

CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE

TAKE BACK AMERICA 2006

MONDAY, JUNE 12, 2006

**WASHINGTON HILTON HOTEL
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

12:30-2:00 P.M. OPENING LUNCH

SPEAKER:

**ROBERT REDFORD,
ACTOR, ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST**

*Transcript by:
Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.*

ROGER HICKEY: Our next guest: Robert Redford. (Applause, cheers.) Robert Redford is somewhat an anomaly in the entertainment industry. Though he has been world-famous for some 30 years, he remains a highly private individual. He is an ardent environmentalist and a champion of social responsibility and political involvement. (Applause.) Robert Redford is also an artist and a businessman who is a staunch supporter of uncompromised creative expression. His passion remains to make films of substance and of social, cultural relevance, as well as to encourage others to express themselves through the arts. Believing that it is the unexpected and uncommon which ultimately enlivens the cultural ecology of a society, Robert Redford has nurtured more than a generation of innovative voices in independent film through his nonprofit Sundance Institute and Film Festival. (Applause, cheers.)

Robert Redford's lifetime passion for nature and issues of justice has resulted in Redford being widely acknowledged as a highly effective and dedicated political and environmental activist. Ladies and gentlemen, let's give it up for Robert Redford. (Applause, cheers.)

ROBERT REDFORD: Thank you. Well, that's a tough act to follow. You know, normally I wouldn't delude myself much about public speaking – it's not my day job – but I'm remembering years ago when I first spoke publicly. I was asked out in Utah to speak to a group of bankers and I thought, what can I possibly say to these guys? And I started to think about it and I started to think about maybe new ideas for them in terms of investment, so I gave this speech to these bankers and I put my heart in it and probably went a little too far, got a little too passionate, but it's what I felt. When it was over, it was dead silence – (laughter) – and as they were filing out, this guy, the president of one of the banks, said, Mr. Redford, I appreciate your comments tonight. And I said, thank you. And he said, but I've just got one question for you. And I thought, oh, boy. I said, what is it? And he said, did you really make the jump off the cliff in "Butch Cassidy"? (Laughter.) So from that point on I never deluded myself about what – (inaudible) – (laughter).

Well, it's a little bit different with you all. It's different here today because I feel the comfort of like mind. (Applause.) And there was some pretty great stuff talked about in these introductory remarks. A couple of things hit my head – you know, what Larry was talking about, a different planet. And when you really understand this planet and its evolution and how it got here, it's just a miracle. So far, despite all the advances in science, there has been no indication that there is anything resembling Earth at all. And how we got here and how we stay here is nothing short of a miracle. And when you know that, you have to ask yourself, how can we not care for what we've got? So when Larry says – somebody was referring to a "different planet." I like to think that how about the planet we should have that's here right now, and what are we going to do about

it when you have such a lack of leadership, which we hear a lot of talk about.
(Applause.)

There's an awful lot of talk about lack of leadership at the top. It was pretty clear why we don't have that leadership. There is a stranglehold on both houses, probably the Supreme Court to boot, and the bully pulpit. What are you going to do? Well, where is it going to come from? It can only come from one place, and that's from the bottom up. And in a way, I've always appreciated that that may be – considering the compromises of the political system, that may be the best way is the America way, to have grassroots coming up. (Applause.)

So, for me – to give you a little bit of history on my account, yeah, I've been at this for a pretty long time, and how I came to it was I grew up in Los Angeles at a time when Los Angeles hadn't hit the high development phase, and I knew a city – even though I came from a lower-working class family – we didn't have much – I knew a city that was pretty great in terms of the natural environment that was still available to it. You had the ocean on one side, you had the Sierras on the other, and so I took full advantage of that as a kid. And I think that's where I got my appreciation of nature and the environment. It was available to me, but once I got into it I really appreciated it. And when things started to slide, when development went out of control, and when no land-use policies were put into action anywhere, you could see the consequences, that there was a slight erosion just chipping away, chipping away at this beautiful, great asset. And then it went further and further until it was crawling all through the West, and now it's pervasive all through the country.

So we talk about that aspect of it. I got involved – probably 1969 I became politically active in the environment. In 1973 I was at a conference in Vail, Colorado as a guest, and in that conference they were talking about energy, and some guys – some experts were there, and they put up a chart, and it said on the one side, this is a list of nonrenewable energy sources. And all of our economic development, all of our industry, our lifestyle, everything seemed to be wrapped up in that category, in our energy use. I thought, well, wait a minute. And then over here was another chart that said, these are renewable energy sources and these are the alternatives for developing energy out of the renewable sources. And to me it was like a no-brainer. And this was 1973. I thought, well, what are we doing here? This is crazy. Why are we not hearing more about this? Why are we not going in that direction?

So I decided that I would take it on myself to investigate that category and do whatever I could, raise whatever voice I could to help anybody out there that was moving in that direction. So 30 years later there was a lot of battles and I got kicked around pretty good, and here we are; it's many, many years later and only now are things beginning to come together in such a way where you've got a perfect storm of opportunity. I said, well, now, why couldn't we have had – those facts were available to any brain, any mind; why was it not acted upon? Then you get into the whole issue of leadership and the lack of leadership.

So here we are, and I think that one of the reasons that I'm here today to speak to you, first of all, is to thank you for being here and thank you for who you are and what you're doing and what you're going to be doing and how much I appreciate that. (Applause.) The group of leaders here today that are taking responsibility in their own hands in lieu of it coming from the top from the people we pay to lead us and who are not, that's really why I'm here. And so I think you start by identifying – when you know there's solutions out there and that it's not going to come – it's a failed leadership in that regard, and probably many others too, but, I mean, what are the solutions?

And you say, well – well, first of all, forget Bush. Forget this administration. They're not going to change. You can't reason with a stone. (Laughter, applause.) And so it's really pretty much a waste of our time to go up that hill without feeling like Sisyphus. So I said, forget it, and looked to where the solutions are going to come. And what excites me, quite frankly – you've seen Al's film. Al's film – there's a lot of doom and gloom in the message being put out there because there has to be. We have to understand how bad it is. But there is also another side of the picture that I'm pretty well committing myself and my energies to, which is also in Al's film, which is where we can go that creates some optimism, and where we can go where we can get back in touch with thinking big again and dreaming again, and thinking about hope again, which has been so savaged in the last few years politically. (Applause.)

We can have it back again, and I think that it is a time for optimism because it's a time for opportunity. And when you draw the picture which is so painfully clear that we're tied to nonrenewable energy sources that are tied to governments that are unstable, led by despots, it's pretty clear that we're in need of a solution, and what is it? Well, it's right here at home, and the idea of the new technologies that are available, which themselves will create new jobs, the new technologies will create new products that will also create new jobs. And the best of it, as far as I'm concerned, is that those jobs are going to stay home; they're going to stay in our community. (Applause.) And we won't get into that sad issue of outsourcing and being dependent on other countries for our own sustainability. To me that's very American and that's, to me, much more American than they way we're behaving right now at the top. (Applause.)

So the idea is, now, who and what? And that's where you all come in. I mean, as far as I'm concerned, I've been here for a while. I've done what I can and will continue to do what I can, but the future is going to be yours and your children. They're my children – I already have my children. I have grandchildren. I've got to think about them. It's your future in your hands to act on, and I know you're going to do it because you have the power, and you're going to be the catalyst to force political change from the leaders that are elected to lead us.

And so I really am here to applaud you and also the fact that Apollo has done something pretty amazing that is also very American, very grassroots, which is putting together a coalition of across-the-board entities that represent just about all of American industrial society. You're got religious leaders, you've got labor – you've got Leo, you've got labor, you've got military leaders, you've got environmental leaders, you've

got farmers. I mean, you put them all together and there you have the real American voice speaking. So to me I find that very optimistic and just downright exciting. And what kind of a future are we going to have after all if we going to have, after all, if we're tying all of our energy to nonrenewable sources?

In any case, the other reason I'm here today in support – aside from support of the Apollo group and knowing that that's going to be a handy solution that's right here right now, is to present an award to a man who represents one segment of that group I just spoke about, and that's Leo Gerard. And I'd like to say – (applause) – that Leo – I mean, a few of us have been out there for a while and you're pretty cognizant of those people that have also been out there for a while. Leo has been out there for a long, long time, doing something pretty terrific, and I'm happy to describe him to you.

He's a unique labor leader among leaders in his understanding of the need for new energy strategies that recognize the inherent link between solutions to global climate change and the need for sustainable job growth. As a charter board member of the Apollo Alliance, he has worked to rally more than a dozen other labor union partners in the pursuit of Apollo's goal of creating good jobs through development of new technologies, policies and practices in pursuit of energy independence. As a member of the bipartisan – and I think that's key, bipartisan – it should be nonpartisan in my mind but – as a member of the bipartisan U.S. National Commission on Energy Policy, he was instrumental in creating a historic consensus among unions in support of the commission's recommendations for addressing global climate change.

As president of the United Steelworkers, he has reasserted his union's decades-old commitment to sustainable growth by winning passage of Securing our Children's World as the official policy of his union, a series of sweeping policy recommendations based on the belief that an unregulated global economy that increases the gap between rich and poor and ignores sound environmental science will ultimately destroy the good jobs and healthy environment that are the legacy of the North American trade union movement. He is himself a man of boundless energy in pressing for the activism essential for building a more progressive society and a cleaner and more humane world.

So in honor of his outstanding leadership in the fight for good jobs and clean energy, I'd like to present Leo Gerard with the Apollo Alliance's first Right Stuff Award. Leo. (Applause.)

(End of remarks.)