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its deadly purpose, such cowardly and criminal acts strike at the heart of the constitutional freedoms and individual liberties all Americans hold dear. I strongly condemn this act of senseless violence. Federal agents are already in Asheville to assist local law enforcement officials. I am confident that the perpetrators of this terrible act will be brought to justice.

Remarks at a Dinner Honoring Former Senator Dale Bumpers in Little Rock, Arkansas

March 13, 1999

Thank you very much. Senator Lincoln, thank you very much. We're all very proud of you. Dale and I were looking up at you, listening to you speak, feeling a little bit better about his retirement and my imminent retirement in the next couple of years.

I'd like to thank Congressman Snyder and Congressman Barry for representing you fiercely and well, and for being my friends and for doing our State proud. The three of them remind me of why I have always loved public life in Arkansas. And I'm always delighted to see people who have served others and worked for others and helped others and done others service be rewarded with higher positions. And all three of them deserve it richly, and I'm very pleased to see that.

I'd like to thank Rabbi Levy for being here tonight, and Bishop Walker, who is my longtime friend and whose vociferous and highly public defense of me may have won an election for me back in 1982, without which I wouldn't be here. Thank you, Bishop. I'm glad to see you.

I thank Rodney Slater for his remarks and for his extraordinary service. He has really done Arkansas proud. And there are a lot of other Arkansans who have been critical to the success our country has enjoyed in the last 6 years who are here tonight. I'll probably miss some of them, but I can't help mentioning Mack McLarty, Bob Nash, Janis Kearney, Bruce Lindsey, Nancy Hernreich, Carroll Willis, Kris Engskov—anybody else who is here from home in the administration, I apologize that I missed you. But you should be very proud of your fellow Arkansans who are making a contribution in Washington.

I would like to thank Vaughn McQuary for his leadership of the party. He has done a great job, and I'm proud of him. And I'm glad he's coming—and to all the other dignitaries that are here tonight. I almost cried listening to David Pryor talk, until I remembered that he's gone over to the other side. David Pryor tonight gave me his Harvard card. [*Laughter*] Says he's a fellow at Harvard. [*Laughter*] You know, I think I deserve some credit. I had enough guts to go to the Ivy League before I was elected to office in Arkansas. [*Laughter*] David was always one of them. He was just waiting to get out of office. [*Laughter*]

You know, one of the truly great joys of my life is that I got to serve as Governor when they were Senators together, Dale and David. I admired them. I liked them. I was so proud of what we were able to do together. I rarely ever called them about any issue they had to vote on, and when I did, they tolerated what I had to say and then did what they thought was right. [*Laughter*]

But when I saw David up here talking about Dale and I, and then Dale whispered to me a story about two friends of ours who were Senators from another State who, to put it charitably, do not like each other—and it interferes, I think, with what they're doing—I thought of how many examples I have seen, State after State after State, where good people let their egos get in the way in the Senate and don't work together. And there was no State that had a better team of Senators, but they were made 10 times better because they respected and liked and even loved each other, and they never let themselves get in the way of doing their jobs. And I appreciate it.

You know, the thing I'm going to miss most about having Dale Bumpers not in the Senate and not handy is that when I get really low, I can't call him and hear his latest joke. [*Laughter*] There has never been a person who liked jokes better than Dale Bumpers, I'm sure, in all of human history. [*Laughter*]

You know, the three of us, we'd go on these road shows when we were all down here; we'd go to these roasts; and we'd tell

each other jokes; and if one of us would forget to tell one of our best jokes, somebody else would tell it and never give credit. [*Laughter*] But it got so bad one time, Dale Bumpers called me and said, "You remember that joke you told me about a month ago?" He said, "I can't remember the punch line to save my life." He said, "Tell it to me again." So I was really happy because his jokes were funnier than mine, by and large, and I got in the middle of a joke, and he remembered it, and he started laughing. And I never to this day—that was 10 years ago—I still haven't finished that joke. [*Laughter*]

I have crashed a plane with Dale Bumpers. [*Laughter*] I have been through all kinds of adversity and shared a lot of joy. But I would like to say something, if I might, to try to add my poor pittance to what Senator Pryor and others have already said.

Yesterday I got to go home to Hope to dedicate the birthplace foundation, the home I lived in for the first 4 years of my life, and it was a very emotional thing. I had a lot of my family there. And I was coming back from Central America, night before last, thinking about what I could say and how I could say it in a very few words. And I said to them that in the heady days after World War II, when I was a child and first coming of age, my hometown wasn't perfect. It was still segregated and had its share of flaws, Mack McLarty reminded me, including a pretty bad town gossip or two. We glorify those types today. [*Laughter*] At least people used to be embarrassed about it.

But I knew then that every child was raised with at least two things in my time, when I was a child coming of age. One was an immense sense of personal optimism, that life was good and that you could live your dreams if you worked for them. And the other was a sense of belonging, a sense of community, a sense of responsibility to others as well as to your own life, and a clear understanding that a lot of the richness and texture and meaning of life came from being a part of a web of relationships with other people.

And in that time, we also thought of, from my earliest childhood, public service as a truly noble endeavor, not that the people who were in it were perfect but that they were well motivated and that they wanted to serve and they wanted to advance our common dreams.

Dale Bumpers represents all that to me in a time when it has been under assault from many quarters. And I tried to think about what it was about him that made him stand up all these years for our State, for the children, for the country, for the environment, for the Constitution, for all the things he fought for, made him believe he could cast unpopular votes, like the Panama Canal vote, and still come home and tell the people why he did it and have them stick with him.

I think there are three things: He never forgot the lessons of the past, beginning with the Constitution of the United States; he never stopped dreaming of the future; and he never lost his essential humanity. Our public life is poorer when people forget the past and ignore the future. It is poorer when they choose power over purpose because they forget we're just here for a little speck of time. And in 100 or 200 years, nobody will remember any of us, and all that will endure is whatever contribution we made to make life better and richer and more decent.

I've watched Dale Bumpers in a way that the whole world got to watch him when he spoke in the Senate. But when you strip it all away, it comes down to that, to humility, humanity, a sense of one's own mortality and one's own capacity for incredible dignity and glory. He has represented all that.

So if a child asks you if he or she should ever go into public life in this country, you should say yes. But don't ever forget the lessons from the past and how smart the people were that started this country. Don't ever stop dreaming about a better future. And do not ever lose your essential humanity. And all the complexities of all the problems I face and all the battles I see come before me, 90 percent of them would go away tomorrow if people could just understand they do not have to define their lives in terms of putting someone else down, defeating someone else, thinking they're better than someone else, ignoring their common humanity.

I was looking at Dale and David tonight, and I was thinking, it seems like yesterday I first saw David Pryor running for Congress in 1976. It seems like yesterday I was first excited about Dale Bumpers coming out of

Charleston in 1970. It seems like yesterday when we were all young and beginning and everything was new. And it passes in the flash of an eye. And when it's over, what remains is the feeling that you have been human and alive to the needs and aspirations of other people. There is nobody in public life in this country today who embodies it better than Dale Bumpers, and I am honored and proud to have served with him.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 p.m. at the Statehouse Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Rabbi Eugene Levy, Temple B'nai Israel, who offered the benediction; Bishop L.T. Walker, Church of God in Christ, who offered the invocation; Arkansas State Democratic Party Chair Vaughn McQuary; Carroll Willis, director, community services division, Democratic National Committee; Kris Engskov, the President's Aide; Senator Blanche Lambert Lincoln; and former Senator David Pryor.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and an Exchange With Reporters

March 15, 1999

President Clinton. Let me just say that I'm delighted to have Secretary General Solana here. I think he has done a superb job in leading NATO. We are very much looking forward, in just a little over a month, to celebrating the 50th anniversary of NATO by admitting new members. The documents were issued over the weekend. The Secretary of State went to Missouri with the representatives of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, and we're very pleased. I'm looking forward to the meeting and looking forward to NATO's missions in the 21st century.

Let me say I'm also very, very pleased by the news we received this morning that the Kosovar Albanians have agreed to sign the peace agreement. And I want to thank Mr. Solana and Secretary Albright and all the others who have worked on this so hard. And again, I would encourage Mr. Milosevic to agree to the terms, as well, so that we can avoid further conflict and bloodshed.

Kosovo

Q. Do you think they will—the Serbs will go along with it?

President Clinton. I don't know. I hope they will. And I think it is clearly the right thing to do. From his point of view, I think it's the best chance to preserve the integrity of Serbia and avoid economic and other adversity. So I would hope that he would do that.

Q. Mr. President, is it a certainty that NATO will strike if he doesn't sign? Is that for sure?

Q. Well, do you have anything to talk him into it?

President Clinton. One at a time. Wait. Wait.

Q. Is it a certainty that NATO will strike the Serbs if Milosevic does not sign?

President Clinton. Well, all I can tell you is I think we have a clear statement out there about what our policy is. And if he shows intransigence and aggression, I think from our point of view we would have little option. You might want to ask Mr. Solana what he thinks about that.

Q. Do you agree with that, Mr. Secretary General?

Secretary General Solana. I agree. Yes, yes. As just said, the President—I do agree, yes.

Q. Mr. President, how long are you prepared to let these talks in France go on?

President Clinton. Well, I think they ought to be able to talk this through a little bit. I don't know that anyone was absolutely sure the Kosovar Albanians would sign this morning. And peace is better than war. But obviously, they can't go on indefinitely. We need to give everybody time to assess the current situation and where they're going to go from here.

But again, I think the most important thing now is that Mr. Milosevic and the Serbs agree to sign. And it's clearly the right thing to do.

Q. Mr. President, in the past, NATO has only been willing to act in the wake of extreme atrocities. Why is it credible to threaten the use of military force in this situation if that doesn't take place?

President Clinton. What would your answer be?