

We are human. We can never wholly forget the injustices done to us, nor can we ever escape reminders of the mistakes we, ourselves, have made. But it is possible to be shaped by history without being a prisoner to it. That, too, is a Greek idea. It was wise Demosthenes who said, "It is necessary to think of the future to enable us to set our ways straight."

Earlier this week in Istanbul, Hillary, Chelsea, and I had the honor of visiting the Ecumenical Patriarch. My heart is still moved by that experience and by the beautiful gift that His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew presented to me, a magnificent piece of parchment on which is written, in Byzantine Greek lettering, one of my favorite Bible passages, the first verse of the 11th chapter of Hebrew: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen."

Elsewhere in the Bible is the marvelous verse: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Vision is to have faith and to imagine the things you hope for, and that faith is a real thing, unseen but real and tangible, more important than all the accumulated anxieties and wounds and worries and hurts, for it allows us to be human by going forward every day and looking toward a new tomorrow. With faith and sober realism, we can imagine a wonderful future for Greece, for southeastern Europe, for this whole part of the world, one in which Greek and Turkish business people work together, from the Balkans to central Asia; one in which Bosnians work across ethnic lines for a common economic and political future; one in which new democracies, from Slovenia to Romania to Bulgaria and, yes, to Serbia, meet the standards for entry into NATO and the European Union; one in which there is a Europe where everyone understands that being open and generous to those who are different does not diminish one's own identity but enhances it; a Europe where everyone practices an ancient Greek trait still alive in Greece today, *filoxenia*; one in which children can be raised to be proud of their heritage and proud of their faith without fearing or hatred, hating those who are different.

Soon, the world will have an opportunity to look at Greece and many to come to

Greece to participate in *filoxenia*, when they see Athens throw open the gates of the city to the Olympics in 2004. By then, I want all the world to see what we know today. Greece is a force for freedom, democracy, stability, growth, the dignity of the individual—assuming yet again the ancient role of the Greeks—to inspire a more humane world.

Two thousand four isn't that far away, and we have a lot of work to do. But I have faith that we can do it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:15 p.m. in the ballroom at the Intercontinental Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to President Konstandinos Stephanopoulos, Prime Minister Konstandinos Simitis, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Yeoryios Papandreou of Greece; Prime Minister Simitis' wife, Daphne; Mayor Dimitrios Avramopoulos of Athens; Peruvian Ambassador to Greece Martin Yrigoyen, dean of the diplomatic corps in Greece; Minister of Foreign Affairs Ismail Cem, Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, and President Suleyman Demirel of Turkey; United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan; President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); Vinton G. Cerf, senior vice president for Internet architecture and technology, MCI WorldCom; Eric Lander, director, Whitehead Institute/MIT Center for Genome Research; and Representative Carolyn B. Maloney. The President also referred to the EMU, the European Monetary Union. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the Prime Minister Simitis.

Statement on Congressional Action on the "Foster Care Independence Act of 1999"

November 20, 1999

Hillary and I are very pleased that the Congress today approved H.R. 3443, "Foster Care Independence Act of 1999." This legislation helps ensure that young people in foster care get the tools they need to make the most of their lives. It builds on proposals in my budget to empower those leaving foster care by providing them access to health care, better educational opportunities, training, housing assistance, counseling, and other support and services. We cannot let these young people walk their tough road alone.

Each year approximately 20,000 18-year-olds leave our Nation's foster care system without an adoptive family or other permanent family relationship. Without the emotional, social, and financial support that families provide, many of these young people are not adequately prepared for life after foster care. Unfortunately, Federal financial support ends just as they are making the critical transition to independence. This bill addresses that problem and will help these youth in their effort to become successful, independent adults.

I am also pleased that the Act provides additional funds for the adoption incentive payments, which are bonuses to the States for increasing the number of children adopted from public foster care. This additional funding will enable States to receive the full amount of the bonuses they have earned through outstanding performance.

Today's legislation is a fitting tribute to the late Senator John Chafee, who was a chief sponsor of the Act. A fierce champion of children, Senator Chafee paid particular attention to our Nation's most vulnerable young people. I am pleased that the bill renames the Independent Living Program in his honor.

I would also like to thank the House and Senate leadership, as well as Representatives Nancy Johnson and Ben Cardin, Chairman William Roth, Jr., and Senators Jay Rockefeller, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Charles Grassley, John Breaux, James Jeffords, Jack Reed, and Susan Collins for their hard work and dedication to this issue. I look forward to signing this bill into law.

**Statement on Signing the Federal
Financial Assistance Management
Improvement Act of 1999**

November 20, 1999

Today I have signed into law S. 468, the "Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999." I strongly sup-

port the objective of this legislation—to make it easier for State, local, and tribal governments and nonprofit organizations to apply for and report on financial assistance. While different types of grant programs can and should have different applications, there is ample room for consolidation and streamlining of similar programs.

Nonetheless, I have strong reservations about some of the specific provisions in the Act. In particular, as my Administration has indicated to the Congress on several occasions, the Act does not provide resources for, nor allow sufficient time to accomplish even partially, the very ambitious overhaul of grant programs that it requires. In addition, the Act anticipates a common application and reporting system for Federal grant programs, but does not amend the many program statutes that establish different application and reporting requirements for different grant programs. Furthermore, the deadlines in the Act are inconsistent with other legislation and unlikely to be achievable in practice. For example, the Act requires agencies to create a common system for electronic processing of all grant programs, but on a schedule that is inconsistent with related requirements of the Government Paperwork Elimination Act of 1998. For these reasons, even an extensive effort may yield only minimal improvements in the simplification of the grants process and the administration of Federal resources.

I remain concerned that S. 468 may create expectations that will not be fulfilled, and tarnish the success of the efforts we have already begun. My Administration will, of course, continue its long-standing efforts to streamline, simplify, and consolidate application and reporting requirements.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
November 20, 1999.

NOTE: S. 468, approved November 20, was assigned Public Law No. 106-107.