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**Record Group/Collection:** George H.W. Bush Presidential Records  
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**Subseries:** Chron Files, 1989-1993

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**OA/ID Number:** 13751  
**Folder ID Number:** 13751-011

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**Folder Title:**  
Associated Gen eral Contractors 4/15/91 [OA 6897]

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<b>G</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

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**ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS \ ROOM 450  
MONDAY, APRIL 15, 1991 \ 10 A.M.**

**PRESIDENT BLACK, MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS. LET ME WELCOME YOU TO THE WHITE HOUSE. I APPRECIATE THE CHANCE TO ADDRESS A GROUP WHOSE LOYALTY HAS MEANT MUCH TO ME, AND TO OUR NATION. /**

**I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR YOUR SUPPORT DURING OPERATION DESERT STORM. YOU HELPED SHOW THAT AGGRESSION WOULD NOT STAND. /**

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**- 2 -**

**I SALUTE YOU -- AS DO THE FINEST SAILORS, SOLDIERS, AIRMEN, COAST GUARDSMEN, AND MARINES ANY NATION HAS EVER KNOWN.**

**THANK YOU ALSO FOR YOUR HELP IN THE PAST IN PROMOTING THE CAUSE OF FREE TRADE -- ESPECIALLY DURING NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE U.S.-CANADA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT.**

**TODAY, I ASK FOR YOUR SUPPORT AGAIN. SUPPORT WHICH CAN ENHANCE OUR ABILITY TO COMPETE IN THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE AND OUR ABILITY TO NEGOTIATE WITH OUR TRADING PARTNERS. //**

**I REFER TO THE FAST-TRACK AUTHORITY IN TRADE NEGOTIATIONS WHICH I HAVE ASKED CONGRESS TO APPROVE. //**

**FAST-TRACK IS A WAY OF ASSURING OUR TRADING COUNTERPARTS THAT THE AGREEMENTS THAT THEY REACH WITH US AT THE BARGAINING TABLE -- THE ONES THEY REACH WITH OUR NEGOTIATORS -- WILL BE THE SAME ONES THAT CONGRESS HAS A CHANCE TO VOTE ON, UP OR DOWN. / SOME ALLEGE THAT CONGRESS HAS NO SAY. THAT'S SIMPLY NOT TRUE. //**

**FAST-TRACK DOESN'T AFFECT CONGRESS' POWER TO ACCEPT OR REJECT TRADE AGREEMENTS. BUT IT DOES PREVENT 11TH-HOUR CHANGES TO AGREEMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN HAMMERED OUT -- CHANGES THAT FORCE EVERYONE TO START ALL OVER AGAIN. //**

**WE NEED FAST-TRACK AUTHORITY TO PURSUE VITAL TRADE OBJECTIVES -- THE URUGUAY ROUND, THE NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT, AND THE ENTERPRISE FOR THE AMERICAS INITIATIVE.**

**IF WE LOSE OUR FAST-TRACK AUTHORITY, WE LOSE ANY HOPE OF ACHIEVING THESE THREE VITAL AGREEMENTS. WE LOSE TRADE. WE LOSE JOBS. AND WE JEOPARDIZE ECONOMIC GROWTH. //**

**HERE'S THE KEY. A VOTE AGAINST FAST-TRACK IS A VOTE AGAINST THINGS THAT WE ALL HOLD DEAR -- PROSPERITY AT HOME, AND GROWTH IN OTHER LANDS. IT IGNORES THE DRAMATIC AND WONDERFUL CHANGES IN THE WORLD ECONOMY. //**

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**WE WANT TO PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN THAT EMERGING, EXCITING WORLD. WE DON'T WANT TO HIDE FROM IT. WE WANT TO JOIN IN THE THRILLING BUSINESS OF INNOVATION. WE DO NOT WANT TO CHAIN PEOPLE TO OUTMODED TECHNOLOGIES AND IDEAS. //**

**RIGHT NOW, WE HAVE THE CHANCE TO EXPAND OPPORTUNITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH FROM THE YUKON TO THE YUCATAN. THINK OF IT.**

THE NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT WOULD LINK US WITH OUR LARGEST TRADING PARTNER, CANADA, AND OUR THIRD-LARGEST PARTNER, MEXICO. IT WOULD CREATE THE LARGEST, RICHEST TRADE ZONE ON EARTH -- 360 MILLION CONSUMERS IN A MARKET THAT GENERATES \$6 TRILLION IN OUTPUT IN A SINGLE YEAR. //

A UNIFIED NORTH AMERICAN MARKET WOULD LET EACH OF OUR COUNTRIES BUILD ON OUR OWN STRENGTHS. IT WOULD CREATE MORE AND BETTER JOBS FOR U.S. WORKERS.

LET ME REPEAT THAT ONE: IT WOULD CREATE MORE AND BETTER JOBS FOR U.S. WORKERS. / IT WOULD STIMULATE PRICE COMPETITION, LOWER CONSUMER PRICES, AND IMPROVE PRODUCT QUALITY. THE AGREEMENT WOULD PROMOTE PRODUCTIVITY AND PRODUCE A HIGHER STANDARD OF LIVING THROUGHOUT THE CONTINENT. //

AS WE HELP MEXICO ACHIEVE PROSPERITY, WE WILL HELP THE ENVIRONMENT.

**ONLY THROUGH ECONOMIC GROWTH WILL MEXICO OBTAIN THE RESOURCES NECESSARY TO ADDRESS ITS TREMENDOUS ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS -- SUCH AS NEW WASTEWATER SYSTEMS FOR THEIR BORDER CITIES AND AIR POLLUTION CONTROL EQUIPMENT FOR MEXICO CITY.**

**AND MEXICO IS COMMITTED TO ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION. PRESIDENT SALINAS HAS PROMISED HIS PEOPLE THAT THE ECONOMIC GROWTH COMING OUT OF THE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT WILL BE "CLEAN GROWTH" -- AND THAT DIRTY INDUSTRIES ARE NOT WELCOME.**

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**NEW MEXICAN LAWS, REQUIRING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS FOR ALL INVESTMENTS IN NEW INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES WILL MAKE THIS COMMITMENT A REALITY.**


**AS WE INCREASE TRADE WITH MEXICO, WE ALSO WILL HELP MEXICAN WORKERS. MEXICAN WAGES HAVE RISEN VERY QUICKLY IN RECENT YEARS, WITH NO TANGIBLE IMPACT ON AMERICA'S PAY SCALES. // THAT BEING TRUE, SOMEONE SHOULD ASK THE OPPONENTS OF FAST-TRACK WHY THEY OPPOSE PROSPERITY IN MEXICO.**



- 11 -

WE HAVE MUCH TO GAIN FROM EXTENDING FAST-TRACK -- A NEW ERA OF OPEN, FREE, AND FAIR TRADE. A VOTE ON FAST-TRACK IS REALLY A VOTE ON WHAT KIND OF AMERICA WE WANT TO BUILD. A "NO" VOTE WILL SHOW WE FEAR THE FUTURE, NOT WELCOME IT. A "YES" VOTE, ON THE OTHER HAND, WILL EXPRESS CONFIDENCE IN AMERICAN-KNOW AND INGENUITY. I SAY WE BELIEVE IN OURSELVES. //

SO I WILL BE FIGHTING MY HEART OUT TO ASSURE CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF FAST-TRACK.



WE HAVE MUCH TO GAIN FROM EXTENDING FAST-TRACK -- A NEW ERA OF OPEN, FREE, AND FAIR TRADE. A VOTE ON FAST-TRACK IS REALLY A VOTE ON WHAT KIND OF AMERICA WE WANT TO BUILD. A "NO" VOTE WILL SHOW WE FEAR THE FUTURE, NOT WELCOME IT. A "YES" VOTE, ON THE OTHER HAND, WILL EXPRESS CONFIDENCE IN AMERICAN-KNOW AND INGENUITY. I SAY WE BELIEVE IN OURSELVES. //

SO I WILL BE FIGHTING MY HEART OUT TO WIN THE PASSAGE OF THIS LEGISLATION. *assure long approval of fast-track*

I ASK FOR YOUR SUPPORT FOR AMERICA'S HEART. THANK YOU, GOD BLESS YOU AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

# # #

## 3:15 P.M. NEWS UPDATE

**KURDS/RELIEF/IRAN** (Geneva/Reuter) -- Tehran has granted approval for U.S. planes to deliver aid to Iraqi refugees in Iran, Secretary Baker said. He relayed the news to a meeting of top relief officials during a stopover in Geneva, said Paer Stenbaeck, secretary-general of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. "He said the American government now has permission from the Iranian government, which is a new and welcome thing," Stenbaeck told reporters after the meeting with Baker.

**KURDS/RELIEF** (UPI) -- U.S. officials committed additional troops and helicopters, along with two ships loaded with food and other relief supplies, to the effort to care for the swelling number of Kurdish refugees in Iraq and Turkey.... The nearly 3,500 personnel being added to the effort will join nearly 4,800 U.S. military personnel already involved in the relief work.

**KURDS/BRITAIN** (London/UPI) -- Foreign Secretary Hurd said Iraq would not be allowed to hamper humanitarian relief for Kurdish refugees and defended Britain's proposal to establish safe havens for them in northern Iraq. "The division between internal and external policies of a nation is not always absolute," Hurd said. "Many internal policies have external ramifications. It would be perverse if international rules put in place to make the world safer were to oblige us to turn a blind eye to inhumanity."

**KURDS/SOVIET UNION** (Moscow/Reuter) -- The Soviet Union said it had serious reservations about creating a haven to protect thousands of Kurdish refugees. Foreign Ministry spokesman Vitaly Churkin told a news conference the proposal to create "security shelters" for Kurds in northern Iraq would mean "taking away part of Iraq's sovereignty without the agreement of the Iraqi government, which would contradict the United Nations' charter."

**MIDDLE EAST PEACE/JORDAN** (Geneva/AP) -- Jordan informed the U.S. it would attend a Mideast peace conference if it is based on the principle that Israel trade land for peace. Foreign Minister Masri told reporters after the meeting with Secretary Baker that peace talks must have "international legitimacy." Jordan's conditional acceptance of peace talks sidestepped another tough problem: who would represent Palestinian Arabs in the talks.

**KURDS/AIRDROP** (Cukurca, Turkey/AP) -- A relief crate dropped by a Western plane fell on an Iraqi refugee tent in Turkey, killing two people in the second such incident this week, witnesses said.

**HEINZ FUNERAL** (AP) -- President Bush joined much of official Washington at the National Cathedral for a memorial service in which Sen. Heinz was recalled as a determined man who refused to become jaded by politics. The Pennsylvania Republican had "an endearing innocence," said Sen. Wirth, a prep school friend of Heinz's. "He really believed he could make the world a better place -- such a contrast to the jaded resignation of our time," Wirth said.... Heinz often disagreed with the Reagan and Bush administrations on trade and on issues involving the elderly. But Bush, Vice President Quayle and his wife, Marilyn, were among 1,950 people who attended the 90-minute service.

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Skinner

4/24/90

Tom Duesterberg  
A5 Intl Econ Pol  
Commerce - Kuwait

Am. Gen Press Contractors  
Open Press  
Man.

Dist. Flying Cross  
age 22  
fighter bomber  
Philippines  
marine-

Chap pres 101/70  
Chap vps 56  
wives 96

last yr.

Skinner - special support  
w/ rights  
mandated hrs / parental leave

~ 33,000 const industry firms  
8000 gen contracting  
everything but houses  
Rm. 450

Kirk Fordice outgoing chair  
Mrs. State Finance

Robins Jackson  
incoming SVP  
Marvin Black incoming pres.  
Burt Beatty 393-2040 SVP

(Smith/Dooley)  
April 12, 1991  
Draft One  
FAST

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: AMERICAN CONTRACTORS  
ROOM 450  
MONDAY, APRIL 15, 1991  
10 A.M.

President Black, Members of the American General  
Contractors. Let me welcome you to the White House. I <sup>appreciate</sup> am glad  
for the chance to address a group whose loyalty has meant much to  
me, and to our Nation. /

I can't thank you enough for your past support -- especially  
in the Persian Gulf. You helped show that aggression would not  
stand. / I salute you -- as do the finest sailors, soldiers,  
airmen, Coast Guardsmen, and Marines any Nation has ever known.

Today, I ask for your support again. Support which can  
enhance our ability to compete in the global marketplace and our  
ability to negotiate with our trading partners. // I refer to  
the Fast-Track authority in trade negotiations which I have asked  
Congress to approve. //

Fast-Track is a way our assuring our trading counterparts  
that the agreements that they reach with us at the bargaining  
table -- the ones they reach with our negotiators -- will be the  
same ones that Congress has a chance to vote on, up or down. /  
Some allege that Congress has no say. That's simply not true. //

Fast-Track doesn't affect Congress' power to accept or  
reject trade agreements. But it does prevent these 11th-hour

stimulate price competition, lower consumer prices, and improve product quality. The agreement would make necessities such as food and clothing more affordable and available to our poorest citizens. It would raise productivity and produce a higher standard of living throughout the continent. //

Some say to help ourselves we must hurt our neighbors. That logic is ~~irrational and even unAmerican~~<sup>irrational</sup>. Look at Mexico. As our trade with Mexico has grown, so have the wages of Mexican workers. Indeed, Mexican wages have risen very quickly in recent years, with no tangible impact on America's pay scales. // That being the case, someone ought to ask the opponents of Fast-Track why they oppose prosperity in Mexico. /

Somone should ask why they oppose letting our neighbors enjoy the benefits of progress. / ~~These are our friends~~. Ask them what's wrong with increased productivity throughout the whole continent. We benefit when others in this continent prosper. // Ask them, ~~too~~, what's wrong with a more stable Mexico. A free-trade pact would encourage investment, would create jobs, would lift wages, and give talented Mexican citizens <sup>greater</sup> opportunities ~~they~~ don't enjoy today. A stronger Mexico, in turn, means a stronger United States -- and a ~~stronger~~<sup>stronger</sup> North American alliance.

We have much to gain from extending Fast-Track -- a new era of open, free, and fair trade. A vote on Fast-Track is really a vote on what kind of America we want to build. A "no" vote will show we fear the future, not welcome it. A "yes" vote, on the

other hand, will express confidence in American-know and  
ingenuity. I say we believe in ourselves. //

So I will be fighting my heart out to win the passage of  
this legislation. I ask for your support for America's heart.  
Thank you, God bless you and the United States of America.

# # # #

chances to agreements that have been hammered out -- changes that force everyone to start all over again. //

We need Fast-Track authority to pursue vital trade objectives -- the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Uruguay Round, and the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative. If we lose our Fast-Track Authority, we lose any hope of achieving these three vital agreements. We lose trade. We lose jobs. And we jeopardize economic growth. //

Here's the key. A vote against Fast-Track is a vote against things that we all hold dear -- prosperity at home, and growth in other lands. It ignores the dramatic and wonderful changes in the world economy. // We want to play a leading role in that emerging, exciting world. We don't want to hide from it. We want to join in the thrilling business of innovation. We do not want to chain people to outmoded technologies and ideas. //

Right now, we have the chance to expand opportunity and economic growth from the Yukon to the Yucatan. Think of it. The North American Free Trade Agreement would link us with our largest trading partner, Canada, and our third-largest partner, Mexico. It would create the largest, richest trade zone on earth -- 360 million consumers in a market that generates \$6 trillion in output in a single year. //

A unified North American market would let each of our countries build on our own strengths. It would provide more and better jobs for U.S. workers. Let me repeat that one: It would provide more and better jobs for U.S. workers. / It would

Kudos to  
Syntas

And so I will be fighting my heart out to win passage of this. I was very privileged to receive for the second time in Houston the able President of Mexico yesterday. He's doing a first-class job. He's moved that country in ways that some of his critics would have never dared dream possible. And I think that it is in our interest now to build on this improved and strengthened relationship to give them and give ourselves the benefit of free and fair trade.

So as we join a world that is linked primarily by economic -- not military -- competition, we have nothing to fear except the fear-mongers themselves. They seem to be the only ones who haven't learned lately that defeatism produces defeat, while confidence and self-reliance produce greatness. We've got to seize the opportunities that this new world economy offers us. And with your help, I am absolutely convinced that we will do it.

So once again, thank you for coming. And I pledge to each and every one of you that this goal is so important to the United States that it will be priority with me, with Secretary Hosbacher, with every other member of the Bush administration in Washington, D.C. We are going to win this fight. But we need your help. Thank you all very, very much. (Applause.)

END

8:45 A.M. CDT

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^BC-Walter Mears, Adv14,0753<

^\$Adv 14<

^For Release Sunday April 14 and Thereafter<

^A Full-Court, Two-President Press on U.S.-Mexico Free Trade Pact<

^An AP News Analysis<

^By WALTER R. MEARS=

^AP Special Correspondent=

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) - When a proposed deal involves a risk of political pain now in return for promised economic progress later, it's bound to be a hard sell in Congress.

So two presidents are on the case, trying to persuade the skeptics that a trade agreement with Mexico will ultimately benefit both sides, and Canada as well.

That sales pitch to Congress is also laced with warnings.

As, for example, when the president of Mexico suggested that without free trade, millions of his countrymen may cross the border looking for work.

President Bush said he is lobbying 100 percent against what he described as some tough opposition. Rejection, Bush warns, would sacrifice trade, jeopardize jobs and economic growth.

And Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's parallel campaign is studded with suggestions of economic and diplomatic woes if the trade deal is blocked. "Either we get together or we won't be able to cope," he told U.S. newspaper editors meeting at Harvard University.

The agreement would make Canada, the United States and Mexico into a North American free trade zone with 360 million potential customers. Bush and Salinas emphasize the opportunity. Opponents concentrate on the threat that jobs and business could migrate across the Mexican border, drawn by lower-paid workers and less restrictive environmental, health and safety regulation.

Salinas insists that the whole package will lead to economic growth and more jobs for the three North American partners - a win-win-win situation.

But the agreement could well cost some U.S. jobs at first.

Organized labor, textile, farm, environmental and other interests oppose the authority Bush needs to work out the deal and make it stick. The procedure is called "fast track" and using it, a trade deal is subject only to votes of approval or disapproval, without amendments that would force renegotiation.

That authority expires in June; Bush can extend it unless the House or Senate adopts a resolution against it. With broad Republican support, and Democrats divided on the question, chances are that Bush will get the extension.

But that outcome will not be easy nor guaranteed. Bush met with Salinas near Houston last Sunday, then pushed for approval with businessmen there and in Washington, and talked strategy with congressional Republicans.

The Mexican president spent three days in Canada urging approval of the trade agreement by the third partner. There, too, labor is opposed.

At Harvard, where he once studied economics in English, Salinas told the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Spanish that without a regional free trade bloc, North America will lose ground to a unifying European market and to Japan and Pacific trading powers.

Salinas said U.S. jobs aren't being lost because of lower wages in Mexico, but because of competition from Europe and the Pacific.

When he was asked why the United States should not be equally concerned about the economies of nations emerging from communism with the end of the Cold War, the answer was in pointed English:

"If you do not establish a free trade agreement with central Europe, their citizens will not swim across the ocean looking for jobs in the United States."

There's no clear political advantage for Bush in the free trade issue. That edge may be with the opponents who say they want to protect U.S. jobs and industries.

And one reason Bush is pushing so hard is because there's more than the one agreement at stake.

It would complete the first phase in a North American free trade zone proposed by Ronald Reagan in 1985. Bush wants it to go farther. His "Enterprise for the Americas Initiative" envisions a free trade zone covering the entire Western Hemisphere.

More pressing, the administration considers the fast track authority essential to revive and conclude the troubled effort to fashion worldwide trade terms with a new General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

*That continues  
for all systems  
we set  
yes*

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary  
(Houston, Texas)

For Immediate Release

April 8, 1991

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
AT HISPANIC FREE TRADE BREAKFAST

The Houstonian  
Houston, Texas

8:30 A.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all very much. And Miguel, thank you for your leadership for the Greater Houston Partnership. And to all of you who managed to get through security and struggle in here, why, -- (laughter) -- apologies for the delay, but I'm sure glad to see you.

You know, these lights are bright. I can see many, many friendly faces out there, people with whom I've worked for one cause or another over the years. You have this wonderful way of making a guy feel at home. So thank you for coming. Lionel Sosa, I love those ads. They're terrific. I believe they're going to be very effective. And I thank you for your energy and your expertise. Those are the people that -- also, would thank all of those who are helping you on this project.

To my old friend, Bob Mosbacher, our able Secretary of Commerce, I'm glad to see him. He's slightly jet lagged out, having just returned from Japan on yet another mission to try to encourage our exports -- a mission in favor of free and fair trade -- something we must continue to press for, whether it's halfway across the world or whether it's in relation to our own neighbors to the south. And Bob is doing a great job, a leadership role in fighting for free trade, because he knows as I do, and as all of you do, that the freer the trade is, the more job opportunities there are for the people of the United States of America, say nothing of our trading partners. And so I'm glad to see him back from his mission.

I've been looking forward to this meeting today. We've had a series of these, as some of you know. Some have attended one in Washington, then we had one out in California, and now this. Because I do want to discuss with you two issues that are vitally important to all of us: America's ability to compete in the global marketplace and our ability to negotiate with our trading partners. That's what's at stake right now. I've said many times that the hard work of freedom awaits us. And now, I'm asking for your help in that challenge.

I love the way that Mexico's very able President Carlos Salinas talked yesterday about the vision -- the vision of free and fair trade between the two countries. It's a vision that we share.

Last month, I asked Congress to support this Fast-Track authority in trade negotiations. You see, Fast-Track is a way of assuring our trading counterparts that the agreements that they reach with us at that bargaining table, the one they reach with our negotiators will be the same ones that Congress has a chance to vote on, up or down. Some are alleging Congress has no say. And that's simply not true.

Fast-Track doesn't affect Congress' power to accept or reject trade agreements. But it does prevent these 11th-hour changes to agreements that have been hammered out, changes that force everyone to start all over again.

MORE

exports, create new jobs, generate wealth -- and hope, I might add, on both sides of the border.

Let's take a look at the impact on American companies. When trade barriers vanish, goods flow freely across borders. And everybody -- businessmen and workers, to farmers and consumers -- reaps the benefits of growth.

Consider the environment. The North American Free Trade Agreement fits into a winning strategy of improving environmental quality. Opponents of Fast-Track and the trade pacts forget that prosperity offers the surest road to worker safety, public health and, indeed, environmental quality.

This administration wants to ensure that Mexican economic growth goes hand in hand with the environmental protection. Our EPA is already assisting the Salinas government with its environmental programs. President Salinas has shown that he's serious about cleaning up the environment -- by requiring all new cars to have catalytic converters, and recently, I'm sure all of us noticed with pride and pleasure the fact that he shut down Mexico's largest oil refinery because, frankly, it was just too much pollution into the air. I believe that -- I know that President Salinas cares deeply about his nation and its people, and that he means business when he says he wants to clean up Mexico's air and water.

*Trans.* Finally, consider the matter of working conditions in Mexico. As our trade with Mexico has grown, so have the wages of Mexican workers. Indeed, Mexican wages have risen very quickly in recent years, with no tangible impact on America's pay scales. That being the case, someone ought to ask the opponents of Fast-Track why they oppose prosperity in Mexico. *Delva*

Someone should ask why they oppose letting our neighbors enjoy the benefits of progress. These are our friends. These are our neighbors. Ask them what's wrong with increased productivity throughout the whole continent. We benefit when others in this continent prosper. And ask them what's wrong with a more stable Mexico. A free-trade pact would encourage investment, would create jobs, would lift wages and give talented Mexican citizens opportunities that they don't enjoy today. A stronger Mexico, in turn, means a stronger United States; it means a stronger North American alliance.

So, you see, we have much to gain from extending Fast-Track -- a new era of open, free and fair trade -- a future of unprecedented economic growth and regional harmony. As with most good things in life, competition involves risk. But we always have been a nation of risk-takers, of adventurers.

Our forefathers transformed a rough wilderness into an industrial superpower. We've created technologies and products unlike any others produced in human history. We've placed the wisdom of the ages within reach of anyone who can operate a computer.

The vote on Fast-Track is really a vote on what kind of America we want to build. A "yes" vote expresses confidence in American know-how and ingenuity. I say we believe in ourselves.

I want to make clear that this isn't a partisan political issue. I want to salute those Democratic leaders in the United States Congress, including our own Senator Lloyd Bentsen, who's a key player in this debate; and others in the House -- Speaker Foley -- who have the vision to say this is good for the United States and it's good for Mexico. I'm going to approach this strictly in a nonpartisan, nonpolitical manner. It is too important to get it bogged down in partisan politics. I take great pride in the fact that the relationship between Mexico and the United States has never been better. But it is my view that we owe the Mexicans the opportunity that they will get from Fast-Track. And when they get that opportunity it is going to benefit the United States of America.

We need Fast-Track authority to pursue vital trade objectives -- the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Uruguay Round and the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative. If we lose our Fast-Track authority, we lose any hope of achieving these three vital agreements. The North American Free Trade Agreement, the Uruguay Round, and the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative. We lose trade. We lose jobs. And we jeopardize economic growth.

Here's the key: A vote against Fast-Track is a vote against things that we all hold dear -- prosperity at home, and growth in other lands. It ignores the dramatic and wonderful changes in the world economy.

We want to play a leading role in that emerging, exciting world; and we don't want to hide from it. We want to join in the thrilling business of innovation; and we do not want to chain people to outmoded technologies and ideas.

Right now, we have the chance to expand opportunity and economic growth from the Yukon to the Yucatan. Think of it. The North American Free Trade Agreement would link us with our largest trading partner, Canada, and our third-largest trading partner, Mexico. It would create the largest, richest trade zone on Earth -- 360 million consumers in a market that generates \$6 trillion in output in a single year.

A unified North American market would let each of our countries build on our own strengths. It would provide more and better jobs for U.S. workers. Let me repeat that one: It would provide more and better jobs for U.S. workers. It would stimulate price competition, lower consumer prices, improve product quality. The agreement would make necessities such as food and clothing more affordable, more available to our poorest citizens. It would raise productivity and produce a higher standard of living throughout the continent.

Let me illustrate the stakes involved in the Fast-Track debate by discussing the Mexican component of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Trade with Mexico has helped both our countries.

Just four years ago, we had a \$4.9 billion trade deficit with Mexico. Since then, we've cut that deficit by two-thirds, to \$1.8 billion. This turnaround took place in part because Mexico's President believes in free trade. He's slashed tariff rates for some goods from 100 percent to 10 percent. One result: our exports to Mexico have increased 130 percent in the past four years.

This export boom has created more than 300,000 new jobs here in the United States of America. And each additional billion dollars in exports creates 20,000 new jobs here in the United States.

I don't have to tell anyone in this room about Mexico's market potential -- 85 million consumers who want to buy our goods. Nor do I have to tell you that as Mexico grows and prospers, it will need even more of the goods we're best at producing -- computers, manufacturing equipment, high-tech and high-value products.

Unfortunately, we've got a tough fight ahead of us. Some members of Congress are concerned about the potential impact that any agreement may have on American jobs, American companies, American exports.

Other members of Congress say that they worry about wage rates or environmental quality, health and safety issues. I believe -- I firmly believe that concern about those very same issues is the strongest argument for support for Fast-Track.

Let me just talk about those concerns. We've already seen what the reduction in Mexican tariffs has done for our exports -- American exports to Mexico. A free trade agreement would eliminate the remaining tariffs entirely. That would stimulate