let anybody think that it's just some ordinary event or that there are no consequences.

I'll close with this. When we celebrated the longest economic expansion in American history last February, I asked my advisers, I said, "Well, when was the last longest economic expansion in history?" You know when it was? Nineteen sixty-one to 1969.

Scott's 17 years old. When I graduated from high school, I was 17 years old, in the springtime of 1964, in the full bloom of the last longest economic expansion in history. You know what I thought? I thought the sucker would go on forever. [*Laughter*]

Ah, we knew we had civil rights challenges. I thought they'd be settled in the courts and in Congress, not in the streets. I knew we had a few people in Vietnam. I never dreamed that we would have trouble prevailing and that the agony of it would someday tear our country apart and tear my generation apart. We just thought everything was fine.

Four years later, when I was a senior in college and I was fixing to graduate from college—passes like this—it was 2 days after Robert Kennedy was killed, 2 months after Martin Luther King was killed, 9 weeks after my President, Lyndon Johnson, could not even run for reelection because this country was torn half in two over Vietnam. And just a couple of months after that, the last longest economic expansion in American history was itself history.

Now, those of us who are old enough to have memories have responsibilities. And I'm here to tell you I've been waiting for 35 years for another chance to do right by our future. And now we have no domestic civil rights struggle that puts millions in the street. Instead we have a million moms that just want our kids to be safe. We have no Vietnam war to divide us and distract us. And if we make the wrong decisions, we have only ourselves to blame. I'm telling you, this can be the best time in human history.

But this election decision for the Presidency and for Congress will determine what the shape of this country is for decades to come. That's why, if somebody tomorrow asks you why you came here, tell them that's why you came here. And tell them some of the things I've told you tonight. And whatever happens between now and November, don't you get tired. I've been waiting 35 years for this, and I'm not going to see us blow it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Rich and Ellen Richman and their son Scott, who introduced the President; Ronni Ginott, State chair, Women's Leadership Forum; dinner cochairs Braith and Peter Kelly and Bob Rose; Edward G. Rendell, general chair, Democratic National Committee; Mayor Dannel P. Malloy of Stamford, CT; State Senator Brian McDermott; and Connecticut State Democratic Party Chair Edward L. Marcus.

Remarks on Permanent Normal Trade Relations With China

May 18, 2000

The President. Good morning. It's always good to have Chairman Greenspan back at the White House, and I'm especially pleased that he has come today to join me in voicing his support for permanent normal trade relations with China. We all know that when Chairman Greenspan talks, the world listens. I just hope that Congress is listening today.

Many Members remain undecided, and we are doing everything we possibly can to round up each and every potential vote. I'm encouraged by the vote in the committees in both Houses, including both Republican and Democratic members, to overwhelmingly approve extending permanent normal trade relations with China. This legislation now goes before the full Congress.

All the former Presidents support it, along with former Secretaries of State, Defense, Trade, Transportation, National Security Advisers, Chairs of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, religious leaders, many of the courageous people in China fighting for human rights and the rule of law.

Momentum is building, but we've still got a challenging fight. I thank Chairman Greenspan for coming here today, and I'd like for him to say whatever is on his mind about this issue.

Mr. Chairman.

[*At this point, Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to say that, first, I believe that Chairman Greenspan has established a pretty good record for knowing what is in America's economic interest. He has once again reiterated, clearly and unambiguously, that this agreement exchanges membership rights for China in the WTO for economic opportunities for America in China, for American businesses and American workers, without the tariffs and technology transfer requirements and production in China requirements and other requirements which have limited our ability to benefit from their market for too long. So economically, the case is clear and compelling.

But I would also like to emphasize here the national security aspects of this, and the human and political rights aspects. You've heard Chairman Greenspan address the human and political rights aspects, and make the point that increasing access to a market economy increases personal freedom in other ways. I will just cite one example, which is that China has gone from 2 million to 9 million to 20 million Internet users over the last 3 years. And it was exploding again this year. We do not know where it will be next year, but this is a profoundly significant thing.

That's why Martin Lee came all the way from Hong Kong. That's why people who have been, themselves, oppressed in China have pleaded with us to support this, because they know getting into a rules-based system and promoting economic competition will both enhance the march of liberty and law and human rights.

The other point I would like to make is, there is a serious national security issue here. We do not know what China will choose to do in the future, and China will make that decision for itself. But we know that one decision will dramatically increase the chances of a constructive relationship with China in a stable Asia, and the other will dramatically increase the chances of a less happy outcome. That's why Japan and North Korea, Thailand and the Philippines, our democratic allies in northeast Asia, are for this.

If you want to reduce tensions along the Taiwan Strait, if you want a more stable Asia, if you want to maximize the chances of avoiding proliferation of dangerous weapons and a new arms race, a yes is the right vote.

Last point. As has been well-documented by those of you in our press, it is indeed ironic that the only people in China who want this vote to fail are the more reactionary elements of the military, economic, and political structure, who do not want to give up control and may need America as a continuing adversary to maintain that control and that capacity to repress liberty and human rights.

I believe the issue is profound and clear. And I am grateful for what Chairman Greenspan has said today.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:38 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Hong Kong Democratic Party Chair Martin Lee. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Chairman Greenspan.

Remarks on Signing the Trade and Development Act of 2000

May 18, 2000

The President. I would like to, first of all, welcome all of you here to the South Lawn on this beautiful day for this important occasion. I thank the members of the Cabinet and the administration who are here. I thank the very large number of Members of Congress who are here from both parties, the mayors and other public officials who supported this legislation. I want to thank our Special Envoy for the Americas, Buddy MacKay, my point person on the Caribbean Basin Initiative, and our former and first Special Envoy to the Americas, Mack McLarty.

I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to Senator Roth and Senator Moynihan, to Representative Rangel and Representative Archer, to Senator Lott and to Speaker Hastert, who supported this legislation, and to all the Members who worked so hard to get this bill passed, including Representatives Crane, Jefferson, McDermott, Payne, Royce, and so many others who are here, too numerous to mention. I want to thank the members of the diplomatic corps who are here, who also supported this initiative.