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ADVERTISING COUNCIL

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First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton's Remarks
to the Advertising Council

Monday, May 8, 1995

Good morning, and welcome to the White House. I'm delighted that you all could be here, and I'm so pleased you've had a chance to meet with some of the other members of the White House family and with Rom and Mike you have two extraordinary examples of leadership and perseverance to try to get through the difficult challenges that we confront as we move toward the end of this century. I'm very grateful for the work that all of you are doing and will do; I was talking with Reg Brack as we were waiting in the Red Room about the commitments that you and your companies have made to the Ad Council and to the various campaigns that the Council has carried out, and I want to thank both Reg Brack and Ruth Wooden for leading and managing the Ad Council this year. The President and his staff and all of us have enjoyed working with Eva Kasten and her staff and getting the word out to the American public about the various initiatives that you have been partners with us on.

I remarked to Reg that I thought that not only is this an extraordinary example of commitment to public service, but it's also a real working model of a public/private partnership as you bring together corporations and media and advertising leaders along with the government, and it's one that has stood the test of time, going back so many years. The public service campaigns that you have addressed have really helped our nation meet challenges that we can think about and know that you've made an impact on, whether it's drunk driving or forest fires or drug abuse or motor vehicle deaths caused by

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the failure to wear seatbelts, and so many others, you have been there at the front of the national consciousness, trying to give voice to concerns that we have all had. We're particularly grateful in this administration for your commitment on the crime campaign that Rom was so intimately involved in, and we know that you have made a new commitment that I am particularly pleased about, Commitment 2000: Raising a Better Tomorrow. Nothing could be more timely or more important, and as Mike was saying about his own children and each of us as we think about our children, our grandchildren, other children in our lives, know that something is not right in our country with our children and something is not right because -- for a variety of reasons -- we as adults have not responded as we have needed to over the past years to provide the kind of love and attention and discipline that our children need and require to become the sort of productive useful adults and citizens that we would want for them. Today we know that American children shoulder greater burdens than ever before and don't quite know what to do with those burdens, and it is especially important that the adult community -- and that's not just parents, but *all* of us -- recognize that we in a sense have to create a new public consensus about what we want for our children, what we expect from our children and how we are going to make the commitment to the next generation that many of us in this room are here because of a prior generation's willingness to commit. We don't do enough in our country to ensure that every child has the opportunity to fulfill his or her God-given potential. And that is not only with respect to the most disadvantaged children amongst us, but it's really true I think across all kinds of boundaries. And parents are

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struggling as are other adults in positions of authority to reassert a positive sense of what we can give to and expect from our children. By helping to raise the issues that you will be addressing in this new commitment, I think you can help us shape this new consensus. Now I don't know that if we can go back to the days as I hear my father's words ringing in my ears, and I'm sure all of you hear somebody's words where for example he would say, "you get in trouble at school, you get in trouble at home," but there are ways in which we can rebuild that consensus and I think children are desperate for structure, and desperate for direction, and they don't really even know they are in some instances, but those of us who follow trends about child rearing, and about children's well being know that despite all of the extraordinary advances technologically, all of the financial opportunities that we have given to our children, children are not as well off on a variety of measurements today than they were thirty years ago. And I think that is a very sobering thought. As I travel around the world and get a chance to talk with people in various cultures, I see them struggling as well with how to move forward into a new and different time without losing the rootedness and the connections among people and particularly between generations that permits children to be given a rich positive upbringing. And certainly as I watch these challenges unfold here at home, I know that that is something that all of us in our own lives are attempting to address and that I hope through your efforts and the efforts of many of us, we can address on a more global basis.

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I want to thank you for devoting your resources in the upcoming years to caring about children and to helping all of us try to reconstruct the fabric that ties us together. It's very exciting to be here in this White House at this time. I won't say that it's always fun, because it is not. It is often extremely difficult and it is made more difficult because so much of what we're attempting to do is charting new waters and it is trying to chart a course between two conflicting positions, both of which are inadequate. And I often quote from what is one of my favorite descriptions of children in our country today which was put out by the National Council of Catholic Bishops in 1991, where they talk about the false choices and the false debate that we have been engaged in in our country. Where those among us who say that child rearing is totally the responsibility of the family, we have to *make* these people be responsible, we have to give them the resources to go out and basically do this on their own, and then others who say, no, we have to have the government in society take responsibility, and they have to have programs to take care of all these needs of children. It is not an either/or. It is a both/and kind of equation. And that is often difficult to present in any dramatic way, because it doesn't make for good political or media conflict. If you don't pit people against each other, but instead try to say, yes, families have to be more responsible, yes, parents have to be willing to take the time to raise their children, but yes, society and the government has a role in trying to help support families. And that is what we are attempting to try to navigate through right now.

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And so it would be very important that you help give voice to what we all know we need to do on behalf of our children. We've had a great debate in our country in the last few weeks about words, and you would not be here as part of the Ad Council if you did not think words mattered very, very much. Images matter very, very much. And what we have to begin to understand is that children are learning every second of their lives about what we are as a people, what we believe in, what our values are. And we have to maybe as I remember some of the things my parents would say to me, recognize that every single minute every one of us is an example to somebody. And if we think about it in that way, then I think all of us can recognize our responsibility to our children and to this country to making it absolutely sure that they will have the same opportunities to fulfill their own God-given potentials that each of us in this room has had. So thank you for what you're doing and thank you for being here today.

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