matter how many times their kids try to make them stay away from them.

***Mr. Jennings.*** Boy, don't you wish you could get such fast, cogent advice from your Cabinet members? [*Laughter*]

***The President.*** It's great, and I think—first of all, I agree with the after-school arguments, the mentoring arguments, the treatment—all the things you have said. But I think it's a good thing that we ended with Ally, because we know that children that have parents who work with them and deal with this issue are much less likely to be in trouble.

NOTE: The town meeting began at 11:06 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

## Statement on Senate Confirmation of Federico Peña as Secretary of Energy

*March 12, 1997*

I want to applaud the Senate today for its strong vote of support for Federico Peña to serve as our Nation's new Energy Secretary. As Transportation Secretary, Federico Peña built consensus among communities, business, and government and streamlined operations to reap benefits for all taxpayers.

With this record, I am confident that Secretary Peña has the skill, experience, and dedication to lead the Energy Department to meet its central challenges—to broaden America's energy resources, to promote a safer, more secure world, and to help to create a brighter economic future for all Americans.

## Remarks on Departure for Raleigh, North Carolina, and an Exchange With Reporters

*March 13, 1997*

### *Attack on Israeli Schoolchildren*

***The President.*** Today along the normally peaceful border between Israel and Jordan, we have seen an inexcusable and tragic act of violence against schoolchildren. I condemn this act in the strongest possible terms. I offer to Prime Minister Netanyahu, the Israeli people, and the families and friends of the innocent children who died or were wounded my profound condolences and those of the American people.

As I travel to North Carolina today to speak to people about our own schoolchildren, the senseless denial of a future for these young Israeli children will bear heavily on my mind. There is no justification or excuse for these acts. Now the leaders in the region must work hard to calm the situation, to do everything in their power to create an atmosphere in which violence is rejected rather than embraced.

I call on the leaders and the people of the region to reject violence, to redouble their efforts toward peace and reconciliation. I was encouraged by the statement which King Hussein issued not long ago—just a few moments ago—and I am very hopeful that the leaders and the people will respond in an appropriate manner.

Thank you.

### *Jerusalem Settlements*

***Q.*** Mr. President, do you believe the Israelis have to halt the settlements in East Jerusalem at this point? Do you think that might help calm the situation there?

***The President.*** Let me first say that there is no evidence at this moment that this terrible incident is related to the tensions in the area over the issues. For all we know, this may have been just a deranged person. And I think it is important, given King Hussein and Jordan's long record of reaching for peace and reconciliation, that no one jump to any undue conclusions.

We don't have the facts. None of us have any facts other than we know this incident occurred. But we have no reason to believe that this was politically motivated by any larger group or anything. We just don't know that.

But you know what I believe. I believe that this is a time when we need to be building confidence and working together and there needs to be a certain mutuality of action in the Middle East to get this peace process well underway. That is what I had hoped would happen after the Hebron agreement, and that is still what I believe has to happen if we're going to succeed.

So we'll be talking to all the parties, and I'm in more or less constant contact with them. And we'll continue to be hopeful. But for right now, I think we need to give the people of Israel the time to absorb this terrible shock.

Thank you.

***Q.*** Have you had a chance to talk to King Hussein?

***The President.*** No.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:36 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel and King Hussein I of Jordan.

## Remarks to a Joint Session of the North Carolina State Legislature in Raleigh

*March 13, 1997*

Thank you very much. Lieutenant Governor Wicker, Speaker Brubaker, Senator Basnight, the other State elected officials who are here; my good friend Governor Hunt; Mayor Fetzer. I'd like to thank those who came down here with me today. I brought some of the Members of your congressional delegation home. They don't need to hear this speech, they've heard it before, but I was glad to have them here in moral support: Congressman David Price; Congressman Bob Etheridge, your former superintendent of education; Congressman Mike McIntyre; and Congresswoman Eva Clayton. I thank them for coming.

I also want to say I'm glad to be joined today by your neighbor, the Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, former Governor of South Carolina, and by our new Secretary of Defense, Bill Cohen of Maine. We're glad to have him with us today, too. Thank you, Secretary Cohen, for coming.

I was glad that you mentioned my Chief of Staff, Erskine Bowles. He wouldn't come here with me today because he was afraid all of you would think that he was shirking his duties and not at work. But let me tell you, he is doing a magnificent job. I'm very proud of him. I couldn't believe it when he agreed to come back to Washington and take this job, especially because I knew it would cost him a small fortune. And he reminded me that his father used to tell him, "Once you have the tools, you've got to spend some time to add to the woodpile." So he's up in Washington adding back to the woodpile. And you should all be very proud of him. He is a remarkable man. He's doing a good job.

I'd also like to thank the other North Carolinians on my staff. Two of the three of them are here today. Doug Sosnik, my former political director and senior counselor, is not here, but my Director of Communications, Don Baer, is here, and Charles Duncan, the Associate Director of Presidential Personnel. They both came home with me, and they were glad to have the excuse to come home. And I appreciate their being here and their service.

I was told that this was the first time a sitting President has addressed the North Carolina State Legislature. If it's not true, don't disabuse me now, because I'm about to say something good. [*Laughter*] And I am very honored to be here. Even more important, I've spent a little time here over the years, and I am honored and mildly surprised that you are here, because it's tournament time and you've got four teams, as usual, in the tournament.

You may know that I am something of a basketball fanatic. And you may know that one of my most memorable basketball experiences—I once saw North Carolina and Kentucky play in the Dean Dome, and the car that I came in was towed. [*Laughter*] But I had so much fun at the ballgame, I would have walked all the way back to Arkansas after it was over. [*Laughter*] I make it a point never to take sides in basketball games unless my home team in Arkansas or my alma mater, Georgetown, are playing. But I am looking forward to the day when the great Dean Smith breaks Adolph Rupp's record.

There is much for the rest of the Nation, and especially the rest of the South, to admire in North Carolina, the determined and visionary leadership that has characterized this State for many decades in education and economic development, in bringing harmony among peoples of different backgrounds.

When I was a young man, I followed the work here of then-Governor Terry Sanford, who later became my friend and colleague.