

Week Ending Friday, March 10, 2000

**Exchange With Reporters  
in San Jose, California**

*March 3, 2000*

**2000 Presidential Election**

**Q.** Mr. President, what do you think of the idea of a Gore-Feinstein ticket?

**The President.** I think very highly of it. And I think she is immensely talented and would be good at anything. But this is a decision that the Vice President should make after he wins the nomination. And it's not done yet. So I would recommend that all these questions be deferred until after we know for sure that he's the nominee, and then you should ask him.

**Q.** How would you assess the Republican strategy using you to tarnish their Presidential candidates? How do you assess it?

**The President.** I don't know. You know, they've got to do what they've got to do. I wish—when I saw the Vice President and Senator Bradley in their last debate, I know that the conventional wisdom was it wasn't very interesting because they agreed on too much. But what I thought is, how fortunate we are to have people that know that much and care that much about things that will actually affect people's lives, instead of grab the day's headlines.

And I thought there was quite a remarkable contrast between the substantive level of knowledge and discussion in that debate and the one I heard last night. That's the only observation I want to make. I shouldn't—they can run their own campaigns. They don't need to have me commenting. I shouldn't get in the way of the Republicans or the Democrats right now. I'm not running. I'm enjoying watching it.

**Q.** But is this a campaign—[*inaudible*].

**The President.** Well, time will tell, won't it. The voters are in charge in this deal, not me.

**Maine Initiative on the Digital Divide**

**Q.** Can I clarify? The seventh graders who are going to get the laptops, can you tell me more about—

**The President.** Oh, yes. That's Maine. It's a great story. Angus King in Maine, it's great, he's got a system to give every seventh grader in the State—[*inaudible*]

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:30 p.m. at the Novell Headquarters. In his remarks, the President referred to former Senator Bill Bradley and Gov. Angus S. King, Jr., of Maine. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

**Remarks at a Democratic National  
Committee Dinner in San Francisco,  
California**

*March 3, 2000*

Thank you very much. The first thing I would like to say to all of you, after thank you for the warm welcome, is that this is not the first time I have come here to campaign for Senator Feinstein's reelection. In fact, I'm an old hand at this. I came here in '94 to campaign for Senator Feinstein's reelection, and she stayed in Washington; I had to do it all by myself. [*Laughter*] So it's nice to be here with the evidence of my argument. I thank you very much.

I also want to thank Senator Barbara Boxer and Stu for being here, and Representative Barbara Lee, who is also off to a very fast start. The women from California in the Senate and the House have defied all of the preconceptions about how long it takes to become effective in the Congress. It could have something to do with that practical instinct of worrying more about what you're doing than where you're sitting. And they have really, really done a good job.

I thank the McCarthy's for chairing this event. And as you said, I can't remember anybody who ever got more done in her first term in the Senate than Dianne Feinstein. And I want you to know, I'm here for many reasons—and I'm not running for anything—[laughter]—and on most days I'm okay with it. [Laughter] But I care a great deal about not whether we're going to change but how we're going to change and where we're going from here.

And one of the things that I always admired about Dianne Feinstein and her husband, Dick—who's been giving me training in how to be a Senate spouse—[laughter]—Stu Boxer and Dick and I decided that we would start right now planning for next year. We're looking for a fourth—[laughter]—for golf, for tea, for whatever, we're open. [Laughter] Life's funny, isn't it? I mean, really, it's great. [Laughter]

Let me say, one of the things that I really admire, maybe the thing I admire most about Dianne Feinstein is, first of all, she cares about a lot of things. How many conversations have we had about China, about Tibet, about different parts of the world; about saving the California redwoods, which meant a lot to me, too; about setting aside the desert—now we have two national parks—it's meant a lot to me, too; about taking on this gun issue, which I started to try to do with the Brady bill concept as Governor more than 16 years ago, and I backed off, to my everlasting regret. When I became President, I promised myself as long as I was standing I would do it. And she's been a great ally, and I thank her for that.

But one thing that Dianne does that sometimes politicians in both parties, especially when you get in Washington and you get all caught up in this atmosphere, you know, and you spend all your time watching talk shows—[laughter]—do you realize that if you've got a halfway good cable selection, you don't ever have to watch anything but talk shows anymore? [Laughter] And do you realize to get on one, all you have to do is take a firm position and never change your mind, and it's better if you don't know anything. [Laughter] Actually, if you have any evidence, any background, any real policy knowledge, it's a terrific encumbrance be-

cause you're supposed to be shouting to great effect on these programs. [Laughter] Now, we're all laughing, but you know it's pretty close to the truth. [Laughter]

And Dianne, you know, she's like me. We're still under the illusion that when you elect us to these things, they're actually jobs, and we're supposed to get up and go to work every day and like your job. It yields to effort. I mean, it really makes a difference if you pass a few days in the headlines to figure out what actually ought to be in the bill. And then if you actually pass a law, it can really change people's lives.

Now, you're laughing, but I'm telling you, you have no idea how hard it is to concentrate on your job if you live in Washington today. Barbara is nodding her head. Representative Lee is nodding her head. We live in this sort of constant culture of critiquing and carping and talking and who's up and who's down and who's in and who's out. And I wanted to be here tonight—I'm proud to show up for somebody who still believes being a United States Senator is one of the most important jobs in the world and with effort you can get results which change people's lives for the better. And that is the measure of public service, and she fulfills it in an astonishing way.

Now, the second reason I'm here is to tell you I want you to go vote on Tuesday. I can't vote in this primary, but I hope you'll vote. You've got a big ballot. You'll have an opportunity to vote for things that will affect your future and to send a signal where California is. I hope you'll vote, as Dianne said, for proposition 26. Why? Because it'll build people up; because we're going to have 2 million teachers retire in the next few years as our student bodies get larger; because we've got, already, untold numbers of kids in schools that are either overcrowded or tumbling down; and because California has shown a commitment to turn around failing schools, to adopt charter schools, to try things that will work. And you need to get all the roadblocks out of your way to building your children's future.

And for me, I hope you'll vote against proposition 22 because—[applause]—now, wait a minute. Calm down. I want to say—I'll say more about this in a minute—because

however you stand on the question of gay marriage—and I realize that San Francisco is different from the rest of California, is different from the rest of America. But that's not what is at stake here. This initiative will have no practical effect whatever. This is a solution in search of a problem that isn't there.

So people are being asked to vote on this to get everybody in a white heat and to divide people at a time when—you know, look around, folks, we just had this little 6-year-old girl killed in Michigan by a 6-year-old boy who got a gun that was stolen, that he shouldn't have been able to get his hands on. That's a problem we ought to be working on. You had a guy flip out in western Pennsylvania and start shooting people at random, apparently out of his imagined grievance that had some racial basis. You had a guy in Los Angeles shoot at Jewish kids—kids—who were going to school, just because they were Jewish. And then he killed a Filipino postal worker just because he was a Filipino and he worked for the Federal Government; he had double satisfaction. You had Matthew Shepard stretched out on a rack in Wyoming. You had James Byrd dragged to death in Texas. You had this guy who said he belonged to a church that didn't believe in God, but did believe in white supremacy, kill a Korean Christian walking out of his church and the former basketball coach of Northwestern, an African-American, last year. And I could go on and on.

We've had all the turmoil in New York City over this Diallo case. And I don't want—as I said before, I don't pretend for a moment to second-guess the jury. I didn't sit there and listen to the evidence. But I know most people in America of all races believe that if it had been a young white man in a young, all-white neighborhood, it probably wouldn't have happened. That doesn't mean they were guilty under criminal law. And the Justice Department is looking into that and the Civil Rights Division, and that's the way to handle that.

But what it does mean is, there's this huge gulf out there, still, in too many places where people wonder if they can be treated fairly. So what I'm trying to do—the reason I ran for President was that the country was in

trouble. California was in real trouble back in '92, and Washington was dominated by sort of a talk show mentality—and the Congress, too, and in the White House. “Did you get your 10 seconds on the news tonight?” And the only way you could get it is if you were bombing the other side. And there was the liberal position, and there was the conservative position. There was the Democrat position, and there was a Republican position, and we were supposed to get in here and basically fight. And it didn't matter if anything ever got done.

And I thought to myself: You know, I've been a Governor for 10 years. I thought: If I ran my State that way, we'd be in the ditch; if you ran your business that way, you would be broke; and if we ran our homes that way, the divorce rate would be 100 percent. I mean, this is—it was crazy. And what I want you to think about tonight is this. I thank Dianne and others who have been so generous. So many of you said to me tonight kind things about my service for which I am grateful. But I want you to think about that tonight.

Elections are about the future. America has stayed young by thinking about tomorrow. And the point I want to make to you, if you like the fact that America is doing well, the only way we can continue to do well is to keep striving to do better, because the world is changing very rapidly, and because there are still unsolved problems and unseized opportunities in this country. And that's what this election is about.

Dianne mentioned a few of them. How are we going to keep the economy going? How are we going to bring economic opportunity to people in places that have been left behind: the Mississippi Delta, where I come from; the Rio Grande Valley, where I was last week; the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and other reservations where unemployment runs as high as 70 percent; the inner-city neighborhoods in California and elsewhere where there is still an unemployment rate 2, 3, 4 times the national average. What are we going to do to reach them? The rest of us need that. If you want to keep doing well, you've got to try to do better. Why? Because if you invest there, you get inflation-free

growth that benefits everyone else. We're living in a time where, economically, doing the morally right thing happens to be good for you, too. Equal pay for equal work for women is morally right. It's good for the economy. Raising the minimum wage is good for the economy. Closing the digital divide is good for the economy.

I was out in northern California a couple of months ago, and I was with some eBay executives who informed me that 20,000 Americans now make a living on eBay, not working for eBay, trading on eBay. And they've done a profile of these people and, lo and behold, they found that a lot of them used to be on welfare. So what happened? That little computer—when the digital divide was bridged—I believe intelligence is equally distributed across racial and income lines. And I grew up in one of the poorest places in America, and some of the smartest people I ever met, I had known by the time I was 10 years old. I've always felt that luck had something to do with the fact that I was standing here, even though all politicians want you to believe they were born in log cabins they built themselves. *[Laughter]*

But anyway, consider this. What does it mean that 20,000 people are making a living on eBay and some of them used to be on welfare? It means if you bridge the digital divide, you collapse the distance not only between people who are physically isolated from markets and opportunities but may be isolated from bank loans, isolated from education, isolated from other things. So it's a big question.

How are you going to educate all these kids? I mentioned proposition 26. California is doing better, with the most diverse student body in the country. But I can tell you, we've got a lot to do. But we know what to do. I was laughing with some of my old Governor friends the other day. We didn't always know what to do. Now we know how to turn failing schools around. It's just a question of whether we're prepared to invest the money and the time and the effort and the discipline and the accountability and give the support to the kids in trouble with after-school and summer school and mentoring and other programs to do what needs to be done. But we know what to do now.

How are you going to help people to balance work and family? Are we going to do more about child care or not? I could go on and on. How are we going to make efforts to continue to grow the economy and improve the environment? It is now no longer necessary to degrade the environment to grow the economy. This is a digital economy. We don't have to do that anymore.

And for those of you that are younger than me, I'll make you a prediction: Within 20 years it will become clear, and probably within a decade, that the only way to improve the economy is to continue to improve the environment. There is a trillion-dollar market out there for people who are committed to new technologies to combat global warming.

Now, how are we going to make the most of the scientific technical revolution? What does it mean that we're going to sequence the human genome? What will it be like when we can cure all kinds of cancers when there are just a few cells forming, so there's no possibility of metastasis? What will it mean when we can block the defective genes that cause Alzheimer's or diabetes or Parkinson's? What will it mean? If you live to be 65 in America, your average life expectancy is already 82. Dianne told me tonight that there were three people that she knew of that were 90 years old in this audience. Can you imagine? Just 10 years ago you'd never go to a group like this, at this hour of the night, and find three people who were 90 years old. True. *[Laughter]* Ten years from now—10 years from now you will come to a meeting like this, and there will be 25 people that are 90 years old.

Now, what does all this mean to us? What does it mean to say we're in a global economy, in a global society? What are our responsibilities to those poor people that are clinging for life on those trees in Mozambique tonight? Was I right or wrong to send the NATO planes, the American planes in so that the people could go home in Kosovo? These are big questions.

What are our obligations to the peace process in the Middle East, in Northern Ireland, in the tribal wars in Africa? What is it that binds us together as a people? That's what this election is about. You've got to think about these big things. Don't get into

this sort of old, broken record kind of cheap slug mentality in this election. This is a big election. And it's not about what will get you 15 seconds on the evening news or what makes for a hard punch on a talk show.

This country is doing well because we have been animated by good ideas, new ideas rooted in basic values: opportunities for all, responsibility from all, a community of all Americans. It's working because we have—our crowd does, in Washington—some basic ideas. We think everybody is important, everyone matters. We think everybody ought to get a chance. We think everybody's got a role to play. We think we all do better when we help each other. That's what we believe.

Now, the results are pretty encouraging. But I am imploring you: Do not be lulled into a false sense of confidence or think for a moment it does not matter whether you keep looking to tomorrow or whether you exert particular efforts to vote in the elections this year.

I want to close with a little story, which will betray my age. [*Laughter*] Over Thanksgiving I had the kids of friends of ours over—Hillary and I had a couple friends and their kids come stay with us. And this one beautiful little girl looked up at me—she was 6 years old—and she said, “How old are you, anyway?” [*Laughter*] And I said, “Well, Mary, I'm 53.” And she said, “That's a lot.” [*Laughter*]

And to those of you who are younger I will say—and to those of you who are older, you know what I'm saying—it is a lot, but it doesn't take long to live a life, no matter how long it is.

When we passed this milestone this month, and we had the longest economic expansion in history, I went back and studied the last economic expansion in history. Do you know when the record was that we broke? Nineteen sixty-one to 1969. Now, let me tell you a little something from my 53 years of life.

In 1964, I finished high school. Our country had been heartbroken by President Kennedy's assassination, but then we had rallied behind President Johnson, and he was wildly popular because we had an economy we thought would go on forever: high growth, low inflation, low unemployment.

We were passing civil rights bills right and left in the United States Congress. And most people believed we would actually solve the problems of race through the laws, through Congress and the courts. The Vietnam war had not yet manifested itself in the way it later did. And most people believed that we would prevail in the cold war, which we subsequently did, but most people thought we would do it without torment, turmoil, and division. We were feeling pretty cool in the summer of 1964. We thought we'd have social justice, economic progress, and freedom and national security in the world—and it would just happen. That's what we thought when I graduated from high school.

Not long after that, we had the Watts riots. Not long after that, the streets of every major city were filled with antiwar demonstrations. Within 4 years, when I graduated from college at Georgetown, it was 2 days after Robert Kennedy had been killed, 2 months after Martin Luther King had been killed, 9 weeks after Lyndon Johnson said he wouldn't run for reelection.

Our country was split right down the middle over the Vietnam war, and in just a couple of months President Nixon would be elected President on the first of our campaigns of division. You may remember, he said he was representing the Silent Majority, which meant the rest of us, I guess, were in the loud minority. [*Laughter*] But the message was clear: America is divided into two camps, “us” and “them”. And anybody who's not with us is them. And we've been “using” and “them-ing” ever since in some way or another.

And ever since I ran in 1992, I have done my best to heal those breaches and to bring us together and to get us to let go of some of that stuff, that poison, that venom, that need we always seem to have to be divided one from another.

But I tell you this because when I was 18 in 1964, times were just about like they are now, and I thought it would all be fine. And in next to no time, all the wheels ran off, and by 1967 everything was divided. And within a few more months in 1968, within a few more months our expansion came to an end.

I say this to you not as your President but as a citizen. I have waited for 35 years for my country to be in a position to build the future of our dreams for our children that all of us could be a part of, not just those of us that are wealthy enough to come here but the people that were good enough to serve us tonight, not just those of us that are doing great and have lived most of our lives but those of us that are just beginning.

But I remember. Don't you be overconfident. Don't you be overcasual. You know, in life we're always lucky when we get a second chance, and most of us are lucky enough to have had more than one. But a country is indeed graced by God to get a second chance. I'm glad I helped to build America's second chance these last 7 years. We've got it now. I've waited 35 years to see it.

That's why I'm for Dianne Feinstein. That's why I'm traipsing all over the country trying to get people to think about this. And when this political debate goes on, don't you get caught in all this little stuff. You lift this country up; lift the people in your community up. Tell the people why they ought to vote. Remind them of how we lost our last expansion. Think about all the possibilities for the future. Be big. Be big and remember: We all do better when we help each other, and the only way to keep doing well is to be committed to doing better.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 p.m. in the Peacock Court at the Mark Hopkins InterContinental. In his remarks, he referred to Stewart Boxer, husband of Senator Barbara Boxer; Robert J. and Suzanne McCarthy, dinner chairs; Richard Blum, husband of Senator Dianne Feinstein; Kayla Rolland, who was shot and mortally wounded by a 6-year-old classmate in Mount Morris Township, MI; Ronald Taylor, who allegedly went on a deadly shooting spree in Wilkinsburg, PA; and West African immigrant Amadou Diallo, who died after being shot in the Bronx Borough of New York City by four police officers, who were acquitted of all criminal charges on February 25 in Albany, NY. The President also referred to California's proposition 26, School Facilities Local Majority Vote, which would permit a simple majority for school bond issues as opposed to the super majority currently required; and proposition 22, Limit on Marriage Initiative, which would ban gay marriages in California. This item was not re-

ceived in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

### **Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Dinner in San Francisco**

*March 3, 2000*

Thank you very much. Well, first of all, I want to thank Sandy and Jean for having me back in this wonderful old home, which I love so much. And I thank the Staglins for cohosting this event, and for the wine, which I could not resist tasting, even though I've been up since 3 o'clock in the morning your time. And I was glad Dianne sort of gave you a little profile of my day, so that if I collapse while speaking, you will be generous enough to make a few exceptions for me. [Laughter] And thank you, Eric, for the great time we had earlier in the day with the Aspen Institute over at Novell.

Tonight, I am here, and at the next stop I have to make, I'm trying to help the people who, unlike me, will be running for office in 2000. And I normally get a laugh when I tell people that. Sometimes I wonder why I'm doing this; I'm not running for anything anymore, and most days, it's okay with me.

But I'm here tonight because I want to see the work we've done for the last 7 years and a couple of months continue. I'm here because I remember what California was like in 1991, when I came here. And I see what it's like today. But I also see underneath that the continuing challenges that Dianne mentioned and others, but let's just take the two she talked about: the challenges of the children in the schools and how it manifests itself, ultimately, in your needing 280,000 high-tech workers you can't get; and the challenge of the safety of our streets and our neighborhoods, our homes and our schools.

Let me say, I'd like to make a couple of points very briefly. With regard to education, I've been working on this stuff for over 20 years now, proudly. I was first elected Governor—in 1979 I became a Governor. And I just had the Governors to the White House. It was my 20th Governors' conference as both a Governor and a President. I never