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MRS. REAGAN'S REMARKS
WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE FOR A DRUG FREE AMERICA
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 1988

-- THANK YOU, MR. PRESIDENT. I KNOW WHO'S BOSS IN THIS FAMILY.

-- BUT I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW GOOD IT FEELS TO BE HERE AT THIS CONFERENCE WITH SO MANY PEOPLE UNITED IN COMMON PURPOSE. ALTHOUGH THE DRUG PROBLEM IS STILL DESTRUCTIVE, THE NATION HAS COME A LONG WAY IN ITS BATTLE AGAINST DRUGS, AND YOUR PRESENCE HERE TODAY PROVES IT.

-- AT LEAST WE REALIZE THERE IS A DRUG PROBLEM TODAY. IN SATURDAY'S "WASHINGTON POST," THERE WAS ONE PAGE IN WHICH EVERY ARTICLE WAS A LOCAL DRUG STORY -- AND THERE WAS ANOTHER LOCAL DRUG STORY ON THE FRONT PAGE. WE MUST FACE THE FACT THAT DRUGS ARE TEARING OUR COMMUNITIES APART.

-- ALTHOUGH I'VE BEEN DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THIS PROBLEM SINCE MY DAYS IN SACRAMENTO, OVER THE PAST NEARLY 8 YEARS, I'VE FOCUSED MAINLY ON EDUCATION, ON PREVENTION, AND ON THE NEED TO CHANGE ATTITUDES. ALTHOUGH WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS, STILL MANY IGNORANT IDEAS PERSIST. ONE OF THE WORST IS THE CASUAL USER'S JUSTIFICATION THAT DRUG USE IS A VICTIMLESS CRIME, THAT DRUGS DON'T HURT ANYONE EXCEPT THE PERSON WHO'S USING THEM. YET THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES TO DRUG USE BEYOND AN INDIVIDUAL'S PERSONAL AND SELFISH HIGH. AND THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO TALK WITH YOU ABOUT THIS MORNING.

-- A FEW WEEKS AGO, THE DRUG CARTEL MURDERED COLOMBIA'S ATTORNEY GENERAL, CARLOS MAURO HOYOS, WHO WAS ACTIVE IN TRYING TO HALT COCAINE TRAFFIC TO THE UNITED STATES. HALF A DOZEN MEN IN

THREE JEEPS RAN HIS CAR INTO A CURB, SPRAYED IT WITH MACHINE GUN FIRE AND KILLED HIS TWO BODY GUARDS. MR. HOYOS WAS LATER FOUND, BLINDFOLDED AND HANDCUFFED, HIS SKULL SHATTERED WITH BULLETS.

-- AND, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE PEOPLE WHO CASUALLY USE COCAINE ARE RESPONSIBLE, BECAUSE THEIR MONEY BOUGHT THE BULLETS. THEY PROVIDED THE HIGH STAKES THAT MURDERED THOSE MEN, PLUS HUNDREDS OF OTHERS IN COLOMBIA, INCLUDING SUPREME COURT JUSTICES, 21 JUDGES HANDLING DRUG CASES AND SCORES OF POLICEMEN AND SOLDIERS.

-- THE NOTION THAT THE MELLOW MARIJUANA USER DOESN'T HURT ANYONE IS JUST AS PHONY. AS A RESULT OF AN INTENSIVE EFFORT BY THE DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION IN GUADALAJARA, MEXICO AND PARTICULARLY SPECIAL AGENT ENRIQUE CAMARENA, OVER 10,000 ACRES OF MARIJUANA THAT WERE READY FOR HARVEST AND EVENTUAL SALE IN THE U.S. WERE DESTROYED. THIS CAUSED A MAJOR FINANCIAL LOSS FOR A NOTORIOUS TRAFFICKING GROUP.

-- ON FEBRUARY 7, 1985, LESS THAN THREE MONTHS AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE 10,000 ACRE PLANTATION, SPECIAL AGENT CAMARENA WAS KIDNAPPED BY THE TRAFFICKERS. HE WAS TORTURED AND BEATEN TO DEATH. AND THIS COUNTRY'S CASUAL MARIJUANA USERS CANNOT ESCAPE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR FELLOW AMERICAN'S DEATH, BECAUSE THEY, IN EFFECT, BOUGHT THE TOOLS FOR HIS TORTURE.

-- AS YOU KNOW, MANY OTHERS HAVE HAD THEIR LIVES TAKEN TO PROTECT OUR SOCIETY FROM THE CORRUPTION OF DRUGS. TWO DEA AGENTS IN CALIFORNIA WERE KILLED JUST THIS MONTH. LAST WEEK WHILE GUARDING THE HOME OF A WITNESS IN A DRUG CRIME, A ROOKIE

POLICEMAN IN NEW YORK WAS ASSASSINATED IN HIS PATROL CAR. THE TRAFFICKERS AND DEALERS WILL MURDER ANYONE WHO STANDS IN THEIR WAY. RECENTLY, A INNOCENT YOUNG GIRL IN LOS ANGELES WAS SHOT TO DEATH IN THE CROSS FIRE BETWEEN TWO RIVAL DRUG GANGS. WHO WILL TELL THE GRIEF-STRICKEN FAMILIES THAT DRUG USE IS A VICTIMLESS CRIME?

-- THE CASUAL USER MAY THINK WHEN HE TAKES A LINE OF COCAINE OR SMOKES A JOINT IN THE PRIVACY OF HIS NICE CONDO, LISTENING TO HIS EXPENSIVE STEREO, THAT HE'S SOMEHOW NOT BOTHERING ANYONE. BUT THERE IS A TRAIL OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION THAT LEADS DIRECTLY TO HIS DOOR. THE CASUAL USER CANNOT MORALLY ESCAPE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACTIONS OF DRUG TRAFFICKERS AND DEALERS. I'M SAYING, THAT IF YOU'RE A CASUAL DRUG USER, YOU ARE AN ACCOMPLICE TO MURDER.

-- THE CASUAL USER ALSO CANNOT MORALLY ESCAPE ASSOCIATION WITH THOSE WHO USE DRUGS AND THEN ENDANGER THE PUBLIC SAFETY. THE MESSAGE FROM CASUAL USE IS THAT DRUGS ARE ACCEPTABLE, THAT THEY CAN BE HANDLED, THAT SOMEHOW IT'S SIMPLY A MATTER OF DOSAGE. CASUAL USE SETS THE TONE FOR TOLERANCE AND THAT TOLERANCE HAS KILLED.

-- ANNE AND ARTHUR JOHNSON ARE FROM POTOMAC, MARYLAND. THEY'RE WITH US TODAY AND I'LL INTRODUCE YOU TO THEM LATER. ON JANUARY 4, 1987, THE JOHNSON'S DAUGHTER -- 20-YEAR-OLD CHRISTY -- WAS TAKING THE TRAIN TO NEW YORK TO VISIT HER SISTER BEFORE HEADING BACK TO CLASSES AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY. THE SUNDAY AFTERNOON AMTRAK TRAIN WAS CROWDED WITH STUDENTS RETURNING TO

SCHOOL AND FAMILIES RETURNING HOME FROM THE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S HOLIDAYS.

-- UNKNOWN TO THE PASSENGERS, A CONRAIL LOCOMOTIVE PASSED SEVERAL WARNING SIGNALS AND CROSSED INTO THE PATH OF THE AMTRAK TRAIN. THE CRASH KILLED 16 INNOCENT PEOPLE AND INJURED 175 OTHERS. CHRISTY NEVER MADE IT TO HER SISTER'S; SHE WAS KILLED IN THE CRASH.

-- THE INVESTIGATION DETERMINED THAT THE ENGINEER AND BRAKEMAN ON THE CONRAIL TRAIN WERE SMOKING MARIJUANA PRIOR TO THE CRASH -- SIXTEEN PEOPLE KILLED BECAUSE OF AN ENGINEER'S PERSONAL INDULGENCE IN A JOINT OF MARIJUANA. DON'T TELL THE JOHNSONS THAT CASUAL DRUG USE IS A VICTIMLESS CRIME. DON'T TRY TO TELL THE JOHNSONS THAT DRUGS HURT NO ONE BUT THE USER.

-- SEVERAL OF THE FAMILIES OF THE VICTIMS WHO WERE KILLED IN THE WRECK TESTIFIED BEFORE THE SENATE LAST WEEK IN FAVOR OF MANDATORY DRUG TESTING FOR RAILROAD PERSONNEL. THE ENGINEER AND BRAKEMAN ALSO CALLED FOR SUCH TESTING, SAYING THAT ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE WAS WIDE SPREAD WITHIN THE INDUSTRY. SENATOR DANFORTH TOLD THE FAMILIES "YOU WILL NOT WIN THIS QUICKLY; YOU HAVE TO FAN THE FLAME OF RAGE." AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT WE MUST DO -- "WE MUST FAN THE FLAME OF RAGE."

-- LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I WANT TO MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR CASUAL USERS TO ESCAPE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY INNOCENT DEATH DUE TO DRUGS. I WANT TO MAKE THEM FULLY FACE THE BRUTALITY OF DRUG USE. I DON'T MIND ADMITTING THAT I HAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT TELLING THE FOLLOWING TWO STORIES, BECAUSE THEY ARE REAL STORIES

OF ANGUISH AND INHUMAN BRUTALITY. YET, BETTY JEAN SPENCER, AND VINCE AND ROBERTA ROPER CANNOT IGNORE THE BRUTALITY OF DRUGS; THEY LIVE WITH IT EVERY DAY. THEY ARE WITH US TODAY, AND IF THEY CANNOT FORGET, NEITHER SHOULD WE.

-- FIRST, LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT BETTY JEAN SPENCER. MRS. SPENCER WAS AT HOME IN HER RURAL FARM HOUSE IN INDIANA WITH HER FOUR SONS. THEY WERE 14, 16, 18, AND 22 YEARS OLD. FOUR MEN BARGED INTO THE HOUSE, MEN OUT ON BAIL ON DRUG TRAFFICKING CHARGES. THE MEN DID NOT KNOW HER. THEY DID NOT KNOW HER SONS. MRS. SPENCER SAYS THEY WERE OBVIOUSLY HIGH ON SOMETHING; THEY WERE LAUGHING ABOUT THE OTHER PEOPLE THEY WERE GOING TO KILL WHEN THEY FINISHED THERE.

-- THEY ORDERED MRS. SPENCER AND HER FOUR SONS TO LINE UP FACE DOWN ON THE FLOOR, AND THEN THE MEN BEGAN SHOOTING THEM AT POINT BLANK RANGE WITH A SHOTGUN. MRS. SPENCER MIRACULOUSLY SURVIVED TWO SHOTGUN BLASTS TO THE BACK OF HER HEAD. HER SONS WERE MURDERED. THE MEN ARE IN PRISON.

-- THAT IS A BRUTAL, BRUTAL STORY. IT MAKES ME ANGRY. AND NO ONE -- ABSOLUTELY NO ONE -- SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO SAY THAT DRUG USE IS A VICTIMLESS CRIME. NO ONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET AWAY WITH THE ARGUMENT THAT DRUGS ARE A HARMLESS, PRIVATE INDULGENCE.

-- FINALLY, LET ME TELL YOU THE NIGHTMARE THAT VINCE AND ROBERTA ROPER MUST ENDURE. THEIR DAUGHTER STEPHANIE, A 22-YEAR-OLD STUDENT, WAS RETURNING TO SCHOOL IN MARYLAND WHEN HER CAR BROKE DOWN. TWO MEN OFFERED ASSISTANCE. THEY DROVE HER A SHORT DISTANCE IN THEIR CAR, PULLED A GUN ON HER AND EACH RAPED HER. THEY DROVE TO ANOTHER LOCATION AND RAPED HER AGAIN.

-- THEY THEN DECIDED TO KILL HER. I DON'T WANT TO REPEAT WHAT THEY DID TO HER, BUT WE CANNOT IGNORE THE BRUTALITY OF DRUGS. . . ONE OF THE MEN WHIPPED STEPHANIE ON THE HEAD WITH A CHAIN. AS SHE TRIED TO RUN AWAY, HE SHOT HER. HE THEN POURED GASOLINE ON HER AND SET FIRE TO HER. BOTH MEN WERE USERS OF PCP, LSD, AMPHETAMINES, BARBITURATES AND VIRTUALLY ANY DRUG THEY COULD OBTAIN.

-- WHO WOULD DARE STAND BEFORE THE ROPERS AND TELL THEM DRUG USE IS A VICTIMLESS CRIME? WHAT APOLOGIST FOR CASUAL DRUG USE WILL LOOK THE ROPERS IN THE EYES AND SAY IT'S ALL A MATTER OF MODERATION? WHO COULD BE SO BRAZEN? YET THE ATTITUDE PREVAILS.

-- APPLAUSE ISN'T APPROPRIATE -- A HUG OR A SQUEEZE OF THE HAND WHEN YOU LEAVE WOULD MEAN MORE -- BUT I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO BETTY JEAN SPENCER. . . ANNE AND ARTHUR JOHNSON. . . VINCE AND ROBERTA ROPER. LET EACH OF US HERE PROMISE THEM THAT WE WILL NOT LET ANYONE FORGET THE BRUTALITY OF DRUGS.

-- YOU KNOW, IN THE FIELD OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE THERE'S SOMETHING CALLED THE ENABLING CONCEPT -- IF I DON'T DO SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR BEHAVIOR, THEN I ENABLE IT TO HAPPEN. SOCIETY'S ATTITUDE HAS ENABLED THE CASUAL USER TO AVOID FACING HIS ROLE IN THE MURDER AND BRUTALITY BEHIND DRUGS. WE CAN NO LONGER LET THE CASUAL USER CONTINUE WITHOUT PAYING THE MORAL PENALTY.

-- WE MUST BE ABSOLUTELY UNYIELDING AND INFLEXIBLE IN OUR OPPOSITION TO DRUG USE. THERE IS NO MIDDLE GROUND. WE MUST BE AS ADAMANT ABOUT THE CASUAL USER AS WE ARE ABOUT THE ADDICT. AND WHEREAS THE ADDICT DESERVES OUR HELP, THE CASUAL USER DESERVES

OUR CONDEMNATION. HE COULD EASILY STOP AND YET CHOOSES NOT TO DO SO. HE MUST BE MADE TO FEEL THE BURDEN OF BRUTALITY AND CORRUPTION FOR WHICH HE IS ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE. WE MUST GET OUT THE MESSAGE -- WE WILL NOT STAND FOR ILLICIT DRUG USE OF ANY KIND, PERIOD.

-- AND THERE'S ANOTHER MESSAGE THAT I WANT TO GET OUT TO ALL OF YOU HERE TODAY. AND THAT IS A MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE FOR YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DRUGS. YOU'RE THE PEOPLE WHO WILL EVENTUALLY TURN THE TIDE. YOU'RE THE ONES WHO WILL MAKE THE DIFFERENCE.

-- MANY OF YOU HAVE BEEN WITH ME FROM THE VERY BEGINNING IN ONE CAPACITY OR ANOTHER. AND I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT WHEN MY HUSBAND AND I RETURN TO CALIFORNIA, I'M NOT GIVING UP MY INTEREST AND CONCERN ABOUT THIS. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LOSE ME. IN FACT, I'LL BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE NANCY REAGAN CENTER IN LOS ANGELES TO BE RUN BY PHOENIX HOUSE. THE CENTER WILL INCLUDE A RESIDENTIAL HIGH SCHOOL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN TREATMENT. . . A TRAINING UNIT. . . AND A RESEARCH UNIT. I HOPE THE CENTER WILL BECOME A PLACE WHERE WE CAN DEVELOP NEW METHODS, TEST NEW APPROACHES AND DISCOVER NEW ANSWERS.

-- ANNE MORROW LINDBERGH WROTE, "ONE CAN NEVER PAY IN GRATITUDE, ONE CAN ONLY PAY 'IN KIND' SOMEWHERE ELSE IN LIFE." I'M HOPING THAT THIS CENTER WILL BE ONE WAY I MAY REPAY ALL OF YOU FOR THE SUPPORT AND LOVE AND ENCOURAGEMENT YOU'VE GIVEN ME OVER THE PAST 8 YEARS.

-- THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU'RE DOING FOR OUR NATION.