

last year.” That doesn’t sound like a lot to some of these mega-corporations. It’s a lot to a small business, and it’s a lot to America, when you think about the number of Michaels there are all over the country hiring an additional 11 people on an annual basis.

Most new jobs in America are created by people like Michael, small-business owners, 70 percent of the new jobs. And therefore, any good policy says, we must recognize the worth of the small businesses, provide incentive for small businesses, and when we do so, make those incentives permanent.

So I appreciate you, Michael, for coming. Are you ready, Gerardine? We’ve got Gerardine Ferlins is with us. Gerardine is the president of Cirtronics. Gerardine is running a big company, and we’re honored you’re here. Thanks for coming. We look forward to hearing your story.

[Gerardine Ferlins made brief remarks.]

The President. I appreciate it. I knew our generation would amount to something. [Laughter] Listen, one of the things that really is so wonderful about our country is the entrepreneurial spirit. You’ve just—you’ve heard it. You’ve heard people talk about the joy of creating job opportunities for fellow citizens and the joy of beating all odds and succeeding and then the recognition of the responsibility that comes with success. And I appreciate that a lot. It’s really a good example for people to see.

By the way, if there’s any young women here in New Hampshire wondering whether or not they can go into the business world, just take a look at Gerardine. Realize what is absolutely possible if you’ve got a good idea and the heart to work hard and the ability to dream big—

Ms. Ferlins. We’re 65 percent women. That’s the good and bad news for the men in the organization. [Laughter]

The President. All right, big Joe. Joe Landers is with us. He’s the president and CEO of Customized Structures, Inc. He’s in the housing industry, not a bad place to be these days, I suspect. Tell us about your company. Tell us about whatever you want to tell us. You’ve got the floor.

[Joseph Landers made brief remarks.]

Mr. Landers. If I might add, just as a side note, I don’t know if you’re aware of it, but your father’s compound in Kennebunkport actually has a modular home on it that was put there for the Secret Service when he was President.

The President. Oh, yes, that’s good. [Laughter] Well, I’ll tell him to buy a new one here—[laughter]—from you. [Laughter]

Listen, I started off by telling everybody I felt optimistic about the future of this country. And they’ve made my case. I hope—if you listen to the stories of what’s happening in America, you get this sense of optimism and the can-do spirit and the willingness of people to invest and save, because they’re confident about this country. And I am too. And I’ll tell you, I’m going to repeat one reason why: I love the people of this country. I love the spirit of America. I love the entrepreneurial spirit, the spirit of love, the deep compassion, the love of family. The values of this country are strong, which makes America strong, which makes me grateful to be the President of the greatest country on the face of the Earth.

Thank you all for coming, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:37 p.m. at Fidelity Investments. In his remarks, he referred to Dale Gilpin, vice president and general manager, Merrimack Regional Site, Fidelity Investments; Edward C. “Ned” Johnson 3d, chairman and chief executive officer, Fidelity Investments; Abigail Johnson, president, Fidelity Management and Research Co.; Bernie Streeter, mayor, Nashua, NH; Ruth L. Griffin, Raymond J. Wiczorek, and David K. Wheeler, members, New Hampshire Executive Council; and Tom Brady, quarterback, New England Patriots.

Exchange With Reporters in Merrimack

January 29, 2004

Swan Chocolates

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Now what was that look for?

Q. I’m wondering what you think of John Kerry, sir?

The President. You’re supposed to be thinking about what it means to start your

own business, like these people here have done.

Q. Mr. President, what about consternation over weapons of mass destruction?

[At this point, the President continued his tour of the chocolate shop.]

The President. Here are the owners, right here. They started their business last year. Had a dream, living their dream, and they're making good product. And I expect people in the national press corps to leave some cash behind. [Laughter]

That would be you, Allen [Mike Allen, Washington Post]. Go buy some—[laughter]—they'll help you, right over there. [Laughter]

NOTE: The exchange began at approximately 3:45 p.m. at Swan Chocolates. In his remarks, the President referred to Michael and Theresa Anderson, owners, Swan Chocolates. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Old Greenwich, Connecticut

January 29, 2004

Thank you all for coming. Thanks for coming. This is a huge crowd. I'm honored. I appreciate so many people being here tonight. I appreciate Debbie mentioning Yale. Some of my classmates from the mighty class of 1968 are here. They were the ones who invented shock and awe when they heard I was President. [Laughter] They're all fine lads. They themselves were C students. [Laughter] Vice President Cheney went to Yale. It just goes to show if you drop out, you can be the Vice President. [Laughter]

But I appreciate you coming. We're laying the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in November of this year. I'm loosening up. [Laughter] And I'm getting ready. [Laughter] But politics is going to come in its own time. See, I've still got a job to do, and I want you to tell your friends and neighbors that my administration will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of every American by keeping this Nation strong and secure, prosperous and free.

I want to thank my cousin Debbie for finally doing something positive. [Laughter] No, I want to thank her. I love Debbie, and I want to thank her for her leadership for this event. She married my great friend Craig, the former Ambassador to the Czech Republic, who represented our Nation so well.

I'm not Debbie's favorite in my family. [Laughter] Laura is her favorite. [Laughter] And Laura was her first choice. [Laughter] She couldn't make it, but she sends her love. She's a fabulous First Lady for this country.

I want to thank Rick as well for your hard work, thank your team. You've done a fabulous job. It's important that you be well-funded if you're going to run a national campaign, so I want to thank you for your help. I also want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds. He's from Cincinnati, Ohio. He is the national chairman for the Bush-Cheney campaign, and he's doing a fabulous job on my behalf. Thank you for coming, Mercer. I appreciate you being here.

I want to thank your fine Congressman, Chris Shays, for his friendship and leadership. Somebody told me the funniest thing, that somebody is actually challenging Shays in this year. We need to send him back to Congress. He's doing a great job.

I want to thank you, Lieutenant Governor, for being here tonight, and all the State and local officials. I appreciate you coming. I'm counting on you. You need to organize and turn out that vote. And I appreciate your service to your State, and I appreciate what you're fixing to do for this campaign.

I want to thank—Debbie mentioned that we have some family in this neck of the woods. I remember coming to Grove Lane here in Greenwich to visit my grandfather and grandmother, two really fine, fine people. If you can't count on your family, it's hard to count on anybody in politics, so I'm really happy that some of my family has showed up tonight. [Laughter] I appreciate Uncle Jon and Uncle Pres—that's Jon Bush and Prescott Bush—and Jody and Beth. I'm honored that they're here and proud to be a member of their family with them.