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retary of State, every living Secretary of the Treasury, every living Nobel Prize-winning economist, and over 40 of the 50 Governors that NAFTA means expanding markets. And we have to have expanding markets, not shrinking horizons. Our jobs and our children's jobs depend on it.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Interview With Timothy Russert and Tom Brokaw on "Meet the Press"
November 7, 1993

Mr. Russert. Welcome again to "Meet the Press," today a special edition live from the White House. I'm with my colleague, Tom Brokaw.

Mr. President, this is our 46th birthday. You're 47. You strike me as the kind of guy who maybe watched the first program from your cradle. [*Laughter*]

The President. I wish I could. I didn't have a television then. I was 1 when you started, but I was 9, I think, when we got our first television in 1956. So I couldn't start, but I did watch it often after that.

NAFTA

Mr. Russert. Well, it's great to have you here. Let's start—we'll have to talk about it today—let's start with NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement. Your closest supporters say that if the vote were held today, you're still 30 votes short. True?

The President. I don't think we're quite that short, but we're 30 votes short of having explicit expressed commitments. I think we'll make it, however.

Mr. Russert. What role has Ross Perot played in this debate?

The President. I think he's kept things stirred up. That's what he likes to do. But I think, frankly, the vociferous organized opposition of most of the unions, telling these Members in private they'll never give them any money again, they'll get them opponents in the primary, the real roughshod, muscle-bound tactics, plus the fact that a lot of the business supporters of NAFTA have not gotten their employees and rank-and-file people to call and say they're for it. In any issue like this, the intensity is always with people who are against it. Those things are difficult.

But again I will say I have been quite heartened by the responses of the last 10 days, more and more of these Members of Congress, men and women who want to do right by their country, don't want to hurt the United States, and understand that NAFTA means more jobs, not just in Mexico but throughout Latin America, a huge trading bloc of people helping to take us to the 21st century.

NAFTA Television Debate

Mr. Russert. Bob Dole mentioned last night that you were elevating Ross Perot. Are you concerned that you're going to recreate a monster?

The President. No, Ross Perot has got enough money to elevate himself. He can buy his way on national television and buy his own exposure and have very little accountability, except when he makes the mistake of coming on this program with you.

Mr. Russert. Without his charts. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes. The same mistake I made today. [*Laughter*] I think the Vice President will do well. Ross Perot is the master of the one-liner and the emotional retort, but I believe that the Vice President has an unusual command of the facts and a real commitment, a profound commitment to this issue. And the American people who watch Larry King will see that it's no accident that all the Presidents, living Presidents, and all the living Nobel Prize-winning economists and 41 of the 50 Governors are for this. It's good for the American economy.

Mr. Russert. Are you trying to demonstrate to the undecided Democratic Congressmen, listen, this is a choice between Clinton-Gore and Perot?

The President. Absolutely not. He is a visible spokesperson for this. As I said to you, at least for the undecided Democrats, our big problem is the raw muscle, the sort of naked pressure

that the labor forces have put on.

Mr. Russert. Are you afraid the Democratic Congressmen are in the pocket of labor?

The President. No, I didn't say that. But I said that a lot of them are saying, "Well, I'm not hearing from these business people who are for it; their employees are not telling me they're for it. And I'm hearing from all these people either pleading with me based on friendship or threatening me based on money and work in the campaign. And I don't hear it."

So I think what we want to do and what the Vice President's trying to do here, and this was his idea, is to let the American people listen. Yes, Ross Perot is against it. Yes, a number of other people, Pat Buchanan and others, are against it. But if all the Presidents are for it, all the Secretaries of State, all the Nobel Prize-winning economists, who've never agreed on anything the rest of their lives probably, and virtually all of the Governors are for it, it must be good for the American economy.

Mr. Russert. We have, in fact, lost jobs to Mexico. And their concern is we'll lose more, and also the depressed wages. There's a clause in the treaty which, with 6 months' notice, any side can void it. Would you say to the American people that if the treaty passes, you'll monitor it? And if, say, in 2 years you are convinced there is a sucking of jobs and a depression of wages, you would move to abrogate the treaty?

The President. If I thought the treaty were bad for the American economy, of course, I would do that. But let me tell you, there's another provision of the treaty that we negotiated that I also want to emphasize because it goes more to the heart of what many Americans are worried about. It deals with the so-called surge problem. That's a term of art which in common language means, well, what if this is a good deal for America and a good deal for Mexico, but some part of our economy, or theirs, to be fair, has an overwhelmingly negative impact? If something that nobody ever dreamed happened, there's also a provision that allows us to slow the agreement down as it applies to that.

So there's no question that we have the protections we need. We can get out in 6 months if it's bad for us, and we can stop anything horrible and unforeseen. This treaty is going to make the problems with Mexico of the last 15 years better. It will raise labor costs in Mexico; it will raise the environmental investments in Mexico; it will reduce the trade barriers to our selling products in Mexico. It means more sales and more jobs.

And also keep in mind, Mexico is just 5 percent of the American economy. It will improve our relationships with our biggest neighbor and thereby help us to take this kind of deal to the rest of Latin America so that we can establish a 700-million-person trading bloc. That's real jobs for America.

APEC Meeting and NAFTA

Mr. Russert. The day after the vote November 17th, the next day, on the 18th, you leave for Seattle to meet with 14 other nations, China, Japan. If you go there having lost NAFTA, what does it do to your standing?

The President. Well, I'd say I'd sure rather not do it. Let me give you the flip side. If I go there and NAFTA passes in the House, it will be a clear statement to Asia, number one, that the United States is not withdrawing from the world, that we are determined to be the world's leading economic power by competing and winning, not from running away. Number two, I will be able to say what I have been saying to the Asians: Asia is important to us, but we want free trade, we want access to your markets.

They will see us developing the NAFTA market, which is not just Mexico, it's Latin America, Canada, the whole 9 yards. And that will be enormous pressure on them to conclude these world trade agreements, these GATT talks by the end of the year. It will also help us with Europe to do that.

So I can't tell you how important I think it will be. If we go out there without this agreement, they may say, "Well, President Clinton wants to have an open door to Asia, but is he really going to be a tough competitor? They ran away from Latin America, their best friends and best consumers. And can he deliver? Will the Congress run away from him even if he tries to expand trade?" My ability to get done what is plainly in the economic interest of this country will be weakened.

Now, that's very important, because almost all these people who are against NAFTA are still for the GATT talks, for the big treaty on world trade. They all know it will create hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs for America. They should consider how much harder it's going to be to get GATT if the House

votes NAFTA down and how much easier it will be to get GATT if the House adopts NAFTA.

Health Care Reform

Mr. Brokaw. Mr. President, let's talk about health care. There's been a lot of confusion about the numbers coming out of the White House. Mrs. Clinton went to the Hill and said that if the Clinton plan passes, costs will go up for about 35 percent to 37 percent of those now covered. Then Donna Shalala, Secretary of Health and Human Services, said 40 percent. Last week, Leon Panetta said 30 percent. Even your strongest advocates, like Jay Rockefeller, were holding their heads, in effect, in anguish. Another Democrat said, "We've got to prove that Democrats can count." Hasn't your credibility been hurt on the whole cost issue?

The President. Maybe, but what I would like to emphasize is we're the only people who have a plan. It's very easy for everybody else to sit up in the peanut gallery. This is a very complex thing. And keep in mind, you're talking about small amounts of money, is this person going to pay $6 more a month or $60 less a month, trying to calculate how it would go if this plan would be passed just as it is.

Now, let me say what was wrong with the early figures, where they said 40 percent of the people with insurance would pay more. Here's what was wrong with them, why they were too high. Of the people who have insurance today, we now think that 70 percent will pay the same or less for the same or better benefits. Why did they say 60 before? Because they neglected to calculate this: A lot of people who have insurance don't really have it. That is, they have $5,000 deductibles, so they're paying every year. They just may not be paying it in their insurance premium. So they went back and calculated based on what we now know about how much out-of-pocket people pay. You have $2,500, $3,000, $5,000 deductible. That is something they neglected to think about.

So now who will pay more under this, who has insurance already? People who have essentially catastrophic policies, that have very limited benefits, and young, single workers will pay more because if they pay more it will enable us to have what's called community rating, so that if a working family—middle-aged working family—with a sick child can still get insurance at an affordable cost. And all young workers who don't have insurance will be brought into the insurance system, and even they will get something for it. That is, what they get for it is knowing their insurance can ever be taken away. There will be a floor.

Finally, let me say this: If you look at the experience of the last 12 years when health costs really started to take off, and then you think about what it will be like 5 years from now, 100 percent of the American people will pay more 5 years from now than the rate of inflation if we don't do something. In other words, at least what we're trying to do will lower the rate of increase for all the American people. So within 5 years everybody will be better off, I believe.

Mr. Brokaw. Mr. President, no one disagrees with the idea that you have engaged the country in a debate about health care which is long overdue. But the fact is that you want to add 37 million people to the insurance pool. There are new technologies coming on board all the time that cost a lot more money. You're willing to pick up the early retirement benefits for corporations. You've added mental health and free prescriptions. It seems to a lot of folks that you ought to be going slower and that you ought to accept kind of phased-in universal health care coverage in 5 years. Would that be acceptable to you?

The President. But the problem is—we are phasing it in over 3 years, through all of '90. We're anticipating passing this program in '94 and then letting people have '95, '96, and '97. But let me emphasize, Tom, the people who make that argument assume something that we assume all the time in America, that we just can't do things that other people can do. We tolerate conditions in America that are intolerable in other countries.

Now, the condition we tolerate by not having everybody insured is higher health care costs. That is, you've got folks in medicine in your family, you know this, not insuring everybody raises health care costs because all those people without insurance, if they need health care, will get it. They'll get it when it's too late, too expensive, and someone else will pay for it. And that rifles the cost. So by accelerating the moment of universal coverage, you not only do the morally right thing by finally letting America join the ranks of all these other advanced countries in giving everybody health security, you immediately begin to lower the rate at which costs

increase.

So you can argue about all these other things, but it seems to me delaying the time of universal coverage will aggravate the price battle, not make it better. We assume that universal coverage will cost more when every other country that has universal coverage is paying much less than we are and having less inflation.

Living Will

Mr. Brokaw. Would you sign a living will publicly? About one-third of our health care costs in America go to the last year of life. Mrs. Clinton has talked about you doing that. Are you prepared to do that?

The President. I certainly would sign one. I don't know if I would do it in public, but I'd be glad to tell you what's in it. I don't know, I've never thought about a public demonstration of a private act like that. But we've given a lot of thought to it because of the experience I had with my stepfather when he died, when Hillary's dad died earlier this year. I think families should think about living wills and should have them. It's not something that Government should impose on them. But we do have a lot of extra costs that most people believe are unnecessary in the system, and that's one way to weed some of them out.

Health Care Reform

Mr. Brokaw. And ultimately, are we going to have to come to health rationing in America, especially those heroic procedures that are long on odds and very expensive, take that money and spend it on prenatal care and other procedures that might extend life at the beginning, not at the end?

The President. Well, let me say before we make that decision, we should acknowledge two things. One is, we're rationing health care right now. There's a huge rationing going on now. It's just a roll of the dice whether you have it or not and what you get.

What we do know is that if our plan passes and we put more emphasis on primary and preventive health care and primary physicians getting out there and taking care of people and stopping bad things from happening, we'll have less need for those extreme procedures.

I do not believe we want America to pull back from the technological advances that we all treasure. I do not believe we want to tell people they can't have procedures that have a realistic chance of saving their lives or returning them to normal. So I suspect they'll always be willing to pay a little more than any other country in the world to do that. But if we do more on the primary side, we'll be better off.

Mr. Russert. Mr. President, you're still confident we'll get a health care bill by next year?

The President. Oh, I think we will, absolutely.

Mr. Russert. We have to take a break. We'll be back with more from President Bill Clinton in the Oval Office. We'll talk a little bit about foreign policy.

[*At this point, the television stations took a commercial break.*]

North Korea

Mr. Russert. We're back live from the Oval Office.

Mr. President, a lot of growing concern about North Korea, a country that we fought some 40 years ago. Will you allow North Korea to build a nuclear bomb?

The President. North Korea cannot be allowed to develop a nuclear bomb. We have to be very firm about it. This is a difficult moment in our relationship with them and, I think, a difficult moment for them. They're one of the most, perhaps the most isolated country in the world, with enormous economic problems, trying to decide what direction to take now, sometimes seeming to reach out to South Korea, sometimes seeming to draw back.

I spend a lot of time on this issue. It's a very, very major issue. We have got to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and particularly North Korea needs to stay in the control regime. They don't need to withdraw. Now, there is a lot of disagreement about what we should do now. I just want to assure you and the American people that we are doing everything we possibly can to make the best decisions, to be firm in this. We are consulting with our allies in South Korea and Japan. They are most immediately affected by what we do and how we do it. And we have worked with the Chinese who, despite our other differences, have helped us to try to work through this.

Mr. Russert. Would one of the options be a preemptive strike, the way the Israelis took out the Iraqi nuclear reactor?

The President. I don't think I should discuss any specific options today. All I can tell you is that I tried to issue the sternest, clearest

possible statement about this when I was in Korea. Nothing has changed since then. I think you asked me a question about it one time also, Tom. This is a very grave issue for the United States.

Mr. Russert. There are 800,000 North Korean troops amassed on the South Korean border. If the North Koreans invaded South Korea, would that, in effect, be an attack on the United States?

The President. Absolutely. We have our soldiers there. They know that. We still have people stationed near the Bridge of No Return. I was up there on the bridge; I was in those bunkers with our young Americans. They know that any attack on South Korea is an attack on the United States.

Russia

Mr. Brokaw. President Yeltsin of Russia has said over the weekend that he wants to now delay the Presidential election until 1996. That is a full term for him, but he had said publicly that he would do it in the spring of next year. You had endorsed that. Now for him to pull back from that public commitment to elections next spring, is that a mistake on his part?

The President. I have not spoken with him directly, because I didn't—late yesterday evening I was made aware of his comments, so I'm not sure exactly what he said and exactly what he meant. His comments are subject to more than one interpretation. I do think the following things. I think he had always assumed he would run for reelection, and his comments seem to indicate that he may not want to do that and he may want to simply finish his term. As long as he is promoting democracy, as long as he is promoting human rights, as long as he is promoting reform, I think the United States should support him. He has been brave and consistent. I think on this issue, we'll have to see how it plays out. I'm sure after the elections of the Parliament in December, they will have something to say about it.

One of the things that Boris Yeltsin has really understood is that it's not good if he's the only source of legitimate democratic power in Russia. And he is now. He's been elected twice by the Russian people in the last couple of years. After December, we'll have another major player, sort of like the President and the Congress here. And as we know, there will be a different source of legitimate democratic power, and we'll see how it works out.

China

Mr. Brokaw. Let me ask you about China. You said during the course of the campaign that President Bush coddles China despite a continuing crackdown on democratic reformers, the brutal subjugation of Tibet, the irresponsible exportation of military and nuclear technology. Your administration now is demonstrably warming up toward China. Have conditions changed there?

The President. Well first of all, let's talk about what we've done. The Chinese have complained because they think we've been so much firmer and colder. We imposed sanctions because of weapons technology transfers that the Chinese engaged in that we opposed. So we have taken steps there that were not taken previously.

But we also have had a consistent economic relationship with them. The United States this year will purchase 38 percent of China's exports—little-known fact. The American people, not the American business community that wants to invest there. American people have been very good to the Chinese people in supporting their economic advances. We believe their movement toward market reform and decentralization will promote more democracy in China and better policies.

I want to engage President Jiang on that, and I think we can do so. But we also have to be very firm on these issues of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and human rights. But I think we have to pursue both courses at once. I don't think you can isolate a country as big as China, as important to the world's future as China, but neither can you simply turn away from things that you cannot abide. And that's what we've tried to do. We've tried to strike the right balance, and I think we have.

United Nations Peacekeeping Efforts

Mr. Brokaw. Even some of your partisans on Capitol Hill believe that you've not shown a strong enough hand on foreign policy. After your experience in Somalia, will you be as eager to get involved with the United Nations in operations of that kind in the future?

The President. I think what we have to do is to recognize that the United Nations peacekeeping function is still very important and sometimes works very, very well. What they've

done in Cambodia, with our financial support but with no Americans there, is truly remarkable. Will it transform Cambodia? Who knows? Maybe it will all go back to the way it was, but at least the United Nations has given Cambodia a chance. That is what we are doing for Somalia. Will they be able to overcome their historic, deeply embedded clan warfare? I'm not sure. But at least we're giving them a chance.

What's wrong with the United Nations peacekeeping operations is that it's too much of an ad hoc thing: Some work, some don't, and a lot of the command and control operations, a lot of the training details, a lot of the simple organizational things that are important have not been worked through. So the United States favors a substantial restructuring and upgrading of the peacekeeping operations in ways that would permit us to participate in the future with a much higher level of confidence.

Somalia

Mr. Russert. Let's turn to Somalia, Mr. President. The reports yesterday that the United States troops will take again a very visible role. What does that mean?

The President. Well, when I announced that we would pursue the political objective a few weeks ago, I also said we would stay there and complete our mission. Our mission there is to deliver the humanitarian supplies and to keep the lines of communications open. We stood down from patrolling the roads when the voluntary cease-fire was announced in Somalia, to try to let things calm down and to try to get the political process going. Now that there is a political process, as always is the case, there's also a lot of maneuvering in a quasi-military sort of way. We cannot allow that to undermine the humanitarian mission, and our people cannot be expected, our young soldiers there cannot be expected to just sort of hunker down and stay behind walls. It almost puts them at greater risk. So we have to go out now and make sure the ordinary conditions of the U.N. peacekeeping mission are continued even in Mogadishu. And that's what we're doing.

Mr. Russert. The Secretary-General of the U.N., Boutros Boutros-Ghali, said that unless you disarm the warlords and the clans and put together and fashion a political settlement before you leave, the mission will have been a failure.

The President. I disagree with that. First of all, that's the argument he made to the Bush administration. President Bush's administration simply refused to get involved in disarmament. Arguably, it would have been easier then, at the moment when we came in, when everybody was starving and we were at our moment of maximum popularity and leverage, but I'm not sure that decision is wrong.

In the end, the international community will have to broker political resolutions within countries. But our ability to stop people within national boundaries from killing each other is somewhat limited and will be for the foreseeable future. I mean, they are going to have to make up their mind. I think the better course is to get these African nations, to get Ethiopia, to get Eritrea, to get their neighbors involved in trying to work out a political solution.

Those people now remember what it was like before we came there. We're going to do everything we can in the next several months to get this political solution going. But for us to go in and disarm would run the risk of our becoming, in effect, combatants on one side or the other, particularly if some said, yes, we'll disarm, and others said no.

Mr. Russert. In retrospect then, it was a mistake for you to send the Rangers to try to capture Mr. Aideed?

The President. No, that was a different issue. The mistake was—and I want to clarify this, because I am proud of what those Rangers did. The ones who gave their lives did not die in vain. The ones who gave their lives and were wounded in the last instance did it because of the tradition of the Rangers of never leaving anybody behind, even someone who has been killed. And I feel terrible about what happened.

But what they were doing is trying to enforce the law. Their mission was to try to arrest people who were suspected of murdering the Pakistani U.N. soldiers. The mistake was not that they were trying to do that. The mistake was that we were out doing that, and while we were doing that the political dialog shut down, so that the people that were associated with Aideed thought we, the U.N., not we, the U.S., but we, the U.N., were trying to cut them out of Somalia's future. And what we had tried to do is to lower our profile on the military police side so that the political dialog can start again. Now that that's going on, we're going to do the U.N. mandate.

Mr. Russert. And all troops will be out by

March 31st?

The President. Yes.

Mr. Russert. Quickly on Haiti.

The President. If I can go back to my statement. They'll be out by March 31st, except for a couple of hundred support personnel who may be there to do just logistical things that——

Mr. Russert. Which is what you said before.

The President. That's right.

Haiti

Mr. Russert. Haiti. The military leaders have refused to meet. Your policy, the United States policy is to reinstate Mr. Aristide. Is it now time to broaden the embargo from just fuel to everything?

The President. We have to strengthen the embargo. There are two options. We can, in effect, have a total embargo and try to shut the country down. That will be more painful in the near term to the average Haitians who are already suffering. We can also try to do something that will target those people that are causing this problem, which is to get all of the other nations in the world to side with us in freezing the assets of the wealthy Haitians who are plundering that country, keeping democracy from taking root, and supporting the police chief and the military. I would prefer to do that, but I'm not going to rule out the other things. And we're following this on a daily basis, spending a lot of time with it.

Mr. Russert. So we could have a complete embargo on all goods?

The President. That is an option, but I also hope that the other wealthy nations of the world that have assets deposited from these Haitian interests who are keeping democracy from returning will join us in freezing those assets. That would really help. That would do more in less time to change the political climate than anything.

Mr. Russert. President Bush invaded Panama to remove Noriega. Would you consider invading Haiti to reinstate Aristide?

The President. I don't want to rule anything in or out. But let me just say that there's a difference here, though. He went to Panama not only to remove Noriega for the Panamanians but because Noriega, himself, was wanted for violating American law as a drugrunner.

Prime Minister Malval and President Aristide have both not called for us to do that. In fact, one of the problems we had with the Governors Island Agreement is that neither they nor the other side wanted the United States or the U.N. there in a police function. That is, those folks we were trying to land there the other day were supposed to train the army to be the army corps of engineers, to rebuild the country. Neither side has wanted that and they had these bad memories of invasion. Last time the Americans went there in 1915, we stayed nearly 20 years. So they have not asked for that. But I don't think we should rule anything in or out.

Mr. Russert. Your stated policy of the United States is to reinstate Mr. Aristide. The CIA has gone around this town saying that Aristide is mentally unstable. Can you as Commander in Chief tolerate that insubordination by the CIA?

The President. Well, I think you have to ask yourself whether it's insubordination or not. And let me tell you what I mean by that. The CIA is duty-bound to tell the Congress what it knows. That's the law. Just like the Joint Chiefs of Staff are duty-bound to go, when asked, express their personal opinion if they have an opinion different than the President, even though they work for me.

In secret hearings the CIA told the Senate what they told me before, which is that they thought they had some evidence which questioned Mr. Aristide's ability to be President of Haiti. All I can tell you is—and I'm glad in a way that it came out, since it had been whispered around—that based on my personal experience, the Vice President's repeated contacts with him, the willingness of Aristide to work with our people, he has done everything he said he would do. And more importantly, he agreed to put in Mr. Malval, who is a respected businessman, to give some balance.

Aristide may not be like you and me; he's had a very different life. But two-thirds of the Haitians voted for him, and he has shown a willingness to reach out and broaden his base. So I just disagree with—and I also disagree that the old CIA reports are conclusive in their evidence. But they had a legal responsibility to tell the Senate. If I had put the thumb on them, you'd be asking me, "Why are you gagging the CIA from giving American intelligence to the Senate Intelligence Committee?"

Mr. Russert. I might ask you that.

The President. You would.

Foreign Policy Team

Mr. Russert. Finally in this round, a lot of

calls or suggestions that Secretary of Defense Aspin, Secretary of State Christopher resign. Are they secure in their positions?

The President. I don't think that the President should even discuss that sort of thing, those personnel things. Let me say this: I think they deserve credit for doing well on many big things. This administration has secured the interest of America in dealing with Russia, in dealing with the Middle East, in raising economic issues to a new high, in conducting a thorough security bottoms-up review of the Pentagon and our military operations, and in many other areas.

We found three problems that we inherited here, when we got in, that are very difficult problems, in Bosnia, Somalia, and Haiti. And every day you can pick up the newspaper and see opinions on both sides about what we should do or a myriad of sides. We're doing the best we can on those. And we're going to do it, and we're going to do it with the team we've got, as long as we're all working together. I think that they have worked very hard, and I think that some of the attacks on them have been quite unfair.

Mr. Russert. Mr. President, we have to take a break. We'll be back with more from the Oval Office and talk about crime and kids in America.

[*The television stations took a commercial break.*]

Mr. Russert. We're back on "Meet the Press." I'm with my colleague, Tom Brokaw, talking to the President of the United States in the Oval Office.

Decline of the American Family

Mr. President, in recent months on "Meet the Press," we've talked to Senator Pat Moynihan, Washington Post columnist William Raspberry, the Reverend Jesse Jackson about the problem of kids and crime. And they are in agreement that the breakup of the traditional family as we know it—two out of every three black kids born this year will be born out of wedlock, two out of five white children born out of wedlock—is the breakup of the traditional family unit a national crisis?

The President. Absolutely. It is absolutely a crisis.

Mr. Russert. And what can you do about it as President?

The President. I think that as President I have to do two things. One is to speak about it and to focus the attention of the Nation on it. I went to the University of North Carolina recently and spoke to the 200th anniversary there of the university and gave a major speech trying to deal with the combined impact of the breakdown of the family and the rise in violence and the rise in drugs and the lack of economic opportunity and——

Mr. Russert. Is there a correlation between crime and drugs and breakdown of the family?

The President. Absolutely. Let me back up and say I think America has two big challenges. One is to change in ways that will permit us to go into the 21st century winning as a country and as individuals. The second is to provide security in the face of all these changes so that people can have a coherent life and that we can't do that with economic stagnation or with social disintegration, and we're fighting with both. I mean, today in the Washington Post, there's a story of four people killed over the weekend, nine people wounded. A guy picks up a 1-year-old daughter—maybe his daughter—a 1-year-old child, drives away, and people drive after him, shoot him in the head, and the bullet then goes through the girl's body and blows her shoe off. You know, 3 or 4 days ago, an 11-year-old girl planning her own funeral, I mean, these things are terrible.

Let me just say, I've called the Attorney General last night; we talked for 30 minutes about this on the phone. We have got to use this administration to awaken in all Americans an understanding of this and to get everyone to ask what their personal responsibility is to try to help rebuild the family and the conditions of community. Then we have to follow policies which will do that.

Mr. Brokaw. Mr. President, do you think that there has been enough dialog within the black community about this whole issue, families without fathers? Jesse Jackson recently has started a campaign on black-on-black violence. But there really—among the activists in the black community, there hasn't been much public dialog. Has that disappointed you?

The President. Well, let me say this. I think there should be more. And I think that we should all be willing to face up to all the reasons why this has occurred. The famous African-American sociologist—at least he's famous in our circles—William Julius Wilson at the University of Chicago wrote a little book a few years ago called "The Truly Disadvantaged." It's only

about 180 pages long, but it graphically shows you what has happened to black families in the inner cities and how the decline of the black family is associated not simply with the rise of welfare but with the evaporation of jobs for black males in those areas.

So I think, first, we ought to pass our crime bill here and put another 100,000 police on the street and do it right in community policing. But we also have to get work back into the lives of people. You know, you can't have generation after generation not knowing work and expect there to be structure and order in people's lives. That's one of the things that Colin Powell—retired as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—he talked about maybe he could be a role model for people outside of the military who have none of the structure that's what makes the military go in this country.

Mr. Brokaw. So much of this is driven by drugs. Your administration has kind of taken drugs off the radar screen. Do you think you're going to have to take a harder line on drugs?

The President. Well, first of all, I don't think that's a fair characterization. The administration has had to subject the drug budget to the same ruthless discipline that nearly every other budget has been subject to. So that while we have increased some drug funding, like in the block grant program, some of the rest of it has not been increased. What I have tried to do is to get people to see the drug problem, first of all, in terms of stopping the major sources, and then here at home, focusing on drugs in terms of treatment and education and integrating it with our overall strategy on law enforcement and violence.

I think this country needs a community strategy which deals with the crises of drugs, violence, crime, the family, and work. And we need to go not only nationally, but at the grassroots level. And we need to understand that there's some basic things we have to do. If you want families to stay together, you've got to make it possible for people to be successful workers and successful parents.

If I could just briefly tell this one story: A couple of Sundays ago, we had a family in here taking a tour, a man, a wife, three daughters. One of these children was in a wheelchair. She was in this Make-A-Wish program, you know, a sick child wants to go see the President. I say hello. We have a picture. On the way out, the man says, "Mr. President, just in case you think that one person doesn't make a difference," he said, "you signed the family leave bill, which gives me the right to spend time with my sick child and not lose my job. If you hadn't done that, if Congress hadn't passed it, I would have had to choose between spending this precious time with my daughter, who's probably not going to live, or keeping my job for my other two daughters and my wife. And I don't have to choose now. Don't ever think that what you do doesn't make a difference."

A few days later that little girl died. But that man knows that he was a good parent and a good worker. That's just one example of the kind of things we have to do that have moral content even though they may be public policies.

But no matter what we do, there has to be a reawakening of responsibility in every community. That goes back to your other question: Should the black community be debating this? They should. Should the white community be debating this? We should.

Racial Tension in Urban Areas

Mr. Brokaw. All of this, it seems to me, is fueling greater racial tensions, especially in the urban areas. Do you think that the racial tension and the racial climate in urban America now is better or worse than it was, say, 10 years ago?

The President. I think for middle class people it's much better. I think the level of comfort among people of different races is much higher. I think the appreciation for diversity is greater. I think for people who are outside the economic mainstream, it is much, much worse.

My God, we've got kids planning their funerals, 11-year-old kids. But the crying shame is, those people also want to be a part of mainstream America. I mean, look at these children. When they make these plans for their funerals, are they out there breaking the law? And one thing I'd like to say to the rest of America is, you read these horrible stories about how many people get killed on the weekends—most of the people that lived in all of those neighborhoods never break the law, work for a living for modest wages, pay their taxes, trying to do right by their kids. I mean, this country is falling apart because we have allowed a whole group of us to drift away. It's not an under class anymore, it's an outer class.

Mr. Russert. Mr. President, can we talk about

this in direct terms without a cloud of political correctness hovering over the subject?

The President. I think we have to. I think we've got to. I think Jesse Jackson, frankly, has performed a good service by going out and starting this debate again when the American people are willing to listen. We've got to be able to sit down and tell people what we think. I think that the American people are willing to put aside political correctness. But if we want to say tough things about the breakdown of the family and the responsibility of people who live in these communities, we also have to say tough things to the rest of America about how you can't just ignore these people until you have to read about how they're having children, children having children, and nobody's married and they're having babies and these kids are dying. You've got to have some structure in these communities and some opportunity. If you want to preach the American dream to them, there's got to be something there at the end of the road. So there's something for all of us to do here.

Mr. Russert. Mr. President, we have to take another break. We'll be back in just a moment to talk about Bill Clinton's first year in office.

[*The television stations took a commercial break.*]

President's Approval Rating

Mr. Russert. We're back with the President of the United States in the Oval Office.

Mr. President, your poll numbers are low, but the one that's most striking to me is that since you've been President, the number of people who think the country is on the wrong track has doubled. What happened?

The President. Well, they may not know what's going on. And I think we should all ask ourselves what responsibility that has. Let's look at the facts. Let's just look at the facts. Since I became President, we have lowered the deficit, lowered interest rates, kept inflation down. This economy has produced more private sector jobs in the first 9 months than in the previous 4 years. Jobs are up and investment is up. We have shown discipline and direction in the budget. It was a remarkable achievement. Not only that, in that budget we did something that has not been done for 20 years, we tried to reverse the inequality of incomes. We asked the wealthy to pay more, and we gave over 15 million working families, comprising about 50 million Americans, a tax cut because they're working hard and still hovering around the poverty line. Most Americans don't know that.

Mr. Russert. So it's just a communications problem?

The President. Well, let me finish.

Mr. Russert. Please.

The President. In that program, one of the things I promised the American people to do to try to add more security to their lives was to open the doors of college education to everybody. We reformed the college loan program; we lowered the interest rates; we strung out the repayments. Most Americans don't know that. We passed the family leave law, which I just spoke about. We have a major health care proposal on the table. We have opened any number of economic avenues of opportunity that everyone agrees with. We've got $37 billion more in high-tech equipment up for exports now, created hundreds of thousands of jobs.

So the economic record of this administration in only 9 months is very good. The educational record of this administration is good. What we're doing on health care is unprecedented in our lifetime. The foreign policy record on the issues that really affect our national security is good.

There are the problems that nobody's figured out how to resolve; I concede that. I do not know what the answer to this is. But I know this: I believe that when historians look at this first year, they will be hard pressed to find many first years of Presidencies that equal ours. The Congressional Quarterly said the other day that only President Eisenhower had had a higher success rate in Congress than I have. If you go out and ask the average American, they think I hardly ever get anything passed.

Mr. Russert. But the voters——

The President. Now, that may be—that's right, that may be my fault, it may be somebody else's fault. But the reality is, the economy is going in the right direction, I'm keeping the commitments of the campaign to empower people through education and through health care initiatives and through all these other things. Why don't they know that? I don't know. I gave a speech the other day to 250 people from my home town, my home State who were up here, and I just went through these specific things. And they said, "There must have been a conspiracy to keep this a secret; we didn't know any of this."

Mr. Russert. But in six States since you've been President, Senate seats in Texas and Georgia, Governorships in Virginia, New Jersey, mayoralties in New York and Los Angeles have all gone Republican. There must be some small message in there for you.

The President. Well, I think the message is people still want change. But you know, you're from Buffalo. Don't you believe that all politics is local? I was a Governor for 12 years, and I can honestly say, with 150 Governors I served with I never heard one say, not one, that he or she won or lost an election because of the President.

Now, what are these things saying? They say people are still upset at crime, they're upset at the lack of jobs, they're upset when they're paying more taxes and think they're not getting something else for it. But we are addressing each of those things. Whether it's in the economic program, the health care program, the reinventing program, expanding trade, we are addressing those things.

I think that what I have to do is to do a better job of getting out there and getting the record there. But what happens here is every day is just a new battle. I don't know anybody who's out there who believes that all these elections are any more than a referendum on what people want for their mayors and their Governors.

Media Coverage

Mr. Brokaw. Mr. President, Jimmy Carter used to complain that the White House press was here simply to play "gotcha." Are you saying, in effect, that the press coverage has failed you and failed the country?

The President. No. Well, I think it may have failed the country some, but I don't take it personally, and I don't think it's a "gotcha" thing. I think, in a way it may be my fault. I go from one thing to another, so we have one moment on national service, for example—a signature idea of my campaign, something we know the American people care about—and it happens, but it happens in the middle of all these other things so nobody knows it happened. I think that's the big problem.

Mr. Brokaw. Let me ask you about 1996. You had a meeting in the White House the other day with Colin Powell; he endorsed NAFTA. Do you think Colin Powell is a Democrat or a Republican? And do you think he'll run for office in '96?

The President. You'll have to ask him that. I don't think I should speak for him.

Mr. Brokaw. Well, what's your instinct?

The President. I don't have an instinct. Let me just say this: What I have determined to do is to get up every day and do what I think is right and try to move this country forward and keep the commitments I made to the American people and follow it through with real conviction and just let everything else happen. I can't control a lot of the events. But I do think it is astonishing to me, and I take this on myself maybe more than you, but that—is to go back to Al Gore's line in the campaign, "What should be up is up; what should be down is down." We're moving in the right direction, and people should know that. And if they don't, then I have to examine why they don't. But perhaps you do, too.

Mr. Russert. Mr. President, we have to take a break. We'll be right back after this break.

[*The television stations took a commercial break.*]

Mr. Russert. We're back with the President. Tom Brokaw, you have a question.

President's Health

Mr. Brokaw. Even in the Oval Office, you can hear the local protest outside about firefighters or something in Washington, DC. You know that it is like living in a fishbowl here. Comedians have had a lot of fun with the fact that you run every day, but you don't seem to lose any weight. In fact, what can you tell us about your personal health? Have you lost weight?

The President. A little bit.

Mr. Brokaw. And have you changed your eating habits?

The President. Yes, quite a bit since I've been here. I have lost weight. I gained a lot of weight in the campaign. I'm now almost back to where I was 2 years ago. I've lost weight, and lost, I don't know, 2 or 3 inches off my waist. But I run 6 days a week, and I just try to—it's like everything else, I think you just have to get up, sort of show up every day, and try to make a little progress. I think that's what you do in life.

The Presidency

Mr. Russert. Mr. President, a friend of yours

told me that you jokingly sometimes refer to life in the White House as "the crown jewel of the Federal penitentiary system."

The President. That's right.

Mr. Russert. How confining has it been?

The President. Well, it's pretty confining. I always say I don't know whether it's the finest public housing in America or the crown jewel of the prison system. It's a very isolating life. And one of the things that frustrates me is that I get more easily out of touch and maybe even out of harmony with the American people—that's the question you asked me earlier. I also know that every little word I say can be sort of twisted, you know. And again, I don't fault anybody, but I just have to be careful.

Mr. Russert. We have just a few seconds.

The President. Did you see what Gergen just did? He brought in this thing saying that the headline is now that Clinton accused labor of roughshod tactics. I mean, those guys are my friends. I just don't agree with them on NAFTA. We're going to all work together——

Mr. Russert. We have just a few seconds. Is there one thing that, a year ago, you were absolutely certain of that you're not quite sure about now?

The President. Yes. I was absolutely certain a year ago that I could pursue this aggressive agenda of change and that every step along the way I'd be able to tell the American people what I was doing and convince them that we're going right. We are pursuing it, we're making in a way a little more progress than I thought we would, but there's a big gap between what we've done and what I've been able to tell the people about. I've got to do a better job.

Mr. Russert. Thank you for letting us join you in the Oval Office today. I take it this is the room you'll invite the Buffalo Bills after they win the Super Bowl?

The President. That's right. The Buffalo Bills will be here if they win the Super Bowl this year.

Mr. Russert. Mr. President, thank you very much.

Mr. Brokaw. You'll be in office a long time if that's the case. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The interview began at 9 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Message to the Congress on Rhinoceros and Tiger Trade by China and Taiwan

November 8, 1993

To the Congress of the United States:

On September 7, 1993, the Secretary of the Interior certified that the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan are engaging in trade of rhinoceros and tiger parts and products that diminishes the effectiveness of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Five rhinoceros species and the tiger are listed in Appendix I of CITES, which means that the species are threatened with extinction and no trade for primarily commercial purposes is allowed. Although recent actions by the PRC and Taiwan show that some progress has been made in addressing their rhinoceros and tiger trade, the record demonstrates that they still fall short of the international conservation standards of CITES. This letter constitutes my report to the Congress pursuant to section 8(b) of the Fisherman's Protective Act of 1967, as amended (Pelly Amendment) (22 U.S.C. 1978(b)).

The population of the world's rhinoceros has declined 90 percent within the last 23 years to the present level of less than 10,000 animals, and the tiger population has declined 95 percent within this century to the present level of about 5,000. Neither the PRC nor Taiwan has fully implemented the international standards established by CITES for controlling the trade in these species, and the poaching of rhinoceroses and tigers continues in their native ranges fueled in part by the market demand in the PRC and Taiwan. These populations will likely be extinct in the next 2 to 5 years if the trade in their parts and products is not eliminated.

To protect the rhinoceros and tiger from ex-