

L' Cirque
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PRESERVATION

LECIRQUE (2/2/99)

Thank you. Thank you so much. While Steve was talking I was thinking back to the first time that Bill and I met him, back in November of 1991, and his extraordinary commitment to the Democratic party and particularly to the campaigns that the President and Vice President have waged has just been exemplary. You should know Steve that while you were talking some of the people in the audience may never have heard you speak before except to be donned by you to try to get them to raise money. Allen turned to me and said, "You know, he's a good speaker". I think all of us would agree and more than that you have been a terrific chairman and we are so grateful to you for everything you have done.

I'm also pleased that we have a number of elected officials as well as DNC officials here and I want to just introduce a couple of them to you. First I want to introduce Congressman Jerry Nadler, who is here and I know you know this in New York but Jerry has become kind of a cult figure around the United States and he has his own following, like I travel in other parts of the country and people say, "Gosh what is Jerry Nadler really like?" I say, "You know he's just as terrific as you saw him on television." I think Congresswoman Caroline Maloney is still here. Caroline, are you here? And we're so pleased Caroline could be here, she was with us earlier and I want to thank her for all of her support. And then there is somebody in the House of Representatives who has not only the greatest personality and a million megawatt smile but gets as much as done as any member of Congress and that is Nita Lowey, who is with us.

Nita has made some very heroic and effective stands in the House on behalf of a range of issues that I really appreciate and I hope everyone here knows how successful she's been championing a lot of things we all agree with. I know that former Congressman Herb Kline from New Jersey is with us and I wanted to greet him as well. Carl McCall could not be here tonight but his fabulous wife Joyce is here and I want to thank her for coming and extend our greetings to Carl who is little bit under the weather. Is Attorney General Spitzer still here? I know he was here earlier and how about Speaker Silver, is he still here? Thank you for coming Speaker. And Judith Hope, I know our New York State Party Chair. Steve introduced some of the DNC who have made such a difference in the last year. And I want to echo his words on behalf of Lynn Berrick who has been a fabulous finance chair and Lynn we are really grateful to you for everything you have done. And I also want to acknowledge the incoming DNC Chairman Joe Andrew. I think Joe is here.

It's rumored that Joe is extraordinarily effective and powerful and then today I show up and here in New York City there are at least five people from Indiana that have come to be supportive of this first event of the year 1999 aiming toward the 2000 election. And also the incoming DNC finance chair Beth Dozorotz is here as well. I wish I could introduce each of you who is in this room and thank each of you for your stalwart support and your friendship and your commitment not only to the ideals of the Democratic Party but in particular to the President and the Vice President and what they have worked so hard to accomplish in the last several years.

You'll hear from the President in a minute about I would assume without presuming about the budget and some of the issues that are centerpieces of that budget that was presented yesterday, the big issues that are going to take up the headlines like Social Security and Medicare and others that he will mention. But I want to really say just a few words about an event I attended today actually and one I attended yesterday as well because there are a lot of

other parts of this budget that really provide a blueprint for the kind of country that we want to have in the next century. Clearly we have to do with the very big challenges, but we also have to remember that there are lots of the Democratic Party can understand and reach out to people of all different kinds of backgrounds and give every American the feeling that he or she is significant. You know, I appreciated what Steve said in introducing me and I am grateful for that but I think that part of what drew me into politics and what I think brings many of you to this room tonight is that we believe it is possible to provide the tools of opportunity for every American if he or she is willing to work hard and take responsibility to lead lives of significance as they define them. And to understand the role they can play in making sure that this country continues to be the strongest leading country into the next century. And both yesterday and today I've been working on issues that aren't going to be necessarily in the headlines of the budget debate but which will have an impact on how people live and whether they believe they have a stake in our society.

Today for example before coming here I was in Brooklyn at the YMCA where we talked about the President's agenda for working families and I sat at a round table discussion with a group of women from Brooklyn, from Staten Island, from Queens who had come together and in the most genuine way you can imagine they expressed their concerns about what's happening in their own lives. There wasn't any complaining it was just a matter of fact statement about how a young working single mom can't find child care she can afford because she makes \$30,000 a year, which means that she is not eligible for any subsidies, which means that after she pays her rent and her utilities and all the other expenses that she has to pay she can't afford child care at the cost that it is being asked of her.

We also heard from a mother who had a daughter that last Spring was in a very serious automobile accident and if it were not for the Family and Medical Leave Act she doesn't know what she would have done but she was able to take twelve weeks of unpaid leave and have a job waiting for her when she went back which meant she could spend those twelve weeks with her daughter in physical therapy, doing what any of us as parents would want to do, begin there to make sure that daughter recovered.

Or we heard from a young woman who has a mother that is now in a very serious state of Alzheimers. And they can't afford to put her in any home and they don't want to. So instead she quit her job and now the entire expense of their household falls on her husband's shoulders who is working very hard at two jobs yet it's not enough to keep up the car payments on her car and they don't have any help and she was extraordinarily grateful to hear about the President's proposal for long term care.

Or another mom who talked about how she too is working, has three small children, had no after school care for them and thanks to what we are trying to do with after school care she now has at least a place for one of her children to go and be safe after school.

Those are things that some people occasionally refer to as small issues, as marginal issues and I just beg to differ. You know, certainly we have to deal with the very big issues that determine the economic future that faces all of us and we have to get our entitlement programs in order, and we have to be sure that we prepare for the aging of the baby boom generation. But the quality of one's life is also determined by the daily struggles that so many decent hardworking Americans face. And we heard that today in a way that I wish I could make possible for everyone of you and literally every New Yorker and American to hear as well because the voices we heard were the voices of hardworking decent responsible people caring

for their families, doing what any of us would want, any one we knew to do.

And they need our support, they need those tools that come from a society that says, "You know we want you to be the best parents and the best workers you can be". So I hope that as the debate of this next year unfolds as we have, as we should have a good debate about what happens with Social Security and the surplus and I hope as the President's budget plans are able to be successful eventually I hope we all don't just caught up in back and forth, the arguments on television and lose sight that we're talking about real people's lives. And we have made a significant difference in the lives of people in the last years. Because of things like the Earned Income Tax Credit and the minimum wage we've lifted families and children out of poverty. Because of the Family and Medical Leave Act or the Crime bill we've given people a sense of security, whether it's taking time off work or being able to live without the fear that stalked this city and other places around our country just a few years ago.

All that we have done makes a difference and when someone says to me as they occasionally do, "Oh, I'll bet you'll be glad when the next two years over" I say on the contrary because every day I get to see first hand results of the work of this President and all of you who have supported him in what he's tried to do for our country. We are a better, safer country than we were when he took office. We are a stronger country and we have given hope to Americans who believe that their President, their Vice President, the people in the White House care about people just like them. That is a great gift in a democracy, that the people who are the citizens understand and appreciate that the people who are the leaders have something in common with them and empathize with their daily struggles to raise families and make a living. And none of that would have been possible if we hadn't had someone to lead the Democratic Party in two national elections, to defy the odds and not only to say what he would do when he ran for President but do deliver on those promises.

You know, I picked up a copy of "Putting People First", which some of you may remember, the book that the President put out in the 1992 campaign. It's all there in black and white, what he said he wanted for this country and what he has delivered on. So it gives me a great deal of pleasure and a great deal of honor to introduce the President of the United States, my husband, Bill Clinton.