

and it's as old as the Scriptures. And it can, indeed, make America a better Nation and ensure a more decent world.

To every Presidential scholar, my heartfelt congratulations. Barbara and I both congratulate you and honor you. And to all of you here, thank you parents for what you do. To the rest of you on the Commission, thank you for giving of yourselves to keep this wonderful program going forward.

Thank you all for coming to the White House on this very special low humidity day—[laughter]—on the South Lawn of the White House.

May God bless our great country. Thank you.

Note: The President spoke at 9:10 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Question-and-Answer Session With Employees of Evergreen Oil in Newark, California

June 18, 1992

Mr. Morgan. It's my pleasure, Mr. President, to introduce to you some of our friends, our neighbors. Evergreen Oil is only possible because we have had some shareholders that have had a lot of foresight. The city of Newark has been very cooperative, a partnership. But most of all, our employees are the ones that made this possible.

So, now that I've got the mike, and I'm not going to have this chance again, I want to ask the first question. Is that all right?

The President. That's the way it is, give a guy a little power. [Laughter]

Q. I know there's been a lot of questions about the environment, but one of the things of our environment that has been in the press a lot lately, and I think as a father and businessman and this sort of thing, I'd like to know how your historic treaty with President Yeltsin and the arms reductions is going to affect people like me and the rest of us here?

The President. Well, let me just say that this morning we said goodbye to President Yeltsin, a new kind of Russian leader. Democratically elected, he came to the United States with the vote of the people behind him. And what we worked out in the arms control field is literally historic. There will be no question that what happened as we move to eliminate now, have agreement to eliminate the most destabilizing missiles, in their case the big SS-18's, multiwarhead missiles that for years have plagued everybody, that move is destined

to make life better for our kids.

Curt and I were talking—he's got a big family and so do we—but for years the children in this country have been going to bed with the fear of nuclear weapons. What happened in the last 2 days is really historic. It has an effect not only on the psychology of all of this, but also it has an enormous effect on the jobs for the future. Because what we're doing now as we move down any military threat is to move forward with business exchanges, and the export potential in that country is enormous, which would mean jobs for the United States at home.

So it was historic. It's a joy doing business with this man. I wish all of you could have seen the way in which he was received, maybe you did see it on the tube, by the United States Congress.

The other point I'd make to those who are in service here, for years we've been dealing with the Soviets in the spirit of mistrust for plenty of reason. Anytime you're up against a totalitarian regime, you better keep your eyes open. Now we're moving away from that. And his offer to go in with the KGB file, go the extra miles to see if any information can be shed on Americans that are missing, this is very good. And we have a wide array of areas in which we're cooperating, including that one.

So it was a historic day, and I think it means a lot for generations to come. It

doesn't mean that we don't need a strong defense. Who knows where the next trouble spot will be? We've got to be prepared, and we can't lay down our arms in hopes that everybody around the world is going to do that.

But this was a big meeting, and I think the historic agreement is going to mean an awful lot for the tranquility of our children. That's very important to me, and I know it is to Curt and everybody else here.

Now, who wants to shoot away, in a figurative sense here? [Laughter]

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to ask you—I'm sure you'll agree with me that the future of our country lies in educating our children. And 4 years ago you promised that you would be the education President. Since then, I've seen tuitions go out of the roof. I've seen classes be so limited in our State colleges, the students can't complete their degrees. I've seen our elementary schools get slashed to where there's not even a remedial reading instructor at our local elementary schools any longer. I'd like to know, if you're reelected in November, can you hold true to your promise to be the education President? And how are you going to do that?

The President. Let me tell you—the first place, a good question. Secondly, everything we do is affected by education. For the first time, since I've become President, for the first time in history we have six education goals.

Now, you might say, "Well, what does that accomplish?" It means that we've gotten all of the Governors of the States together, and they have agreed on the goals, the goals that we must strive for: better performance. Kids should start school ready to learn; that means much more emphasis on Head Start, which we've done. Nobody is too old to learn; that means more emphasis on adult education, which we've done. It means proficiency in math and science. It means voluntary testing. So we've got these goals.

Secondly, we have the most revolutionary program in education, called America 2000. I regret to report to you that America 2000's ingredients have been blocked in a hostile United States Congress that is thinking old thoughts. The problems you bring up re-

quire new thinking. I would urge you to take a look at the America 2000. The way to achieve, not for my sake but for everybody's sake, better education is to pass our program America 2000.

It has things like school choice. You see, when I got out of the service and was on the GI bill, why, you could choose where you want to go to school. Pell Grants, you can choose where you want to go to school. But in elementary and secondary education, the parents have no choice. I believe the time has come for the parents to have choice in education. So we're stressing that.

The fundamentals, we've gotten too far away from them in many of our schools. We are stressing that.

So, first place, I think our schools are under constraints because of the economy. This, as you know, is the responsibility of the local government. I do not want the Federal Government to dictate curriculum to the cities. It's much better that Newark decides on its own and not have some bureaucrat in Washington setting the agenda. But we are spending more money by far on education. Head Start funding, which is to meet one of our national goals, is way up; Pell Grant funding is up. So the Federal Government, in spite of these enormous deficits that are ripping off everybody, is putting more money into education.

But the answer isn't more money; it is America 2000, our education program. We need the help in the United States Congress to get it passed.

Thank you.

Q. My question is, I saw you on CNN the other night, and the last question posed to you was, are you willing to open up an "Ask George Bush" line and meet with people, like Bill Clinton and Ross Perot had? I think that this is probably very good for your PR. But why don't you do this more?

The President. Well, I've been doing it, ever since I've been in politics. We had a thing called "Ask George Bush" when these other guys hadn't even started on this kind of an event, and we do do some of it. But I don't believe that the White House should have a—we have a comments line, but I just have a certain respect for the office, and I don't want to turn it into a call-in-

show place. I mean I just think that I owe the people a certain respect for the office of the Presidency.

But this isn't the first time that we've done this. As a matter of fact, we did it not so long ago in an event not too far away in the valley, right here in California. I've been doing it. I did it up in the primaries up in New Hampshire, and I've been doing it ever since I've been running for office.

It's a good thing to do and you do learn. I learn from the questions and learn the anxieties of people. So we're going to keep on doing it. But I'm glad you think that it makes some sense. I'll be honest with you, though. I think in a campaign year you've got to draw the line somewhere. I am not going to be out there, kind of being a teenybopper at 68; I just can't do it. [Laughter]

Yes.

Q. Mr. President, in light of your goals for education, the environment, the rebuilding of the infrastructure, and the social problems, how are we going to make those goals come to pass in light of our financial situation, the deficit and such?

The President. We're not going to if we don't get this economy back. The national economy is recovering. Anemic growth: grew at two-point-some percent here in the first quarter; it will be, I think, a little bit stronger in the second quarter. So the national economy is recovering. Incidentally, 60 percent of the people in the poll I saw that same night I did that show think it's getting worse. In some areas like California it has been horrible, but we've got to get the economy recovering.

The other day we had a chance to discipline the executive branch and we had a chance to discipline the Congress by passing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. I was for it. We got well over a majority of the vote, but we did not get two-thirds because it was blocked by the entrenched liberal leadership in the United States Congress. Eighty percent of the American people want it. It would help. It wouldn't automatically do it, but it would force the tough decisions on the elected members of the Government.

And so that's one thing. I also would like to have what 43 Governors have, the line-

item veto, and see if the President couldn't do a better job of cutting the spending than the United States Congress has done. But more important than just presiding over what we've got is to get this economy to grow. We have a growth program up there that would spur investment in small business. Included in it, also, is an incentive that would spur investment in homebuying. It is a \$5,000 credit for the first-time home buyer. I believe that would not only offer the American dream to some young family but would stimulate jobs in our economy.

I believe that a capital gains tax reduction would stimulate risk-taking and stimulate investment. I believe that changing the IRA's in a way that would increase risk-taking would be very good. So we have a six—you know, everybody's got an eight-point or a ten-point program—we've got a six-point program to stimulate this economy, and it's been languishing in the Congress. In fact, to try to get it passed I ended up having to veto a tax bill because I just could not accept that, the fact that people are taxed too little in this country.

So we're going to keep pushing for economic growth, and as President the only weapon I've got now is to use that veto to keep bad things from happening. But I'm a little more optimistic because I think, one, things are beginning to move on the economy, and secondly, I think people want to see some of these incentives passed to stimulate economic growth. It is essential for California, I think, because we're suffering here with defense going down. In a way, that's good; in a way, that's not so good. Jobs way, it's tough. World peace, it's good. But we need to move with incentives in this economy, and I'm going to keep on fighting for them.

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to know how you're going to balance our immediate economic needs for growth with those of the long-term environmental needs. We didn't look real well in Rio, and I'm wondering how you want to balance those two things.

The President. Well, I'll tell you what, we may have a difference about Rio. I don't think leadership is going along with everybody else. We have the best environmental record in the whole world. Our technology

is fantastic. What you're doing right here for conservation, what you're doing right here is an example of this.

So we've got a good record on the environment. We're the leaders in CFC's. We're the leaders in forestry. We're the leaders in ocean technology. We have the best programs for our parks and adding to wilderness which, incidentally, a lot of that's happened since I've been President.

But what we've got to do is find a balance so we don't throw a lot of Americans out of work by going to the extreme. I could not sign that biodiversity treaty because, in my view, it would take technological innovation like this and hand it over to others and dry up our technology and dry up the labs. I stood up there against the whole world and said, "Look, we want to share our technology. We want to continue to lead on the environment, but I simply also, as President, must consider the working man and woman, the families of this country."

So we're trying to find the balance. We did come out of there in a lot of ways with what they call Agenda 21 and with the climate control agreement, all pretty good agreements. But I was singled out by many of the special interest groups as saying, "Hey, our President should have signed this." I didn't come in here to follow, to jump on the bandwagon. We're the United States, and we're going to continue to lead in environmental policy.

Q. Mr. President, I agree that we are leaders in the environment. But if reelected, what incentives would you devise to aid our country in reducing our overconsumption of the energy resources?

The President. We've got an energy bill before the Congress right now that does that, encourages alternative use of fuels. We have sound environmental practice on offshore. We've got—in this bill, I mean, all—from lighting, kinds of new light bulbs that really save an enormous amount of energy, to alternative uses of fuel. We've got a good program. It's hung up in the United States Congress right now. But I would press forward on that energy bill and try to move forward.

Let me say this as a word of caution, though. We are more and more dependent on foreign oil. It was about a year and a

half ago, when the Persian Gulf situation got fired up, that it was predicted oil would go to \$80 a barrel overseas. And I don't know if you saw what Saddam Hussein said the other day. He said the biggest mistake he made is when he first moved into Kuwait, that he didn't move into Saudi Arabia. You want to project something that would just shoot these gasoline prices right off the scoreboard, try that one on.

So what we've got to do, it seems to me, is to try to become less dependent on foreign oil for security reasons, and that means alternate sources. I may get into a big fight here, but I believe that nuclear power can be used safely. And it's clean-burning—I believe, clean. I believe that we ought to facilitate that rather than turn our back on that.

But it does concern me that we're becoming more dependent on foreign oil, and yet, I think the answer is conservation and alternative sources. That's in our energy bill.

Q. Mr. President—and I assume that you are—what do you think about the oil that we've got to send out for incineration?

The President. What you've got to send out for incineration? Help me, I'm not a technologist, but what I see here I like in terms—refining it.

Q. Well, the oil that fails our test that we do on the field, we send that out for incineration to Kansas, to a facility, the RCRA facility that burns it off.

The President. I'm sorry, I hate to say this. Yes, I'm President, but I don't know enough about the technology to know whether that's good or bad. [Laughter] But I assume this company, committed to environmental sanity, is not doing something that would—help me, though. Are you worried about it, or you think we need to do more of it, or what is it?

Q. Well, I think it should be recycled.

The President. Yes.

Q. And right now, some of the oil that fails, well, all the oil that fails the test is being burned off—

The President. I see.

Q. —in the RCRA facility where they're licensed to do so.

The President. Well, let me check it. I'll just have to say I don't know. I think that's all right for a President, as long as you don't do it all the time. [Laughter]

Q. Mr. President?

The President. Shoot.

Q. With the recent close of many bases, military bases, do you have a plan for employment of our servicemen?

The President. Well, the answer is to get the economy moving so that the men and women coming out of the service get jobs in the private sector. I've addressed myself here to the things I think would help on that. The Defense Department is spending, it's either \$6 billion or \$7 billion in transformation as we move from defense to help people coming out of the military and also to help transfer some of our technology.

Our labs, for example, that have been devoted to some of this highest tech—and we spend \$90 billion a year on everything in the Government on research—those that are now being—they're loosening up that technology to go into the private sector. That will mean jobs. We've extended the GI bill for veterans, for people coming out so that they can then use those benefits for their own education. And as I say, it's \$6 billion or \$7 billion out of the Defense Department for this transformation. So that's what we're doing about it.

Q. Hi, Mr. President. I noticed earlier you pretty much seem family oriented as far as the economy goes. But do you have any type of plan for the homeless? It seems like there's a growing number.

The President. Well, it does. And the plan for the homeless is to fully fund what's known as the McKinney Act, which we've done. The Federal Government has partial responsibility for that. But the responsibility the Federal Government has is to assist the States and municipalities as much as we can. I think we're spending more money as a result of that act on the homeless than we've had before. But it's a tough problem, and I don't believe the answer lies just at the Federal level.

I'll be honest with you: I continue to worry about a third of the homeless who have mental problems. We changed the laws somewhere back in the last couple of decades which permitted these people to

be free of care and attention, and that has exacerbated this problem. I'm not sure that it needs the Federal action on this, but it is an area of which I'm very much concerned, and without shifting responsibility.

I know when Barbara took Mrs. Yeltsin the other day to a soup kitchen there, it was to demonstrate that the Government can't do it all. The, what we call Points of Light, the volunteers that are helping all over the country, got to pitch in and do more. Federal level, the answer is fully funding of the McKinney bill, which we are trying to do and which we propose.

Q. Mr. President, I am a social worker, and I have been working with the Head Start program. I'm currently working in a skilled nursing facility, and I am very concerned about a lot of the senior citizens in our country. They live on fixed incomes. Many of them have inadequate economy, inadequate health care. What are your plans for the future?

The President. We've got a good health care program. Let me tell you how I feel about health care. I've noted that when people need specialized care, need quality care, they come to the United States. We have the best quality health care in the world. What we don't have is access for those that are in the poorer end of the economic scale. The proposal that we have up there guarantees access through pooling of insurance, guarantees access to every person.

It involves giving vouchers to these people that have no insurance. Those vouchers could only be used to get insurance. The insurance would be transferable, so when you left a company you couldn't be cut off and then not get it in the next place.

This is a very comprehensive bill. It includes in it, incidentally, trying to do something about malpractice reform. One of the reasons costs are so high is that all these doctors get sued, frivolously, a lot of the time. We're suing each other too much and caring for each other too little. So we're trying to get that under control.

But take a look. And I will say this: It is the only comprehensive health care reform proposal before the Congress right now. At first, they started off saying: Well, let's try

the Canada plan. Let's try the "pay or play" plan that failed so miserably in Massachusetts that all the small companies started moving across the border to some other State. They're moving back now to our plan, which is expanded insurance coverage to guarantee against what you're talking about.

I still don't have an easy answer for you on how we get these health care costs under control. And we're never going to do what this gentleman is talking about, get this fiscal sanity going, until we control the mandatory programs that a President has no control over now. I'm talking about the increases in health care, and those kinds of programs that are just going right off the roof.

But I'd take a look at our program on health care reform in terms of making insurance available to all. It's expensive; I think it's long overdue, though.

Q. Mr. President, I represent 1,400 small-business people here in the State of California that perform the smog check program. We have the most proficient smog check program in the United States, in fact in the world. But yet, Mr. Reilly and EPA is stressing a centralized program. I know that you have supported a decentralized program, as it means jobs and income for small-business people. How will you help us in this situation if you're reelected?

The President. Well, what we're trying to do on a broad sense is to get Federal regulation under control. When you do that, you run into the special interests, but we have gotten to be too regulatory.

I headed a task force for President Reagan on deregulation, and we made some inroads. We have now frozen new regulations at the Federal level unless it can be shown that they're absolutely essential for somebody's health or something of that nature. So I think in a broad sense, the answer is, you've got to ask a person: Do you favor more regulation? Do you favor more control? Or, do you think that less regulation would mean more jobs? I am in the second camp. I believe less regulation means more jobs.

I have an obligation at the Federal level to protect worker safety, for example. But we can overdo it. We can pass frivolous regulations. I have an obligation to guarantee

health as best one can, I believe. But we can overdo it by frivolous regulation. And sometimes, in the environmental area, we get too regulatory. I've had to rule very recently on a case that came down in the favor of less regulation.

I'll tell you when it gets to you as President, it's when you really have to sort out regulation and then the welfare of a family. I know there's a lot of spotted owl jokes around. But you go up to the Northwest; there are not many spotted owl jokes, because the question is: Do you protect this feathery little guy and go the extra mile if that means throwing 30,000 families out of work? I had to make a comedown the other day on a decision saying no. We've got to protect the environment. We've got to do better by the old growth forests. We've got to help preserve these species. But if you're asking me to choose between throwing 30,000 or 15,000 families out of work or the owl, I'm going to have to give an awful lot of emphasis to the families.

When we get this economy growing and things moving, then maybe you lean a little more towards protection. But I find in this job you're always balancing these interests. It isn't always black or white, and there was a decision I cite because it's a tough one. Some of the people out here with their signs I'm sure would be 100 percent on the other side. At least I have it in my conscience here and down in Rio: Hey, American family matters. And a lot of them are hurting, and as President I am not going to go down here, sign something away, and then have on my conscience that a family doesn't have a job.

Q. Mr. President, we've proved here that, using high technology, you could produce a product of the highest grade, emission-free. It seems like the big boys that have the money, like refineries and all that stuff, they tie things up with their money and their power in politics, if you will. Because we've proved here that you can produce a product by spending the money with no emissions, at what point in our history of mankind are we going to allow the big boys to continue to pollute just because they have the money and the power, if you will,

to hold off when we've proved that it can be done now?

The President. My being here, I hope, identifies with your technology, identifies with the conservation ethic that I understand is prevalent here. You'd have to give me a specific to know where I would come on down on adjusting some differences between these interests. Again, I'm not a specialist; you could tell from my answer over here to this question on your industry.

But I do think that when you have this technology and when you have this commitment to the environment, what the Government should do is to be sure we're not standing in the way of your competing or of your being able to sell your service or sell your product. That gets back to this man's question on regulation, gets back to his on economic growth. So, I don't know again the issue of what major company is trying to cut down on what you're doing, but I want to be identified with those who are innovating and those who are conservation-oriented and those who are doing their part to clean up our environment and make us more efficient. And that's what I think you're doing.

Q. Mr. President, thank you. I'm also one of the people in that smog check program in California. And for some reason or other the EPA seems to think that they've been mandated by the Clean Air Act to inject a monopoly into the smog check system and force people to go to a centralized monopoly smog check deal. You commented on bureaucracy and the little guy and there are a lot of us out there that feel like we've been doing a hell of a job trying to clean up the air and now the EPA seems to think that their job is to put us out of business, and we don't understand.

The President. Well, I don't want any Government Agency to even have the reputation for trying to put people out of business; what we're trying to do is put them in business. Now, the Clean Air Act was historic environmental legislation. And yes, it's caused some burdens in some areas, but I still believe that it was proper.

I believe our use of market incentives to try to meet these pollution standards is very, very important. But again, in this case, please understand that if there's some re-

gional office or some area that is trying to act like they have the whole say and the local entrepreneurs or local agencies don't have any say, that is not what I want.

So in this case if there's some specifics I would be happy to take a look at it, because I don't believe any bureau in Washington or Department in Washington has a monopoly on how we do things.

The lady's question on education comes back to me, because for years we've had every mandate coming out of some subcommittee back there inflicted on local school boards. You want Federal money—it's your money—you want Federal money, you've got to comply with a bunch of standards out of Washington. Our whole approach to education is different. Our whole approach to deregulation is different.

So, it would distress me if local initiative on cleaning up smog, for example, was being overridden by needless, needless regulation. Now, if they'll argue, "Well, you're not doing enough," then we'd have to take a look at it and see that that's adjudicated.

Q. I brought a letter to the President. Maybe you can read it on the plane if you run out of—

The President. I'll read it. If I run out of light reading, I'll take a look at it. [Laughter] No, I'd be glad to, sir. You trying to get me out of here? [Laughter] This is fun.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. How would you explain the current situation of so many people that voted for you 4 years ago are willing to vote for somebody like Ross Perot? Again, you've spent your whole life in the public service, and he hasn't. Why—

The President. Let me tell you this: Thank God, I have not spent my whole life—I computed it the other day: 50 percent since I got out of college in business, starting a business, running a small business, and doing stuff in business; and 50 percent in Government. I wear the business as a badge of honor because I think it gives me some feel for what it means to run something.

But look, I understand the discontent that's out there. This economy has been in the dregs. But I will end with this statement: I believe that when the whole record

is looked at, the economy is coming back, and when people take a look at things like world peace, whether it's a good thing that their kids go to sleep at night without the fear of nuclear weapons, when they take a look at what we're talking about here and have done in terms of education goals, it will be fine. But right now, I think a lot of the problems that face me politically are saying, hey, everybody in ought to be out, and everybody out ought to be in.

But that's not the way it works. I mean, I will take the case to the American people that these ideas and many more that we haven't talked about are blocked by the Congress. I'll say this to the American people: You've got to work with Congress one way or another. We've tried it with Democrats controlling both Houses of the Congress, and that didn't work. When Jimmy Carter went out, inflation was right through the roof, interest rates were high, and the "misery index," they called it, was terrible.

What we haven't tried is where the Republicans have both, control. And the reason I say it ought to be tried is, I think what's on people's minds today, one of them, is safety in their neighborhoods, crime. I hear people coming out here on these little bites on television, saying, "Well, hey, we need a tough crime bill," the same people that vote against the tough crime bill that we want to get passed back in Washington. Right today, the American people want to back the law enforcement community and want strong anticrime, antinarcotic legislation. We have been trying to get it through the liberal leadership in the Congress for 3 years, and I'm going to take that case to the American people.

But right now I don't think it's in focus. I think what's in focus is kind of a discontent. But I believe it'll change, and I believe that our record will be—which it does include Clean Air Act, it does include child care legislation that gives the parents, rather than the Federal Government, the choice of where you have your children get cared for. It does include trying to get ahold of this Federal deficit. So I think what happens is we go through this period now, and then it gets in focus. I would remind some that 4 years ago to this very day I was 18

points behind the opponent. Got it on focus by November, and I'll be trying hard to do that.

But when it comes to who is doing something on this big painting, world peace, changes—right now you have a lot of revisionists on the Desert Storm. It was a proud moment. The reason it was a proud moment is, our country took the lead in an historic coalition and stood up against aggression. Now you've got a lot of people trying to tell us it was wrong, and it was right. So that one's not in focus, either.

So I think the record—I'm not satisfied that we've gotten enough done. But I'm going to say I want to be President for 4 years and here's why: I want to finish what we started on education. I want to do what I've said we're going to do here on health care, get that program through. I want to pass our anticrime, antinarcotics, pro-law-and-order crime package. That alone is enough reason to ask the people for their support for 4 years.

But right now, there's a hurricane blowing out there. And all I can do is try to run this country as best I can and then take this case forcefully.

I've been here for, what, 30 minutes sitting on this stool, and you haven't heard one negative comment against either of the two people that want my job. And you're not going to hear one until maybe the middle of August. [Laughter] But then you are, because I know how to fight. I'm not going to be their spear catcher for the rest of this year; I can tell you that.

I think Don's trying to get you guys back to work here.

Well, thank you very much for the opportunity and very good questions. You make Phil Donahue look like a piker out there.

Note: The President spoke at 1:33 p.m. at the Evergreen Environmental Services Oil Refinery. Curt E. Morgan, chairman of the board, Evergreen Oil, Inc., introduced the President.