

9-22-1984

## Bayonne Democratic Club Annual Picnic Speech: Draft

Geraldine Ferraro

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/vice\\_presidential\\_campaign\\_speeches\\_1984](https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/vice_presidential_campaign_speeches_1984)



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Ferraro, Geraldine, "Bayonne Democratic Club Annual Picnic Speech: Draft" (1984). *Speeches*. 126.  
[https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/vice\\_presidential\\_campaign\\_speeches\\_1984/126](https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/vice_presidential_campaign_speeches_1984/126)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the 1984 Vice-Presidential Campaign at FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History. It has been accepted for inclusion in Speeches by an authorized administrator of FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History. For more information, please contact [tmelnick@law.fordham.edu](mailto:tmelnick@law.fordham.edu).

Draft One  
Bob Boorstin

BAYONNE, N.J. DEMOCRATIC CLUB ANNUAL PICNIC

September 22, 1984

Thank you, Frank, for that terrific introduction. In Frank Guarini, the people of Bayonne and all of Hudson County have a compassionate and effective representative, and a legislator all of America needs.

I want to say thanks to \_\_\_\_\_, the president of the Bayonne Democratic Club, for inviting me here today. You sure know how to have a good time, \_\_\_\_\_. Occasions like today remind me why we're all members of something called the Democratic Party.

I want to ask you something: can we win? Are we going to send Ronald Reagan back to his ranch? You bet we are.

This past week, we've travelled all over the country--from Philadelphia to Milwaukee...from Chicago to Minneapolis...from Dallas to Los Angeles. But I can't help but say: E meraviglioso d'essere qui in Nuova Jersey!

I want to begin today by telling you a story. This story made me mad the first time I read it, and I really don't enjoy telling it. Quite frankly, I find it obscene.

But as a candidate for Vice-President of the United States, I think it's only fair that the American people know what's really been going on for the last four years.

On the other side of this state, in the town of Newton, there lives a man by the name of Bruce Merli. Bruce is 41 years old, and he fought in Vietnam.

During the fighting, Bruce was shot in the head. He was discharged from the Army and, because of his injuries, granted the maximum Social Security disability benefits available from the federal government.

But then, three years ago, something happened. Ronald Reagan's Department of Health and Human Services told him to prove he deserved his benefits. And then, despite his severe handicaps -- speaking and reading problems, muscular weakness and bad vision, to name a few -- they said he was fit to work. And they cut off his benefits.

With no other choice, Bruce went to court to claim his benefits. Eventually, a judge heard his case. That judge, quite naturally, was outraged. And he said that the Department of Health and Human Services was "destroying the lives of disabled citizens and creating years of agony and anxiety." And he added: "Social Security laws were enacted to relieve human suffering, not to cause it."

That story is not unique. Since 1981, there have been more than 200,000 Bruces -- people whose disability benefits have been cut and who've had to fight to have them restored. People who worked while they could, who wanted something better. And for each of those people, there is another out there who still isn't being helped.

That story makes me ask myself a fundamental question. It's a question that brought me into politics, and it's a question which this election asks of each and every one of us: What kind of a society do we live in?

Now we Americans are not a selfish people. We are a giving people. And we are not a lazy people. Our fathers and grandfathers came to this land because they were willing to work hard. They knew that in America, if you worked hard, you could get ahead.

But they also knew, as New Jersey's great President Woodrow Wilson said, that while we Americans "have a great ardor for gain...we have a deep passion for the rights of man." They knew that as you climb the ladder of success, you don't saw the rungs off below you. They knew that while we march ahead, we must never leave anyone by the wayside.

Fritz Mondale and I believe that. We believe in one America -- not one for the rich, and one for the rest. We believe in an

America where opportunities are within everyone's reach. We believe that those who cannot help themselves must be given a helping hand. We believe that you don't help people by degrading them. You help people by believing in them.

Ronald Reagan's Administration doesn't believe that. In the four years the Republicans have ruled the roost, they've operated on the theory of survival of the richest. They've gone to extremes and left the middle-class behind. They've talked a lot about the "safety net," but given us a sieve.

The record is clear -- painfully clear.

In the name of trickle-down, they slashed taxes for the wealthy while sticking it to the middle-class and the poor.

In the name of savings, they cut school lunch programs for children, and bought another round of drinks for big business.

In the name of independence, this administration pulled nearly half a million people from the Social Security disability rolls. Even a Republican has called it "a holocaust for the nation's disabled" and, all over this country, people are living in fear.

In the name of education, they've denied college grants to the children of widows, and loans to many more.

In the name of progress, they've pushed six million more people into poverty. And they've said that if you're homeless, it's only because you want to live that way.

Well I say to Ronald Reagan: in the name of humanity, you can't do that.

Democrats won't let you do it, Mr. Reagan. And the people of Bayonne, and people all over this nation, won't either. Because they believe, like Fritz Mondale and I believe, that opportunities are for all of us...that fairness means giving those in need a helping hand, not the back of your hand.

And unlike Mr. Reagan, we'll speak with actions, not just words.

We'll maintain and expand Social Security. Because we know that it's more than just another program -- we know it's a contract with 35 million American people. And we know that 116 million Americans contribute to it every day -- and we pledge that they will receive their just returns.

We'll protect young widows and motherless and fatherless children, and make sure that those who want child care can find it. We know that a hungry child is a child who cannot learn, and that a child alone is a child who cannot grow. We commit ourselves to our children's future.

We'll restore loans and grants for education. Because we know that a strong economy requires people who can run it. And we know that opportunity starts at the classroom door. As we step boldly into the future, we will leave none behind.

We'll support these programs not only in the name of simple decency and fairness, but also because they make good economic sense. Supplemental food programs for low-income pregnant women and children bring us three dollars for every one we spend. Every dollar we spend to educate our children will bring us six in return. And we believe that every dollar we invest in our people -- all our people -- is a dollar invested in our future.

That's where we stand, Mr. Reagan. And Fritz Mondale and I, and the American people, now want to know where you stand. We want some answers. We want to know where's the plan, Mr. Reagan, and we want to know what it says.

You've told us that if we want to know what you've got in mind, we should take a look at the cuts you've already asked for.

Does that mean that your budget axe will cut another two hundred thousand lifelines in the next four years? ?

Does that mean Social Security should be voluntary, as you once said?

Does that mean that when you "bite the tough bullets" in 1985 -- as David Stockman says you will do -- that the targets in your shooting gallery will be labelled "School Lunch Program" "Medicare" or "Social Security"?

We need those answers -- and we need them now.

We Democrats believe in fairness, and in these government programs because they help each of us to achieve the American dream. A week ago, Mr. Reagan told a story about that dream -- the story of an Italian milkman whose son grew up to be a doctor, and the doctor who saved the life of a President of the United States.

But he didn't tell us that low-interest government loans helped finance that doctor's education. And that other programs have helped millions of Americans along their ways.

We believe, as Dr. Joseph Giordano believes, that these programs have "played a vital role in making this success possible," and "have enabled people with little resources to reach their full potential." And above all else, we believe in the American potential.

And we know that you stand with us.

Today, I want each of you to think about what kind of a



society you want to live in, and what kind of society you want your children to inherit.

In just forty-five days, each of you will make a critical choice about the direction of this society. And I ask you this: before you vote for Ronald Reagan in 1984, think about what he might do in 1985.

Thank you.