

Week Ending Friday, September 1, 1995

The President's Radio Address

August 26, 1995

Good morning. There's an old Native American saying that goes: In all our deliberations we must take into account the well-being of the seventh generation to follow. The wisdom of those words has come alive to me during my family's Wyoming vacation.

During the past week and a half, Chelsea, Hillary, and I have been vacationing in two of our Nation's most spectacular national treasures, Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks. We've been hiking, horseback riding, rafting on the Snake River. We've seen Old Faithful, the canyon falls, and the young wolves that are being reintroduced into Yellowstone. We've seen buffalo, moose, elk, eagles, osprey, red hawks. No bears yet, but we're still looking. We've seen breathtaking mountains, lakes, streams, and meadows. And all of this belongs to you, the American people, for all time to come.

I've also seen lots of Americans, young, old, and in-between, from all over our country in these parks. Mostly I've seen families, hard-working families who can afford these wonders of the world because these parks belong to them. So I'm more grateful than ever that those who came before us saw fit to preserve this land for the enjoyment of future generations of Americans. That was the intent of Congress when it established the National Park Service 79 years ago today. I can think of few things that mean more to the national life of our country than our national parks.

Last year, more than 270 million visitors made their way to places like Yellowstone, Grand Teton, and Grand Canyon National Parks, and to urban treasures like Golden Gate in California, Cuyahoga in Ohio, and Gateway in New York. They came to big parks and to smaller ones, like the one in my hometown, Hot Springs National Park.

Our 369 national parks aren't simply aesthetically pleasing; they're also important to the economies of their communities. For example, in 1994, visitors to Yellowstone, the world's first national park, pumped more than \$643 million into the local economy, creating more than 12,000 jobs. Visitors to Big Bend National Park, along the Texas-Mexican border, spent more than \$77 million while creating 1,544 local jobs.

But while the parks have been good for local economies, many of them have fallen into disrepair. So if we want them to be there for our children in the 21st century we've got to turn this around. But there's a right way and a wrong way to do it. The wrong way is to say that this is an investment no longer worth making, to close the parks and sell them off to the highest bidder. Some people want to do that, but it wouldn't be in faith with the kind of commonsense values that have made our country great and the kind of common ground we've had over our national parks throughout the 20th century.

That's why I strongly oppose the budget cuts that were proposed earlier this year by the congressional majority. They could have forced the closing of more than 200 national parks and recreation areas. The right way to help our parks is through the kind of sensible reforms our administration has proposed.

First, we have to put our parks on sound financial footing by keeping park fees that the citizens pay in the parks. Most visitors to our national parks believe their fees are used for park improvements, but they aren't. That will change under our reforms. Many visitors tell us they want their money to stay in the parks and they'd even pay a little more if they knew that was the case. Well, that's what we propose to do, keep the fees in the parks.

The second thing we want to do is to make it easier for our parks to form partnerships with people in the private sector who want

to invest money to preserve our natural heritage, not to destroy it.

And thirdly, we want to change the out-of-date contracting policies that keep the concession fees paid by businesses operating in the parks unreasonably low. We've got to change that because those who make a profit from the private businesses in our parks should pay a fair amount for the privilege, so that they can make a profit and help us to maintain our parks.

I'm also concerned about activities on land that belongs to the American people which are being used for profit in ways that could damage our national parks. For example, just 2½ miles from Yellowstone Park there's a proposal to build a big gold mine. Before that mine can be approved, it must meet the highest standards in an environmental impact statement. And yesterday I declared a 2-year moratorium on any new mining claims in the area near the northeast corner of Yellowstone Park.

Unfortunately, we're still burdened with an 1872 mining law which allows these claims to be staked and mined while giving virtually nothing back to the American people who make it possible. We have to do everything we can to protect parks like Yellowstone. They're more priceless than gold.

Finally, if we want to maintain our national heritage for our children and our grandchildren, we have to do more than preserve our national parks; we've got to preserve our environment. Right now we face a lot of pressure to pollute the environment and to go back on our commitment to keeping it safe and clean and healthy. The House recently voted to gut environmental and public health protections in the name of regulatory reform. Some in the Senate tried to do the same. They were willing to put at risk the safety of our air, our food, our drinking water, the water we fish and swim in, for short-term financial gains for a few.

The budget bill the House passed would cut environmental enforcement by 50 percent, virtually bringing to a halt Federal enforcement of the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and it would stop toxic waste clean-ups. This would be a terrible mistake, and I'm determined to fight it with vetoes, if necessary.

For a long time now, the American people have stood together on common ground to preserve our environment. At the beginning of this century, Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican, began a fervent call for conservation. In 1905, he said, "There can be nothing in the world more beautiful than a Yosemite, the groves of giant sequoias and redwoods, the canyon of the Colorado, the canyon of Yellowstone, its three Tetons. And our people should see to it that they are preserved for their children and their children's children forever."

Well, I second that emotion. And after spending the last week in Wyoming, I have an even deeper commitment to fulfilling it. So let's end this century by meeting the challenge Teddy Roosevelt set for us at the beginning. We've made a lot of progress in the protection of our environment and our national heritage. But the future can be even brighter. Do we need reforms? Yes. Should we reverse course? Not on your life. It's up to us.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:40 p.m. on August 25 at the Rockefeller residence in Jackson Hole, WY, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 26.

Remarks on the 75th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage in Jackson Hole, Wyoming *August 26, 1995*

Thank you very much. Thank you very much, I think, Hillary. [*Laughter*] In my own defense, I brought these boots home about 10 years ago, and the shine has kind of come off of them now. [*Laughter*] They don't wake anybody at night anymore.

I want to thank Rosemary Shockley and all the representatives and guests of the women's organizations who are here who put this wonderful event together. I want to thank the wonderful people who work for the Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks for making this an incredible vacation for our family. We have had a wonderful couple of days.

Yesterday we were up in Yellowstone, and I remarked that I had had a lot of incredible