

things over and over and over again as we rose to a higher and higher and higher level of democracy. Every time, we had to deepen the meaning of freedom to include more people and to make their freedom real; we had to widen the circle of opportunity so that citizenship meant your chance at the brass ring; and we had to strengthen the bonds of our Union.

Now, you remember that. The Democratic Party, I'm sad to say, was not always on the right side of all three of those issues in the 19th century. But since Woodrow Wilson became President, throughout the 20th century, we haven't always been right on every issue, but we've always been on the right side of our history. And I am determined that when we start this new century, this country will have deepened our freedom, widened our opportunity, and strengthened our Union. If we do the right things, our kids will have the best America ever.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Elaine and Gerald Schuster; Mayor Thomas M. Menino of Boston and his wife, Angela; Steve Grossman, national chair, and Alan D. Solomont, former national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; Fred Seigel, member, 1997 Presidential Inaugural Committee; economist Lester Thurow; and musician James Taylor.

Executive Order 13082—Joint Mexican-United States Defense Commission

May 8, 1998

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in order to add a member of the Joint Staff to the Joint-Mexican-United States Defense Commission, it is hereby ordered that the third paragraph of Executive Order 9080 of February 27, 1942, as amended by Executive Order 10692 of December 22, 1956, and by Executive Order 12377 of August 6, 1982, is further amended to read as follows:

“The United States membership of the Commission shall consist of an Army member, a Navy member, an Air Force member,

a Marine Corps member, and a Joint Staff member, each of whom shall be designated by the Secretary of Defense and serve during the pleasure of the Secretary. The Secretary shall designate from among the United States members a Chair thereof and may designate alternate United States members of the Commission.”

William J. Clinton

The White House,
May 8, 1998.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:08 a.m., May 12, 1998]

NOTE: This Executive order was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 11, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on May 13.

Statement on the Middle East Peace Process

May 11, 1998

I have just met with Secretary Albright, National Security Adviser Berger, and Ambassador Ross. Unfortunately, there will not be a meeting today with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat to launch the permanent status talks. I regret that.

I have asked Secretary Albright to meet later this week with Prime Minister Netanyahu while he is in Washington. The objective of those discussions will be to seek to overcome the remaining differences so that we can proceed immediately with accelerated permanent status talks.

Secretary Albright will then report to me whether, as a result of her discussions with the Prime Minister, the basis exists to launch those talks in Washington.

Statement on Secretary of Labor Alexis M. Herman

May 11, 1998

Secretary Herman has served me and this administration with distinction. She is a person of integrity, a dedicated public servant, and an asset to working families all over America. I know her well, and I am confident she will not be distracted from the important

work she is doing. It is unfortunate that, despite no findings of wrongdoing by the Secretary, the Independent Counsel Act compels the Attorney General to recommend the appointment of an independent counsel in these circumstances. I look forward to the speedy resolution of this investigation. I am confident that in the end, investigators will also conclude that Ms. Herman did nothing wrong.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Food Safety Legislation

May 11, 1998

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Leader:)

The report to be released today by the General Accounting Office (GAO) calls on Congress to give the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) the authority to ensure that food eligible for import to the United States is produced under food safety systems that will provide the same level of protection as the safety systems in place in the United States. This report is further confirmation of the need for Congress to pass the Safety of Imported Food Act, which I called for in October 1997, which Senators Mikulski and Kennedy, and Representatives Eshoo and Pallone have introduced.

This important legislation will do what the GAO says is necessary: it will ensure that the FDA denies the entry of imports of fruits, vegetables, or other food from a foreign country or facility that does not meet U.S. food safety requirements or otherwise achieve the level of protection required in the United States. It will give FDA the authority it urgently needs, comparable to the Department of Agriculture's existing authority to prevent the importation of unsafe meat and poultry, to protect the safety of the food Americans eat. I have taken several further steps to begin implementing standards to ensure the safety of imported food. My FY '99 budget committed approximately \$25 million to enabling the FDA to dramatically expand its international food inspection force in order to implement the pending legislation. In March of this year, I released a report on how the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in partnership with the Secretary

of Agriculture, and in cooperation with the agricultural community, will develop guidance on good agricultural and manufacturing practices that will apply to both domestic and foreign producers.

There is no more important task our government faces than ensuring the safety of the American food supply. That is why last year Vice President Gore and I announced my comprehensive new initiative, "Food Safety from Farm to Table"—which detailed a comprehensive program including surveillance, outbreak response, education and research. The Safety of Imported Food Act is another vital step in protecting the safety of all the food Americans eat, and I urge you to pass it promptly.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives; Trent Lott, Senate majority leader; Thomas A. Daschle, Senate minority leader; Richard K. Armey, House majority leader; and Richard A. Gephardt, House minority leader. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Report on the National Institute of Building Sciences

May 11, 1998

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with the requirements of section 809 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended (12 U.S.C. 1701j-2(j)), I transmit herewith the annual report of the National Institute of Building Sciences for fiscal year 1996.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
May 11, 1998.