



DAVID LEVINE

Act would overrule that," she said to Clinton. "It would make reproductive choice a Constitutional right. I'm also concerned with the anti-gay initiatives in Oregon and Colorado. Fortunately we defeated a repressive measure here and a judge has held up its implementation in Colorado. But you must give attention to the growing rightwing extremism in this country, and implicit White House support must stop."

"I beg you to respect the lives of millions of infant children," Donald Doumatt said to the new President. "When we kill our innocent offspring we dehumanize ourselves and our nation. And when we say abortion is progressive and liberating we become liars, hypocrites and cowards."

"It seems like our country spends a lot of time and counterproductive energy fighting against small differences of opinion," Mona Wood said. "Some people hate abortion, some think it a right, when it's really nobody's business. We need to stop forcing our opinions on everybody else and channel our energy into things that need fixing."

"I think you should renounce the use of war as a method of conflict resolution," Joseph Stevenson said. "I would like to see this country become a unilateral pacifist nation."

"I don't even want to ask you," Virginia Bynum said. "You've been asked to do so much I don't see how you can function. If you raise the taxes necessary for everything everybody wants..." She laughed. "But you could add the cost of medication to Medicare."

"I guess I want to see something about the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe and the necessity for someone knowledgeable to pay close attention," Barbara Hansell said. "We

must be able to do something to prevent people from destroying themselves and a major part of the world. I hope you can comprehend with the help of people who do understand the effect on the world of the disintegration of a society."

"It would warm my heart so much if you said you were not running for reelection so you don't feel that you have to cover your ass for the next election," Chuck Meyer said. He had circulated through the crowd snapping photographs for his personal collection of historic photos of Astoria. Now he loomed over the President and First Lady. "Every damned politician is so worried about reelection and raising money for it they don't do what we elect them for." Then he photographed the First Couple just as a large ship filled with small Asian automobiles plowed up-river behind them.

"It would be nice if you brought people back together again," Danny Jiles said. "Reagan and Bush spent so much time using people's biases to separate us. I hope you can change the trend and make government more humane."

"No new gun laws," Jim Stanovich said. "Stricter enforcement of current laws. Fewer criminal rights, more victims' rights."

"Live up to some of your promises," Markku Tila said. "No new taxes."

"Less government spending," David Johnson said. "Live up to your promise of middle class tax cuts. Far better educational programs than Bush or Reagan ever thought of. Strict environmental and industrial laws. More jobs for Americans and less imports. Less Congressional spending for partying."

"What pisses me off is the court system that puts people guilty of capital crimes in jail for only a few years," Jim Meiners said.

"Help people find jobs and raise the economy, and meet our needs at home," Karen Gustafson said.

"I want you to reform the welfare system," Cassandra Van Gundy said. "Once you're on it, it makes it impossible to get off. I have a five year old and I lost my welfare as a single mother because of a 15 hour a week job, which is not enough to support a child. So what can I do, quit a job that doesn't support us and go back on welfare and not work at all? I can't even go to school the way the system works."

"I want Hillary to run the show," Greg Bird-emo said to her husband. "She's one of the best lawyers in America and the more responsibility she has in your administration the better it will be for all of us. I like the way you focus on issues," he said to Hillary. "You've got the picture."

"I'd like to see sending less money out of the country and spent instead on domestic social programs," Michael Hathaway said. "I think you will write the book on the Presidency," he added.

"I'd like to see the economy get better around here," Scott Long said. "I'm a carpenter and my concern is just keeping working. We spend a lot of money attacking Iraq and trying to get food to Somalia. I think more attention should be paid to places like Astoria where it's hard to get a good job that pays enough. I also think there ought to be more tuba solos."

"Whenever decisions that are controversial are to be made you should go to the American people and explain them in clear terms that can be readily understood," Doug Sweet said. "And don't be afraid of public opinion, whether for or against something. The job of President includes convincing people of the goodness or rightness of an idea and not simply following the polls. Always look for the humor in a situation no matter how serious or grim it might be. No situation is so bad we can't find something to laugh about."

"I want you to start holding public forums in every city in the country," Hope Harris said. "I hope you will keep abortion legal and definitely set up a national health care system. I'd like to see tax credits for people who are conservative with their use of energy and for funds to go to alternative energy research and development. I've heard about methanol for 20 years but the previous administrations paid no attention. Federal mandates for recycling and promote conservation as a lifestyle we must all adopt. The biggest consumers of resources should be taxed the most."

"A civilized vacation policy," M.E.H. said. All employees should have at least three weeks vacation every year like Denmark and Germany. You should also fully fund Head Start and expand it from serving three to five year olds to zero to five year olds. Some of the best I've seen come out of the program started as infants. Yet only 50% of children eligible are funded."

She was the last. Sunset flared deteriorating cannery buildings that jabbed into the river on rotted pilings. Dense clouds approached the old city over the eastern mountains. The wind was strong and bitter. Soon it would snow and the crowd around the Clintons dispersed for home or a friendly bar. The President and First Lady faded into the middle distance.

The Clintons missed a party in their honor in Seaside, but their attendance was not expected. Maryanne Radmacher and friends planned to answer the President's question of what people wanted him to do in a book to be sent to Clinton in time for his inauguration January 20.

One concern was left unspoken by the crowd as they clustered around their new President in Astoria, perhaps not thought about because it was unthinkable. Yet it had happened before — in particular to the young President the new young President was most compared with.

"Don't get shot," I said to Clinton, though he was gone and the pier deserted.



"He didn't say 'al dente,' did he?"

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