibilities, because it doesn't do anything for anybody who's not already doing something for himself or herself. Anybody can give a tax cut, but what I want to do is cut taxes in a way that strengthens families and raise incomes. That's what we need to be doing in this country: We need to strengthen families; we need to raise incomes.

Fifty years ago, the GI bill of rights helped transform a wartime economy into the most successful peacetime economy in history. It literally built the great American middle class, helping them get houses and education and to raise their kids. And now what I want to do is to implement this middle class bill of rights, these ideas that will help us move into the 21st century with the American dream alive for everyone.

Now, if you agree with the analysis I just gave you, I hope you will agree with the particulars. First of all, I think people ought to be able to deduct the cost of education after high school from their taxes. If you think about it, you can deduct the interest on your home. Why? Because we want people to buy homes; we want people to be homeowners. We think it's a good thing. It's important to being an American and having a solid life. Well, in the 21st century, and in 1995, and with all the people I just finished talking to, having a decent education is also important to being in the middle class. And you may not get to the homeownership stage if you don't have an education in the first place. So we ought to let people deduct the cost of an education.

Secondly, we ought to try to support working families more, and so I recommended a tax credit, or a tax reduction, of $500 a child for every child under 13 in families with incomes of $75,000 a year or less. In 1993, we cut taxes an average of $1,000 a year for working families who were on really modest incomes and having a hard time making ends meet. It's now $26,000 a year or less will get an average of $1,000 tax cut below what the taxes were when I took office. But this will help people raise their children.

Third, I believe we ought to bring back the IRA, the individual retirement account, let people put $2,000 in it. But under our proposal, you could take the money out in any year, tax-free, as long as you spent it on education, health insurance, buying a home for the first time, or the care of an elderly parent. This would empower people to solve their own problems. It's something that government can let you do for yourself. It requires no bureaucracy. It requires no program. It requires nothing, just letting you withdraw money you save, tax-free, to solve a problem for yourselves and for the United States.

Finally, finally, we propose to take the literally billions of dollars the Government now spends on dozens, literally dozens, of different training programs and consolidate those programs and make that money directly available to people who are now eligible for it. That is, today, people who are unemployed can get help from a government training program. And people who are on quite modest incomes who are eligible, for example, to participate in a job training and partnership act, training programs, can get help through a training program.

But there are literally dozens of these programs. You've got to figure out what you're eligible for, what the criteria are, what the program is, are you going to be in it. I mean, by the time you get through fooling with it, it may seem like it's not worth the trouble. We discovered that we could collapse 50 of these programs and just give you the money if you're eligible for it, and it would make people who are eligible able to get a chit, a voucher for education only worth up to $2,600 a year for 2 years.

Now, that's better than having a Federal bureaucracy. It's better than giving the money to a State bureaucracy. Everybody in America, just about, is within driving distance of a community college now. We do not need

all these separate government programs telling people what to do. We ought to just give you the money if you're eligible for it and let you bring it here and get a good education. That's the fourth element of our program.

I like this middle class bill of rights a lot because it furthers all three objectives that I had when I ran for President. It helps us build a new economy. The more people we educate, the more powerful our Nation will be, the stronger our economy will be. It helps us build a new covenant. We offer more opportunity to people if they exercise the responsibility to take it, they have the power to improve their own lives. All of you do. You know that, or you wouldn't be here today.

And it changes the way Government works. Government is still being used to help expand opportunity but in a less bureaucratic, less mandatory, more empowering way. I like it, and I hope the Congress will like it as well. And I hope you will help them like it by telling them that you like it.

Under this last proposal—let me just give you one example. If we want to set up centers where what the Government does is make sure you have information on the jobs that are available in an area and the educational opportunities that are available in one place, you could show up at the local one-stop center and find out, for example, here about jobs opening up at Maytag because of the new $164 million retooling project they've got underway. Then you could figure out whether you could get the skills needed to be a part of that project in this place. And if you could, you qualified, you could simply take your certificate, show up here, and start to school. Much better than having to enroll in some sort of program.

Here at this community college—and this is true all over the country, maybe not quite this good, but this is typical—there is an extraordinary job placement rate of over 94 percent at an average wage of nearly $12 an hour. And believe me, that's a lot better than a lot of people are facing who have no education and training and who have been left behind by the changes that are going on in our economy.

This is the kind of opportunity that I believe the middle class bill of rights can help create. This will enable us to finish the job. Yes, we have laid the foundations of a disciplined, responsible economic policy. Yes, we have taken a strong stand against crime. Yes, we know—and I hope we'll have a bipartisan consensus on what to do about problems like welfare. But until we know that we have done everything we can to use the power of this country to give every American the opportunity to win in this global economy, the job will not be finished. That, more than anything else, can keep the American dream alive in the 21st century.

So, as I go back to Washington, I ask all of you, Republicans and Democrats, to tell the people who represent you in Washington to adopt the same attitude about these challenges that you have. If you think about it, in every new time our country faces, there are new problems that have no necessary partisan solution. And the problems fall over everybody and the opportunities come to people without regard to their party, their philosophy, their race, or their region today. We should be united in tackling these problems. They are America's problems and America's opportunities.

You have seen over and over and over again, probably enough to make you scream, that people in Washington know how to stop things for partisan gain. It's now time for us to join together and do things for the people's gain. That's what you expect us to do. That's what we need to do. That's what will take us into the next century with the American dream alive and well, stronger than ever, and America stronger than ever.

I am convinced—I am convinced—having traveled the world now on your behalf, having seen what is going on in Europe, having seen what is going on in Asia, having met with the leaders of all the Latin American countries, having a feel for what is happening in this world, I am convinced more than ever in my life that the best days of this country are still ahead of us if we remember that there are no guarantees.

The Founders gave us the right to pursue life, liberty, happiness. That's what they gave us the right to do. Over 70 years ago, your namesake here, Carl Sandburg, wrote a

poem inspired by the Washington Monument. And I want to close with the line from that poem that meant the most to me: ''Nothing happens unless, first, a dream.'' More than anything, more even than our Constitution and laws, this country is a dream. And it is our job to renew it.

Thank you very much, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:44 p.m. in the gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Don Crist, president of the college, and Mayor Fred Kimble of Galesburg.

Remarks to Students at Galesburg High School in Galesburg

January 10, 1995

The President. Thank you. Wow! Thank you. Thank you very much. I don't know where everybody else in Galesburg is today, but I'm glad you're here. I'm glad to see you all. [*Applause*] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much.

I would like to begin by paying my compliments to the band. Didn't they do a good job? I thought they were terrific. [*Applause*]

I also want to thank—I understand that you all heard the speech I gave. Is that right? No, yes? No? Somebody is saying yes; somebody is saying no. Anyway, I was over at the community college, as you know, and I met there with about 20 people who had either been students there or are now students there or who taught there or who hired people who graduated from there. And I went there to talk about education with the Secretary of Labor, who is not here with me, and the Secretary of Education, Dick Riley, the former Governor of South Carolina, who is here with me, and your fine Congressman, Lane Evans. I'm glad to see him. Give him a hand. [*Applause*]

I would like to say, first of all, on behalf of myself and all of those who came with me from Washington today, we have had a wonderful welcome in this terrific community. And we're very grateful to all of you for that.

I must say, when I landed at the airport and they told me that I couldn't take the helicopter to Galesburg, I'd have to drive, I was actually kind of happy because I got to drive across the farmland. And I looked at all the land, and it kind of made me feel—no, I liked it. It made me feel right at home. That's where I grew up.

I would like—I want to say a couple of things about what I came here to talk about today, since some of you heard what I said and some of you didn't. I'll be brief, but I want to talk about it because I think it's important.

When I ran for President in 1992 and I came here to Illinois and I went up and down the State——

Audience member. To Peoria.

The President. Yes, to Peoria and other places—I always knew it was a very big State, but when I visited Southern Illinois University in the southern part of the State, I looked at a map, and I realized I was south of Richmond, Virginia. And I said, this is a very big State and a very beautiful one and, of course, my wife's home. So I like it a lot.

I believed then and I believe now that we are going through a time of great change which, if we do the right thing, will lead us to America's greatest days. I think the young people here in this school can live in the most peaceful, most exciting, most prosperous, most exhilarating times this country has ever known if we do the right thing.

And if you look at what's going on in America today, it just reinforces in my mind the things I have always wanted to do. I worked as a Governor for 12 years, and I knew what my mission was in this global economy: I had to improve the schools, improve education for people of all ages, and get more jobs into my State.

If you look at where we are as a country now, I ran for President committed to doing three things. I wanted a new economic policy so that the Government would be working with ordinary working people and with business so that we would be able to compete and win in a global economy, we'd be able to get good jobs and keep them.

I wanted to change the way the Federal Government works. I wanted the Government to be smaller but more effective. I wanted it to be able to solve people's problems but to be flexible and creative and not waste money. And I thought we could do