

Exchange With Reporters in Sequoia National Forest, California July 14, 1992

Presidential Campaign

Q. Mr. President, can you lay the Baker rumors to rest, sir? Can you lay those Baker rumors to rest? Are you going to ask him to return?

The President. The truth is he and I are going fishing. It's pure fishing, pure fishing.

Q. But are you going to ask him to return to the White House or campaign—

Q. Mr. President, what's the most impor-

tant domestic issue besides the economy?

The President. Well, there are so many of them, but education, crime; education, tranquility in the neighborhoods.

Q. Is America and the American economy better off than it was 4 years ago?

The President. Well, some parts of it are.

Note: The exchange began at 11:15 a.m. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks on Signing the Giant Sequoia in National Forests Proclamation in Sequoia National Forest

July 14, 1992

Dale Robertson, thank you, sir. As all of you know, Mr. Robertson is the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service. But I would like to take this opportunity not simply to thank him but to thank the other dedicated professionals that work in the Forest Service. And I'm just delighted to be here today and delighted that Bill Reilly, the head of EPA, is with us; that Congressman Bill Thomas, who claims this as part of his own congressional district—proudly proclaims it, brags about it, understandably so—is with us today; Forest Supervisor Sandra Key; and also an old friend, Derrick Crandall, could join us.

Let me begin by acknowledging the hard work and the valuable time being invested in our environment by the likes of Bruce Howard and the Save the Redwoods League, David Magney and the California Native Plant Society, the Audubon Society, the Nature Conservatory. They all do fantastic work in keeping this the way it ought to be.

I understand we have some special guests here. I met one group of them, and these are the kids from R.M. Pyles Boys Camp. They come out here away from it all to learn how to hike and fish and pitch a tent. They learn how to respect themselves and

respect the land. I believe Teddy Roosevelt had these kids in mind when he spoke of the "beautiful gifts" that we've received from nature, gifts that we "ought to hand on as a precious heritage to our children and our children's children."

The fact is these forests, our lakes, and our lands, they are gifts, the commonwealth that we inherited from our parents, that we borrow from our kids. That's the spirit of this agreement that we'll salute here today. Different groups from Government agencies to private organizations have come together, bridging ideological divides in order to forge an agreement that protects our sequoia groves as part of our national legacy, our common heritage, if you will. Whatever name you put on it, our actions are going to speak louder than words. And when words are memories, when we are long gone, these trees will stand.

America has one of the oldest National Forest Systems in the world, the best National Park System in the world, and the best Wildlife Refuge System in the world. And yet, as President, I have said that the best simply is not good enough.

The Wallop-Breaux Trust Fund is a good example. It's helped us invest more than \$200 million each year to improve our fish-

ing waters and open them up to fishermen. Think of the Potomac River; go all the way across the country and think of the Potomac River in our Nation's Capital. Twenty years ago you literally couldn't even touch that water without being advised to get an inoculation. Now, on warm summer days the Potomac belongs to the windsurfers and the bass fishermen. Around the country, signs rimmed our lakes with the warning: Don't Touch the Water. In two decades, we have spent over \$100 billion to clean up our waters. Today, more and more of our rivers and lakes are safer for the people who swim and fish in them, for the animals that live in and around them.

To help show off our clean rivers and lakes, last winter I signed ISTEA. Let me point out that is the Transportation Act, not the rap act. [Laughter] But that legislation will help bring America outdoors, revamping our scenic byways, blazing new trails, letting Americans become their own pioneers. That's what the pursuit of happiness is all about.

Some will look at the record and say that it isn't enough. I have a surprise for them. I couldn't agree more. Take a look at what I've asked for from Congress, and then take a look at what we've got.

We've proposed, lobbied, and signed the Clean Air Act, the most ambitious environmental law in history: Reduces acid rain by 50 percent, reduces air toxics by 90 percent, brings all cities into attainment with health standards. On this we had good congressional bipartisan cooperation, for which I'm grateful.

We've assessed more fines and penalties for violations of environmental law in 3 years than in the entire previous 18-year history of EPA. I don't see that record advertised in the political process or written about in the press, yet enforcement is traditionally one of the principal measures of an administration's environmental performance. We've convicted more people of environmental crimes in 3 years than in the previous 18 years of EPA. Think about that. A lot of people doing jail time, and those tempted to evade these very sound environmental laws, they're now reconsidering their actions.

We've doubled funding for national parks,

and outdoor recreation and tripled funds for States for parks and open spaces. We've proposed or added 20 new national parks. We've proposed or added 57 new national wildlife refuges. We've added 1.5 million new acres to national parks and then 6.4 million acres to the Wilderness System. We've added 2,700 miles of rivers to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. We've increased funds for wetlands protection from \$295 million in 1989 to \$812 million in 1993.

Then we've also closed off the coastal oil development in California, in Oregon, in Washington, in Florida and New England until the year 2000. We've established three new national marine sanctuaries, including the largest ever, the one at Monterey Bay, that National Marine Sanctuary. We've increased funding for Federal fisheries management by \$80 million and requested full funding for the Wallop-Breaux that I mentioned earlier for sport fish restoration.

Now, that is the record of our actions, of my actions. Now, let's turn our attention to Congress and its response to our proposals. In this year's budget, I requested increased funding for parks, recreation, and the outdoors. And here's what Congress said: Funding for parks, forests, and wildlife, \$250 million cut; a Federal partnership with the States for parks and recreation, \$32 million cut; park and forest acquisition, \$73 million cut; resource recovery for Sequoia National Forest, cut; parks as classrooms, cut; tree planting, we've got a good new tree-planting initiative, cut. I could go on, but the very trees around us might get nervous. [Laughter]

But I cite this because I'm not sure the American people really understand this commitment and what we are trying to do. The fact is not just the trees but all of us ought to be a little nervous. Congress has met a fork in the road now, and they have a choice. On one hand they can gut these proposals, they can stuff them with pork and perks, and then turn around and complain about the environment. Or they can choose another path; they can look out for the voices that don't have a vote: the land, the children, the future generations. I'm asking Congress to do the right thing: full

funding for our land, our trees, our waters, and our parks.

You see, we need more seasonal park rangers, not fewer. We need to acquire more land upstream, not less. Send a message to Congress: We need less papers, less posturing, less promises. And we really do need more action.

Now, we all want cleaner air and water. We all want a more beautiful America. Some flaunt their commitment with these sound bites, and I've proven mine through, I believe, sound policy proposals. Some have sent entire forests to their death to fill books with propaganda, short on facts and long on fiction. But our approach represents new thinking here, a new environmentalism that harnesses the power of the marketplace in the service of the environment.

The fact is only a growing economy can generate the resources that we need to take care of our natural assets. And our environmental policies are designed to give businesses new incentives to prevent pollution, to innovate and create new environmental technologies, and to save money by becoming more efficient. Our objective is to reconcile America's deep desire to improve our economic well-being, to have secure jobs and homes, to be able to educate our kids, and to have water we can drink and air that we can breathe. I believe this Nation can achieve both of these objectives. No other country in the world has come so far along this road. None will go farther than

the United States of America.

The steps we take here today can blaze a trail for others to follow. And in case anyone should miss the forest for the trees, so to speak, here's a reminder: They were here first. These trees have watched history go by. Some of these sequoias, I was reminded by Dale as we walked through the grove, were already seedlings by the time Christ walked the Earth.

I think back to Sequoyah himself. The first time he saw the Bible, he called it "talking leaves." I think those leaves have something to teach us today. In Revelations we learn that "the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." We are healing our forests, our parks, and our lands. It's a beautiful country. And I want more and more of the American people to enjoy settings like we're in right here today. Let's remember to take time to come out, show our kids the land, to walk among the redwoods, to climb a mountain. Our land can heal us, too.

It is a joy for me to be out here with you all today in this beautiful setting. Thank you very much for coming. And may God bless our great country, the United States of America. Thank you very, very much.

Note: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. in the Sequoia Grove. In his remarks, he referred to Derrick Crandall, president of the American Recreation Coalition. The proclamation is listed in Appendix E at the end of this volume.

The President's News Conference With President Carlos Salinas of Mexico in San Diego, California July 14, 1992

President Bush. President Salinas and I had a very good discussion. I think it was extremely constructive. We talked about the status of negotiation among our two countries and Canada to create this North American free trade area, NAFTA. We reaffirmed our commitment to reaching this sound NAFTA agreement just as soon as possible. Let me just say a word about the

importance of this historic undertaking.

We live in a global economy. The fastest growing sector of the American economy is our export sector. And Mexico is the fastest growing market for U.S. exports in the entire world. Over the last 5 years, U.S. merchandise exports to Mexico have increased an average of 17 percent per year, twice as fast as U.S. exports worldwide. And