

## Remarks at a National Democratic Club Dinner January 9, 1996

Thank you. I needed that. [*Laughter and applause*] Thanks. I said that because, you know, I just needed a Democratic fix. [*Laughter*] I've spent more time with Senator Dole and Speaker Gingrich than I have with Hillary and Chelsea in the last 3 weeks. [*Laughter*] And it's nice to sort of be home.

I want to thank Dawson Mathis and Pat Rissler and Bill Long, Barbara Boggs, and all the others who have made me feel so welcome tonight. I'm glad to be here with Congressman Bonior and Mrs. Bonior. I want to tell you, if we had 100 people in the Congress like David Bonior, this would be a better country. This would be a better country. He is a great man. [*Applause*] Thank you. And if we had 218, we'd be in the majority. [*Laughter*]

All of you know this is a very interesting time to be in Washington, DC, to be in public life, indeed, to be an American. I'm glad to see so many young people here tonight. I'm glad to see that anybody showed up. I was afraid that only the President could navigate the roads. [*Laughter*] I figured this was going to be like my early campaign rallies in New Hampshire. Wherever two or more are gathered, you know, I just showed up, and I figured that—[*laughter*—so I'm glad you made it tonight.

But particularly for the young people, I would say to you that you are living through an era of more profound change than any the United States has experienced in a hundred years in terms of the way we work and live and relate to each other and the rest of the world, trading the cold war for the global village, trading the industrial age for an information and technology age, trading a lot of yesterday's problems for tomorrow's problems.

And I believe for the young people who are here, if we do our job now, it will also be an age of immense possibility, beyond things that even we can imagine now. But it's also a time of great difficulty. And as with every period of great change, we have to reaffirm what it means to be an American and also make the right kinds of decisions. That's really what's going on here.

And this great debate in Washington about the budget is not about balancing the budget

at all, really. As I announced today, we have now, both sides, agreed on far more than enough savings to bring the budget into balance—already. We could do that tomorrow. In an hour, we could draw it up and put it out and have a balanced budget. That's not what we're debating.

We're really debating what kind of country we're going to be and what our common obligations to each other are, what our obligations to the future are. And tonight I just want to take just a few minutes to ask you to think about that in terms of where we are now and what this country has always been about.

If you go back to the Founding Fathers and you go through the Civil War, the period of Reconstruction, the progressive era with Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, the Great Depression, the Second World War, the cold war, and the great explosion of opportunity in the United States afterward, in everything that has happened, you will see that there have always been three great, constant themes in American life: our love of liberty, our belief in progress, and our struggle to find common ground.

And sooner or later, we have always understood that each of them depended upon the other. Our Constitution enshrined liberty in a Bill of Rights that said that black people only counted as three-fifths of human beings, so sooner or later we realized we couldn't really preserve everybody's liberty until all people were free. And we found some common ground.

Progress was largely an individual thing until we came to understand that in an industrial economy, the Government had a role to play to create a framework in which everybody could get ahead who was willing to work and make the most of their God-given abilities.

And now, as we move out of the industrial age into a time that will be far less centralized, far less dominated by large organizations, at least in terms of employment, and far more dominated by new forms of communications and technology, we have to once again examine these three questions and ask ourselves: How will we preserve our liberty? Do we have to stand up for people's liberty beyond our borders? How