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# Interview With Tom Brokaw of MSNBC's "InterNight"
## *July 15, 1996*

*Mr. Brokaw.* Good evening, and welcome to "InterNight." It's going to be a nightly primetime program here on MSNBC in which we talk to the major newsmakers of the day. What better way to launch this program tonight than with our guest, our special guest, the President of the United States. He faces an election campaign that will determine his and this country's future.

Mr. President, I was struck by the fact that we're here in the Roosevelt Room; no one personified the beginning of the 20th century better than Teddy Roosevelt. And as we come to the conclusion of the 20th century we're not only on cable television but we're on the cyber universe as well, on the Microsoft network. It's a remarkable time.

*The President.* I think Teddy Roosevelt would like this very much. This is a room that is named for Teddy and for Franklin Roosevelt. Theodore Roosevelt's Nobel Prize which he won in 1905 is here in this room. We keep it here. And he really brought us into the modern age, and we're now going into a very different kind of world. And I think it would excite him very much to see it.

*Russia*

*Mr. Brokaw.* We saw another demonstration of that different kind of world today when Boris Yeltsin stiffed the Vice President of the United States, to put it in inelegant terms. He stood him up. They had an appointment. The Vice President told me earlier this evening he doesn't know whether Yeltsin is in good health or not, or whether he, in fact, is just fatigued. Does that make you a little nervous, that we don't know the condition of his physical being?

*The President.* Well, we have—we don't know, but we have no reason to believe that he has a serious illness. We do not know. I talked to him just a few days ago; we had a very good talk. He was very glad that the Vice President was coming over. Mr. Mamedov, his Deputy Foreign Minister, was just here a couple of days ago, and I saw him. So in terms of the relations between the two of us, our two countries, we're doing fine.

And I would urge us not to read too much into it. After all, he's just finished an exhausting campaign. You know how exhausting it is to run for President of the United States, and keep in mind, if you want to be President of Russia, you have to be willing to travel through 11 time zones. So he's been through a lot, and he may just be tired.

*Mr. Brokaw.* But, frankly, he has had some health problems in the past.

*The President.* He has.

*Mr. Brokaw.* What happens to our intelligence in Russia that we can't find out what's going on with the President?

*The President.* Well, we normally have a pretty good idea. And as I said, we certainly have no reason to believe, as I am talking to you tonight, that there's something serious wrong. But we just don't know. We can't know everything, and we can't know everything instantaneously. But I have no reason to believe that he did anything but ask Al Gore if he could delay the meeting.

And I don't consider it being stiffed since he knows what Al's—what his itinerary is in Russia. He's not being asked to stay later or anything to see him.

*Mr. Brokaw.* Would you be surprised if Boris Yeltsin does not finish his 4-year term and that the reigns of power are assumed by somebody like General Lebed?

*The President.* I would. I think he'll be able to finish his term. And I was very encouraged that he found a way to put this new team together that kept Prime Minister Chernomyrdin there, who is a real symbol I think of stability and progress, discipline. They're a good team, and Mr. Lebed seems to be finding his way into the team. So I think it's working out reasonably well so far.

*Mr. Brokaw.* What makes you more nervous, Russia's fragile democracy or China's uncertain future?

*The President.* I don't know that I'm nervous about either one. But I think that Russia is clearly now committed to a democratic future and one in which it is a responsible partner in world affairs. I think China is committed to a future of continued economic progress. I think they're still ambivalent about democratic free-

doms, but we seem to be developing a more constructive relationship with them.

I have told a lot of people—I'd like to say it again on your show because you have got a lot of future-oriented people listening to this show—I think how Russia and China define their own greatness in the next 20 years will have a lot to do with how the 21st century comes out. And I want them both to define their greatness in terms of the positive achievements of their people, their winning in peaceful cooperation on economic and cultural and athletic fields, and their willingness to cooperate with us to fight our common enemies: terrorism, the proliferation of dangerous weapons, and environmental destruction and diseases sweeping the globe. We need great countries working together if we're going to make the 21st century what it ought to be.

*Personal Character*

*Mr. Brokaw.* Let's switch from international politics and the future to domestic politics. We have some polls tonight—good news and bad news for you. The latest NBC News poll shows that you have expanded your lead as of the moment over Bob Dole. You're leading now by a factor of 54 to 30 percent. That's about a 7 percent—7 point gain for you in just the past 3 weeks.

Here's the bad news. We did a poll 3 weeks ago. We asked the question whether the people believed that you were telling the truth on Whitewater. By a factor of 55 to 24 percent, they said, no. Mrs. Clinton—it's even greater: 62 to 18 percent of the American people believe that she is not telling the truth. These are fundamental questions about personal character. Doesn't that bother you some, that the American people believe that they're not getting the truth from either one of you?

*The President.* It bothers me some, but I don't see how they could draw any conclusion other than that since if you looked at the information that they have been given, I'm sure it's four, five, six to one negative. And I think character is a legitimate issue, and I look forward to having that discussion. But I think that you can demonstrate character most effectively by what you fight for and for whom you fight. And I believe that the fact that I've stood up for the American people for the things like fighting for the family leave law or the assault weapons ban or the Brady bill or the V-chip for parents or trying to keep tobacco out of the hands of kids and a lot of other issues—those things will count for something, and they demonstrate character, too.

But on the other matter, I would like to remind everybody that this has gotten a lot of exhaustive attention, perhaps more than it deserves, and every reading of the evidence, as opposed to another round of questions, fails to demonstrate any wrongdoing by either one of us. And I believe that in the end that will come out and come clear to the American people. I just think that in the meanwhile all we can do is go about our business. We've got to keep working for the American people, and let them sort that out. I feel good about it.

*Mr. Brokaw.* What do you say to each other in the privacy of the living quarters about these questions, however, at the end of the day? Because none of us, after all, is immune to that kind of judgment on the part of the people that we care a lot about.

*The President.* Well, I try to remind Hillary not to worry too much about it because every time she goes out and people see her and she relates to people, they admire her, they like her, they respond to her just as they did around the world in this last trip where world leaders always contact me after she's been to a country and say, "Thank you for sending her. She really represents your country well. She inspires our young people, and thank you for doing it."

And I also remind her about the evidence being on her side. I mean, it didn't get a lot of publicity, but there's only been one definitive report on this whole business, and that was the Resolution Trust Corporation's report, supervised by a staunchly Republican appointee from the previous administration, which said that there was no evidence of any wrongdoing, not even any basis for a civil action against me or Hillary or her law firm and that her billing records, which received so much publicity, actually confirm her account.

Now, that's a dispassionate view of the evidence. So I think the American people are fair-minded. They've heard a lot more negative than positive, so they have questions. But I think in the end they say, "Well, what do we know, and what has this man done and what have they done, what have they fought for, who have they stood with?" So I remind her whenever this comes up—it doesn't come up so often anymore—that we only have so many hours of the

day, and every day we spend thinking about that, every minute we spend thinking about it is a minute we're not working on the job we were sent here to do. And so we just try to cooperate when questions are asked and keep working ahead when they're not.

*Whitewater Trials*

*Mr. Brokaw.* She's had to appear before a grand jury, and your very close friend Bruce Lindsey has been named an unindicted co-conspirator. He's down in Arkansas now on another trial. Does that ever lurk in the back of your mind that there may be more indictments that will arrive at the White House, maybe even for the First Family after the election? Has that possibility occurred to you?

*The President.* No, and it's a highly politicized operation. And I think it's obvious, there's no precedent for it that I know of, ever. But even so, it's very hard to just make things up. And I don't think anyone doubts that, for example, Mr. Lindsey, if there was any serious evidence that he'd done anything wrong that they would have moved against him.

So we'll just wait and see. But I still believe it's hard to make a lie stick and call it the truth. I think in the end the American people will figure it out. And I wake up and go to bed every night with that assurance, and I'm just going to keep working.

*Mr. Brokaw.* Mr. President, we've got a lot of ground to cover here tonight, a lot of substantive issues. We've got phone calls. We've got questions from the Internet, as well, to get to.

We'll be back with "InterNight" in a moment.

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

*Tobacco*

*Mr. Brokaw.* Mr. President, do you think that smoking is an American health hazard?

*The President.* Absolutely I do.

*Mr. Brokaw.* And addictive?

*The President.* Yes.

*Mr. Brokaw.* In the last 10 years the tobacco companies have given the Republicans something like $7 million in campaign contributions, but they've given your party $2 million. Why don't you make a pledge tonight to the American people you will take no more tobacco money, not just the Clinton campaign but the Democratic National Committee?

*The President.* Well, I think the Democratic Committee is reviewing its policy, although let me say, I have never fought even with the Republicans over their money. It's just a question of does the money have an adverse impact on your policy. It's their policy I disagree with. I have never tried to even put the tobacco companies out of business. I think they have a right to sell a legal product, and they have a right to market it to adults. The real problem is that it's illegal in every State in America for children to start smoking, but 3,000 start every day; 1,000 of them will die sooner because of it. And we have to do something to stop it.

And they'll have to answer whether the fact that they do better than we do on contributions has anything to do with their policy. But our policy is the correct one. And I don't want to treat the people who work for these tobacco companies like they're not citizens. They're not doing anything illegal, but they're wrong in fighting us on this policy. They should help us.

*Mr. Brokaw.* But given all that, why not just turn off the money spigot?

*The President.* The money spigot has been pretty well turned off. I think that in the last couple of years they're going five or six to one for the Republicans. But again, I don't want to get into that. The money is relevant only insofar it has an influence on the wrongheaded policy. These people, they're not criminals because they work for tobacco companies; they're citizens. They have a right to participate in the political process. They have a right to have their voices heard. They have a right to sell legal products.

What is wrong is they are marketing in ways that they know—I believe they know—has to be appealing to young people. You look at—young people, for example, who smoke illegally are far more likely to buy the most heavily advertised brands than adults are. And smoking would continue to deteriorate in this country and go down as a health hazard if people didn't start before they were adults.

Now, I just want to keep the attention of the American people focused on that. And that's why—my fight with the Republicans has been clearly focused on their policy. They got—may get more money because of their policy, but their policy is wrong, and they ought to change it.

*Illegal Drugs*

*Mr. Brokaw.* Recently, Bob Dole said, in response to your criticisms of his stand on tobacco, you know, the Clinton administration, the use of marijuana and other illegal drugs went up before he started to do something about it. Why were you so late off the mark in beginning to attack what was a plain increase in the use of illegal drugs during the last 4 years?

*The President.* Well, first of all, I don't think that's a fair criticism. I think the—if you go back and look at our '93 budget, we asked for more funds in '93 both for enforcement and for treatment. I named a drug czar promptly, a man with a lot of experience running big-city police operations dealing with drugs. And then when he left, I named General McCaffrey, who had managed our Southern Command and dealt a lot with drug exports. So I've been interested in this right along.

The drug use did start going up in the early nineties among young people, especially marijuana use. Cocaine use has continued to drop, but they're diversifying drug use. It's a terrible problem. We're working on it. We have a strategy; we're trying to implement it. And we've basically been able to do this in a bipartisan fashion in this country in the last 10 years or so. And I'd like to see us continue to do that.

But it is a serious problem. When I came here we instituted, even in the Federal Government, in the executive branch, stiffer drug testing policies than the legislative branch had. I think it's a really serious problem. I have always fought it and will continue to do so.

*Welfare Reform*

*Mr. Brokaw.* Let's talk for a moment about welfare. The Republicans have a bill that they think you will sign on the Hill. It eliminates the Federal guarantee of cash assistance for poor children in this country, a guarantee that we've had in place since the early 1930's. Are you prepared to have that happen?

*The President.* It depends on what else is in the bill. That is, if——

*Mr. Brokaw.* You can foresee the possibility it will take away the ultimate safety net of no Federal cash assistance for very poor children?

*The President.* Of the guarantee—if the bill has provisions in it which provide more child care to these same families, which has more flexibility to enhance the ability of the parents in these families to go to work, which help the young parents who have children at home to be better parents. The money will still be spent on the children. The reason they want to get rid of the guarantee is so the States will have more flexibility to require people to move from welfare to work more quickly. And if that's what's going on, then I can support it, if the rest of the supports are enough.

Let me just make one other point. There's a dramatic difference already in the welfare benefits from the poorest to the richest States. There's not really a national guarantee that amounts to much now.

*Mr. Brokaw.* We're not going to leave this alone; we're going to come back to it in a moment——

*The President.* Let's do it.

*Mr. Brokaw.* ——because we want to talk some more about that, and we want to hear from our viewers out there by telephone and the Internet. Back in a moment on "InterNight."

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

*Social Security*

*Mr. Brokaw.* We're back on "InterNight," and we're looking with the President of the United States at various chatrooms on the on-line service that MSNBC is providing to all of you. Here is a question that came from one of the many thousands of people who submitted them: How will you keep the Social Security system solvent without raising taxes? That's on the minds of a lot of people, especially because your generation is a big bulge out there.

*The President.* That's right.

*Mr. Brokaw.* And the question is, can Chelsea afford you as parents in about 10 years? I think that's the relevance of that.

*The President.* The answer is there will probably have to be some changes in the Social Security system, and what we need to do is to preserve its integrity in the same way we did in 1983. In 1983 we had a bipartisan commission representing all the various interests in the country. They came up with a proposal, and they implemented it. Now, then they did raise the payroll tax, but if you look at it now it's a long way—this system is solvent till 2019. And so we can make some changes now that won't require payroll tax changes that I believe

will be widely accepted by the American people if we get into it and we do it in a totally nonpartisan way, the way we did in '83.

*Mr. Brokaw.* There's a growing wave of people out there who believe that we ought to either privatize it or give people that option. Do you think that's a good idea?

*The President.* Well, there's apparently going to be a report issued from the advisory commission that will recommend that this be looked into. I think if you privatize the whole thing you would really put people who are not sophisticated investors and didn't have a lot of money on their own at serious risk. If you gave them the option individually or as a system to do it, that's something I think you could study. You could even—that's something that could be tested.

But before we do something that totally changes something that's worked rather well, there ought to be a way to test it in kind of a laboratory sense. And I would favor looking at it very closely with some evidence before we made a big, sweeping decision.

*Presidential Experience*

*Mr. Brokaw.* Here's another question. We had 60,000 hits on the system and 8,000 questions submitted. What is the most important thing that you've learned in the last 4 years?

*The President.* That the President can really make a positive difference, but that it requires every bit of concentration every day to do it. You simply cannot be distracted. You have to keep thinking about your job and the American people. That's the most important thing. I feel more optimistic today than the day I became President about the potential of all of us to change our lives together for the better, especially the Presidency. But it requires enormous discipline not to be distracted and not to be diverted.

And I think that—there are a lot of other things I've learned. I've learned more humility. There are a lot of things I don't know the answers to that I once thought would be easy to find out.

*Mr. Brokaw.* Were you ready for primetime when you arrived here, do you think?

*The President.* I think I knew enough to be President. And I think my ideas were right and my vision was right. I think I would have been probably a little more successful early on if I had had more Washington experience. But I think maybe the fact that I didn't have any made me more optimistic about what I could get done and more ambitious. And that was good.

But I think that I'm definitely better at my job than I was 4 years ago, in terms of just getting through the day-to-day work of it. I just learned a lot. I don't think anyone, even someone who's been around here a long time, can be fully prepared for the pressures and the work of the Presidency until you actually do the job.

*Oil Imports*

*Mr. Brokaw.* Here's another question, Mr. President, that's very relevant and very timely. With U.S. soldiers dying in defense of Saudi oil fields, shouldn't we have a renewed vigor about the pursuit of freeing the United States from the dependency on foreign oil?

There's not been much talk recently, fairly, from either party about conservation or finding alternative forms of energy.

*The President.* Well, we have had—that's one of our budget fights that we had with the Republicans. Let me answer that question in two parts.

We are not in Saudi Arabia simply for Saudi oil fields. We're there because it's a base from which we can prevent further aggression by Saddam Hussein in the area, first. And second, it's a base which enables us to cooperate with those who agree with us in the Middle East, including many Arab countries, in fighting terrorism. So that's not the only reason we're there.

But we should be trying to become less energy dependent. We have worked with Detroit to find a clean car that gets 3 or 4 times the average mileage now. We have worked hard on alternative technologies. We have worked hard to do things that would make us much more energy efficient. And frankly, this Congress disagrees with us on that. They don't believe we should be investing money in new technologies to achieve energy efficiency. But if you look at the explosion of technology that we're celebrating tonight, that same technology is available to make us more energy efficient, and we ought to be investing a lot more money in it because it's a way of cleaning the environment, reducing our dependence on foreign oil, and making us wealthier without really eroding the country and the globe that we share.

*Terrorist Attack in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia*

*Mr. Brokaw.* Why are the Saudis giving us such a bad time on the investigation? And we have had to send the FBI Director, Louis Freeh, back over there for a second time to try to get things moving again. Why can't you get on the phone to King Fahd and say, hey, listen——

*The President.* We've had several talks about it, and we expect that they will cooperate. And I think there will be cooperation; I do expect it. I believe that any time a crime is committed in a country that's high profile, that nation wants to believe that it can handle it and do what's right. And I understand that. But this is a case with international implications, and we have to cooperate.

*Income Tax*

*Mr. Brokaw.* Here's another question from the Internet: Why don't we have a flat tax for everyone instead of taxing our income and then taxing everything we buy? It was a very popular issue, as you know, during the primaries.

*The President.* It was. First of all, you should know that as far as the Federal income tax, we're getting pretty close to a flat tax. Fifty-seven percent of the taxpayers over the last couple of years have filled out that simple little form and paid the 15 percent with the standard deduction. That's pretty close to a flat tax. But I have never seen a single tax rate that did not either raise taxes on everybody that was making less than $100,000 a year or leave us with a much bigger deficit.

So I would do anything I can to further simplify the tax system. I'm trying to let more people file electronically. I'm all for making the forms simpler, the rate structure simpler. But I have never seen a plan—I've studied them carefully because I know how much people want to be free of it—that doesn't either raise taxes on most people or balloon the deficit. And we can't afford to do either one.

*Mr. Brokaw.* Mr. President, we have got a lot more ground to cover tonight. We do have some telephone calls coming as well as questions from the Internet. We'll be back on "InterNight" in a moment.

*The President.* That's a good question.

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

*Internet Usage*

*Mr. Brokaw.* We're back on "InterNight." Mr. President, you and I have been looking at another question from the Internet: Does Chelsea net surf and, if so, how do you protect her from inappropriate material? Does she use the computer pretty handily?

*The President.* She does. I don't think she net surfs a lot, simply because, at least during the school year, she has too much homework at night, for several hours every night. But she does some. And honestly, I can't protect her in that sense because she knows so much more about it than I do.

But one of the things that we're trying to do, I think with the support of everyone, is, first of all, get a case up to the Supreme Court so that they can define what the first amendment requires us to do and not to do in terms of legislation here. And then we need to find some sort of technological fix. During the break you said that Mr. Gates, Bill Gates, said that there's at least a possibility of developing a log——

*Mr. Brokaw.* Yes, they've got a log built in now that you can go in and check on.

*The President.* Yes, so the parents can see what's been called up. And of course we're working on this V-chip with television and with the entertainment industry supporting us with the rating system. So there probably will be some sort of technological responses here. But then parents like me are going to have to assume the responsibility of becoming literate enough with the technology to work with our children and make sure that we and they make responsible choices.

*Mr. Brokaw.* Mr. President, we promised a lot of viewers out there that they could ask questions via telephone. I think we can do that right now. We have a call from Leesburg, Virginia. A question for the President, please.

*College Tuition Deduction*

*Q.* Mr. President, I'd like to know if the deductible that you have proposed for families, the $1,500 for the college students, do you expect that that will come to fruition before the end of the year? And also I would like to tell you and the First Lady I think you're doing a wonderful job.

*The President.* Thank you. The truth is, I don't know whether it will come to fruition be-

fore the first of the year. I think there's a chance we could pass it if I could reach agreement with the Congress on the balanced budget. Now, most of the experts here in town will tell you that's not going to happen because we're only 3½ months away from an election. But I still think there is a possibility that we can reach a balanced budget agreement. If it does, I will push very hard for my two major education proposals. One is a $10,000 deduction for the cost of tuition after high school for people without regard to their age, and in addition to that, a $1,500 credit for 2 years of college after high school which would, in effect, guarantee community college access to people throughout the country.

My goal here is to make college affordable for everyone, but to make the second 2 years—at least a community college education—as universal within a couple of years as high school is now, because we know we need that. I mean, look at what we're celebrating here tonight. We need more education. So I expect to push it, and if we don't get it this year and I'm successful in the election, then it would be a top priority just as soon as the Congress comes in next year.

*Mr. Brokaw.* Mr. President, some people believe that, for the moment, it's just mostly campaign rhetoric, however, because you have not sent anything up to the Hill yet on the college deduction.

*The President.* But that's because the only way we can pass it now, this year, is if it was put into an omnibus budget agreement. And so that's how I will advance it. And I'm still hoping we can do that. You know, we've got agreement here—look, we passed an antiterrorism bill this year. We passed telecommunications legislation this year. We may get welfare reform. We may get the minimum wage; it's looking very good on the minimum wage. We might get the Kassebaum-Kennedy health care reform bill. If we do all that, I don't see why we couldn't have a budget agreement too.

*Welfare Reform*

*Mr. Brokaw.* Mr. President, before we get back to the Internet questions, I wanted to follow up just for a moment on welfare if I can. If, in fact, you sign the Republican bill that is likely to come down from the Hill, all the projections show that that will push, at least short-term, more than a million youngsters in this country below the poverty line. That's a high risk for youngsters in this country who are already in peril.

*The President.* That's right. There are two problems there. The main reasons for that are the proposal on food stamps, which I think may be moderated some, and what I consider to be excessive cuts in assistance to legal immigrants. We're not talking about illegal immigrants. So before our budget negotiations broke up, I asked the Speaker and then-Senator Dole—now it would be Senator Lott, of course—to consider whether or not we ought to give assistance to the children of legal immigrants, at least who were in trouble through no fault of their own; the parents had an accident or got cancer or were mugged in a 7-Eleven or something. Those kind of folks, it seems to me, we ought to take care of the children. Now, if we did that, then I believe you'd see a continued reduction in poverty.

Keep in mind, we let the States experiment with moving people from welfare to work. I have granted 67 experiments to 40 States. So 75 percent of the people on welfare today are already under welfare-to-work programs, which have helped to reduce the welfare rolls by 1.3 million. Those kids are better off, not worse off, when their folks get off welfare. So that's what I want to do for the whole country.

*Mr. Brokaw.* In 1992 you said we're going to end welfare as we now know it, as we have been practicing it in this country. But most of your welfare proposals have been reacting to what the Republicans have proposed in the last year or so. There have not been——

*The President.* That's not accurate. I started granting these waivers—I had to write the last welfare reform law, so I knew the President could give States permission to try their own experiments. I started doing this in 1993. And then I sent legislation to Congress which was not adopted in '94, so I just kept on doing the waivers. Then I vetoed the Republican welfare bill, and I kept on doing the waivers.

So now three out of four people in America are already on welfare under welfare-to-work experiments. I think you can make a compelling case, as the New York Times said, that we have made a quiet revolution in welfare. I'd like to finish it. I'd like to go on and pass welfare reform legislation. But we're clearly moving in the right direction.

*China*

*Mr. Brokaw.* We have another question from the Internet about, in fact, foreign policy, and we're going to click on to it right now, even as you watch. We'll see how facile our people are, and they're pretty good. "Between the United States and China, what is more important, the economy or democracy?" That's especially a concern to people in Hong Kong, obviously——

*The President.* Yes.

*Mr. Brokaw.* ——because next year the Chinese take over that——

*The President.* Well, I believe over the long run between the United States and China, the thing that's most important is democracy, because I think the freer the people are the more likely they will be to be responsible partners. But the implication of that is, therefore, we should subordinate our economic goals, or we should withhold most-favored-nation status from them and not treat them like ordinary partners if they're not as democratic as we think they should be. That's what I disagree with. That is, imposing some sort of economic sanctions will not make China more democratic. I believe they're more likely to become democratic if they progress economically, if we have regular relationships with them, and if we don't pull any punches when we disagree with them if they violate human rights or do other things we don't agree with.

So I believe that economic development and democracy will go hand in hand. And there is some evidence of that. If you look at South Korea, it's more democratic today than it used to be. It was led by economic advances. If you look at Taiwan, they just had a very raucous election there with a huge turnout, growing out of incredible economic progress in the years before.

So my hope is that we can find a way to deal with the Chinese and be partners with them and agree to disagree but be honest about that so that we can follow economic and democratic objectives hand in hand. I think that's the way to pursue it.

*Mr. Brokaw.* We have a question. I want to remind everybody that we do have a telephone number. It's 1–888–676–2287. That translates, you'll not be surprised to hear, into MSNBC USA, after the 888 number. We have a call now from Miami, Florida, Mr. President.

*Immigration and Cuba*

*Q.* Hello, Mr. President. It's an honor to be speaking with you. As Mr. Brokaw said, I'm calling you from Miami and we are a community of immigrants and there's two questions regarding this community of immigrants that I'd like to ask. It's a two-pronged question, so please indulge me.

*Mr. Brokaw.* If you could just make it briefly, please.

*Q.* The first one has to do with our Cuban community, and we'd like to know whether you are going to enforce the title in the Helms-Burton bill which allows Cuban-Americans to sue companies and the investors in Cuba with confiscated properties.

And the other question that I'd like to ask you is about the Nicaraguan community. As you know, there's a lot of Nicaraguans here in Miami, Florida, which have been here for a great deal of time, many have been here for over 15 years. And there's a limbo as far as to their immigration status goes. Many of them are in great danger because of the Simpson-Smith bill which is pending in Congress. I'd like to know whether you are leaning towards signing the Simpson-Smith bill and whether any decision at all will come regarding the status of the Nicaraguans. And I'd really encourage you to do so, to make a positive decision. These are communities which have contributed enormously.

*Mr. Brokaw.* Let's let the President answer the first one——

*The President.* Let me answer the Nicaraguan question first. The bill to strengthen our hand in dealing with illegal immigration I am strongly inclined to sign if we can get the provision out of there which would require schools all over America to kick the children of undocumented immigrants out of this country, out of the schools. I think that would be a mistake. Every law enforcement group in America has come out against kicking the immigrant children out of the schools.

So we need a bill that would give us some more tools to deal with the problem of illegal immigration. It's out of hand, and it's wrong, and it's costing the taxpayers too much money, and it's unfair to the legal immigrants who wait in line and do what they're supposed to do.

Now, the Nicaraguans present some special issues, as you pointed out, and we will attempt

to resolve those in a fair and honorable way. But on balance, the country needs this illegal immigration bill.

With regard to the Helms-Burton bill, let me say, first of all, I signed it, as you know, after the Cuban Government shot down two airplanes and killed American citizens who were in international waters. We have already begun to enforce vigorously title IV of the act, which revokes the travel privileges to this country from companies that are involved in dealing with confiscated property. I have to make a decision on title III tomorrow. After this program is over I'm going to have a meeting about it, and then I'm going to have another meeting tomorrow. And I will make a decision. I have, as I understand it, three or four different options under the law. The criteria is that I must do what I think is in the national interests of the United States and what is most likely to bring democracy to Cuba. And in general, we believe that putting more pressure on does that.

As you know, we've been severely criticized by our European allies and others for doing this, and I was for signing the bill. But I believe that we have to keep pushing until we get a democratic response and some changes in Cuba. But I've not made a decision on specifically what I'm going to do on title III, and I can't until I have these meetings tonight or tomorrow. I'll make a decision tomorrow.

*Former Senator Bob Dole*

*Mr. Brokaw.* Mr. President, we have another question from the Internet on "InterNight." Here it is: What do you admire most about Bob Dole, the man you're likely going to be running against next fall?

*The President.* Well, there's more than one thing I admire about him, but I think the thing I admire most about him is I believe he really loves our country. He was hurt very badly in World War II. He could have been embittered. He could have walked away. He could have lived a very different, secluded life. He threw himself into politics and public life.

And on several occasions when I had to do unpopular things, even when he disagreed with me he didn't try to stop me. When I tried to help Mexico because I thought it was important—it was unpopular—he agreed with me. When I tried to support democracy in Haiti, he disagreed with me. When I went into Bosnia, he disagreed with me, but he didn't try to interrupt it because he believed that you could only have one President at a time.

And I believe he really loves America. And I think that's the first and most important thing for anybody who wants to get into public life. And I admire him. I think it's genuine, and I admire it.

*Former Governor Richard Lamm*

*Mr. Brokaw.* What do you think about the issues that your old friend Richard Lamm is raising, the former Governor of Colorado, and the manner in which he is raising them?

*The President.* Well, I haven't—I don't know about the manner in which he is raising them. I haven't had much time to keep up with the manner in which he is raising them. But I have known him a long time and very well. And many of these issues we've discussed probably for 10 years or more now. And he's a brilliant man, and he's a man with some very strong convictions, and he looks at the world in a unique way. And I'm looking forward to whatever contribution he makes to this debate.

*Democratic Convention*

*Mr. Brokaw.* Will Mrs. Clinton have a role at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago? Do you expect that she'll address the delegates?

*The President.* I don't know. She didn't—I don't believe she spoke in 1992. There was a campaign film in which she spoke, but I don't believe she did. And we really haven't made a lot of the final decisions yet.

It's her hometown, and she's looking forward to kind of hosting a lot of things there in Chicago because she always has considered it her home, and she still has a lot of friends there from her childhood, and a lot of them are very active in the convention. So she'll be very active there. But we haven't decided what specifically she'll do.

*"Independence Day"*

*Mr. Brokaw.* Here's a question from the Internet, one more: "Independence Day," the movie, could we really fight these guys off or what, Mr. President?

*The President.* I loved it. I loved it and——

*Mr. Brokaw.* A lot of people did, apparently.

*The President.* Mr. Pullman came and showed it. I thought he made a good President. And we watched the movie together, and I told him

after it was over he was a good President, and I was glad we won. And it made me wonder if I should take flying lessons.

But yes, I think we'd fight them off. We'd find a way to win. That's what America does. We'd find a way to win if it happened.

The good thing about "Independence Day" is there's an ultimate lesson for that—for the problems right here on Earth. We whipped that problem by working together with all these countries. And all of a sudden the differences we had with them seemed so small once we realized there were threats that went beyond our borders. And I wish that we could think about that when we deal with terrorism and when we deal with weapons proliferation—the difference between all these other problems. That's the lesson I wish people would take away from "Independence Day."

*Mr. Brokaw.* Mr. President, we thank you very much for being our first guest here on "InterNight," the new enterprise of MSNBC, which combines cable television, of course, and the Internet and telephones and over-the-air broadcasting as well. We thank you very much. We wish you well, and Bob Dole as well in the coming months.

*The President.* Thank you very much.

NOTE: The interview began at 8 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Boris Yeltsin, Deputy Foreign Minister Georgiy Mamedov, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, and Security Council Secretary Aleksandr Lebed of Russia; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; King Fahd bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia; Bill Gates, chairman, Microsoft Corp.; Richard Lamm, candidate for the Reform Party nomination for President; and actor Bill Pullman. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

## Remarks to the National Governors' Association Conference

*July 16, 1996*

Thank you. Thank you very much, Governor Thompson, for your kind words and for all your good work as chairman of the NGA over the past year. And thank you also for your work on reform, especially on reforming welfare, not only in the bold plan you have developed in Wisconsin but also as a leader on behalf of the NGA on Capitol Hill. And to Governor Miller, let me add my congratulations to you as you take on the responsibility of leading the NGA. It's one of the best jobs I ever had, and I know you'll enjoy it as well.

I regret very much that I can't be with all of you for this meeting. I had especially looked forward to being with my good friend and my fellow Democrat Governor Pedro Rossello in Puerto Rico, and I hope I can see you there before too long. But I'm glad you're there, and I'm glad you're having a good meeting.

This is the 4th year I have spoken to the NGA as President. And more than ever before, I believe that we are poised together to make real, bipartisan progress and that our Nation's Governors have a critical role to play. I want to thank all of you for the work you have done so far to grow your economies, to help your people be better educated, to reform welfare and fight crime and preserve the environment and move people forward.

We have to think a lot about that now. We all know that just 4 years from now we will enter that long awaited and very much discussed 21st century. You know as well as any group of Americans that there are tremendous forces of economic and social change remaking our country. I believe that on balance this is a positive and hopeful time, an age of enormous possibility, a chance for us to build a country and a world for our children that is stronger and safer and more full of opportunity than any that has existed before. I believe we can do that if we meet these new challenges with our most enduring values. We have to offer opportunity to all. We must demand responsibility from all. And we must work hard to come together across all our diversity as a great American community. We'll have to meet these challenges not by edicts from Washington but by working together at all levels, by cutting redtape and working with the private sector, by setting national goals