

to it, who know that, always, there are going to be people who will work hard to struggle, sometimes at real personal risks to themselves, to get the news and hopefully to be fair, honest, and critical in their reporting of it. America is stronger and freer because of them, and I thank them. This Newseum is really a great addition to the Washington area. And I know it will attract a lot of visitors, not only from every State but also from all around the world.

Now, the question you asked me is a fair one and a good one. I think that the fundamental role of the news media and the reporting today is what it has always been—is to give people information in a fair and accurate way. But the context is far different. There are, first of all, more sources of news. There is more information that people have to process, and people get their news in more different ways. And as I said, there are all these sort of “near-news” forces bearing down on you and offering competition.

I sometimes wonder what it’s like to put together an evening news program or a morning newspaper when the main story has been playing every 5 minutes on CNN for 6 hours, and whether you really—whether that affects what you do or not. I would say that from my perspective, the most important thing is that while we’re being inundated with this glut of information, that we try to make sure that people have a proper context within which to understand the information. I think that the fact that we can have more facts than ever before is important, but if you don’t have any framework within which to understand those facts, it seems to me it poses an enormous challenge.

The other thing that I think we have to do is to be careful when we report the stories about things that might be true, not to say that they are, particularly if to say that they are or to imply that they are could cause real damage to people in their reputations and, indeed, in their own lives.

But I think that the competition to which you’re subject makes it more difficult both to keep down excessive hype in some stories and to take the time and the effort to put it in proper context. I think in some ways it is much more difficult to be a member of the news media than in years past. It’s

a great challenge. And all the benefits of this communications explosion impose new challenges on you to meet the old-fashioned duty of being accurate, thorough, tough, and fair.

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—*once you’re off your crutches, you and your family will come over and browse through the Newseum with us. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. I’d love to do it. Thank you and bless you all. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke by satellite at 11:24 a.m. from the Roosevelt Room at the White House to the Newseum in Arlington, VA. In his remarks, he referred to Allen H. Neuharth, chairman, and Peter S. Prichard, executive director, Newseum; and Charles Overby, chief executive officer, Freedom Forum.

Remarks at the Award Ceremony for the National Teacher of the Year

April 18, 1997

Thank you very much to our Teacher of the Year and all the teachers of the year and their friends and supporters and family members who are here. Senator Glenn, Congressman Chabot, Secretary Riley, and Vice President Gore, thank you for being such wonderful partners to me.

Dick Riley—next year, Dick Riley and I will have been working together for 20 years in one way or another, and we’re about to get the hang of it. [*Laughter*] And I really think he’s done a wonderful job as our Secretary of Education.

I want to tell you, this NetDay idea that the Vice President developed—we were just sitting around talking one day, and I was be-moaning the fact that he was doing some elaborate thing on his computer screen in his office and I still can hardly figure out how to turn mine on. [*Laughter*] And we were all laughing about how our children were leapfrogging us in their capacity to deal with computers and one thing led to another and before you know it, we have a goal that we’ll hook up every library and classroom in the country by the year 2000, and then there’s going to be a NetDay and, all of a sudden, one day we hook up 20 percent of the classrooms in California. And I never met anybody that was any better at taking an idea

and turning it into reality than Al Gore. And this NetDay thing, it's going to revolutionize education in this country because we're not going to stop until we bring the benefits of technology to every single child in this country, and I think it's a wonderful thing.

I could have done without Secretary Riley telling that story that my—[laughter]—my second grade teacher did. But I was sitting here—I have no notes on this, so if I mess it up you'll have to forgive me, but the truth is that Sister Mary Amata McGee, whom I found after over 30 years of having no contact with her—she was my second and third grade teacher. I found her in Springfield, Missouri, one night when I came there near the end of the 1992 campaign. I had no idea what had become of her. I didn't know what had happened. So I reestablished my relationship with her. But she was a little too generous. The truth is, I think she gave me a D in conduct—[laughter]—and I think she gave me a D not because I raised my hand but because I spoke whether I was called on or not. [Laughter]

But if ever you wonder whether what you do matters, after Sister Mary Amata McGee in the second and third grade, there was Louise Vaughn, Mary Christianus, Kathleen Scher, my sixth grade teacher, who was my steady pen pal until she died just a few days before she became 90 years old, when I was Governor. And then in the seventh grade, my homeroom teacher was Ruth Atkins. And then there was Miss Teague, my civics teacher in the eighth grade. And Mary Broussard, my ninth grade English teacher, who was the only person in our class besides me that supported John Kennedy over Richard Nixon. [Laughter] In the ninth grade!

And I could go through my whole high school list of teachers, through my college list of teachers. All the people around here have to put up with stories that I forget that I've already told once about specific verbatim things I remember that my teachers in college said in lectures over 30 years ago.

Now, don't ever think what you do does not matter. I remember them all as if I were sitting with them yesterday. And there are things that each of them gave to me that I am not even aware of today after all these

years of having had a chance to think about it.

Every one of you made a decision that you would never be wealthy. [Laughter] You made a decision that you would give yourselves to the next generation. You made a decision that you would do at work what we're all supposed to do in our families—that you would always be thinking about tomorrow.

On New Year's Eve, someone asked me, in this meeting I was at, if I had to write a legacy on my tombstone, what would it be? And I would say—I said something like—I don't remember exactly what I said, but something like that I had the privilege of leading America into a new century and keeping the American dream alive for everyone, having our very diverse country live together as one America, and maintaining our leadership as the world's greatest force for peace and freedom and prosperity. If you think about that, every single one of those tasks requires that we do a better job of educating more of our people, every single one.

You look around America today, we have 5.2 percent unemployment. It's a great thing. And it's also entirely misleading. Unemployment is virtually zero for people who have the skills necessary to meet the demands of the emerging economy if they live in a place where investment is coming in. What we have to do is to close the gaps and the skill levels. How do you do that? Give people better education and then provide incentives to invest in the places that have been left behind.

The Vice President was in Detroit a few days ago, promoting our empowerment zone concept of trying to build communities and give incentives for people to invest where people are there willing to work and there is no investment. But the unemployment rate is absolutely meaningless if you're unemployed. If you're unemployed, the unemployment rate is 100 percent. [Laughter] It's not one or zero or five or—you know, that's what it is. So we can't create opportunity for all Americans unless everybody first has the educational skills.

We certainly can't learn to live together as one America, with all this rich diversity we have, without being educated to it. Be-

cause for thousands of years, people have lived in tribal patterns that taught them to be suspicious of those that were different from themselves. Among the Teachers of the Year here today, we have an immigrant from Taiwan making a great contribution to the United States. Among the Teachers of the Year today we have a Japanese-American whose parents were interned during World War II. My State had one of those internment camps. I've been down there to see it, and I still can't believe my country ever did that. We have African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans. We have people from different religious backgrounds.

You know that what unites us is more important than what divides us, and, once having recognized that, you know that what divides us makes us more interesting and far better positioned to do well in the world of tomorrow than countries that are less diverse than we are. But we can't learn to do this right unless we cannot only feel our way out of this but think our way out of this. We have to know more than we now know.

And we certainly—we certainly—cannot take advantage of the opportunities that are there for us at the end of the cold war to create a whole new order of peace and freedom and prosperity without much higher levels of understanding.

Or let me put it in another way. The American Society of Newspaper Editors were here the other day, and one of the editors from out in the country stood up and I thought, you know, I'm going to get a question on whatever is going on in Washington. He said, "I got a 10-year-old son in the fifth grade, and he wants to know what your advice is for him for the future." And it was the hardest question I got asked all day.

And I said, he should study hard, he should stay out of trouble and not defile his body with drugs or anything else. He should seek out people who were of different racial and religious backgrounds and get to know them and understand them. He should try to learn more about the rest of the world as early as possible, as soon as possible. And he should begin right now taking some time to serve in his community to help people who needed help. Those are the five things I said. Why? Because I think that will give him a

good education and give him opportunity, help us to come together as one America and appreciate our differences, and help us to maintain our leadership in the world. And you're doing that every day. The kindergarten teachers here are doing that.

Now, that's why I look so forward to this every year. Because most of the time, frankly, we just sort of take you for granted, unless we get mad because we don't like the way the test scores come out or the comparative test scores or whatever else. And I think it is very important that we not lose the enormous significance of your collective impact. And I thought I'd stand up here today and try—and I didn't know if I could do it, but I thought I could—just remember all my teachers, just to show you the personal impact you have. See, I'll bet you a lot of you could do the same thing I just did, and that's probably why you're doing what you're doing today.

We do have some changes to make, and we do have to recognize that we have to keep moving to lift the standards and we have to realize that there are some senses in which we do what we do very well and some senses in which we have challenges because we have so much diversity among our children that others don't have. But we can't use that as an excuse. We have to just deal with the facts and believe every child can learn.

At this brain conference yesterday that the Vice President mentioned that the First Lady and I hosted, I was stunned when we had these scientists there talking about one trillion networks being developed in the brain.

We've known for a long time—I was taught in school that we only use a small part of our brain's capacity, but I never understood the extent to which the brain keeps developing all during childhood and how we interrelate to it. But what it convinced me of was what I already believed by conviction, which is that nearly everybody is fully capable of learning whatever they need to learn to get where they need to go.

And that's to me what this whole standards business is about and what the encouragement of all the States to develop standards that are nationally and internationally sound, challenging all the States to join in the fourth grade reading and the eighth grade math

tests in 1999 is all about. It's not about another test. It's about saying, we believe all our children can learn, and we believe children learn according to the expectations placed on them, and our expectations are going to be high. That's what this is about. And I hope every one of you will support that because I think it is terribly important.

So far, in only a couple of months, the educational leadership of California has joined Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, and the schools of the Defense Department system in endorsing—in saying they will participate in this standards movement. And I hope every State in the country will say yes before the time comes.

Because we have a record number of students in our schools and they're growing rapidly and now we've got for the first time—it's rather humbling for me and the Vice President—we finally have more kids in school than we had during the baby boom. [Laughter] We're going to have to find in the next 10 years 2 million new teachers. And that's going to be quite a challenge. And we have to train them for the challenges that they'll face today and the world their children will face tomorrow.

So I want to thank you for your willingness to think about that and for helping to encourage teachers to achieve new levels of excellence. I know many of you are participating in Secretary Riley's national forum, which gives you a chance to share ideas with educators all across the country about the best way to train teachers. This is an issue that is very hard. It will never make the front page on any day. There will always be something more immediate. But there are very few things that are more important than how we train our teachers, and how we continue to learn as teachers in the classroom and in the schools, and how we can all learn from each other. That's one of the reasons I encourage teachers all over the country to seek board certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

And we now have 500 of these teachers, nationwide. Governor Hunt from North Carolina, who is well-known to many of you, has been working on this as an obsession for years. But in our balanced budget plan we've got \$105 million that would put 100,000 mas-

ter teachers in our Nation's classrooms. And the idea is not really—it's just like you. You're the Teacher of the Year, but you know, you're really standing in the shoes of every other good teacher in your State. But if you can put this training in the hands of one teacher in every school building in America, which we ought to be able to do with this, it will upgrade the performance of all the teachers in the schools, and it will change the culture of the schools. So I hope you will support that as well.

There are a lot of other things in our education program, but I wanted to focus on those two things, plus our efforts to wire the schools, to focus just on the public schools today. We're also trying to help the schools that are terribly overcrowded get some financial help to reduce the cost of new construction or repair work when the local districts are willing to do their part, and I hope that initiative will pass.

But the main thing I want to tell you is, what you do really matters. It matters to the country as a whole, it matters to individual kids, and if any—if at all possible, it matters even more now to our society at large than it did when I had all those teachers whose names and faces and voices and manners and stern rebukes I still remember. [Laughter]

Today we honor, especially, Sharon Draper. She happens to be one of our Nation's first master teachers and a member of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and I'm especially pleased about that.

For 27 years, she has inspired students with her passion for literature and life. The standards to which she holds her students at the Walnut Hills High School in Cincinnati are legendary, so much so that seniors wear T-shirts that proclaim, "I survived the Draper Paper"—[laughter]—when they finish their senior thesis. I was intrigued when I read that and I asked her for one of those T-shirts and I was denied because I haven't yet survived it. [Laughter]

Her gifted teaching has not gone unrecognized. She received both the National Council of Negro Women Excellence in Teaching Award and the Ohio Governors Educational Leadership Award. She is an accomplished author in her own right. She was honored

with the American Library Association's Coretta Scott King's Genesis Award, and it's annual Best Books for Young People Award. She has devoted her career not only to teaching and to writing but to helping other teachers improve their skills as well.

Sharon Draper is more than a credit to her profession, she is a true blessing to the children she has taught. And it gives me great pleasure now to present her with the National Teacher of the Year Award and ask her to come forward and say whatever she'd like to say. Congratulations.

[At this point, the President presented the award to Ms. Draper, and she made brief remarks.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr., of North Carolina.

The President's News Conference

April 18, 1997

The President. Good afternoon. Less than 2 weeks from today, the Chemical Weapons Convention goes into effect, with or without the United States. The bottom line is this: Will the United States join a treaty we helped to shape, or will we go from leading the fight against poison gas to joining the company of pariah nations this treaty seeks to isolate?

With this treaty, other nations will follow the lead we set years ago by giving up chemical weapons. Our troops will be less likely to face poison gas on the battle field. Rogue states and terrorists will have a harder time acquiring or making chemical weapons, and we'll have new tools to prevent and punish them if they try. But if we fail to ratify, other countries could back out as well. We won't be able to enforce the treaty's rules or use its tools, and our companies will face trade sanctions aimed at countries that refuse to join.

As the Senate prepares to vote next week, I'm encouraged by the great progress we have made but mindful of its hurdles we still must overcome in order to gain approval of the CWC. I welcome yesterday's unanimous agreement by the Senate to bring the treaty to a vote, and I thank Majority Leader Lott,

Senator Daschle, Senator Helms, and Senator Biden, and all the Members of the Senate from both parties for their efforts. By going the extra mile, we've reached agreement on 28 conditions that will be included in the treaty's resolution of ratification, for example, maintaining strong defenses against chemical attacks, toughening enforcement, allowing the use of riot control agents like tear gas in a wide range of military and law enforcement situations, and requiring search warrants for any involuntary inspections of an American business.

These agreed-upon conditions resolve virtually all of the issues that have been raised about this treaty. But there are still a handful of issues on which we fundamentally disagree. They will be voted on by the full Senate as it takes up the treaty next week. We should all understand what's at stake. A vote for any of these killer amendments will prevent our participation in the treaty. Let me quickly address four of them.

The first would prohibit the United States from joining the treaty until Russia does. That is precisely backwards. The best way to secure Russian ratification is to ratify the treaty ourselves. Failure to do so will only give hardliners in Russia an excuse to hold out and hold on to their chemical weapons.

A second killer condition would prohibit us from becoming a party until rogue states like Iraq and Libya join. The result is we'd be weaker, not stronger, in our fight to prevent these rogue states from developing chemical weapons because we would lose the ability to use and enforce the treaty's tough trade restrictions and inspection tools. No country, especially an outlaw state, should have a veto over our national security.

A third killer condition would impose an unrealistically high standard of verification. There is no such thing as perfect verifiability in a treaty, but this treaty's tough monitoring, reporting, and on-site inspection requirements will enable us to detect militarily significant cheating. Our soldiers on the battle-field will be safer. That, clearly, is an advance over no treaty at all.

Finally, the opponents would force us to reopen negotiations on the Chemical Weapons Convention to try to fix two concerns that have already been resolved. First, they claim