



SPEECH

Illinois Agricultural Legislative Roundtable Candidates' Forum

Alan Keyes
September 8, 2004
Bloomington, Illinois

HOST: Ladies and gentlemen, please help me welcome the Republican candidate for U.S. Senate, Alan Keyes.

[applause]

DR. ALAN KEYES: Thank you very much.

In the course of the next few minutes, I want to do two things.

I'll be talking to you, of course, as folks who have a very special and particular interest in agriculture, and I'll also be talking to you as citizens, both of Illinois and of this country. It's a little something that we sometimes, I think, neglect in our politics, particularly in contexts like this, because we have redefined our political process in such a way that the aim seems to be most of the time simply to see whether candidates can lure people into a coalition with them, in order to achieve their particular objective of power. I believe that that is a mistake. I also believe it's a degradation of our political process and of our system of self-government.

At the end of the day, whatever else we may be as people and as individuals, when we enter the political arena, be it as candidates or citizens, we do so with a special responsibility to our community and our way of life—a responsibility to exercise our vote, to exercise our intelligence, to exercise our choice, not only in our own particular and selfish interest, but in the best interests of our community, our state, our nation as a whole.

The interesting thing to me, though, is that in coming to talk to y'all today, I am in fact talking to folks who represent an intersection of those two very important realities in our lives.

One of the things I learned, over the years that I spent in working on America's foreign policy—a time during which I had a broad exposure to a lot of the problems in the world, because I worked in international organizations and was for a while assistant secretary who oversaw America's participation in the whole U. N. system, including things like the Food and Agricultural Organization, and the World Health Organization—in the course of that time, I had occasion to visit a whole lot of countries, to look at the kinds of projects that were being done by AID and by other elements of the international community including the IMF and the World Bank and things like this, and one of the things that I came away with, and it kept me over the years from ever taking for granted the remarkable and providential miracle that is represented by the success of America's agriculture is the fact that there is not, with possibly one exception, a successful economic power in the world, a successful developed country in the world, that was not able to meet the challenge of agriculture.

When you step back from this country and look at it from that point of view, it turns out that, whatever may have been the miracles of our industrial development, whatever may be right now the miracles of our technological development and advances, whatever the contribution they make to the American economy, the bedrock foundation of America's economic strengths, success, and survival is the success of our agricultural sector. That is what makes us possible.

And it does so not only in terms of generating the necessary surplus on the land that then becomes the foundation for economic security in every other respect; it does so in America because it also helps to sustain the culture of moral understanding that is required to sustain our system of self-government.

And I don't believe we should ever address the problems and challenges that are faced in the agricultural sector without remembering both these things. It is not just about whether or not we sustain successful food production, whether or not we sustain profitability for the people working the land, whether in a strictly financial, economic sense, there is success for people who work in the agricultural sector: No. Because from the beginning of this nation's life, from the very moment it was founded, the leaders who really understand America's destiny as a free country have understood that the heart of the moral culture of liberty is a heart that beats especially on the land.

And I'm going to talk about both those things today, because obviously, there are challenges that have to be met in order to sustain the remarkable miracle that we've had in this country.

One of those challenges is to sustain the system we have developed, in which we have combined respect for the effectiveness, the discipline, the understanding, the expertise, of our people on the land, with the knowledge that in order to sustain their productivity, in order to sustain the challenge of their profitability, government has a role. Now, that is one of those things that I say, and you have to understand it not as some people might, because that's the knee-jerk reaction that I have to every problem in the world, because it's not. Those of you who know me know that I value the sense in which we understand that government in this society is not to be our master. It is to be our servant. It is not to be the dominant structure of our lives. And that means that we should approach with caution every use that we make of government power.

But the use that has been made of government power in the agricultural sector, I think, is at least in part what has sustained our success relative to all the economies in the world, and that is why we shouldn't be tampering with a system that has shown us such good results. We need to provide, in a consistent and sustained fashion, the support that our farmers need in order to sustain the profitability and expectations of their work on the land, the support that is needed and that has helped to sustain the consistent results that we have been able to achieve as a nation over the course of the last several decades. I think that's an important contrast with countries that I see, where we don't respect the need to meet the requirements of producers on the land. And when that happens, as it does in many developing countries, economic systems collapse. We must never make that error.

But we live, of course, in a changing world, in a changing environment. A lot of times we hear talk—and we have, every time we pass an agricultural bill—about, I always find it interesting, how popular is the notion of the family farm at the time we consider these things, and yet in many respects the results have not sustained the expectation that we were actually working to sustain smaller, independent farmers.

I think we need to respect the contribution that is made, not only to our farming efficiency and expertise, but to the moral culture of our society by the true existence of independent and family farmers. That's not to say that we have to sacrifice the wonderful results we get from larger corporations and businesses, but we need to develop a system where the government especially pays attention to the needs of family and independent farmers, because sometimes in the development of our system financially, we have seen banks and others who actually operate more efficiently and effectively with the larger corporations in their needs. That's the time for government to step in and play its role in sustaining the expectations of family and independent farmers who might not have the same degree of access to capital that

is needed to sustain them.

So I think that appropriate government role has to be sustained, and it has to be sustained as well in the areas where, traditionally in American life, government has played its role.

One role was, of course, in opening up our land in the first place and exploring the frontiers that later became, as this great state has been, the breadbasket of the country. But there is a role for government now in opening up a different kind of frontier, the frontiers of research and development, where we will be able to explore the possibilities of alternative uses for our agricultural products, where we will be able to open up the horizons of opportunity that will spell new profitability and also new sustainability for those who are dependent on the land.

Folks who would tend to believe that that can be taken care of without the government's involvement seem, I think, to forget the heritage of our country. The Lewis and Clark expedition was a government-funded expedition. It symbolizes the fact that we have understood that the community and its instrument, the government, must play a role in opening up new horizons of opportunity for our people, particularly when it comes to areas that will not be sustainable and profitable until a certain amount of work has been invested in them in order to produce the necessary results that can then be used more effectively and efficiently in our private and free enterprise economic system.

That's why I think we have to sustain the government's support for important advances in research and development that will come up with these alternatives, that will help to turn them into usable products. It is an appropriate and necessary and historically-important role that has always been there, even as the role that government has played in making sure we develop the expertise that was necessary to take advantage of the wonderful abundance that God has given us in our natural resources in America.

One of the keys to our success was, of course, government's willingness to invest in education, in training, in the preparation of the people to take advantage of these resources, and that is a role that, in our changing times, we must also sustain, especially given the fact that a lot of the people that we're going to need to sustain the cutting edge of our leadership in the agricultural area are no longer going to come simply from the agricultural sector. They're going to have to be attracted out of urban cultures. They're going to be attracted by the fact that they're going to get help in understanding and developing the skills that can be used in that sector. I think they're also going to be attracted by something else, too. They're going to be attracted by the moral environment and culture that is offered in the communities that are close to the land.

And that brings me to my second, I think, important theme today. I am one of those people—and I say it everywhere and do it everywhere, because I think it is important everywhere—who has challenged people in every walk of life in this country, to understand a fundamental truth. The major challenge that America faces today as a nation is not—I repeat, not—an economic challenge. The major challenge that we face as a nation, the one that is going to determine whether or not in fact we successfully sustain our economic strength, our great material power, our great advances in technology and science, is going to be in whether we can sustain the moral culture, the moral foundations of that system of liberty and self-government that has been the true secret of our success as a people.

And that means that, in addition to the challenges in any particular area, the things that are needed in order to sustain it, we have a challenge as a people, to pay attention to the things that are needed to sustain our character as a free people. And I've got to tell you, we're not doing a very good job of that, right now. In point of fact, we are hovering on the border edge of taking decisions that will represent the collapse, both of our system of freedom and of our civilization. We are playing with fire on a whole range of issues that will represent, in the very near future, the end of our free way of life if we're not careful.

And I want to lay that out in front of you, especially, today, because I think y'all have a special role to play—an understanding, for instance, of the importance of family life. Are there people in America who are more likely to understand that, firsthand, in the experience of their lives, than folks like yourselves, who live on and close to, and work in communities that are

based upon the land? Well, in the course of our history, there never has been. People would understand the importance of the cooperation that exists first between mother and father, then between parents and children, then between the networks that develop as families grow in a community. We are on the verge, right now in America, of taking decisions, like the abandonment of an understanding of marriage based upon that model of mother and father and procreation, the abandonment of that moral understanding which sees family life as not only involving joys and pleasures but also sacrifices and self-discipline. We abandon that, and we have not only abandoned the strong foundation of all economic success; we have abandoned that which is the foundation of the character that a free people needs to sustain itself.

And yet, we are now confronted by decisions that will result in that very destruction. And insofar as the people who live in our agricultural areas have a better understanding in firsthand of some of the important aspects of that way of life, I think you also have a special responsibility to stand forward, to speak up, to work effectively in order to make sure that our important institution of traditional marriage is defended.

But it is also true you have a special responsibility to the moral values that have made this nation what it is. We started on a premise that we're all created equal and endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, and yet every day I face in the political arena challenge after challenge after challenge from those who say I have no right to mention the name of God when I speak about political things. It is rather sad and sorry that a free people that founded its claim to rights on the existence and authority of God has come to a point where they actually believe that their leaders have no right to mention His name. I think that that's not only something that ought to make us uncomfortable; it ought to make us realize that we have reached that stage in our misunderstanding of the foundations of our own life where we are in danger of becoming so sophisticated we lose all our common sense. And where are we likely to rediscover the sources of that common sense, if not among folks who have to exercise and respect it every day, and who have been in the course of our history the least likely to forget that the sustainable truth of our lives is based upon our relationship with the authority of our Creator, and that therefore we can't afford to take steps as a people that violate His will?

Now, that's going to be an important issue in this campaign. It's going to be an important issue because it's a fundamental difference between myself and my opponent.

Barack Obama, for instance, has thought that it was actually conscionable to cast a vote in the Senate of Illinois that allowed the continuation of one of the most heinous practices I think any of us can imagine, and yet it takes place under our auspices in this state. In our hospitals right now, if a baby is born alive in the course of a botched abortion—now, this is not a partial-birth abortion, people misunderstand this. This is a baby born alive, separate from the mother in the course of an abortion, and in hospitals right now, such an infant—living, breathing, with as much claim to be respected in its life as you or I have, and with a claim by the way disputed by no one, because when this kind of an issue was considered in the Senate of the United States, even the most hard-core, pro-abortion senators, like Teddy Kennedy and Barbara Mikulski, voted to stop this unconscionable procedure. But Barack Obama voted once, twice, three times to let it continue.

I don't understand that, because [it's] one of the things that most effectively caught my eye when people were talking to me about getting involved in this race. Can we really have, representing the State of Illinois, the state after all that produced Abraham Lincoln, the man who above all in the history of the country, understood the importance of those founding principles to the future of our nation, to its integrity—can that state be represented by somebody who so completely rejects our principles that he is willing to violate the first principle, which is the equality that comes to us from the hand of God, with respect to an innocent, infant child?

That is a hardening of our hearts. It is a corruption of our conscience. And believe me, the willingness to tolerate it reflects something that is deeply wrong with the underlying moral spirit that some people wish to impose upon our country.

So in addition to everything else that we'll talk about in the course of this afternoon, I want you, if you will, to consider what we discuss in the context not only of your needs, not only of your desires, not only of what government can do for you and should do for you in order to sustain the strength and success of our agricultural sector. I want you also to think about what you owe to the moral culture of the country, to the moral integrity of its conscience and its future, and what you would like to be the truth with respect to the children that you are raising up in this country.

The issue I've talked about just exemplifies our moral conscience. It is one of those egregious examples of how some people want us to turn our back on them. When you vote in the election this November, between Alan Keyes and Barack Obama, you will be deciding whether you wish us to turn our backs on it. And that is going to be the fundamental and most important decision you make.

And I say that unabashedly. Some people tell me I should shut up, and it's not important, and that nobody cares about it—somebody said this to me on the air the other day. They said, "Do you think the people of Illinois really care about that?" And they wonder why I keep bringing it up. Well, I'll tell you why. I will bring it up everywhere. I will bring it up always. I will get us back to it every time I can. Do you know why? Because when I read in the history books that the plight of my ancestors in slavery, I wished with all my heart that there had been people to stand up for them in every forum, and to decry the injustice that was done, and to move the consciences of people who didn't want to take it seriously, to take it seriously before they did.

So I will not be guilty of silence now. And I will challenge you, whatever the risk, to take on this challenge of your citizenship. For, yes, we are responsible for our families and our farms and our communities and our businesses, but we are also above all responsible for the moral heart and conscience of our people. You and I both know that, at the end of the day, when push comes to shove in the bad times when everything seems against us, in the times of drought and difficulty, in the times when we weren't sure we could sustain it, it was the heart and spirit of our people that kept us going. And though we must cooperate to make sure we can sustain by material means our material success, I think we also have to concentrate so by moral means we sustain the moral heart that above all guarantees that at the end of the day, this land of the free will remain so, and the hope that it offers the world will remain true.

Thank you very much, and I'd be glad to take your questions.

[applause]

Q & A

HOST: Thank you very much. That left us quite a bit of time to ask some questions, and I believe the slips of paper should now be distributed if they have not already been, but I do have a couple of questions that may get the ball rolling. Focusing back on the agricultural policy, if I may, you talked a little bit about the role that the federal government should play in terms of farm policy, the next United States senator from the state of Illinois will have a hand in developing the next farm bill. What specifically, what role should the federal government play to ensure that farmers continue to provide a plentiful, reasonably-priced, safe food supply for U.S. consumers?

DR. KEYES: Well, I think it's important that the federal government play and develop the role that it has played in providing the support that will assure a consistent environment for farm production. I think that that has to be done, though, in a way that lets the farmers farm the land instead of the bureaucracy. And that means that we don't want to be trying to dictate to farmers what they must do; we need to be supporting them as they do it, and that will be the philosophy that I bring to bear in terms of dealing with issues that have to do with how we administer the programs of support that are going to help to sustain that continuing environment.

I also think that we need to be careful to make sure that, while we're respecting things like

our environmental concerns, we are not imposing those concerns upon our farmers in ways that don't respect their own ability to make choices that will respect the environment. It's one of the reasons that I have preferred approaches that move in the direction of providing incentives for the behavior that will respect the environment, rather than simply imposing requirements that don't respect the possibility of judicious choices on the part of our farmers. I think that's the direction that we've taken in the course of the last several years under the leadership of G. W. Bush and the Republicans in the Congress and that we need to sustain.

HOST: I think that answers another one of our questions. Thank you. What role should the United States play in providing a sustainable energy supply, natural gas supplies, renewable fuels?

DR. KEYES: I think that we're obviously in a situation, and we have been for quite some time, and I've talked about this in the course of my last campaign that I mounted at the national level—we've been in a situation for a long time where we need to stop playing games with our dependency on other sources of supply in terms of energy. We have the technological capability to end that dependency, and we need to do so as a matter of top priority.

I think it is as important, when you consider the parlous situation in the Middle East—yes, we need to deal with terrorism. Yes, we can have some hope of dealing with that as an immediate fact by taking the war to the enemy as we have in Afghanistan and Iraq. I am not one of those people, though, who thinks that we ought to be deluding ourselves about the prospects of stability and democracy in the Middle East region. It's buildable, but it's gonna take a while, and we're not going to be the ones who complete that job because the people in that region have to do it for themselves.

In the meanwhile, it's going to continue to be a volatile and dangerous region. That we should continue our dependency for energy on supplies that are influenced by events in such a volatile region, seems to me to be very unsafe, especially when we know that a lot of the money that has been funneled in goes into the coffers of the very terrorists who are trying to kill us.

That means that I think that we need to give a top priority—as much of a priority, in my opinion, as we gave to landing somebody on the moon—to developing, through our technological expertise, alternative sources of energy. Using the expertise that we have to develop alternative sources of energy off the land, with things like ethanol, using it with renewable sources of energy, solar energy and other things like this—it is true that, in an economic sense, those things may or may not be viable in the marketplace right now, but as I just said, it is precisely in the face of such challenges that government has a role in opening up new frontiers. And in this particular case, the new frontier will not only serve our economic interests; it will also serve the interests of our national security.

HOST: Thank you. This is one that is along the same lines. "Farmers in the United States are paying more for fertilizer, because our energy policy has not kept us competitive in the natural gas industry. So much time is spent promoting renewable fuels. What can be done to assure U.S. fertilizer manufacturers can continue to exist and produce fertilizer in the United States?"

DR. KEYES: Well, that's a question that gives me pause. I think I would want to talk to folks who are faced with that problem, and understand it better. That's an area that I haven't given a whole lot of thought to, I will have to say that. And I wouldn't want to venture to give a response that was based upon ignorance. It's one of those areas that I've been wanting to learn more about. It does seem to me that, in an area of this kind, we have to look at ways in which the government can effectively help and sustain people in their industry, but I think we have to look at it with some knowledge of the facts, and I can't say that I have those, so I would have to say that I don't know, but I'll be listening to that concern, and trying to understand what the answer is.

HOST: A lot of the associations that are represented here today have been pushing very hard to get an energy bill passed through Congress and signed by the President. And of course,

one of the major components is a renewable fuel standard, but it also would open up areas to drilling for natural gas in the—there's been a lot of discussion about the Anwar, in Alaska. If you had an opportunity to vote on the bill today, would you support it?

DR. KEYES: I think it's very important that we take advantage of the resources that America has domestically. I have never understood, when I looked at the facts, the controversy over Anwar. I think that it's quite possible to exploit access to sources of energy of that kind in ways that are not going to be severely damaging to the environment. It has already been done in various areas in America, and I think I would support a bill that is aimed at making sure that we are able to exploit those resources for our economy's sake.

HOST: We'll move off of energy, now; another question. "If you respect agriculture as a sustainable life force, why did you suggest abolishing the Department of Agriculture (USDA)?"

DR. KEYES: I did, at one point in 1996, during the course of the campaign, because you were looking—and yet, remember, because the media always does its work, right, they act as if the Department of Agriculture is the same as the agricultural programs that we have been talking about, and that is not true.

The Department of Agriculture is a construct of the government in which you pay a bunch of bureaucrats to do certain things. Sometimes, they do them efficiently and effectively, and sometimes they do not. The idea of our farm programs is not to pay bureaucrats; it's to support farmers in their work, and when we get to a point where the money's sloshing around in the bureaucracy more than it is actually helping to sustain the farmer, then we need to look at ways to cut back and do what's necessary so we give priority to making sure that that money is doing its work on the land, not supporting bureaucrats as they do work that may or may not support the farmers, in the bureaucracy.

And at the time in 1996, I think we had a problem and lot of us knew it, and it was a big issue. It was one of those things that was, I think, energizing Republicans to want to get into control in the Congress and in the White House, so we could streamline the bureaucracy and do what was necessary to make sure, as I say, that farmers farm the land, not the bureaucracy, and that at the end of the day the money that is supposed to sustain effective agriculture and a sustainable environment for farmers is not just growing a bureaucracy. It had become so bad, as you and I both know, that it was proverbial. People used to make jokes about having one bureaucrat for every farmer. At the end of the day, y'all, that is not a joke. That is a waste of our resources as a country, and it doesn't serve the farming people of this country.

So I think that it was a proposal made at the time, in the context of a severe budget crunch, to make sure we were going to use the dollars for the farmers, not in order to pay for bureaucracy. I think steps have been taken over the course of the last several years, as I said in an interview recently, to address those problems. I would not take the same stand today, because I think we have had leadership under the Bush administration that has helped to make a difference.

HOST: Thank you. "International markets are increasingly important to agriculture. What is your position relative to the WTO negotiations and other efforts to open foreign markets to U.S. agricultural products?"

DR. KEYES: Well, I'll say right out, I was one of those people, I am not fond of the WTO. I'll say it straight in the front; I know it runs in the face of some folks, and I have very good reason for not being fond of it.

And I know people [say], "Well, the WTO, we're going to get better access," and so forth and so on—the questions are relative. I have worked in the multilateral fora. The first thing I will tell you as a result of my experience in the United Nations is that when America walks into a multilateral negotiating arena, we leave behind forty or fifty percent of our clout. That is to say, the clout that has been developed by the hard work of our people, our economic power, the fact that people have to depend on us for security relationships—all of these things, checked at the door so that we can operate in a multilateral environment, where everybody has a vote,

where groups operate according to all kinds of strange machinations, and where, at the end of the day, powerful competitors can hide behind group interests in order to get better deals than they would be able to get if they had to sit down at the table and negotiate with us one-on-one. See? And people say, "Well, we get all agreements that give us changes and access to a whole range of countries"—yeah. But those agreements are in their terms worse for us than we might have gotten by other means. That's especially true, by the way, with the larger countries.

And that's why I think, for instance, our agriculture—I know, I got a question the other day, when I was in Springfield for the state fair, someone asked about Cuba, and how important it was to get access to Cuba so that we could ignore Castro's despotism and so forth. You know what this comes from? It comes from living off the scraps, y'all. So we're going to fight over access to Cuba while access to the Japanese market continues to be denied in any meaningful way. We're going to fight over the scraps, while access to China and other places is denied in any material way, and they are building their economy every day on flooding our markets with their goods. And meanwhile we're supposed to go to the multilateral table of negotiations and take the crumbs.

I'm fed up with this. I'm fed up with its results for farmers. I'm fed up with its results in terms of the working people of this country. I don't think it works in the best interest of our people, and as a result, I would want to see more emphasis placed on negotiating these agreements in a context where the full weight of our bilateral clout is going to be felt, particularly by the most important countries involved, the ones that can give us the greatest advantages in economic terms. And I think that that's going to produce fairer deals for America. And the fact that we might go down that road? I'm not saying, though I'm not entirely sure I wouldn't support it, but I'm not saying that you knock WTO off the table; that, in itself—you never take an abrupt move in the international arena, because those things can be damaging in various ways once expectations have been built up.

But if we showed a determination to take the kind of steps that were going to get better deals for our people, then maybe we wouldn't be snookered quite so often in those multilateral fora—and I think we have been, meaning no disparagement to the people who have had to do the hard work of negotiating. And it's not their fault, half the time, because a lot of times in those multilateral negotiations we often end up at the end of the day breathing a sigh of relief and thinking we got a good deal, when we had actually started out trying to figure out how we got from a position that was really bad for us to a position that's only very bad for us.

That's not good enough for the American people. And I think that we need to develop a combination that puts at the emphasis bilaterally, regionally, on something that will keep people from using these multilateral arenas as a way of not giving us the kind of fair deals we ought to be getting with them when it comes to our bilateral relationship.

HOST: A question about NAFTA. The questioner suggests that NAFTA has proved very positive for agriculture, opening lots of markets for grain and meat. What's your opinion of NAFTA in dealing with manufacturing or jobs going to Third World countries, for example, Maytag moving to Mexico?

DR. KEYES: Well, it was during the course of the NAFTA discussion that I kind of achieved my, I guess you'd call it, reeducation.

I used to be, like a lot of conservatives, a pretty knee-jerk free-trader, and I was engaging in the NAFTA discussion at the time that that was controversial, and I started listening to some of my colleagues, people I know, Pat Buchanan and others, and they were making arguments against them, and I found over the course of time that I was less and less convinced by my own arguments. And I was less and less convinced by them because the concrete results that were being produced in various areas for America didn't correspond to the theory. And you do have to take account of this, you know, at some point. You have to ask yourself whether or not the theory that sounds good is actually producing results that are good.

And yes, people will say, we've gotten some good results for our farmers, but it's all relative, as I was just saying. I believe we could get better results for our farmers, see? Because I

believe we need to crack some of the nuts that are larger and have been resisting us successfully, making use of this peculiar mélange of regional and multilateral approaches.

That's number one; I think that's important. But I think you especially start to be a little skeptical about the whole thing when you look at what has been the actual result for workers in our country. See? Because they told us, for instance, during the NAFTA discussion, that we were in a changing time, and we have to be willing—as Illinois sadly has been willing—to see the sacrifice of an important part of our industrial base, but that we were going to get an exchange—you do remember this, right?—we were going to get an exchange of jobs that would reflect the fact that we were going to become an information-processing, a service economy and all of this.

Now y'all have been paying attention to the papers lately, right, and the reports that have been developing over the last several years, that in the service area and the information-processing area, we have been exporting those jobs overseas now.

Doesn't it start to make you wonder what's going to be left if we keep this up? See? I mean, at the end of the day, I think we owe it to the world, too, to make sure that we don't go too far down this road, because if we allow the erosion of that which powers the consumer economy—all right, they call us consumers, but you can only be a consumer if you are a worker, last time I looked. You don't have something to produce that money that pays for the goods you're consuming, you're going to get in trouble fairly quickly. So if we keep exporting the jobs, we're not going to sustain the consumption. If we don't sustain the consumption, the rest of the world is going to suffer right along with us, so we owe it to ourselves and we owe it to them to stop this process, and to begin looking at the concrete results that have been produced by these agreements.

Don't get taken in by the theories. Look at the results, and ask, are we better off? Do we in fact have greater horizons of opportunity for our workers, or has a state like Illinois watched its industrial base shrink, now watch other things not come in to substitute for it, and all because, as I say, we have been willing to accept results that are not as good as they should be, because I think we have placed too much emphasis on negotiating trade results in multilateral fora where the results are not going to be as good as they could be for our people.

And yes, there are going to be a few people who beat up on me all the time because some interests do benefit from these agreements. But I believe that, at the end of the day, it's going to be my responsibility as a United States senator, not to represent this interest or that interest, but to represent the whole and best interest of the people of the state of Illinois.

And that's what I would try to do in approaching this issue of trade and, by the way, I think that with my background and experience in international relations, and my reputation by the way, already reasonably well-known in that regard, I'd walk into the United States Senate as somebody that other people already listen to, not that they are going to listen to, but that they already listen to, and I will help to deal with these matters in a way that I think provides some real and renewed energy and creativity, so that we can get better approaches to trade.

And it will also mean, of course, that—you all have noticed, haven't you, I guess that the press, well we call them the media now, but the media has in fact highlighted this fact, that when it comes to things that I think are really important, I'm not the least bit afraid to speak my mind, and take the heat that results. See? And that even is true when it comes to disagreements with people, whether it's in the Republican party, Democrat party, the leadership elsewhere—now, you ask yourself what kind of a senator you want, somebody who rolls over and plays dead to this or that political machine, or somebody who's going to, with knowledge and skill, step forward to articulate what is required in the best interest of the people of this state, and can do so in such a way that at the end of the day, we will influence the terms on which the Senate ratifies these trade agreements so that we get better results for our people.

HOST: One last question along these lines, and it's a very big concern in farm country: Do you have a plan for how U.S. farmers could compete with low-cost producers in South America?

DR. KEYES: Well, I know it's a forbidden word, y'all, because we haven't spoken it but being as how I am not a knee-jerk free-trader, I'm not afraid to speak it. The proper way in which you deal with competition that is in some sense a reflection of, not comparative advantage but unfair advantages—what do you do, what has been the traditional response of countries when that happens? What do you call it? I think that you equalize business by making sure that when their goods enter your country, you have compensated for their unfair advantage by raising the price of that good a little bit, so that they don't get that advantage which is unfair. I think that used to be called tariff policy, and we used to make use of it.

Now—oh! Bad word! I'm sorry. It's liked I cursed in public. I said that word. See? But I don't understand the fear we have of this. I don't understand it at all. Let's say that you are somebody who owns a shopping mall, and lots of people, because you live in a very rich community where lots of wealthy people come to shop, and they're just ready to drop money around all the time, and therefore lots of folks, who are distributors for various goods, they want to set up shop in your mall. That's kind of like America with respect to the world, in terms of every kind of good, including agricultural goods. People want to sell here, and that's because they can make money here, right? Now tell me something. Do we consider it some kind of interference with free trade or constraint of economic enterprise because when you set up the mall, and you have to build the building and maintain the police, do all that sort of stuff, you actually charge people for setting up their shop? It's called rent, I think.

Now, I can say "rent" in your company, and you don't get all shocked and think I just cursed. Why is it in American economics, you say "tariffs" and everyone thinks you just cursed? Because we got traumatized by the history of the twentieth century into believing that, in and of themselves, this was a bad thing. I think that's a lie.

Abused, they are bad things. Properly used, they are no more a contravention of free enterprise and free trade than a price on a good, than a rent for your shop in the mall. Generally speaking, we understand that people who are getting an advantage from access have to pay a little something for that access. Why is it we suspend our common sense when it comes to trade, because some intellectuals have told us there's a theory that we should do so? See?

I think that, rather than listen to intellectuals, we ought to apply our own intellect and the result ought to be a balanced policy that respects the fact that we live in a global economy but at the same time respects the fact that, in order to live there, we need to make sure we get a fair deal, and we need to make sure that the people who are taking advantage of the wonderful opportunities we have created through the creation of the American market are bearing their fair share of the cost for doing so, not able to come in here, take out all the money, send it back home, and not leave anything behind to help us sustain what we need to sustain and at the same time they do it, impose an unfair burden on our farmers and workers as they unfairly compete with us.

So I would say we need to start looking, once again, at that prudential policy that characterized our history before we went off completely into the realms of academic abstraction in order to pursue a free-trade mantra that we're not examining according to its results. There used to be a time when it was understood that proper legislation in these areas was a balance—a balance of trying to keep your markets open so your consumers could be served, but at the same time a balance that assured that when you saw unfair competition out there, you were able to slap a price on it that would slap back that unfairness until something was done about it.

If we are not willing to do that any more, then it's no wonder that we get snookered at the negotiating table. Haven't you noticed that when you don't have a little something in the way of—what would we call it?—a negative incentive for the people you're negotiating with, they don't take you seriously? If they don't have something to lose, they won't listen to you? I know, we're supposed to believe we'll get in these multilateral fora and everybody going to negotiate all in good faith because, I guess, the world has increased in its comity and friendliness, and so forth; that's why we're dealing now with the most insidious war in our nation's history. Who are we fooling? Only ourselves.

The truth is, we need all these tools. We need them to defend our workers. We need them to get fairness for our farmers. And we need to stop being subject to intellectual abstractions and insist that our statesmen once again use them to good purpose, in a balanced and intelligent way that doesn't lead to disaster, but in a way that serves our interests.

HOST: As a U.S. senator from the great state of Illinois, would you actively seek a seat on the Senate Agriculture Committee?

DR. KEYES: Of course. Of course. I mean, I have thought about this, but I think that goes without saying. "Seek" is the operative word, of course, because you never know, but I would certainly seek it. I think that I would stand a reasonable chance of getting it and, though nobody's speaking about this right now, my guess is that the Republicans will retain the majority in the U.S. Senate. If they do, people in Illinois really need to go into the voting booth thinking about whether they want to have two senators in the minority, because that's usually not an advantageous position. I just want to mention that in passing.

[laughter]

I would also, I think, be interested, given my background, in seeking Judiciary Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. But those are, all of them, really important, but I think, for a senator from Illinois, agriculture has to be a priority, because this state is like the nation. It is in fact an agricultural entity, and we need to remember this at all times.

HOST: Are you in favor of upgrading the locks on the Mississippi and Illinois rivers?

DR. KEYES: I want to preface this with another question: Why is that a question?

[laughter]

No, I'm serious. Why is that a question? It's sort of like asking somebody, are you in favor of fixing the plumbing in your house? "Well no, I'd rather live with a toilet that doesn't flush."

[laughter]

This doesn't make any sense to me. This is a no—what was that phrase? A no-brainer. We cannot possibly think that with overaged infrastructure we're going to sustain a twenty-first century agricultural system. And it should simply be taken for granted that we, I mean, I take it for granted that, every few years, I've got to paint my house, right? Every few years you got to renew all of the front part of it and so forth. Every few years you do what's necessary to make sure it doesn't turn into a slum. And, what is it now, seventy years or something?—I think that it goes without saying that we ought to commit the resources that are necessary to take care of these basics. And if there's any disagreement about that, I think that we ought to put a question mark behind the common sense of the person who raises it.

HOST: Could you share your views on the war on terrorism, and how we can reconcile the high cost of that war versus large budget deficits?

DR. KEYES: Actually, that's a question that tempts me just a little bit to be slightly flippant, because we sometimes in our discussion, and if you don't mind my saying so, I am a little bit partisan, and therefore I think it's especially true when I listen to John Kerry and Barack Obama talk about the war, Iraq, everything else—they really talk like the war is optional. "Shall we do it? Shall we fight the war today, or not? Shall we pay for the war today, or not?" That's maybe why Kerry got confused and did all those flip-flops, because he actually thinks the war is optional.

Now, let's turn the clock back, and we need to do this seriously, we'll be celebrating the anniversary soon and I hope that we will celebrate it with some seriousness. You know, "celebrate" in the sense of "observe," obviously. The anniversary of 9/11. Think about what happened that day. We were attacked. Did we have any control over those attackers? Could

we have picked up the phone and said, "Don't attack today, please"? I think we need to remember that war isn't a choice we make. It's a choice that has already been made for us by others. Terrorists have made and are making war upon the United States. We must—and the operative word is "must"—defend ourselves. We have no choice, if we want to survive. And I think that politicians who stand before the American people acting like this is optional, prove by that fact alone that they are unfit for any high office. Because the only alternative to fighting this war is letting the terrorists kill us. How many are in favor of that option? I never see any hands.

And the other truth is that, if you're going to fight a war, you've got to fight it. See? Unlike John Kerry, you can't vote for the war and then vote not to send the troops what they need to fight the war. That's insane. That is an absurd lack of common sense.

We are in the midst of the war. It may be that it's unlike wars where we watch the raging battles on every front and do you know why? It's because the front in Iraq and the front in Afghanistan aren't the front lines of the war. That's our troops, going behind the enemy's lines to seek out their sources of supply, to disrupt their training camps and the factories that produce the [unintelligible]. You know where the front line is, don't you? The front line is right here. The front line is in Chicago. The front line is in Washington, D.C. The front line is in New York. That's where the people will die. And they may include you and they may include your brethren. We can't play games with this. We have no choice but to fight this war. We have no choice, if we want to survive, than to win it. And that means that we must sustain the effort to root out every source of terrorism, wipe out its infrastructure, find those who provide its cadre, and make it clear that they will not escape our attentions. That's what we've got to do.

How long do we have to do it? Well, that's like asking the doctor how long we've got to take an antibiotic. See? Well, you could take it, if you want, until the symptoms go away, and the symptoms have gone away for the time being, and there are some people who think, "Well, let's stop taking the medicine." But you and I both know, don't we, that if you don't eradicate the infection, it will just come back worse. And terrorism is like that. Yeah, it is.

And so I would say that my principle answer is, we've got to fight this war, we want to make sure that we fight it in a way that obviously takes some account of the fact that we don't have infinite resources, so we've got to fight it economically, going after the targets of opportunity that will do the most good, trying to find those state sponsors and providers as I think G. W. Bush was doing in Iraq, that could do us the most harm, but I don't think we should talk to each other pretending that we have some option here. Because if we don't commit the necessary resources, if we don't make the tough decisions, if we don't find the ability to send out the forces that are needed to deal with this problem, then we shall die in great numbers.

And I don't say that, by the way, in abstraction. Because again, unlike my opponent, I have some experience in this. I've worked on the problem of terrorism on the National Security Council staff. And I used to go to bed every night with the sense that, if Americans knew, they would be scared to death. Well, now you know. Now you know.

And just as we couldn't play games then, as a preoccupation of our lives, eighteen, twenty hours a day with that dreadful fear in your stomach that something would go wrong and something would get through, that's where we are right now. And we need to thank God that we have folks who take it seriously, that we have a President who, in spite of all criticism and opposition, is willing to bite the bullet and make the tough decisions. I'd rather have a President any day of the week willing to err on the side of defending this country than a President too scared of decisions who then sits on his hands and lets us die by the tens or hundreds of thousands. And that's, I think, the reality we face.

And as citizens, I know our politicians always want to talk to us of "gimme" people, you know, that we're just sitting there saying, "Gimme this, gimme that, gimme the other thing." I don't believe that. I think we're also responsible citizens, who know that at times, that we have to be willing to bear the sacrifices that are needed to sustain our liberty and our lives. And that's what this war is about.

HOST: One last question, we're at 4:30 and Mr. Keyes has to move on, but I would be in

trouble if I didn't ask this question. "Do you support the repeal of the estate tax?"

DR. KEYES: Huh! Do I support the repeal of the estate tax!

[laughter]

I think I was one of the first of those people who thought that dreadful thing ought to go. Yes, I support the repeal of the estate tax. I also, by the way, just as an advertisement, I also support the repeal of the Sixteenth Amendment, in case anybody is interested.

I am one of those people who believes that we have adopted a tax system in this country that, just like the estate tax, seems aimed at discouraging our people from having the motive they need to work hard, and do the right thing. It's insane, and the best example of that is the income tax—a tax, by the way, never intended by our Founders at the federal level, that has been imposed on us according to a philosophy—socialism—that was prevalent when it was put in place, but has turned out to be a big disaster for the world. You did notice that.

And I think this vestige of twentieth-century error needs to be removed from the back of our people. And I've been so glad, Denny Hastert, the President even, saying, "We've got to look at seriously now." We need to look at it seriously. So I would hope that the permanent repeal of the estate tax will just be one step on the direction of getting back to tax sanity for this country, a tax system that leaves the people of the country in control of the first use of their dollars, so that they decide to save, to invest, to spend, and once they've made their decisions, the government then gets a look in, in the open marketplace that the government helps to create and sustain. That, I think, is the system of taxation the Founders intended, and I'm going to continue to work with forces around the country to get us back where we belong.

HOST: Thank you very much. Let's show our appreciation for Republican U.S. Senate candidate, Alan Keyes. Thank you.

[applause]

