

Jan. 10 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1997

The President. I thought the last sentence of the introduction of his book said that he was not responsible for my getting reelected, I was. [Laughter] So I would think that you would have to say that was a rather selective reading

of the book, if that's the way you read it. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Remarks to the 1996 National Hockey League Champion Colorado Avalanche

January 10, 1997

I'd like to welcome all of you to the White House, especially Representative Diana DeGette; and Charlie Lyons, the president of Ascent Entertainment; and of course the 1996 Stanley Cup winners, the Colorado Avalanche.

I'm pleased that all of you could join us today to congratulate the team, especially the people who have come all the way from Colorado. Ice hockey is one of the fastest, most exciting games going, and there was an article in one of the papers yesterday detailing all the cities in America that now want a hockey franchise. I think it's because Colorado won the championship so quickly. [Laughter]

When you watch an amazing team like the Avalanche take the ice, you understand why children all over our country for the first time are trying on skates and crowding the rinks. This was a very awe-inspiring performance that this team turned in this year.

No one could have anticipated the kind of season you've had when you moved to Denver just 18 months ago, rolling over the NHL like the avalanche you are so well named for. You swept the final series against the Florida Panthers, a great team who deserve a lot of credit for being the youngest expansion team to make it to the Stanley Cup final after only 3 years in the league. And as the Avalanche played out the final minutes of the triple overtime game that brought you to victory, you also showed what teamwork is all about. I may show those final minutes to the Cabinet repeatedly over the next 2 years. [Laughter]

In one short season, you captured the heart of your new home city and gave Colorado its

first major sports championship ever. Your coach, Marc Crawford, is the third youngest coach in history to lead a team to a Stanley Cup victory. That's a remarkable achievement, something I can identify with. I used to be the youngest person doing things—[laughter]—a long time ago. At 27, Joe Sakic brings incredible talent and maturity to the team, and I see him here recovering from his recent injury. I hope you'll be back on your skates soon. Your outstanding goalie, Patrick Roy, must be used to this by now. Of course, this is his third Stanley Cup victory. I understand he's an avid golfer as well, and the difference is, of course, in golf you're not allowed to block the other person's shots. [Laughter] I must say, there have been a lot of times when I wished there had been someone there to block mine.

This victory belongs to every player on the team. By bringing home to Denver and to Colorado their first ever professional sports championship, you have justified the loyalty and pride of some ferociously loyal and proud fans. And I think it highly likely that you'll keep them happy again this year too. After your win against the Senators last night, I know you're number one in the NHL again.

Now I'd like to introduce the commissioner of the National Hockey League, Gary Bettman, to continue the program.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:34 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Charlie Lyons, chairman, and Joe Sakic, center, Colorado Avalanche.