Week Ending Friday, August 5, 1994

Remarks to the American Legion Boys Nation

July 29, 1994

The President. Thank you very much. Good afternoon. Welcome to the White House. I want to say a special word of welcome to your president, Thomas Whitehead, and your vice president, Robert Mattivi, and to Jack Mercier, George Blume, and Ron Engel. And to all of you, welcome and congratulations.

I have a special treat for you today. This has been a remarkable week for America, a great week for you to be here. We had the signing of the agreement between the King of Jordan and the Prime Minister of Israel ending the state of war between them, the announcement that Russia would withdraw all of its troops from Central and Eastern Europe, for the first time since the end of World War II, by the end of August. We had the announcement today that our economy grew 3.7 percent in the last quarter, that jobless claims are down, that the robust growth is continuing. It's produced now 3.8 million new jobs in the last year and a half.

And yesterday we had the historic agreement by the Senate and the House on what will be the toughest and smartest crime bill in the history of the country, that will put 100,000 more police officers on the street, ban assault weapons, provide a ''three strikes and you're out'' law, and provide billions of dollars to young people for activities to give our kids something to say yes to as well as to punish people who do the wrong thing.

And then today we had an historic event just about an hour ago, where a new Justice of the United States Supreme Court, Stephen Breyer, was confirmed. And I thought it would be a nice thing if Mr. Justice Breyer, accompanied by Senator Kennedy and Senator Hatch, would come here and make his first public appearance to you. So I'd like to ask Justice Breyer and Senator Kennedy and Senator Hatch—[*applause*].

I wanted to say just a word about this, and then I'd like to ask Justice Breyer to come up here and speak to you for a moment or two, and then they'll all have to go back to work.

Let me thank Senator Kennedy and Senator Hatch and Chairman Biden and the other members of the Senate Judiciary Committee who recommended Judge Breyer by a unanimous vote to the Senate as a whole.

This gentleman has set a standard of excellence and fidelity to the law and the Constitution of which every American can be proud. When he came before the Senate, there was a very broad spectrum of praise for his appointment among Democrats and Republicans alike, among people who consider themselves liberals and people who consider themselves conservatives.

I have now had the honor to appoint two people to the United States Supreme Court. Justice Ginsburg and Justice Breyer have now shown that we can have excellence on the Supreme Court that unites the American people, rather than divides them.

Let me say that—we were joking a little out here—the Founding Fathers in their wisdom said that there had to be somebody hanging around to resolve these fundamental constitutional disputes, and so they created the Supreme Court. And they didn't want the Supreme Court to be subject to undue pressure, so they gave the Justices of the Supreme Court a lifetime term, so they could say no to everybody, including the President. And we were laughing on the way out that Senator Kennedy and Senator Hatch are running for reelection, and of course, the President gets a 4-year term. Now Justice Breyer has a lifetime term. You are looking at the only man in America that you've met lately with total job security. [*Laughter*]

There is a reason for it. Someone needs to be free to decide what the Constitution

requires of the rest of us without the pressures of day-to-day politics. But that imposes on the President and on the United States Senate a very heavy responsibility to pick someone with the character and wisdom to use that awesome power and that lifetime guarantee in the interests of our Constitution, our values, and all the American people, without regard to their race, their income, and their background. I believe Justice Breyer will be that kind of person, and it's an honor for me to introduce him to you at this time.

[*At this point, Justice Stephen Breyer made brief remarks.*]

The President. Well, I am glad we were able to do that, and I hope you enjoyed it.

As all of you know, we share a common bond. I sat where you are 31 years ago, and Senator Kennedy's brother was here as President. Ironically, Senator Kennedy pulled out the record of what President Kennedy said to us when I was here where you are, and on that day he happened to be meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. So he brought them out to meet the Boys Nation delegates. And so you'll now always be able to remember this, and I think as Justice Breyer goes on to a long and distinguished career on the Supreme Court, when you read about him or you hear some decision that he's written, I hope you will always remember this day with pride and with some amount of joy.

I was thinking a little today about how different the world is now from what it was like 31 years ago when I was here. We were in the middle of the cold war; Russia was still the Soviet Union; our troops faced each other, divided, in Berlin. We still had huge amounts of legal segregation in large parts of the United States. There were all kinds of problems. But at the same time, we had enormous faith in the capacity of our economy and our people to solve those problems.

Now the cold war is over. We had all those good events I told you about this week. We have been working very, very hard to try to deal with the horrible tragedy in Rwanda. And again, I have been so impressed with and grateful for our military in their capacity to move quickly over there to take a terrible situation—we have delivered 20 million packets of oral rehydration therapy to try to help the people with cholera. We've gone from zero to 100,000 gallons of water a day to serve the people there almost overnight.

We have all these things going on. And yet we know that there's still a sense of foreboding, of worry in our country because we do have a lot of problems. There's still a lot of people that want jobs that don't have them. There are people who have jobs who are insecure in those jobs. We have people who are growing up in mean streets and tough neighborhoods where there's too much crime and violence. There was a study last week which showed young people between the ages of 12 and 17 are 5 times more likely than people younger than or older than them to be victims of violent crime, that even in cities where the crime rate is going down, often it's going up among young people.

So there is a disturbing as well as a hopeful atmosphere in the country. The thing I always love about Boys Nation is that I can look out and be guaranteed I'll see 96 optimists. And that's a very important thing for our country because a great deal of how we live and whether we go forward depends upon our willingness to view the future with possibility and hope. And a big part of the battle I fight around here as President every day is to try to keep people's spirits up and their eyes on the future and thinking about big things, not little things, and believing that we can make a difference. And I believe that.

I ran for President because I was very concerned about the direction of the country. We had the economy going down and the deficit going up, middle class people being burdened more, while we weren't investing enough in our young people, in our future. The country was coming apart when I thought we ought to be coming together. And my simple mission is to make sure that the American dream is there for you in the 21st century and to do it by restoring the economy, rebuilding our sense of community, empowering individuals to take responsibility for themselves and to do it by putting the power of Government on the side of ordinary Americans.

The first thing I tried to do was to get our economic house in order. We had quadrupled the debt of the United States in 12

years. You were facing a prospect, by the time you were my age, we'd be spending a third or more of all your tax money just paying off our deficit.

Now, we've had the biggest deficit reduction program in history. We have reduced the size of the Federal Government dramatically. By the end of this decade, your National Government will be under 2 million people in size for the first time since I came here when President Kennedy was President—smallest Federal Government in 30 years. We will have 3 years of deficit reduction in a row for the first time since Harry Truman was President of the United States. And it's produced 3.8 million jobs and a 1½ percent drop in the unemployment rate. Last year, we had the largest number of new businesses started in the United States since the end of World War II, in any year. So we're moving the economy in the right direction.

What else do we have to do? We've got to make sure young people are ready to compete in it. We need a system of lifetime learning in which a young person, who will change jobs on average seven or eight times in a lifetime, will know that he or she can always, always get the training, the skills, the knowledge that you need if you have to make a change.

You know, when you make changes in life, they can either be very frightening or very exciting. And usually, changes are a little bit of both, aren't they? Usually changes are a little bit of both. And what keeps our country going is knowing that changes always have more hope than fear in them, that there's more excitement than there is reservation. And every time in our country we come to the end of one era and start another, there's almost a mental war that goes on inside the American people: Are we going to be scared, or are we going to be hopeful? Because we've always had problems, and we're always going to have problems. The Scripture says we'll have problems until the end of the Earth. It's part of our human nature, right?

So when we come to the end of one era and we start another, the issue is, will our dominant feeling be fear or hope? In the 20th century, when World War I was over, the American people said, we do not have any more energy for the problems of the world. We withdrew from the world. We elected a President who said he would take us back to normalcy, whatever that meant, and give everybody a good lettin' alone. And there was this huge uprising of the Ku Klux Klan right after World War I and a huge uprising of a Red scare—you know, there was a Communist under every bush.

At the end of World War II, the same thing happened, but we had a President named Harry Truman who said, "We're not going to walk away from our problems at home; we're not going to walk away from our obligations abroad." He passed the GI bill to give the soldiers coming home housing and education and a way to support their families. He put in motion the system that allowed us to stop communism and win the cold war. He passed the Marshall plan to restore Europe and Japan after World War II so that even our former enemies could become our allies and our trading partners. Today, America has a very close relationship with both Germany and Japan, our bitter enemies in World War II, fighting for democracy, fighting for economic growth.

But all the time, there were people who said, "Oh, I'm more scared than full of hope." There were people who said Harry Truman was radical, incompetent, unfit to be President, too liberal—accused him of being soft on communism. At that time—some of you will read about this when you go to college—not long after that, Senator Joseph McCarthy from Wisconsin started saying every third person he met was a Communist. It's interesting, because Wisconsin has historically been one of the most progressive States in America. But what it shows you is, at the end of one time and the beginning of another, when people are used to looking at the world through this set of glasses, and then they haven't put on another set of glasses yet, anybody can be confused.

And that's what we're seeing today. We've come to the end of the cold war, and I can no longer be President and just tell you that we'll view everything in terms of our competition with the Russians, because it's not true anymore. We're cooperating with the Russians. I just was elated the week before last when the United States Congress passed by overwhelming majorities our continuation

in the international space station project which now is not an American project to put a space station in the sky, it's an American, a European, a Japanese, a Canadian, and now a Russian project. We're going into the future together. And that's good.

But what it means is, when you're trying to get people to build the future and when there's not an obvious enemy and when you have a lot of responsibilities, there's a big question out there in the country. Are we going to be dominated by our hopes or our fears? Are we going to be builders or dividers? When we look at America's problems and promise, is the glass half empty, or is the glass half full? You wouldn't be here if you didn't think the glass was half full, if you didn't believe in yourselves, your communities, and the future of your country.

What I want to say to you goes way beyond any kind of partisan politics or issue. It is that this country has now been around for a very long time, 218 years since the Declaration of Independence, 11 years less than that since the Constitution. We have been around for a very long time. And the way we have survived is by believing in the future and by coming together, not being driven apart. And we've had to redefine over and over and over again what coming together means. Upstairs in the next floor up here, in 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, in this house, liberating the slaves. Before that, coming together meant what all the white folks decided to do. He redefined that forever. It took us another 100 years and more to figure out how to live together. We haven't quite got it all worked out yet, but we've made a lot of progress.

Now what we have to do is to figure out, how are we going to restore our economy? How are we going to make it work for all Americans? How is all this racial and other diversity we have in our country going to make us stronger and more united? How do we stand up for what we believe in our religion and our politics and still respect people who are totally different from what we are? How can we live together? Los Angeles County alone has 150 different racial and ethnic groups, one county. Can we be an American family?

I can tell you this. If we figure it out, nobody can stop this country because in a world where the global economy gets smaller and smaller and smaller, having somebody in your country who's an American first but who understands every other culture in the world is a huge plus. It is a big deal we should be happy about.

So, can we be a community again? How can we rescue all these kids that are in trouble? How can we drive the crime rate down and the graduation rate up? How can we empower people so that they don't think the Government's doing something for them but the Government is doing something with them to give them the skills to take responsibility for their own lives? These are the great questions. How can we live in a world where we promote peace and prosperity by taking care of the remaining nuclear threats, stopping the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, promoting democracy, and at least trying to limit chaos and human suffering as we are doing in Rwanda?

And it is clear, as we move toward the next century, to me, that a major, a major, major, major factor in what it looks like, whether the American dream is alive for you and your children, is whether we believe we can do these things.

And so, that's what I want to leave you with. Whatever your politics, whatever your philosophy, whatever your party, do not participate in this movement that happens at the end of every great era to be cynical, to be negative, to be divisive, to look down on your friends and neighbors, to see the glass as half empty, not half full. This is America. The glass is half full, and you can fill it up the rest of the way if you are determined to do it.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:08 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jack Mercier, director of activities, and Dr. George Blume, legislative program director, Boys Nation; and Ronald A. Engel, deputy director for Americanism, American Legion. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on the Death of John Britton and James Barrett

July 29, 1994

I strongly condemn the senseless shootings today which abruptly ended the lives of two men and seriously wounded a third in Pensacola, Florida.

The safety, freedom, and protection of all our citizens is paramount in guaranteeing the health and vitality of our Nation. I am strongly committed to ending this form of domestic terrorism that threatens the fabric of our country. I encourage a quick and thorough investigation into this tragic incident as the local officials work closely with the resources of the Federal law enforcement community.

Hillary and I extend our deepest sympathy to the friends and family of Dr. John Britton and Mr. James Barrett on their tragic loss today, and I speak for all Americans in expressing my hope for a full and complete recovery for Mrs. June Barrett.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 6710—National Scleroderma Awareness Month, 1994

July 29, 1994

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Literally meaning ''hard skin,'' scleroderma is a chronic disease that thickens and attaches the skin to underlying structures. Its cause is unknown.

Scleroderma strikes individuals of every age, sex, and ethnic background, although women between the ages of 25 and 55 are four times more likely to be afflicted. It is a painful and sometimes progressive disorder of the connective tissue that can cause disability, disfigurement, and even death. Its impact, in terms of both physical and emotional suffering, is enormous.

In patients with scleroderma, there is an excess production of collagen, the main fibrous component of connective tissue. As a result, the formation of dense, compact tissue causes the skin to lose its elasticity. Scleroderma is also a disease of the vascular and immune systems and can impair internal organs, such as the kidneys, lungs, heart, and gastrointestinal tract.

New biomedical research findings and innovative approaches to diagnosis and treatment are essential in fighting against this multifaceted disorder. The Federal Government and private voluntary organizations are working together to increase both public awareness of and research on scleroderma. Their objective is to discover the cause of this devastating disease and to develop effective ways to prevent, treat, and cure it.

I applaud all those who are working to bring public attention to this disabling illness, those who are aiding its victims, and those who are researching its complex nature.

The Congress, by Public Law 103–92, has designated the month of August 1994 as ''National Scleroderma Awareness Month'' and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this month.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the month of August 1994 as National Scleroderma Awareness Month. I urge all Government agencies and the people of the United States, as well as educational, philanthropic, scientific, medical, and health care organizations and professionals, to participate in appropriate activities to encourage greater awareness of scleroderma and further research into its cause and cure.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of July, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and nineteenth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 2:14 p.m., August 2, 1994]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on August 4. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.