

Q. Mr. President, can you confirm reports that the pilot may have been having mechanical difficulties and—

The President. When I got—I cannot confirm any final reports. Last night—maybe it was 2:30 this morning, quarter to three, it was about that time when I got a call. I was told that they thought the pilot had turned around to come back to the airport. And that’s the last—that’s the last word I have on the facts. But we should be able to tell you more by the end of the day, because they’re out there.

“60 Minutes” Interview

Q. Happy birthday, Mr. President. Did you lay a glove on Dole in the interview?

The President. I don’t have any idea. You all watch it and tell me. I wouldn’t know. But I’m just happy to be here—still standing—at 50.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:24 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee 50th Birthday Reception for the President in New York City August 18, 1996

The President. Thank you.

Audience member. Cut cake, but don’t cut welfare!

Audience members. Boo-o-o! Go away!

The President. Wait, wait, wait. They’ve had their say. Now, we’ve heard—wait, wait. They got their message. We heard them. Give them an applause, and let them go now. Give them a hand, give them applause. [Applause] Thank you. All right, we got you an audience. We did do that, also. Now, please let me talk.

Audience member. You don’t represent poor working people! Stop the—[inaudible]—against the poor!

The President. Well, all I know is I just got the minimum wage raised. And we cut income taxes on the 15 million poorest working families in America. And there are 1.3 million fewer people on welfare today than there were the day I became President. So I think we’ve got a pretty good claim on that.

Let me begin by thanking Chairman Don Fowler. I know he said before I came out a word, but I’d like to say another word of respect and condolence to the families of those who were on that Government airplane, the Air Force plane that was carrying those who work with me on my security detail out there in Wyoming. It’s a very sad thing. One of the safest planes we ever had. We don’t yet know what happened, but tonight I just ask you to be thinking about their families.

And let me also say to the people who provided our music, to Smokey Joe’s Cafe, and to the Cravat’s Orchestra, I’ve been out here listening while you all have been in here enjoying it directly, and you know, if you’re President, when you stand up in front of people, you’re always afraid that you’re not supposed to be on one foot; you’re not supposed to be snapping your fingers; you’re not supposed to be doing all these things. So I can really enjoy this music better if I’m out there, and you’re not looking at me; we’re all paying attention to the music.

You guys were great. Thank you very much, and we’re grateful to you.

I know that Governor Carey is in the audience tonight. And Carolyn McCarthy, our new candidate for Congress, is here. I wish her well. I believe Mark Green and Judith Hope are here, and I thank you for being here. And somebody told me two people I very much admire for their different gifts with the English language, Neil Simon and Arthur Schlesinger, are here. If they’re here, I welcome them, and thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, I feel very grateful tonight to be on the verge of my 50th birthday. I don’t know why I feel grateful for that. [Laughter] I have been getting all of these absolutely hilarious cards. I got one card I couldn’t begin to figure out. There were nine people in black robes on it and Mr. Perot was on it and Diana Ross was on it. And it said, “Happy birthday from Diana Ross and the Supremes.” [Laughter] I got a card today pointing out that as bad as this is, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr are older than I am. [Laughter] So I’m getting all of these cards, trying to put the best face on this event. I’m going to be all right until I get my AARP card in the mail.

[*Laughter*] And there will be a couple of bad hours there.

Let me—you know, our friends in the Republican Party that had their convention last week—and I didn't watch it because I was too busy on vacation, but they've had their say and now we can have ours. And I wanted—I just wanted to say to you that when we have our convention in Chicago next week, I have told our people that I don't want anybody standing up at the platform at the Democratic Convention making demeaning personal remarks about any Republican, not their nominee, not their nominee's wife, not any of them.

On the other hand, since they neglected to talk about their record for the last 2 years, I think we ought to remind people about that every chance we get and remind everyone that this is really a great contest between two different visions of the future. There is no status quo option. Neither of us believe that we can stay with what we did for 40 or 50 years. But on the other hand, there are very different consequences to where we will go in the future.

Now, this administration can be proud that, compared to 4 years ago, there are 10 million more jobs, there are a record number of new small businesses, including businesses owned by women and minorities, there are a record number of exports. We've had 4 years in a row where the crime rate went down. There are 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers that could not get handguns because of the Brady bill. And as I said a moment ago, we dramatically cut taxes for the 15 million American working families with incomes of \$28,000 a year or less who are the most hard pressed and reduced the welfare rolls by 1.3 million—all that compared to 4 years ago.

The average closing cost on a home for first-time homebuyers has been cut by \$1,000. We have almost 4½ million new homeowners; 10 million American families refinanced their homes. Things are better than they were 4 years ago.

And the most important thing to know is that the leaders of the other party, their nominee for President, their Speaker of the House—they fought us on the economic program; they fought us on the crime bill; they

fought us on the Brady bill; they fought us on the family and medical leave law; they fought us on the things that we tried to do that made a difference for America. The results are in: We're better off than we were. We need to keep going where we're going, not take a great U-turn and go back in the other direction.

And the second point I want to make to you is that this is not an election like most elections where there's a little guesswork involved. This is your birthday present. You get a Presidential election where you don't have to guess. I mean, if you think about it, there's normally some guesswork in any election. You took a chance on me 4 years ago. Those of you who knew me, maybe it wasn't such a big chance, but most people didn't.

Well, now people know what we've done for the last 4 years, and they know that I'll do everything I can to implement these plans that we put before the American people. And they know what the Republicans will do because, even though they did not talk about it at their convention, apparently, they've already done it once. I just vetoed it the first time. [*Laughter*] And so that's a very happy thing.

So if you look at these choices, the choice is not the standard choice. This is not between, for example, as they would say, cutting taxes and balancing the budget. I'm not against cutting taxes. I'm just against cutting taxes if to do it, you have to explode the deficit again after we took it from \$290 billion down to \$116 billion a year or if you have to cut Medicare and Medicaid, education, and the environment to pay for it. That would be wrong. That would be wrong.

So, if you like the budget I vetoed, you will love the next one that's coming along with this new plan. If you didn't, stay with us. We'll balance the budget and invest in education and invest in protecting the environment and protect Medicare and Medicaid while reforming them so that we can all preserve them over the long term. And we will give the American people the right sort of tax cut, targeted to education, sending everybody to college, raising children, and giving people incentives to save for their own retirement, their own health care, their own educational needs. That is the right thing to do

for America. We do not want to take a dramatic turn in the wrong direction.

Finally, let me say that there are a lot of things that have to be done in the future, and I want you to think about that. I want you to think about what the family and medical leave law has meant to America: 12 million American families, someone in the family got to take a little time off when there was a baby born or a sick parent or a sick child without losing their jobs. I'd like to see that extended so that parents could go to regular parent conferences and doctor's appointments with their children, without losing their jobs.

If you look at what happened—if you look at the results that we've gotten with the Brady bill, the assault weapons ban, and the plan to put 100,000 police on the street, I'd like to see that expanded so that we can ban those cop-killer bullets that have no purpose other than to knock our police officers and other innocent citizens out of their lives.

If you look at what we did with the college loan program to make more college loans available to people and more scholarships available at lower cost, I'd like to see that expanded to give American families a tax credit of \$1,500 a year so that every single American adult could at least get a community college education, and it would be as universal as a high school education is today, and we have tax deductions for the costs of college education for everybody.

So there's a lot more to do here. But our country is stronger; we are more respected in the world; we are a larger force for peace and freedom and decency than we were.

And let me just say one last thing about this welfare issue. I've been working on this since 1980. And about 10 years ago when I was trying to write the last welfare reform bill, I asked a woman from my State who had moved from welfare to work to come be a part of a panel that I had for the Governors; this was nearly a decade ago. And this lady was asked the following question, and I did not know—she was being questioned by other Governors. I didn't have a clue about what she was going to say. I just knew that she had been a successful graduate of our experiment.

And this lady was asked, "Do you believe that people should be required to move from welfare to work if there is a job there and if they can take care of their kids?" She said, "I certainly do." And so the questioner said, "Well, why?" She said, "Well, because people like me have been treated like we can't do anything for so long, we'll just keep on doing nothing unless somebody requires us to do it but also gives us the help to do it." And then they said, "Well, what's the best thing about having a job?" And she said, "Well, the best thing is not the check. It's when my boy goes to school, and they say, what does your mama do for a living, he can give an answer."

Now, what I have done in signing this bill is to give us a chance to move everybody from welfare to work, but we're all thinking about this in the wrong way. This welfare reform issue is not over; it is just beginning. It is just beginning.

So those folks holding those signs up and everybody else ought to be thinking about this: Who do you trust to give jobs to those people? Who do you trust to take care of their children? Who do you trust to implement this instead of turning around and walking away from it?

Remember, the bills I vetoed—that you know what they did, the bills I vetoed? No child care; take away the guarantees of the school lunch program; take away the guarantees of the food stamp program; take away the guarantees of health care for children with disabilities. That's what they tried to do. I vetoed all that.

We got that back in. We got protections back in. The question is now how are we going to embark on this great experiment to put jobs in the inner cities and jobs in the isolated rural areas and give people something to do? You can't just put people in the street. You have to give them work and child care and health care to support them. That is my commitment, and that is the decision we ought to be facing in this election.

So let me just say this last point. This is my birthday gift to you. I want you to think about it for 79 days. [Laughter] I did an interview with one of the most highly watched news programs in the country, showing just in a couple of hours here, today before I

came up. And the questioner said, "Well, Mr. President, aren't you worried about what happened after the convention and this big tax cut promise and the movement in the polls, and doesn't that really bother you?" And I said, "No." I said, "I'm not against a tax cut. I just don't want one that's too big, that we can't pay for. I don't want one that's big and indiscriminate, that will either explode the deficit or force us to really hurt people with more cuts in education and the environment and Medicare and Medicaid. But we can have a tax cut targeted at childrearing and education and family savings, and pay for it. But I'm not worried about that."

He said, "Well, what if it causes all these changes in the polls? Everybody else that's ever run on one has won." I said, "Well, first of all, it's a false choice between a tax cut and no tax cut. The issue is, are you going to have a good one that you can pay for?"

I said, "You know, Hillary and I used to live around the corner when we were living in Arkansas from this wonderful place called the Community Bakery." I used to go down there all the time, and in the morning I'd buy bagels. [Laughter] Sometimes on the weekend I'd buy other things, but there were wonderful things in the Community Bakery. [Laughter] There were cookies, bagels, doughnuts, fruit tarts. And so I was telling this fellow; I said, "You know, every one of them was good, but if you bought them all and ate them all at once you'd get sick. That's my attitude about this tax cut issue. We can have one, but we have to have what we can afford, that's consistent with balancing the budget, investing in our future, bringing our people together. That is the right decision."

And then I said—and this is what I want you to think about for 79 days—"If the American people want to go back to a failed economic plan of the past that quadrupled the deficit, gave us high interest rates, increased unemployment, increased welfare, and weakened America, they can do it. But that's what the election is for." I cannot do that. I will not do that. That is the wrong thing for America. There is another choice there. I won't do that.

So my gift to you is to remember that this is a choice. And I'm delighted that you're

here to celebrate my birthday. And I'm going to have a wonderful time tonight. But I want to remind you that we have 79 more days before we can really celebrate the assurance that America will march into the 21st century with the vision I articulated in 1991 that I reaffirm to you today. I want us to go into the 21st century with three things unquestionably true. I want every child in this country, without regard to race or gender or station in life, to be able to live out his or her dreams if they're responsible enough to work for it. I want to know that our country is the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and democracy. And I want to know that with all of our incredible diversity—unlike all these other countries that are coming apart at the seams because of their racial, their religious, their ethnic, their tribal hatred—I want America to be the one country in the world that says, we believe in our common humanity, and we are growing stronger through our diversity, not weaker. That is my dream, and that's the present I want for you.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:05 p.m. in the Imperial Ballroom at the Sheraton New York Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Don Fowler, chairman, Democratic National Committee; Hugh Carey, former Governor of New York; Carolyn McCarthy, Democratic candidate for the 1st Congressional District in New York; Mark Green, New York City public advocate; Judith Hope, New York State Democratic Party chair; playwright Neil Simon; and historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee 50th Birthday Gala for the President in New York City

August 18, 1996

The President. Thank you. First of all, I just want to say I hope all of you have had just half as good a time tonight as I have. I want to thank my friend Whoopi Goldberg and all the other magnificent entertainers and Jeff Margolis, who did the production; let's give him a hand. He was great.

I know the hour is late, but I'd like to say just a thing or two. I mean, I only turn 50 once, you know. [Laughter] First of all, I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude tonight.