

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library
Digital Library Collections

This is a PDF of a folder from our textual collections.

Collection: Khachigian, Ken: Papers
Folder Title: Remarks to Republican Nat.
Convention, New Orleans, LA, Mon. 8/15/88
Box 2

To see more digitized collections visit:

<https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/digital-library>

To see all Ronald Reagan Presidential Library inventories visit:

<https://reaganlibrary.gov/document-collection>

Contact a reference archivist at: reagan.library@nara.gov

Citation Guidelines: <https://reaganlibrary.gov/citing>

National Archives Catalogue: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

(Khachigian)
August 2, 1988

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: REMARKS TO REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, MONDAY, AUGUST, 15, 1988

Mr. Chairman, delegates to this convention, fellow citizens:

Thank you for that warm and generous welcome. Nancy and I have been enjoying the finest of southern hospitality since we arrived here yesterday -- and, believe me, after that reception, I don't think the "Big Easy" has ever been bigger than it is tonight. And with all due respect to Cajun cuisine and New Orleans jazz, nothing could be hotter than the spirit of the delegates in this Hall -- except maybe a victory celebration on November 8.

In that spirit, I think we can be forgiven if we give ourselves a little pat on the back, ^{FOR HAVING} ~~because we have~~ made "Republican" a proud word once again.

Nancy and I are so honored to be your guests tonight -- to share a little of your special time. And we thank you ~~for that~~.

Now, I want to invoke executive privilege to talk for a moment about ^{A VERY} ~~this~~ special lady, ^{WHO} ~~For~~ ~~our entire life together,~~ ~~but especially these past 8 years,~~ ^{HAS BEEN SELFLESS} ~~Nancy,~~ ~~has been selfless,~~ not just for our party, but for the entire Nation. ~~I couldn't let this moment pass without sharing my pride and my feelings on~~ ^{She is} ~~what~~ a strong, courageous and compassionate woman. ~~Nancy has been~~ ~~-- and is~~. Wherever she's gone, here in the U.S. as well as abroad -- whether with young or old, whether comforting the grieving or supporting youngsters who are fighting ^{THE} ~~this~~ scourge of drugs, she makes us proud. I've been proud of her for a long time but never more so than I have last 7 yrs. With your tribute to Nancy today you warmed my heart as well as here. Believe me she deserves your tribute and I am deeply grateful to you for what you have done.

~~of drugs Nancy's always makes us proud.~~

When people tell me I became President on January 20, 1981, ^{fuck!} I have to correct them. You don't become President ~~of~~ the United States. ~~Here~~ You are given temporary custody of an institution called the Presidency, ^{which} ~~and it~~ belongs to our people.

Having temporary custody of this office has been for me a sacred trust → an honor beyond words or measure. That trust began with many of you in this room many conventions ago.

Many's the time I've said a ~~little~~ prayer of thanks to all Americans who placed this trust in my hands, and tonight, please accept again our heartfelt gratitude ^{NANCY'S + RINE} for this special time you've given in our lives.

Just before I arrived, you multiplied the honor with a moving tribute. ^{Being} ~~the~~ only human, ~~so~~ there's a part of me that ^{would like} ~~would like~~ to take credit for what we've achieved.

But tonight, before we do anything else -- let us remember that ~~the~~ tribute really belongs to the 240 million citizens who make up the first -- and greatest -- three words in our Constitution: WE THE PEOPLE.

It is the American people who endured the great challenge of lifting us from the depths of national calamity, renewing our mighty economic strength and leading the way to restoring our respect in the world. ~~They are not ordinary people.~~ They are an extraordinary breed we call Americans.

So if there's any salute deserved tonight -- it's to the heros everywhere in this land who make up the doers, dreamers

and life-builders without whom our glorious experiment in democracy would have failed. (RR salutes "head-on" camera)

* * *

This convention brings back so many memories to a fellow like me. I can still remember my first Republican convention.

Abraham Lincoln ^{GIVING} ~~GAVE~~ a speech that sent tingles down my spine. ^{NO I HAVE TO}
~~CONFESS I WAS NOT ACTUALLY THERE. TRUTH IS, WAY BACK THEN I BELONGED TO THE OTHER PARTY.~~

But surely we can remember another convention. Eight years ago we gathered in Detroit in a troubled time for our beloved country.

And we gathered solemnly to share our dreams. When I look back, I wonder if we dared be so bold to take on those burdens. But in that same city of Detroit, when the 20th century was only in its second year, another great Republican, Teddy Roosevelt, told Americans not to hold back from dangers ahead, but to rejoice -- "our hearts lifted with the faith that to us and our children . . . it shall be given to make this Republic the mightiest among the peoples of mankind." HE SAID.

In 1980 we needed every bit of that kind of faith.

That year, it was our dream that together we would rescue America and make a New Beginning -- to create anew that shining city on a hill.

The dream we shared was to reclaim our government -- to transform it from one that was consuming our prosperity into one that would get out of the way of those who created prosperity.

It was a dream of again making our nation strong enough to preserve world peace and freedom and to recapture our

national destiny.

We made a determination that our dream would not be built on a foundation of sand -- something called "Trust Me Government" -- but we would trust, instead, the American spirit.

And yes, we were unashamed in believing that this dream was driven by a community of shared values of family, work, neighborhood, peace and freedom.

And on the night of July 17, 1980, we left with a mutual pledge to conduct a national crusade to make America great again. We had faith, because the heroes in our midst had never failed us before.

Tom Paine knew what these Americans with character of steel could do when he wrote: "the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

MY FELLOW CITIZENS
And while our triumph is not yet complete -- ~~my fellow citizens~~, the road has been glorious, indeed.

Eight years ago, we met at a time when America was in economic chaos -- and today we meet in a time of economic promise. We met then in international distress and today with global hope.

Now, I think we can be forgiven if we engage in a little review of that history tonight. As the saying goes -- "just a friendly reminder."

I've been doing a little remembering of my own because of all that inflated rhetoric by our friends in Atlanta last month. But then, ~~isn't~~ inflation ^{is} their specialty.

Before we came to Washington, Americans had just suffered the two worst back-to-back years of inflation in 60 years. Those are the facts. And as John Adams said: "Facts are stubborn things."

Interest rates ^{HAD} jumped to over 21% -- the highest in 120 years -- more than doubling the average monthly mortgage payments for working families -- our families.

Facts are stubborn things.

Productivity was down for two consecutive years, and industrial production was down.

The average weekly wage plunged 10 percent. The median family's real income fell eight percent.

Facts are stubborn things.

Our friends on the other side had actually passed the single highest tax bill in the 200 year history of the United States. Auto loans went for 16% or more -- so our great factories began shutting down. Fuel costs jumped through the atmosphere -- ^{MORE THAN DOUBLING} ~~rising by more than 100 percent~~, and so people waited in gas lines as well as unemployment lines.

Facts are stubborn things.

And then there was the misery index. That was an election year gimmick they designed for the 1976 campaign -- ^{THEY ADDED} ~~adding~~ the unemployment and inflation rates. It came to 12.5% in 1976, and they declared that ^{OUR CANDIDATE JERRY FORD} ~~Jerry Ford~~ had no right to seek re-election with that kind of misery index. ~~But then, they~~ caused it to go up to 20.6%.

^{BUT 4 YRS. LATER IN THE 1980 CAMPAIGN THERE WAS NO MENTION OF THE MISERY INDEX POSSIBLY BECAUSE IT WAS NO LONGER 12½%.}
^{IT WAS ~~20.6%~~ MORE THAN 20 & a half %.}

~~So something interesting happened. In 1980, their~~
~~convention did not talk about the misery index because it was~~
~~too high.~~ And last month, ^{IN ATLANTA AT} ~~the~~ ^{There was AGAIN} ~~convention was silent~~
^{no mention of} ~~on~~ the misery index, -- ^{WHY?} ~~Because now it's too low. In fact,~~ right
now, it's ~~about 9 1/2~~ ^{ONLY} ~~LESS THAN 9 1/2~~ %

Facts are stubborn things.

~~And~~ When we met in Detroit in that summer of 1980 -- it
was a summer of discontent for America around the world. Our
national defense had been so weakened, the Soviet Union had begun
to engage in reckless aggression, including the invasion and
occupation of Afghanistan. ^{THE U.S. TO THAT} ~~Our~~ response was to forbid our
athletes to participate in the 1980 Olympics and to pull the
rug out from under our farmers with a grain and soybean embargo.

~~Half of our aircraft couldn't fly for lack of spare parts,~~
^{ON ANY GIVEN DAY} ~~and half our navy couldn't leave port at any given time.~~ ^{FOR THE SAME REASON OR FOR LACK OF CREW.}

~~Our~~ embassy in Pakistan was burned to the ground and the one in Iran
was stormed and occupied with all Americans taken as hostages.
The world began to question the constancy and resolve of the
United States. Our leaders answered not that there was something
wrong with our government but that our people were at fault
because of some malaise.

Facts are stubborn things.

When our friends last month talked of unemployment, despair,
hopelessness, economic weakness . . . I wondered -- why on earth
~~were~~ ^{WERE} they ^A talking about 1978?

Now, we hear talk that it's time for a change. Well, ladies and gentlemen, another friendly reminder: We are the change.

We didn't waste time going to work in January of 1981; we focused on hope, not despair. We challenged the failed policies of the past, because we believed that a society is great not because of promises made by its government, but only because of progress made by its people. That was the change.

We said something shocking. Taxes ought to be reduced, not raised. We cut the tax rates for the working folks of America. We indexed taxes to stop bracket creep which kicked average wage-earners into higher tax brackets WHEN THEY HAD ONLY RECEIVED A COST OF LIVING PAY RAISE. And we initiated reform of the unfairness in our tax system.

That was a change.

So together we pulled out of a tailspin and created 17½ ^{←?} million new, good jobs. That's more than a quarter of a million jobs a month -- every month -- for 68 consecutive months. America is working again. ^{JUST} Since our ¹⁹⁸⁴ ~~last~~ convention ~~there~~, we have created over 11 million new jobs. Now, just why would our friends on the other side want to change that? Why do they think putting you out of work is better than putting you to work.

New homes are being built. New car sales reached record levels. Exports are starting to climb again. Factory capacity is approaching maximum use.

As for inflation -- well, that, too, has changed. We

changed it from the time it hit 18% in 1980 -- down to 3½ to 4½ percent. Interest rates are less than half of what they were. In fact, nearly half of all mortgages taken out on family homes in 1986 and more than a third of those in 1987 were actually old loans being refinanced at ^{the} new, lower rates. Young families have finally been able to get some relief.

These, too, were our changes.

We rebuilt our armed forces. We liberated Grenada from the Communists and helped return that island to democracy. We struck a firm blow against Libyan terrorism. We've seen the growth of democracy in 90% of Latin America. The Soviets have begun to pull out of Afghanistan. And in the 2,783 days of our administration, not one inch of ground has fallen to the Communists.

Today, we have the first treaty in world history to eliminate an entire class of U.S. and Soviet nuclear missiles. We are working on the strategic defense initiative to defend ourselves and our allies against nuclear terror, and American-Soviet relations are the best they've been since World War II.

And virtually all this change occurred -- and continues to occur -- ^{IN SPIRE OF} ~~over~~ the resistance of those who loudly proclaim that it's time for a change. They resisted our defense buildup; they resisted our tax cuts; they resisted cutting the fat out of government; and they resisted our appointments of judges committed to the law and the Constitution.

Insert P. 9

Early in the 1st term we set out to reduce Federal regulations that had been imposed on the people, on business & on local & state gov'ts. Today I'm proud to say we have eliminated so many ~~of these~~ ~~unnecessary~~ regulations that ~~we estimated the reduction in paper work imposed on all of gov't~~ ^{OTHER LEVELS OF GOVT.} work imposed on citizens, businesses & ~~local & state gov'ts.~~ has been reduced by an estimated 600 mil. man hours a year.

And George was there. He headed up the task force that eliminated those regulations.

In 1980 & before, it took 6 to 8 weeks to get a Social Security Card. Now it takes 10 days. It only takes 10 days to get a passport. It used to take 43 days. It took 75 days to get an export license now it's only 16 days & for some countries only 5. It took over 100 days to process a claim for a Dept. of Housing & Urban Development Title 1 loan - 100 days. It now takes ~~at~~ less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of that - 22 days.

I think these specifics suggest there is a new level of competent management in the depts. of Gov't. and there was George. He's ~~been~~ played a major role in everything we've accomplished.

~~George was looking for experience in foreign policy~~
Early on we had a foreign policy problem. Our NATO allies were under the threat of Soviet Intermediate Range missiles & NATO had no deterrent. Our effort to provide a deterrent - Parading missiles on the NATO line resulted

It's time for some straight talk about the budget deficit.

Yes, it's much too high. But the President doesn't vote for

a budget; only the Congress can ^{DO THAT.} They blame the defense

increases for the deficit, yet defense spending today in real

dollars is almost exactly what it was 6 years ago. While ^{IT'S TRUE THAT}

Congress cut ~~the~~ defense ^{SPENDING} ~~budget~~ by \$125 billion, they added ^{IN THOSE SAME 5 YRS.}

^{OVER A 5 YR PERIOD} ~~quarter of a billion~~ ^{250 MIL.} dollars to domestic spending. If they

had ~~only~~ ^{MY 1ST BUD.} passed the 1982 budget ^{THAT I SUBMITTED} ~~recommended~~, there would ^{HAVE BEEN}

\$207 billion less in cumulative deficits ^{THE} ~~by 1986.~~ ^{BY 1986.}

Every single year I've been in office, I have supported

and called for a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution,

and the liberals have said no. Every year I called for the line

item veto ^{WHICH 43 GOVS. HAVE} to cut fat in the budget, and they have said no. Every

year, I have attempted to limit their wild spending sprees, and

they have said no. ^{THEY WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE THAT RUNAWAY BUDGET DEFICITS BEGAN, IN 1981 WHEN WE TOOK OFFICE. THE FACT IS, BEGINNING WITH THEIR WAR ON POVERTY IN THE MIDDLE '60'S, FROM 1965 THROUGH 1980 - JUST 15 YRS. THE BUDGETS INCREASED TO ALMOST 5X WHAT THEY HAD BEEN & THE DEFICITS WENT UP TO 38% OF WHAT THEY HAD BEEN.} Don't we know that if they're elected, their answer will

be the one they have relied on in the past -- and that is higher taxes?

The other party has controlled the House of Representatives for 52 out of the last 56 years. They've controlled the Senate for 46 of those years. Where we really need a change is to elect Republican majorities in both houses. Then George Bush can have a team that will protect your tax cuts, keep America strong, hold down inflation, and interest rates, appoint judges to preserve your rights, and, yes, reduce the budget deficit.

- INSERT -

None of our achievements happened by accident, but only

in political problems for our Nato allies. There was
objection to the ~~deployment~~^{deployment} of the Pershings. And George
was there. He represented us in Brussels with the
heads of the Nato states and they agreed to take the
Pershings, the minister that subsequently persuaded the
Soviets to remove their S.S. 20's & sign the INF treaty.

because we overcame liberal opposition to put our programs in place. Without George Bush to build on those policies, everything we have achieved will be at risk. All the work, sacrifice, and effort of the American people could end in the very same disaster that we inherited in 1981.

Because I feel so strongly about the work that must continue and the need to protect our gains for the American family and our national security, I want to share with you the qualities we should seek in the next President.

We need someone who's big enough and experienced enough to handle tough and demanding negotiations with Mr. Gorbachev -- because this is no time to gamble with on-the-job training. We need someone who's prepared to be President and who has the commitment to stand up for you against massive new taxes and who will keep alive the hope and promise that keeps our economy strong.

It will take someone who has seen this office from the inside, who senses the danger points, will be cool under fire and knows the range of answers when the tough questions come.

This office is not mine to give -- only you, the people, can do that. But I love America too much and care too much about where we will be in the next few years. I care that we give custody of this office to someone who will build on our changes, not retreat to the past -- someone who will save the change all of us fought for. That is why it is my unswerving conviction that to preserve what we have and not risk losing it all -- America needs George Bush.

So, George, I'm in your corner. I'm ready to volunteer a little advice now and then, and offer a pointer or two on strategy ^{IF ASKED.} I'll help keep the facts straight or just stand back and cheer. But George, just one personal request: ~~I hope you'll~~ go out there and make it one more for the Gipper.

As you can imagine, I'm sorely tempted to spend the rest of this evening telling the truth about our friends who met in Atlanta -- but, then, why should I have all the fun?

So, for the next few moments, let's talk about the future.

This is the last Republican Convention I will address as President. Maybe you'll see your way to inviting me back sometime.

AS I SAID EARLIER
Like so many of us, I started out in the other party. But 40 years ago, I cast my last vote as a Democrat. It was a party in which FDR promised the return of power to the States. It was a party where Harry Truman committed a strong and resolute America to preserving freedom. *FDR had run on a platform of eliminating warrents boards & commissions & returning autonomy to local gov'ts to the States.* That party changed -- and it will never be the same. They left me; I didn't leave them.

So, it was our Republican party that gave me a political home. When I signed up for duty, I didn't have to check my principles at the door. And I soon found out that the desire for victory did not overcome our devotion to ideals.

And what ideals those have been.

Our party speaks for human freedom -- for the sweep of liberties that are at the core of our existence. We do not

shirk from our duties to preserve freedom so it can unfold for yearning millions across the world.

We believe that ^{LASTING} peace ~~that lasts~~ comes only through strength and not through the goodwill of our adversaries.

We have a healthy skepticism of government -- checking its excesses at the same time we are willing to harness its energy when it helps improve the lives of our citizens.

We have pretty strong notions that higher tax receipts are no inherent right of the Federal government. We don't think that inflation and high interest rates show compassion for the poor, the young and the elderly.

We respect the values which bind us together as families and as a nation.

For our children . . . we don't think it's wrong to have them committed to pledging each day to "one Nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

And we have so many requirements in their classrooms, why can't we have at least one thing that is voluntary -- and that is to allow our kids to repair quietly to their faith to say a prayer to start the day **AS CONG. DOES**

For the unborn -- quite simply -- shouldn't they be able to live to become children in the classrooms?

Those are some of our principles. You in this room, and millions like you watching and listening tonight, are selfless and dedicated to a better world based on these principles.

You don't quit after defeat. You walk not just precincts, but for a cause. You stand for something -- the finest warriors

for free government that I have known. Nancy and I thank you for letting us be a part of your tireless determination to leave a better world for our children.

That's why we're here, isn't it? A better world.
*I know Dave said this before but I believe that God sent this land
between the 2 great Oceans to be found by people from every corner of the
charging us in this brief flicker in eternal time to make a
world who had that extra love for freedom that prompted them to leave
society unlike any other. It has been given to us to be a
their homeland & come to this land to make it a
brilliant light beam of freedom to the world.*


It is our gift to have visions, and I want to share that of young Mark Hawley of Seattle. ~~He wrote me~~ ^{THE LAD WROTE ME SOME TIME AGO} to say: "I love America because you can join Cub Scouts if you want to. You have a right to worship as you please. If you have the ability, you can try to be anything you want to be. I also like America because we have about 200 flavors of ice cream."

Truth through the eyes of a child. Freedom of association. Freedom of worship. Freedom of hope and opportunity. And the pursuit of happiness -- in this case chocolate flavored.

That's America. Everyone with his or her vision of the American promise. That's why we're a magnet for the world -- for those who dodged bullets and gave their lives coming over the Berlin Wall and others, only a few of whom avoided death, coming in tiny boats on turbulent oceans.

This land, it's people, the dreams that unfold here and the freedom to bring it all together -- well these are what make America soar -- up where you can see hope billowing in those freedom winds.

When our children turn the pages of our lives, I hope they'll see that we had a vision to pass forward a nation as nearly perfect as we could. Where there's decency, tolerance, generosity, honesty, courage, common sense, fairness, and piety.

This is my vision, and I'm grateful to God for blessing me with a good life and a long one to live it. But as I begin to pack  my bags, don't expect me to be happy to hear all this talk about the twilight of my life.

Twilight? Not in America.

Here, it's a sunrise every day. Fresh new opportunities. Dreams to build.

Twilight? That's not possible, because I confess there are still times when I feel like Dutch Reagan racing my brother down a dusty road on a summer's morning looking for new adventure.

You see, there's no sweeter day than each new one because here in our country, it means something wonderful can happen to you.

And something wonderful happened to me.

We lit a prairie fire a few years back. Those flames were fed by passionate ideas and convictions, and we were determined to make them burn all across America. What times we've had!

Together we've fought for causes we love. But we can never let the fire go out or quit the fight, because the battle is never over. Our freedom must be defended over and over again. And then again.

There's still a lot of brush to clear out at the ranch,
and ~~the~~ fences ~~always seem to~~ ^{THAT} need repair.

But I want you to know that if the fires ever dim, I'll
leave my phone number and address behind just in case you need
a foot soldier. Just let me know, and I'll be there -- as long
as words don't leave me and as long as this sweet country strives
to be special during its ~~brief~~ shining moment on earth.

Twilight, you say?

Listen to H.G. Wells: "The past is but the beginning of
a beginning, and all that is and has been is but the twilight
of the dawn."

That's a new day -- our sunlit new day -- to keep alive
the fire so that when we look back at the time of choosing, we
can say that we did all that could be done. Never less.

Thank you. Good night. God bless you. And God bless
America.

#