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Question-and-Answer Session in Paducah

October 27, 1992

Tom Butler. Thank you, and welcome to our program today. Mr. President, welcome to you, sir. We're delighted to have you here. You're helping us to make a little bit of history, because this is the first and only Kentucky statewide town meeting of this campaign. I want you to also know that there are viewers watching today in southern Illinois, southeast Missouri, and west Tennessee, as well as in western Kentucky. And some of our audience are from those other States. So they'll be asking questions today. We have a studio audience today that we've invited here, mainly a group of undecided voters. It's up to you to try to convince them, Mr. President. And so based on what they hear today, it may help them to make a decision about this election.

Also today Jackie Hays is at WAVE–TV in Louisville. She has a group there in her studios. And Tom Kenny has some folks with him at WLEX–TV in Lexington, Kentucky. We're going to be going back to them shortly. So get your questions ready in Louisville and Lexington, and we'll see you in just a few minutes.

The Economy

Mr. President, I'd like to sort of get the ball rolling, if I might. You know, the GDP figures came out today showing a 2.7 increase, surprised some folks, I think, for the last quarter. Given the fact that we've now had this long a positive economic growth, meager though some of it has been, does it not suggest that maybe the Congress and the administration in order to—ought to leave it alone and just let it happen? This is happening since you've had gridlock in Congress for a while. So this thing seems to be correcting itself.

The President. It suggests a lot of things. We've been told as a nation, 92 percent of the news coverage, negative on the economy. The economy has grown for six straight quarters. And yet you hear some of these talking heads come on there, these guys they pay a couple of hundred bucks, on the national news telling everybody how bad things are. We've grown, and this is very encouraging news. The United States will lead the way out into real recovery. But it's very encouraging.

I still feel we need to give more incentives to small business. I'm for investment tax allowance. The Democrats, the liberals, call it, a capital gains reductions, a break for the rich. It isn't. It will stimulate investment by small business, create new jobs. And I love the idea of a tax credit for the first-time homebuyer.

So yes, 2.7 percent is darned good growth. And it pulls the rug right out from under Mr. Clinton, who is telling everybody how horrible everything is. People are hurting in this country, but they've been told that there's no hope. Here we're growing at 2.7 percent, more than Germany, more than Japan, more than the rest of Europe, and more than Canada. It's very good news. But I still think we need to do things. Not to invest—Clinton says, invest Government, get the Government to invest more—I don't believe it. I think we need to help small business invest more. That means jobs for people, hope for the future.

Entitlement Programs

Q. President Bush, my question for you is why is it that handicapped people who draw SSI/disability do not get an equal amount to today's standard cost of living?

The President. Let me first say that one of my proudest accomplishments—and give credit to the Democrats on this, and I must and I do, but also to us—we passed something called the Americans for Disabilities Act. It's a wonderful piece, the most forward piece of civil rights legislation in the last couple of decades. What it does is enable disabled people to work their way into the mainstream, instead of being pushed off to the side.

On this one, I think most of the benefits have these cost-of-living increases. I don't know technically—I'll have to get from you your own specific case. I'll just take that question to move a little bit off of it. My view is to get this deficit down, we must set

aside Social Security, don't touch it. It was fixed back in the mid-eighties. But then we're going to have to control the growth of the other mandatory programs. Let it grow, let them grow to inflation and population, but not increase the spending. Otherwise we won't get the deficit down.

But in this case, you would be exempt and covered. So I'll have to check as to why you're not getting your increases.

Quality of Life for Children

Q. Mr. President, I work in small business development and in economic as well, and done that for the past 9 years. But I also work with a number of women and women's issues. One of the major concerns I keep hearing is in the pro-life position. What guarantee does your administration propose for the quality of life for the individual who would be brought into our society based upon the pro-life stance?

The President. Well, you're right, I do favor life. And I favor adoption. I think the answer is more adoption and fewer abortions. We've had 28 million. You know, this is an issue, Karen, that just divides this country. A lot of people feel differently than I do, and I have respect for their judgment. I hope they have respect for mine. But the answer—I wouldn't say it makes a difference to whether a kid is adopted or brought into the world through a pro-life position, because kids that are born into families or kids that come and don't have parents look after them, we have to have policies that help all of them.

I think my program for getting more emphasis on the private sector is good. We have increased the women and children WIC program, which is the main support from the Federal Government for women, infants, and children. The spending under the Bush administration has reached all-time highs. Therein lies the answer to those kids that are put off in foster homes and all of that.

But I really believe the answer is to—it's not a pro-life or a pro-choice question. It is how do you lift the hopes for all kids in this country. And I think with our emphasis on Head Start, education, we've got all but—all the 4-year-olds are now eligible. Increased spending for Head Start, that's very important. My whole program for education, America 2000, which bypasses the powerful teachers union but gets the teachers themselves involved in the community with the parents, is a good program. So I don't discriminate between a child that comes into the world and is put up for adoption, between regular kids that are born into a family that need help.

Welfare Reform

Q. I find that there are lots of problems with Federal assistance. People that would like jobs can't afford to work because they lose their benefits. What will you do to correct that situation?

The President. She raises a very important point. I favor the welfare reform. Let me give you an example of one thing that really troubles me with the existing setup and one of the reasons we're trying to get the Congress to change it.

A mother is on welfare. A kid has a little piddly job somewhere saving for her education or his education. If that kid saves over 1,000 bucks, that mother gets off welfare. We have got to have welfare reform with workfare and learnfare.

This isn't just the Federal Government, ma'am. The way we do it, you give States waivers. Wisconsin's taken a lead. Jersey's taken a lead. All of these States are trying different formulas for working and learning. But I think one of the reforms at the Federal level is the one you're talking about to permit these families to save a little more of what they get through jobs without getting thrown off of the welfare; work their way off. That is going to happen. That's going to happen soon.

Q. By the way, my son said to tell Millie hello. [*Laughter*]

The President. Really? Hey, listen, how would you like to have an author in your family that, like Millie—the dog wrote a book, with a little help from Barbara Bush, and it made over $1 million. It's now in Japan and Russia, and every dime of it has gone for education. It's a wonderful thing. Now the dog's thinking of writing another book. [*Laughter*]

Undecided Voters

Q. Mr. President, in this highly competitive election, recent polls have indicated that many voters are still undecided. As the incumbent, do you consider this to be favorable or unfavorable to your reelection bid?

The President. In the first place, I have trouble understanding the polls. Secondly, I think that's favorable, because it's my view in elections that a lot of people make up their minds, really make them up at the last week, the last few days, actually. I think there's a lot of evidence to support that. So given the hammering that I've taken out there by these Democrats running around saying the economy is in the tank, in recession, now we see it's growing at 2.7 percent for the last quarter and growing for six quarters, I think that's a good thing. I'd much rather have them open-minded.

Here's my view on all of this: Look, when you make mistake as President, you do like you teach your kids. Hey, say I was wrong. Let's move forward. I think we've got by far the best programs for the economic recovery. I think people are beginning to see that, particularly now that they see there's some hope out there for the economy.

I also believe that this one is right on your question. I don't think many people yet have focused on the final decision: Who do you trust; who has the character; and things like foreign policy or the fact that your kids, my grandkids go to bed at night without that same fear of nuclear war. That's not resonating. You don't read that on the front pages. But when people go into the booth, they're going to say, "Hey, let's look at the overall record."

So I think undecided at this point is probably positive for me. We see the polls closing nationally now, dramatically, over where it was just a week ago. These darned Sunday shows they have on television, these guys coming on there telling me that I have no chance, heck with that. There's too many elections to prove that contradictory. So I cannot live and die by the polls. But undecided at this point has got to be positive, given the negative coverage we've been receiving.

North American Free Trade Agreement

Q. Mr. President, my question: With the free trade agreement, big business that has headquarters here in the U.S., they can make their products in Mexico, bring it back here to sell. And by doing this, it's going to reduce some of our tax base. And then when you're comparing the wage to a country with a lower standard of living than ours, competitively how would this benefit us?

The President. Okay, I'll answer your question with a rhetorical question. If wage base is what's required to locate plants, why is not Haiti the industrial capital of the world? You see my point.

Businesses are not going to move overseas, flock overseas because of a fair trade agreement. Exports have saved our economy in a very extraordinarily difficult time. You look at the sales—exports and jobs created in tough economic times; it's been related to exports. So do not believe the argument that exports and fair trade agreements are going to do anything but create jobs. They're going to create jobs. Don't believe the argument that they're going to cost jobs. The evidence is overwhelming.

I come back to the point, if wage rates are the only thing that matters, why today aren't these companies all moved down there to wherever that might be? They're not going to do that. We're going to create more jobs. It's exports that's going to lead the entire world, not just the United States, into new prosperity. I'm absolutely convinced of it. I'm against protection. I am for free trade. I think the NAFTA agreement with Mexico is extraordinarily positive. I think the conclusion of the GATT round that we're working on right now would certainly benefit agriculture. I think it will benefit the entire world.

So my view is, look, it's not going to cost us jobs; it's going to create jobs. Remember, if wages were the thing, Haiti would be booming, and they're having a rough go down there.

The Environment

Q. Mr. President, yesterday the Courier Journal printed questions submitted to your campaign concerning your environmental

issues, environmental policies, to which you did not respond. I was wondering if you could clarify your environmental policy, specifically regarding wetlands, and also if you could explain how you intend to strike a balance between protecting the environment and creating new jobs?

The President. Very important question. I don't know the questionnaire you're talking about, but I think we've got a darned good environmental record. It has achieved a balance, because I don't believe you can go to the environmental extreme.

Let me tell you: Since I've become President, we passed a Clean Air Act. We have got a tree-planting program for a billion trees a year, which is a very sound program that will help clean up the environment, help the climate change. We've done well on the oceans. Our enforcement agency, the EPA, has brought more enforcement actions against people that violate the environment than all of them put together, I believe, in the previous administration. So I think we're doing well in getting this balance.

What was the other part of your question? I should have written it down. But you just asked about——

Q. ——specifically on your policies towards wetlands?

The President. Wetlands, yes. We've got a policy of no net loss of wetlands. But let me tell you something. When one of these extreme environmental groups considers all of Alaska, the tundra, a wetland, I say let's find the balance, as your last part of your question said. We cannot go to the extreme.

Farmers are good conservationists for the most part. And yet, some extreme rulings say if you've got a low place on your farm, you can't even farm your own land. We've got a good no-net-loss-of-wetlands policy. I'm implementing it, and I think we should be very proud of it. But you've got a guy coming over here in Ozone Man, Gore, and he'll shut down this country, I'll tell you. And we've got to find the balance.

I mean, it is too much when you go and say that the owl is so important that you're going to throw 30,000 people in the timber business out of work; or go up, as Mr. Gore's book says, and say you want 40- to 45-miles-per-gallon standards, fuel efficiency standards. You've got some auto stuff in this State, and you're going to throw those workers needlessly out of work by setting these strange and too far-out standards.

We've got to find what your last point was, a balance. I think we're striving very hard to do it. We've got a great environmentalist heading our EPA, and I am proud of the record. But I'm not going to go down to Rio, as Mr. Gore suggested, and sign a treaty—I don't care how many countries are for it—if it goes against the interest of the United States. I'm proud of the record, but we're not on the extreme.

Education and Job Training

Q. My question is, Mr. President, if reelected, what is your plan to help the common families with both parents that work and make less than $25,000 a year?

The President. The best answer is education, because we're moving into a new technical era. We're moving into an era where math and science mean something. We have proposed, and indeed, it's operating now under our Job Training 2000, a very vigorous program, a $10 billion program to retrain people for the future. I mean, we've got a lot of defense workers, for example, that are coming out of defense because we've been successful in the cold war.

Incidentally, my opponent, Mr. Gore, wants to cut the muscle of defense. He'll say to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, forget it, we're going to cut many more troops than Colin Powell and Cheney tell me are necessary. I'm in charge of the national security, and I'm going to keep it strong.

But job retraining is the answer to the family you're talking about who aspires up the ladder. Part of our job retraining program says to a guy who is working at a job that you describe, maybe not the most productive: While you're working, you can participate in this apprenticeship program. So I really believe that is the key and only answer. Then along with it comes the fundamentals of education reform for the kids.

Racial Harmony

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. It is generally agreed that over the last 12 years race relations in our country has greatly de-

teriorated. What plans, if you are reelected, do you have to begin to heal our Nation?

The President. I'm not sure I agree with your premise about the last 12 years. I'm old enough to remember some really ugly scenes in this country when the country was really divided on race. And I think the country has come a long, long way over the past 25 years. So we start with a very different premise.

Yes, there is some racism, and yes, I've tried as President to speak out against it. We have passed two major pieces of civil rights legislation, but what you're talking about, respect for each other, is not going to be legislated. But we passed the ADA bill that I mentioned, which is forward-leaning civil rights, and one bill to avoid discrimination in the workplace. So that has happened on my watch. But it's not going to be legislated. It's got to be done through good will. It's got to be done through strengthening families' knowledge, education, so you educate out of the kids any propensity for intolerance. The President must continue to speak out against anti-Semitism or racial bigotry at every time. I think that's the only thing that's going to happen, moral persuasion.

But please look at your history, because I think we would all remember that we've had times which have been uglier than now in terms of race relations. It's not good, but we've got to make it better.

I'll tell you what we've got to do. We've got to strengthen our communities and our families. And the liberals hate it when I say this, but family is vital. When Mayor Bradley of Los Angeles—I'll not filibuster here, but when he came to see me with a lot of other mayors from the National League of Cities, he said, "The biggest concern we've got about urban unrest is the decline of the American family." So let the liberal Democrats scream, but strengthening family, not through legislation but through education, teaching discipline, teaching respect for the law, supporting law enforcement people, choice in child care, choice in education, all of these things will strengthen the family. As that happens, we lower this threshold of discrimination which is terrible, and we've got to make it better.

Education

Q. My question is regarding education. Earlier, you mentioned Millie's book. You have said that you would subsidize families to send their children to private schools. Please explain to me why that's better than putting more money and efforts into the public school system. Because my husband and I would fall in the middle class range; we would not be low-income to receive subsidies, and we're not in the upper end to be able to afford to send children to——

The President. Let me try to explain it to you. I do believe in parental choice for public, private, and religious schools. When I got out of the service, many thousand years ago, I was eligible for the GI bill. And the GI bill said you can go to the college of your choice, religious college, Holy Cross, or go to public State college or go to a private. We're giving—assist the family—separation of church and state, money goes to the family.

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the Democratic Mayor and a black Democratic legislator, Polly Williams, came to see me to tell me how successful their choice plan had been. Her child was considered dysfunctional. And that child is now performing because they chose, and were assisted in the choice, a better school. The irony is that the public schools not chosen have found they are improving themselves.

And under the plan, under our "GI bill" for kids, they could have chosen a public school. So the plan is to try, in a model system, the choice to see if it doesn't do what I'm convinced it will, which is elevate the public schools and private. Did you know 46 percent of the public schoolteachers in Chicago send their kids to private school? Now, why is that? It is that some of those public schools are not performing well enough. So I think competition will make them perform better, and that's the basis. I know that the teachers union doesn't like it, but I am convinced that nationwide it will work as it did in Milwaukee.

I don't want to probe into the internal affairs of your family, but it can't happen—there's not enough money in the world to do it for every family. So there is a cutoff point.

Job Retraining

Q. Mr. President, as a dislocated worker, an older worker, what kind of programs do you have in store for an older dislocated worker?

The President. Well, John, the only answer is this retraining program I mentioned here to the gentleman from Illinois. I believe that's what the Federal Government should do. I'm sure your community has some training programs, too. But that's the answer. And we're going to have more of it because you're having a shift to higher technology out of ordinary jobs, jobs that heretofore have been pretty darned good, and you're having this change in defense.

One other thing we're doing, and this isn't of any comfort to you right now, but we're taking the laboratories, the Government labs, and having them cooperate with business to bring new technology to the private sector. That will mean new jobs. But it will mean in your case, sir, job retraining.

Take a look at the programs, because I think you'll find some that might fit your needs. I hope you do, anyway, because I certainly can empathize with somebody who is a good worker, wants to work, and can't find work. I might say unemployment in this country has gone down for the last 3 months. And every time it happens, again back to my talking head friends: Bad news for President Bush, job market shrinks. Come on, it's getting better.

So we've got to keep this recovery going, without doing bad things to it, and helping stimulate it. And then a guy like John, who just mentioned this, will find work because I think we're going to have a much more plentiful job market. We created 15 million new jobs in the eighties, and I think we can do it more now that we're coming out of this long slow period.

Education

Q. Mr. President, you've declared yourself the education President. But why is our country still behind Japan in math and science? And what do you plan to do about it in the next 4 years?

The President. When I came in as President, we convened all the Governors. We did something that's never been done before—and I'll give Bill Clinton credit for this. He was one of the leaders in it as a Governor—to get educational standards. We adopted six national education standards, and communities now are striving to reach them. One of the standards is math and science. Kids must be proficient in math and science by the year 2000. That's caused a whole array of new teaching methods being used for math and science.

So we've already started on that. And the program I referred to, I just refer you back to it, America 2000, because it really does help us achieve these six education goals. But you're on to something, and we've got to do better in math and science. Do you know we spend more per education per kid than every country except Switzerland? And we're not getting the results. The Federal Government, what, 6 percent of the spending is from the Federal Government, and it's way up. But that's not good enough for this country. So we've got to break the mold in these schools. We've got to challenge the establishment. Education fundamentally hasn't changed in this country for the last 50 years. Now it's got to, to accommodate young kids like this.

The Economy

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned the value of high wages to the entire economy. Recently in Winchester where I live, our once-largest employer, Rockwell International, closed their truck axle plant. Manufacturing jobs are now only 16 percent of our economy. In Germany, manufacturing jobs are fully 32 percent of their economy, and they have the highest wages in the world. America's now 13th in wages and still falling. Governor Clinton favors a more direct partnership between business, labor, and Government, similar to the German approach. Why is this not a good idea to develop new technologies?

The President. I challenge your figures on the wages. Manufacturing in this country is up as a percentage of our gross domestic product, manufacturing is. Some of the reason that manufacturing jobs has sloughed off is because manufacturing has become much more modern and streamlined.

But the answer is not to do what Clinton wants, which is to have the Government

invest. He talks about Government investment. Government does not create wealth. And therein I have a—and most of Europe, including Germany, has moved away from this concept of this kind of social fabric of government in terms of business.

You've got to free up through less regulation, less lawsuits. We're killing ourselves with the cost of lawsuits. Less taxation; stimulate—I just said earlier, and I won't repeat them, these ways to stimulate business investment here. But we cannot go back to the failed European model of, you know, it used to be pure socialism. Those countries have all come out of it now.

So I think we've got a little fact difference here as to how Germany is doing. They had a 4 percent negative growth, or 3 this last quarter, when we grew at 2.7. So I'm not about to think of Germany as the great example. They're good on some things, and they make good products, but I notice that Germany is putting a BMW plant in South Carolina. Now, why are they doing that if this gentleman is so right about how swimming everything is going in Germany? Because we've got the best workers, and we're the most productive nation there is.

Sorry I can't debate you eyeball to eyeball. I might come out ahead; I might not. You sound like you know what you're talking about.

Mr. Butler. When the time is over for things like this, Helen Thomas usually says "Thank you, Mr. President," and that's where we are.

The President. I looked at my watch in the debate, and I caught the dickens for it. But time flies when you're having fun. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Butler. We want to thank you. We want to thank my colleagues in Louisville where Jackie Hays had some very good questions from her group; from WLEX–TV in Lexington, where Tom Kenny had a good group to ask questions. And we want to thank all of you in our studio audience. I know that many of you had questions that didn't get asked, but we appreciate those that were. So we thank all of you.

And Mr. President, thank you for joining us today. We were real glad you came and answered the questions.

The President. I'm just delighted to be here. It's a wonderful thing you all do, of public service, I think. I mean, it transcends politics, and it's a very good thing. And I appreciate it.

Mr. Butler. Maybe you won a few votes today out of all this.

The President. Well, I don't know. I hope so. That's what it's all about.

Note: The question-and-answer session began at 1:30 p.m. at the WPSD–TV studios. Tom Butler, WPSD–TV vice president of news, served as moderator for the session.

Remarks at a Miami Valley Rally in Kettering, Ohio

October 27, 1992

The President. Thank you, Mac. Thank you very, very much. Thank you, Gerald McRaney. Thank you for that great Ohio welcome. Thank you very, very much. Thank you.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We are fired up. Thank you. If I ever needed convincing, you have convinced me that we are going to win 4 more years on November 3d. This is fantastic. Wall to wall people. And thank you for that great welcome.

May I salute Congressman John Boehner, who is here with us today. And may I say, you hear a lot of talk around the country, "Clean House!" Change the Congress. Send Mike DeWine to the United States Senate, and let's get on with changing this country for the better. While we're at it, send Pete Davis to the United States Congress. We need a good man there.

It's great to be here at the birthplace of aviation. And the choice before the Ameri-