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MRS. REAGAN'S REMARKS
NON-GOVERNMENTAL FORUM ON DRUG ABUSE
STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN
TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 1987

-- THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO BE WITH YOU TODAY. IT'S A GREAT PLEASURE TO BE IN YOUR BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY. I'VE FELT VERY WELCOMED BY THE WARM HOSPITALITY EXTENDED TO ME DURING MY STAY.

-- I HAVE COME TO SWEDEN TO LEARN HOW YOU ARE FIGHTING DRUG ABUSE. I VISITED UPPLANDS VASBY AND LEARNED ABOUT COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT THERE. I MET WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND EXPECTANT MOTHERS FIGHTING TO STAY AWAY FROM DRUGS. AND TODAY, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN HOW YOU, THE REPRESENTATIVES OF SWEDISH VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS, ARE WORKING IN SO MANY DIFFERENT WAYS AGAINST THE DRUG PROBLEM.

-- I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I'VE BEEN IMPRESSED WITH WHAT I'VE SEEN IN SWEDEN. I CAN SEE THAT PEOPLE LIKE YOU IN PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS ARE WORKING VERY SUCCESSFULLY WITH THE GOVERNMENT. AND THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT WE WILL WIN THE BATTLE AGAINST DRUGS WITH THESE CONTINUED EFFORTS ALONG WITH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION.

-- THE TIME AND ENERGY YOU GIVE IS WELL SPENT -- BECAUSE YOU CAN NEVER INVEST TOO MUCH OF THOSE PRECIOUS RESOURCES IN OUR MOST PRECIOUS RESOURCE, OUR CHILDREN. IT HAS BEEN SAID: "CHILDREN ARE THE LIVING MESSAGES WE SEND TO A TIME WE WILL NOT SEE."

-- WHEN YOU THINK OF A CHILD, WHAT COMES TO MIND? FOR THOSE OF US WHO ARE PARENTS, THE ANSWER COMES QUICKLY. WE DON'T IMMEDIATELY THINK OF THE SLEEPLESS NIGHTS, THE UNTIDY CLOSETS, OR THE BEDTIME SQUABBLES. WHAT COMES TO MIND IS THE SWEETNESS OF A SMILE; THE VULNERABILITY OF THAT LITTLE HAND HOLDING OURS; AND PERHAPS MOST OF ALL, OUR DEEP HOPE THIS YOUNG LIFE WILL BE A

HAPPY ONE. THERE MAY BE DIFFERENCES THAT SEPARATE NATIONS AND PEOPLE, BUT WE ALL SHARE THIS SAME LOVE AND CONCERN FOR OUR CHILDREN.

-- A HAPPY CHILD ALMOST ALWAYS LOOKS AT HIS WORLD WITH A DELIGHTFUL EXPECTANCY. THE EYES OF YOUNG ADDICTS, BY CONTRAST, ARE DOWNCAST AND SAD. THE EYES OF YOUNG ADDICTS SEE NO DELIGHT, SEE NO HOPE, SEE NO FUTURE.

-- MANY PEOPLE STILL THINK THAT DRUG ABUSE IS SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS ONLY TO OTHER FAMILIES. BUT WHEN YOU TALK TO THE CHILDREN INVOLVED IN DRUGS, AS I HAVE DONE OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, HARSH REALITY SHATTERS THAT FALSE ASSURANCE. THE TRUTH IS THAT DRUGS AND ALCOHOL ARE EVERYWHERE AVAILABLE AND EVERYWHERE ABUSED. THERE IS NO RACE, NO RELIGION, NO AGE GROUP, NO SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS THAT IS IMMUNE.

-- DRUG ABUSE CONCERNS ALL OF US. IT CONCERNS YOU IF YOU HAVE A FAMILY BECAUSE WHEN ONE FAMILY MEMBER BECOMES CAUGHT IN THE CYCLE OF ADDICTION, IT'S LIKE A WHIRLPOOL WHICH DRAGS THE REST OF THE FAMILY DOWN WITH IT.

-- IT CONCERNS YOU AS AN EMPLOYER, BECAUSE DRUGS ARE VERY COSTLY IN ILLNESS, ACCIDENTS, LOST PRODUCTIVITY AND CORRUPTION. IT CONCERNS YOU AS A CITIZEN, BECAUSE THERE'S A DIRECT AND UNDENIABLE LINK BETWEEN CRIME AND DRUGS.

-- AND FURTHERMORE, IT CONCERNS YOU AS AN INDIVIDUAL OF CONSCIENCE, BECAUSE THE TRAGEDY AND PAIN DRUGS CAUSE ARE STAGGERING. DRUGS ARE A VERY POWERFUL FORCE ALL OVER THE WORLD, AND WE CANNOT IGNORE THEM.

-- OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS HAS RISEN DRAMATICALLY. FOR A LONG TIME, NO ONE WANTED TO ADMIT

THERE WAS A PROBLEM. BUT THE WALL OF DENIAL HAS BEEN CRUMBLING AND PEOPLE ALL OVER THE GLOBE ARE RESPONDING. IN THE UNITED STATES ALONE WE HAVE MORE THAN 9000 PARENT GROUPS THAT ARE DOING MARVELOUS WORK. THEY ARE SIMILAR TO YOUR GROUP CALLED "PARENTS AGAINST NARCOTICS."

-- I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT IF WE COULD GET THE YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED, IT WOULD BE A GIANT STEP FORWARD. AND NOW THAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE "JUST SAY NO" CLUBS IN AMERICA AND OTHER COUNTRIES AS WELL. YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FORMING THEIR OWN POSITIVE PEER GROUPS TO COUNTER THE PRESSURES TO USE DRUGS.

-- YOU KNOW ONE YOUNG GIRL WROTE TO ME ABOUT HER BROTHER, WHO HAD HELPED RAISE HER. SHE STILL LOVED HIM DESPITE THE FACT HE'D BECOME SO POSSESSED BY DRUGS HE'D EVEN THREATENED TO KILL THEM BOTH. SHE WROTE: "ONE DAY HE WAS SO DRUGGED UP THAT HE COULDN'T WALK, HE SAT ON A STEP AND GAVE ME A LOOK OF 'HELP ME' STRAIGHT IN THE EYES. I STARTED TO CRY. LATER THAT NIGHT, WE FOUND OUT HE OVERDOSED ON HEROIN . . . HE HURT ME SO BAD, BUT NEVER BAD ENOUGH THAT I HATED HIM. I LOVE HIM MORE THAN ANYONE KNOWS . ." AND AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE IN LARGE LETTERS SHE WROTE "HELP."

-- EACH OF US HAS THE MORAL OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE THAT HELP. WE MUST DO MORE THAN SIMPLY RECOGNIZE THE PROBLEM -- WE MUST TAKE A PERSONAL STAND AGAINST DRUGS. IF WE DON'T WE ARE ACCEPTING A PRACTICE THAT KILLS.

-- I WANT TO CLOSE WITH A MESSAGE FOR THE DRUG DEALERS AND PRODUCERS AND PUSHERS, AND THE MESSAGE IS THIS: THE PARENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE WORLD ARE GOING TO DRIVE YOU OUT OF BUSINESS. WE'RE THE ONES WHO ARE GOING TO BE THE PUSHERS FROM NOW ON.

WE'RE GOING TO PUSH YOU OUT. PUSH YOU OUT OF OUR SCHOOLS, OUT OF OUR COMMUNITIES, OUT OF OUR COUNTRIES, AND OUT OF EXISTENCE.

-- WE'LL DO IT THROUGH EDUCATION AND COMMITMENT. WE'LL DO IT THROUGH INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY. WE'LL DO IT THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION. AND WE WILL DRY UP THEIR MARKETS.

-- I RESPECT YOU, COMMEND YOU, AND THANK YOU FOR HELPING TO STOP DRUG ABUSE. AND I THANK THE SWEDISH LIONS CLUB AND ALL THE OTHER GROUPS WHO HAVE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO MEET WITH YOU TODAY. I APPRECIATE YOUR KINDNESS AND HOSPITALITY.

-- AND MOST OF ALL, CARRY ON THE GOOD WORK!

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