

I'll study that one a little more."

You can't do that as President of the United States. I had to make a tough decision. Some of you may have agreed with it; some of you didn't. But when Saddam Hussein took over Kuwait, I determined that we were going to kick him out of Kuwait, and we did.

And where was Bill? He said, here's exactly what he said, he said, "I agreed with the minority, but I guess I would have voted with the majority." What kind of leadership is that? Flip-flop, flip-flop, everything to all people. You can't do it. Look the American people in the eye and say, this is what I'm for. I'll call them as I see them. I'll be right, I'll be wrong, but I'm going to tell you the truth. I'm not going to be all things to all people. You can't do it.

And so I think character is important. And I think trust is important. And Barbara and I have tried very hard as a family to uphold the public trust. The honor of living in this, the most fantastic "people's house" in the entire world. We have changed the world. These kids go to bed at night without

the same fear of nuclear war that their mothers and dads had. And that is significant challenge and significant change.

And now what we've got to do is take that same leadership, and working with the new Congress—and there will be one, there will be over 100 new Members of the United States Congress—say, I want to sit down with you the minute this election is over and do the people's business. Get on with the business of lifting up every family in this country and telling them, not like Clinton does, that we're a Nation in decline, but we are the best, the fairest, most decent country in the entire world. And now let's make life better for every single American.

Thank you all. Thank you very, very much, and may God bless the United States of America. May God bless our great country. Thank you.

*Note: The President spoke at 3:35 p.m. at Veterans Memorial Park. In his remarks, he referred to Bob Grant, WABC radio talk show host.*

## Question-and-Answer Session in Secaucus, New Jersey

October 22, 1992

*Rolland Smith.* We're very excited about tonight's exclusive event. This is not a debate. It's not a news conference. It is a chance for the President to interact with our studio audience. Our audience tonight is made up of a cross-section of the State's residents, people from all walks of life, and I've got a handful of questions that the viewers have phoned in.

But now please join me in welcoming the President of the United States, George Bush.

*The President.* Thank you very, very much. Thanks a lot.

*Mr. Smith.* Obviously, a warm welcome for you, Mr. Bush.

*The President.* Well, it was very nice.

*Mr. Smith.* Are you ready for questions?

*The President.* Sure. Fire away.

### *Health Insurance*

*Q.* I'm a health care worker from Bloomfield, New Jersey. My question to you is, if elected President again, what would you do to keep down the spiraling cost of health care insurance, and at the end of 4 years will everyone have health care, health insurance?

*The President.* Rolland, you're on a subject that I think is of paramount importance to everyone. Our health care plan works like this: It provides vouchers to the poorest of the poor to get—give an insurance to the kind of overworked next layer in the tax structure. It gives tax credits up to 3,750 bucks for the family. It pools insurance. I don't believe that we need to go the Government route. I believe that the way to get these costs down is through competition, providing insurance for all.

One of the ways you get costs down, to get to the second part of your question, is to do something about malpractice insurance. I've got a big difference with Governor Clinton on this one. It costs \$25 to \$50 billion, these crazy lawsuits, and what happens—if you're in the field, I'm sure you know this probably a heck of a lot better than I do—but what happens is, doctors, to protect themselves against these crazy lawsuits, do more testing than is required. Hospitals, to protect themselves, sometimes say, well, instead of giving one test, give three.

So we've got to do something about malpractice insurance. We have got to continue to make the field more competitive. I say pooling will bring down the costs, and then we've got to really get started and try to be sure that everyone is insured. I believe that will bring the costs down. We're also in an electronic age, and this automatic billing and this putting everything together in this managed care, all of those will contribute to getting the cost down. The first thing I think is to get the insurance available for all. There's a lot of people that are not covered now, and we're going to do that.

I think I can get it done, too, because the Congress has got—hey, they've had different ideas, but here's what's going to happen. You're going to have a whole bunch of new Congressmen because of the scandals in the Congress, and I believe then people will say, let's get the people's business on. And I've taken this case to the people, and I think this plan will be the one they try. So I'm a little more optimistic than I was a couple of months ago.

Thank you. Good question.

#### *Incentives for Small Business*

*Q.* Your opponent Ross Perot has promised to help allocate funds for startup businesses to create jobs. What would you do in your administration, help raise startup capital for inventors like me to create jobs right now? And why should I vote for you again, which I would like to do, but we're currently being strangled by the economy?

*The President.* Well, let me put the economy in perspective first, if I can. We're in what's called a global slowdown, or a global recession. I'll take my share of the

blame. But when you look at Germany and Canada and France and the European countries, it's hard to believe, we're doing better than they are. It's the U.S. that's going to lead the way out.

The answer to your question—I don't think Perot said he's going to give small businesses money. Our small-business program says give tax incentives, an investment tax allowance. I want to get that through the Congress. I want to do a capital gains. People say a capital gains cut is a tax for the rich; the enemy, the opposition says that. It's not. It's going to stimulate investment in new businesses. A person's going to take a risk if they know they can keep a little more of what they earn.

So it's that. You talk about small business getting stimulated, my credit for first-time homebuyers says to a homebuyer who never owned a home: You're going to get \$5,000 credit. It stimulates a lot of businesses that supply the housing industry. So I think those three things—cutting down on the paperwork, regulation strangling a lot of small businesses, is the way to get it done.

*Q.* Yes. But right now, the SBA loans are for businesses that are in business. And for startups, the capital is not available. You cannot—

*The President.* I don't want to mislead you. I don't think the Government will put money in risktaking. I don't think the Government—see, I think—and I don't think Ross Perot will do that. He may. He's got enough money. He can do anything he wants to do. But I don't think—[laughter].

*Q.* I wish he'd lend some to me right now.

*The President.* No, I know. But, I mean, I don't think anybody will say that the Government, the taxpayers—you've got a good idea, maybe, but I don't think everybody here should be asked to see if it works or not.

*Q.* True.

*The President.* I do think what you do is when you get it started, you ought to be able to get loans at a better rate if you're a small business. You ought to be able to do better on the insurance. And SBA is doing better now, and I think that's the approach I'd take.

*Mr. Smith.* Did that answer your question?

*Q.* Thank you very much.

*The President.* Good luck to you on that.

#### *Family Values*

*Q.* Mr. President, the issue of family values has been raised during this campaign. Unfortunately, your opponent and the media has focused on what is a family rather than on what are values. If reelected, how will you get the focus back on values and get the country on track related to this issue?

*The President.* Well, you're onto something. We talk about family values. And the more liberal side of the political equation say, who are you to tell us what size family there ought to be, or something of that nature. I was on another network here. I've got to be a little careful. But the question was, "Do you and Barbara think your family is better than the Clintons or the Gores?" I said, "You're missing the point."

I put it like this: The mayors, including Tom Bradley, a Democrat from Los Angeles, came to see me, the mayors from the National League of Cities, little towns, big towns, Republicans, Democrats. They said the biggest single concern of urban decay is the decline in the American family. So let me tell you—and it doesn't mean you have to have a two-parent family. But what it does mean is kids ought to be taught discipline; kids ought to be taught respect for the law; kids ought to have parents read to them. Government can't do this. Parents ought to have choice in child care. We've already got that in the law. I think choice in education is good. I think it strengthens family for a mother and a father or a mother alone or whoever it is raising a kid to be able to choose a choice and get help from the Federal Government for public school, private school, or religious school.

When Barbara reads to kids, I think it's saying, you ought to read to your children. So it's a broad array of things that I at least have in my heart when we talk about family values. We are not going to be scared away from it. You can't legislate it. It's not something where you can pass a family value act and say, okay, everybody adhere to these standards. It's something we know

is wrong. When you have 13-year-old pregnancies going up and up and up, don't tell me family values is not important. It is. So that's what I'm talking about.

How you do it, how you strengthen it, a lot of it is through the private sector. He won't tell you this, but I will. We have a program called Points of Light, and it salutes those in communities all across the country that help others. This station does something for family values. They're, I think, the 12th Point of Light out of 1,000, the 12th one named. Everyone here, I'm told, participates in education, helping adopt a school or whatever it is. If a parent's not there, these people are there to help out and say, get the kid so everyone knows his name and everybody can lift him up, dust him off on the playground, and put him back in the game. Family values, sometimes it's a parent. A lot of times, because of the way families break up and we've got so darn many divorces and stuff, it's got to be community. This station is doing it. I think they strengthen families.

Anyway, that's the end of speech. If I go too long—I get wound up, Rolland, so you say, look, to me, because we don't want to deprive them. You just—and I'll try to make the answers short.

#### *School Choice*

*Q.* Mr. President, I'm concerned about the voucher system. The Milwaukee school system, I understand, was the first school system in America to institute such a system where they have publicly subsidized private school choice programs. Their attrition rate has been remarkably high, 46 percent. It doesn't seem to be working. And I'm concerned about the program, number one. And secondly, is this a violation of principle of separation of church and state?

*The President.* No, it's not a violation. The GI bill was not a violation. I'm old enough to have gotten out of the war, and they gave me the GI bill. You know, it didn't say you have to go to a religious school, public school, or private school. It worked. Those schools that weren't chosen picked themselves up and did better.

Milwaukee is working. If it weren't why would the Mayor, a Democrat, why would

Polly Williams, a black former member—I think she was a Democrat in the State legislature, whose own child has benefited from this choice, come down to the White House, as they did a few months ago, and say you ought to try it nationally? I don't know about the numbers. All I know is they believe it is really working there.

It's not violation of church and state because the money goes to the family, the voucher goes to the family. And it's not just Milwaukee, but it is working.

Do we have time to tell this example? She mentioned Polly Williams, a black mother whose child was in a bad public school, one that wasn't achieving anything. They said, "Your kid is dysfunctional, or he can't keep up." She said, "He's not dysfunctional. He's a good kid." And she arranged through this program to get the kid into a private school; chose a different school, and the kid is really achieving now. And the school that he left, she tells me, is trying to do better now.

So I don't think it's a—I know it's not a violation of church and state, and we ought to try something different. We've used the same educational system for years. We're spending more money now, my administration is, than any other administration on education, and I'm not happy with the results. So try something different. That's my— [applause].

#### *The Economy*

Q. I'm a self-employed sports photographer. A few days ago you were quoted in the local newspaper as saying when the history of the recession is written, the recession will have ended five quarters ago, four quarters ago?

*The President.* Five.

Q. What we've been reading also in the papers is that the majority of people in the country are still having trouble finding work. Thousands of people are still being laid off. The gross national product is either flat or down. Exports were down last month. I don't understand. Could you please explain how you justify that statement?

*The President.* Good question. The definition of a recession that I was using, and it's the technical definition, is two straight quarters of negative growth. Do you agree

with that?

Q. That's one definition of it, yes.

*The President.* Well, what's another one? Another definition is, if you're out of work it's a depression, not a recession. So that is the technical definition. We have had five straight quarters of economic growth. And that's what I was referring to. I'm not trying to say people aren't hurting. We've had 3 straight months of national unemployment going down. Today, we had the lowest unemployment claims announced in the last couple of years. So there are some encouraging signs.

Interest rates are down. If you're a saver, you're not getting wiped out by inflation. If you're borrowing money, had a home mortgage, you can refinance it and save a pretty good chunk of change. The last time the Democrats had the White House and the Congress, interest rates were 21.5 percent.

Q. They were also that high under Mr. Reagan's term as well.

*The President.* Well, if they were, it was for a month or two, because they've been down now. And the point is they're way down, because the "misery index" that was invented by the Democrats of inflation and unemployment was 21, and now it's 10.

All I'm saying is, not everything is good. But I'm telling you—you asked me how I arrived at that—

Q. You said the recession would have been over 5 months ago. I think a lot of people in this country would disagree with you. And the definition of terms—

*The President.* May I finish and let me answer that for you? I sent up to the Congress—this guy asked the right question on small business—a bill to put in an investment tax allowance, stimulate business. I put in one on a capital gains tax. I put in one that said this first-time homebuyer should get a credit. All three of those would stimulate the economy, and none of them have come down to the White House. That's what I was referring to. You may not agree with it, but that's what I was referring to. And I'm convinced it would have—past pluperfect, or whatever it is—stimulated the economy. I'm absolutely convinced of it.

*Balanced Budget Amendment*

Q. Mr. President, you are a supporter of the balanced budget amendment to the United States Constitution. Can you please tell us why you have never presented to Congress a balanced budget?

*The President.* I've presented four of them. I can't do it in one—you mean in one year?

Q. Balanced budget, yes.

*The President.* You can't do it in a year.

Q. Any year. One balanced budget. Well, then, why the proposal of a balanced budget when it's almost impossible to achieve?

*The President.* Let me clear it up for you. The balanced budget amendment would have to be phased in. There's no way you can balance it in one year. Everybody concedes that. But I have submitted 4 straight years to the Congress. It's printed—I'd get a hernia lifting it. Really, it's out there, and it brings it down each time to zero after 4 or 5 years, 5 years.

The balance budget amendment would discipline not only the Congress but the executive branch. The States live under it. Governor Clinton talks about he's balanced the budget in Arkansas. He has to. That is the law. We got it very close in the last Congress. We got down—I think the votes separated were about six votes out of a mainly Democratic-controlled Congress. And six or seven of the people that had cosponsored it got the leaderships to twist their arms out of their sockets, and they voted against the thing they cosponsored.

It's not magic, but it will discipline the Government. So will a line-item veto. So will the check-off I've proposed. The check-off says to a taxpayer, look, if you care about the deficit, check 10 percent of your taxes that have to go to reduce the deficit. Can't be offset by spending increases.

So I really think these—

Q. Will that affect entitlements, though? Won't that affect some of the entitlements, the 10 percent checking-off?

*The President.* No. Well, it will affect getting the budget deficit down, and that depends on how the Congress and the President do. Here's what we're going to have to do to get it down. There isn't any easy formula. There's no free lunch out there

anymore. You're going to have to control the growth of the mandatory spending programs. You don't have to cut them, but they can't grow as fast. And that I really believe is the answer. Set Social Security aside. Don't touch it, and control the growth of the mandatory programs. Two-thirds of the budget, the President never gets to sign it, never gets to touch it. It's automatic because, as you say, it's an entitlement.

*Gridlock*

Q. Mr. President, you criticized the gridlocked Congress, and you just did again—

*The President.* Yes.

Q. —that gentleman's question. Yet, President Reagan didn't seem to have that much trouble getting major legislation such as tax reform accomplished. Why haven't you been able to do the same thing?

*The President.* I think we have on some things, child care. One of the great things is the Americans for Disabilities Act. It says to the handicapped or the disabled, we're going to get you into the mainstream, a major bipartisan agreement. A lot of Presidents tried to get the revised Clean Air Act. I happen to believe strongly in clean air. We passed that with this Congress. We passed the highway bill, \$150 billion infrastructure bill. So we've gotten a lot of things done. But on this one, I've got a big difference with—maybe with—I know I do with him, but he isn't in the Congress. Thank heavens. We've got enough guys like him. [*Laughter*]

No, but we've got a big difference. I mean, I honestly believe that the Democrats that control the Congress, not all but those that control it, have a very different philosophy of priorities. And I think that's why we haven't been able to get these financial incentives through.

But here's why the gridlock will end: Congress has got it so fouled up with the post office and a bank—they can't run a two-bit bank. One party has controlled it for 38 years. Just by accident they should have changed control, and it hasn't happened. Now you're going to have over 100 new Members of Congress, some Demo-

crats, some Republican. But they're going to have to listen to the voters, as I do. I think you're going to see the ability to move, certainly in the first year. The best time for the new President to do something, particularly one that doesn't have to run again, doesn't have to worry about any politics, is in that first 120 days. I think that's how you break the gridlock.

*The Arkansas Record*

Q. Good evening, Mr. President. To get away from the economy, I would just like to know, are the American people ever going to know the truth about Governor Clinton's record in Arkansas before election?

*The President.* Well, I'm trying to get it out. You know, I tried to point it out in the last debate. I didn't do it in the first couple of debates, and I think I made a tactical mistake because he has been talking about my record. And I think, very candidly—I don't want to sound harsh or critical in the lovely ambience like this. However, I think he's been very unfair about it. And I think I'll take my share of the responsibility. Unlike him, if I make a mistake, I'll admit it.

But Arkansas is near the bottom on every single category. He says they've done better in jobs. He takes one period, one month. And for 10 years as Governor, they have achieved 30 percent of what the rest of the Nation did. On education, 75 percent of the kids that graduate from high school there have to have remedial education when they get to college. I mean—the environment, 50th. He said the other day, "I want to do for the United States what I've done for Arkansas." And I'm thinking, my God, please don't do that. We've got enough problems.

So the record will be out there. And some say, well, that's negative campaigning. And I'll say, where have you been for the last 11 years with this guy and six others like him knocking my brains out? So I think we need to take that case out there.

*Administration Accomplishments*

Q. Mr. President, what would you consider to be your single most important accomplishment as President?

*The President.* Domestic or foreign?

Q. Domestic.

*The President.* Domestic. I mentioned some of them. I believe in the environment, the Clean Air Act. I think I take the most personal joy in the Americans for Disabilities Act. Worldwide, the fact that these kids go to bed without the same fear of nuclear war.

*Innovation in Education*

*Mr. Smith.* Mr. President, a teacher from the Kentler School in Westwood, New Jersey, had her kids write some questions for you, and this one is, "What do you think about expanding the school year?"

*The President.* I think it ought to be decided by local school districts. I think we've got to innovate in this country. My America 2000 program bypasses the mandates from Congress and says to communities, you decide. You want a shorter school year, fine. You want a longer school year, fine. You want a different kind of school building, but let's innovate. Let's try new things. That's why I answered as I did on school choice.

*War on Drugs*

Q. I'm a mother of three children, and I'd like to know in the next 4 years how are you going to continue to fight drugs?

*The President.* Well, we've got to win it, and we haven't won yet. We've made progress. Teenage use of cocaine is down 60 percent. The addictive drug use, regrettably, is going the wrong way. Back the law enforcement people; do better in interdiction, although we've made some great strides working with Colombia, Peru, and all of these countries. And then back up the law enforcement people with tougher, not weaker but tougher, anticrime legislation that puts these real dealers away for a long, long time, no appeals, not getting them out early. He's trying to get me to do this quicker, but that's a quick and dirty answer. And education, education and rehabilitation.

*Republican Party Platform*

Q. Good evening, Mr. President. I voted for you, sir, in 1988 because I thought you were a moderate. I'm voting for Governor Clinton in '92 because he's the moderate. And the thing is, your convention—Pat Bu-

chanan, Pat Robertson, extreme right-wing jargon—I mean, it didn't seem to fit with George Bush and the George Bush we knew in 1988. Can you talk about it?

*The President.* I'd be glad to talk about it. Our party has room for plenty of diversity in it. The Democrats' convention wouldn't even let somebody speak if they differed on that very sensitive question of abortion. The Governor of Pennsylvania wasn't even allowed to have any air time. And so I'll be glad to talk about it. Our convention was accused by the Governor of New York, the illustrious Mario Cuomo, right in the front page of the New York Post, of being like the Nazis. His cochairman called me a racist, and you can condone this, as a professor? I'm sorry. I don't think that's right.

We have diversity. I don't agree with everything in the platform, and I don't agree with every spokesman at our convention. So we've got a large—

Q. So you don't necessarily stand behind the platform of the Republican Party?

*The President.* Not necessarily every part of it. I differ with—

Q. What do you disagree with?

*The President.* Well, I've already told you my position on abortion. I hope you know what it is. I'm against this wanton abortion. But I don't—favor rape, incest, and the life of the mother as exceptions to it. So I'm not going to necessarily be bound. I'm the President. I'll say what I'm for and what I'm against. I've got to argue with you, I've got to argue on this liberal perception that this is some kind of a racist, reactionary situation there. It isn't. You talk about family values, and the libs say, oh, we shouldn't do that. We should do it. This is vital to the American people, and we ought to endorse it.

#### *The Character Issue*

Q. Mr. President, I'm a comrade in arms from World War II. Unlike you, I'm a doughboy, not a flyboy. I'm very much bothered by Clinton's record on the draft. I have with me his letter that was published in the New York Times February 13, '92, Mr. President, in which he states, "I stayed up all night writing a letter to the chairman of my draft board stating: after all, would

he please draft me as soon as possible." That's what he said. His very next paragraph, he said, "I never mailed the letter." Now, my question to you, Mr. President, did he ever submit himself into the draft before he was saved by the draft lottery number?

*The President.* I'll be honest with you—I'm not ducking your question—I don't know the answer. What I do know is on April 17th he said, "I will get all my records out." It hasn't happened.

My argument with Governor Clinton, I have a different view of service to country, and I have a different view of organizing demonstrations in England when you've got ghetto kids dying in Vietnam. But I was told by some that that's a little old-fashioned. My argument is broader. It is this pattern of saying one thing and then the truth coming out on the other side of it.

Some say character is not an issue. He said it's "the character of the Presidency," not the character of the President. And I could not disagree with him more. I believe they're interlocked. So I think he ought to tell the truth.

#### *Iraq*

Q. Mr. President, I'm self-employed. I'd like to switch for a moment to some overseas events. Today's Bergen Record, there was an article—I have it here—that states that three Federal agencies are investigating U.S.-made equipment that was recently found at a nuclear development site in Iraq by U.N. inspectors. In Monday's debate you said that no U.S. technology was used in Iraq's nuclear weapons development program. How do you account for this discrepancy?

*The President.* I believe this is dual-use equipment. I believe this is dual use that was cleared. If it's not, somebody screwed up, or somebody took equipment that shouldn't have been shipped over there, or not. We never, ever tried to support Saddam Hussein in building his nuclear capability. It is the United States that guarantees he doesn't have one.

So if there was some high-level, you know, just really special level technology that got there, it got there without the knowledge of the United States. But what I

saw today—I don't know about the Bergen Record—was dual-use tech—have you got what kind of equipment it was?

Q. It said that it was an electronic welding machine that we shipped to Iraq in 1988 under Commerce Department license.

*The President.* Okay, well, if it was licensed, that's dual use. I have no problem with that.

Q. For general military purposes, it says.

*The President.* Okay. If it was dual use, it can have a civilian use and others. Some equipment did this. Some computers were in that category. But if it was designed strictly to build up a nuclear capability, it shouldn't be there, and I hope none was there. That's what I was talking about, and I hope it didn't get there.

Q. Isn't it a bit naive, though, to think that if a country like Iraq with a madman like Saddam Hussein at the helm would not try to use some of this equipment for nuclear development?

*The President.* No, I don't think it was naive if the equipment itself is not going to enhance his nuclear capability. I don't think so.

But look, we were trying to bring him into the family of nations. They just finished a war. He had the fourth biggest army in the world. Our friends over in that part of the country who became our allies thought we were too tough on him, thought we were going to drive him into a more totalitarian position. And we had a good program. It included sending grain over there. And it didn't work. The guy then went in and took Kuwait, and we knocked his brains out.

And you've got a lot of Democrats who didn't want to move at all down there trying to make something to cover their own necks and trying to make it look like they were right all along. If I had listened to them, Saddam Hussein would be in downtown Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, and he'd have had a nuclear weapon. So we tried; didn't work. Admit it, go on and do your business. In this case, put him back in his box and destroy the fourth largest army.

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

#### *Foreign Loans*

*Mr. Smith.* We're back with America again. Our studio audience is made up of a cross-section of New Jersey residents, and let's get to some of our questions. This one was called in, Mr. President, on our 800 number: How much of our national debt is attributed to loans to other countries?

*The President.* Oh, I can't tell you the figure. Not anything substantial in terms of the total debt. But gosh, I don't think I could even estimate it for you. Do you consider a grain credit a loan? And you know, you get things where we guarantee loans, but they are not technically loans. I'd say I'd just have to get her name and address and—

*Mr. Smith.* She was probably wondering if it was a large percentage.

*The President.* No, it's not a large percentage. It's a substantial amount of bucks, but in terms of the total debt, it is not. But let me say: Have you got her address, because I think she's entitled to a decent answer.

*Mr. Smith.* I have just the name and other—I'm sure she'll call in.

#### *The Environment*

Q. Mr. President, if I were a Clinton supporter because of his stand on environmental issues, what would you say to convince me that you're at least as concerned, if not more so, than Governor Clinton? And also, how does Millie feel about reintroduction of the wolves into our national parks?

*The President.* All right. On the Clinton record, one of the reasons I have to do a better job in describing Arkansas is they are 50th in the Nation. He said the other night in the debate, "I want to do for America what I've done for Arkansas." That wouldn't be very good. We've got a good record on the wilderness. We've got a good record on EPA enforcement. We passed the Clean Air Act that no other President has been able to do. We've got a good record on planting a billion trees a year in forestry.

So I am not on the extreme of the environment. I believe that you can get compatibility between jobs and in the environment. But I would ask only that you compare these things and more that I've named

with what his record actually is. I don't think that's negative campaigning. I think that's comparative.

I don't think Millie's got a position on the wolves, but—[laughter]—I'm a little wary about that because I think again I'd come down on the side of the people out there that are making their living. I wouldn't want to do something that's going to wipe out their cattle herds.

Q. Do you feel that you're the environmental President?

*The President.* I think I've done well, yes. Don't think we get much credit for it, but I've clicked off some of the reasons I think we should. I came to New Jersey, and I said, "We're going to give you Federal help to clean up the beaches, and we're going to stop ocean dumping." In that area I think we're doing all right. That was easy.

*Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act*

Q. Mr. President, you recently vetoed cable television legislation that would have controlled the sometimes exorbitant fees these companies could charge. Did the veto have anything to do with the fact that your son Neil networks for the owner of one of the largest cable television systems in the country?

*The President.* No, it didn't. I never talked to him about it. I just hope that you're right and that your cable rates go down. My view is that the—and I lost, I lost to the Congress on this. It was a battle of the networks versus the cables, and the networks won. Now I hope your cable rates go down, as they told you they were going to, because I'm out of this. I tried to keep them down by not putting in more regulations. That's why I felt that way. But please be sure and write me when your cable rates go down. I'm waiting. They're not going to do it. I don't believe they'll do it.

They had a big battle, cable versus the networks. I said, "Look, we don't need more regulation." We got beat, and I hope that the other side is right, because they represented that the rates are going to come down. We'll see.

*College Loans*

Q. My question is regarding education.

I've read that you're in favor of cutting Federal aid to families who earn \$20,000 and over. As a student, this would affect me severely. Is it true?

*The President.* No. Twenty thousand dollars over, cutting Federal aid for what?

Q. For student assistance.

*The President.* Well, what we've done is increase Pell grant money. I don't believe that the richest of the rich—and I don't think it's \$20,000—should get the same benefits for scholarships for college—are you talking about college aid? Yes—that everybody else gets. I just think it ought to have some means tests in there.

*American Protesters in Foreign Countries*

Q. My question is a followup to the idea of the distinction between demonstrating here or demonstrating in a foreign land, which I find difficult to understand. But divorcing it for a minute and following your logic, wouldn't it also be wrong, show lack of character or bad judgment if the person running for President were from your generation and, instead of protesting Vietnam, he had protested U.S. treatment of Japanese Americans by quarantining them outside one of our embassies in a foreign land while we were at war with Japan during World War II?

*The President.* You mean to go to—would it have been wrong to be protesting in Japan during World War II?

Q. No, Japan—in one of our embassies. Let's say, Mexico, Canada, whatever it happened to be, outside and organizing demonstrations, protesting American policy, while we are at war with a foreign country?

*The President.* Well, gosh. Back then, I don't think anybody would have done that. It was quite different. It's hard for people to understand it. I make a distinction. We get protests out there, Barbara and I do. We have dinner in a little dining room upstairs in the White House, and you look out, and there's always some group out there. Sometimes they're a bunch of weirdos, and sometimes they're very genuine, people that want to protest something, and I understand that. It's a distinction that I think has a difference, but it's legally—I'm not a lawyer, so I can't prove it.

I just think it is morally indefensible—and maybe it is generational, because I did fight for the country, and I was in combat. I just think it's morally indefensible to go to a foreign country, particularly with the record that we heard a little bit about here tonight, and organize demonstrations against your own country in a foreign land. Come to the White House and do it. It's not legal—it's not a legal difference. It's not a legal difference. It's just—tell you what I think—obviously have a little trouble getting you to agree with me.

*North American Free Trade Agreement*

Q. Mr. President, with your recently signed trade pact, do you really believe that it's going to create more jobs for us—

*The President.* Absolutely, yes.

Q. —companies will go down to Mexico, and they'll get cheap labor. How many people do you really believe will relocate from here to go down there and work?

*The President.* I don't think many will, because if they were—let me ask you this question: If the labor union bosses in Washington are right, and we're going to ship a lot of jobs abroad, why is Haiti not the manufacturing capital of the world today? They've got the lowest wages. Why is American business not pouring into Haiti?

This is going to create—the gentleman's talking about the North American free trade agreement, and that is going to create jobs. It is exports that have saved us in this economy, export jobs in America. And so I disagree with those.

If it's going to lose jobs, you may have one or two, but then retrain. Have the best retraining program in the world, and reach out and create jobs.

Q. It would be nice to retrain if the companies were still here. But if they're going there, they're going to get the cheap labor there. They're not going to—

*The President.* Well, why haven't they already gone?

Q. Because they did not have the trade pact now. Now they do, they can go down there and get the cheaper labor.

*The President.* Well, no, they can go right now. They can locate in these countries. See, the trade pact doesn't just give license to move a business down there. You can

go right now. Take your factory, move to Haiti, and you couldn't get a darn thing done.

Q. How would they bring it back if there wasn't a trade agreement to send products back into the United States, because we weren't going to take all their products. Now that we have this trade pact, we can—

*The President.* I see what you—I think you're making a good case for protection, and I think protection is just 180 degrees wrong. What I think we need to do is expand markets. We're in a global economy. It's no longer just the U.S. We can't live behind these borders. We're caught up in a global slowdown, recession in some countries, growth going down. And so I believe that the way to get out of it is—no, the way to get out of it is to continue to sell more abroad. New Jersey is an export State. You've got a great port. You're moving product out of here. So we just have a difference in philosophy.

*Mr. Smith.* It's also a question State, and we have a lot of them for you. [Laughter]

*The President.* All right, sorry.

*Wilderness Conservation*

Q. I'm an outdoorsman, as I know you are. I enjoy my fishing. What are you going to do to protect our national forests and parks from people who want to chop the trees down, the lumber companies, and destroy most of them and kill off the animals?

*The President.* I don't think you can do that. I think we've got to have good, strong conservation policies. I think we do. We've done something about the old growth forests. We've stopped this slashing approach that you're talking about, although I think that's been going on—better balance on that is being found. And I am an outdoorsman. I am a sportsman. And I think we can take great pride in the stewardship of the parks under me. More wilderness has been created. I don't want to have so much that you deny people access. But we have created more, not less, wilderness areas than any previous administration. But you raise a tough question because you do have to find a balance. We're going to keep striving to do that.

*Child Support Enforcement*

*Mr. Smith.* Mr. President, this came in on one of our 800 numbers. It says it's from John from New York. He says, "I'm 13 years old. My father hasn't paid child support for a year. What will you do to make sure that deadbeat dads pay?"

*The President.* Try to pass laws to crack down on them. And we have to do that. It is simply unfair, and we submitted legislation again that I think makes sense. They don't get the passport. They don't get a lot of things that the Federal Government can control if they don't pay up. And I believe that the kid is right. We've got to put legislation through to back up these families and get these deadbeat dads to do what they're supposed to do.

*Entitlement Programs for the Disabled*

*Q.* Mr. President, my major concern is the cut in Social Security benefits for the disabled, health care benefits for the disabled, job opportunities for the disabled, and a change in the Social Security law to allow disabled people to work without having their benefits penalized.

*Mr. Smith.* What's your question?

*The President.* How do I feel about those?

*Q.* Yes.

*The President.* Americans for Disabilities Act really is helpful to the disabled. The other, second part of it: Do not fool around with Social Security benefits. Don't touch them. I pledged to the Congress in the State of the Union, do not mess with Social Security, and we haven't. So I think we've got to leave that sacrosanct from this lady's very appropriate question, "How are you going to get the deficit down without cutting benefits." You control the growth of the others to population and to inflation, but don't touch Social Security.

*Education*

*Q.* Mr. President, what educational reforms will be used in your next 4 years in the White House?

*The President.* What what?

*Q.* Educational reforms.

*The President.* Educational reforms: America 2000 is our main educational reform. It addresses K through 12. Parental choice I've touched about. Programs to get

the communities involved. We have a thing called the New American School Corporation. And I might say, unlike Governor Clinton, I oppose the English-only legislation that bounces around in these various States because I think it would result in discrimination. And perhaps I'm a little sensitive because I have two grandchildren who are half Mexican, and it makes you a little more simpatico. I think the answer is to go with this America 2000 program that's really going to put the emphasis back at the local community level.

Unions don't like it. The teachers union doesn't like it, but they've never been for me anyway so I'm not going to worry about that. [Laughter] And I want to support the teachers, the teachers, not the NEA. Bilingual, we've got a—I'm sorry I missed it—we've got a strong bilingual program. Money for bilingual is up under the Education Department.

*Bosnia*

*Q.* Mr. President, do you have any plans for United States involvement in the struggle in Bosnia?

*The President.* Well, we're involved. We're trying to help in a relief sense. I don't have any plans to put troops in there. When you commit someone else's son or daughter to war, it's a pretty burdensome thing. And I won't do that until the military, Colin Powell, Cheney, come to me and say, "Here's what we need to do. Here's what our mission is. And here's how those kids are going to get out." Vietnam, we didn't do it that way. We made a big mistake. Saudi Arabia, we did do it the way I say, and something good happened.

But I think the answer is to continue to push on emergency relief. I also think that what we're doing—we took the lead in the U.N. on something called the no-fly zone, passing a resolution, which is now international law, that says the Serbian planes will not fly. And so far they've watched it.

The big question comes: What if they do? Then the President has to make another decision. Do you permit it, or do you do something about it? We can do something about it. The question is—we'll cross that bridge when we come to it. But I'm not

considering sending American kids into this very complicated ethnic, historically ethnic battle over there. It is so sad, too.

*Foreign Policy*

Q. Mr. President, first of all, I want to tell you that my patient this morning was Father John Connally, and he took a census among the—[inaudible]—students in Ramsey, New Jersey. He found that you were an overwhelming favorite, 2 to 1.

The question is the following: Mr. President, the American people owe you a major debt of gratitude for your helping bring the cold war to an end. However, in spite of this, bloodshed in Yugoslavia. Russian troops are still in European nations, and there are still missiles aimed at the U.S. There is continental unrest in the Mideast.

Mr. Smith. Your question, please.

Q. Do you feel that Governor Clinton would be equipped to handle these problems? What, if anything, do you know about his background in foreign affairs?

The President. Well, that's what we call a slow ball in the trade. You can see the seams going across the plate. [Laughter] He has no experience in it. But you put your finger on a problem. There's still danger in the world, and that's why I do not want to cut the defense spending more. We've already cut it by billions of dollars, reduced the troop level by billions. But there are wolves in the woods. And the doctor put his finger on some of them. And we've got to stay persuasively strong to enhance the road, the democratic road for these countries, to be sure those nuclear weapons come out.

One thing I take great pride in is the fact that I worked out a deal with Yeltsin to eliminate these SS-18 missiles, the most destabilizing intercontinental ballistic missiles. We've got that in writing. But we've got to stay persuasively strong to be sure that the deal is finalized and that the troops go out of these Eastern European and these Baltic countries and that peace prevails.

Mr. Smith. Mr. President, thank you. You've had almost an hour to answer the questions from people of New Jersey. Is there anything you'd like to say to our viewing audience tonight?

The President. Well, I don't want to take advantage of them and make the normal political pitch. But let me just say this: That I am not pessimistic about America. I've got a big difference—when Governor Clinton says we're somewhere less than Germany and more than Sri Lanka, I don't agree with that. We're going through an awful difficult time. But it's the United States that's going to lead the world out of recession.

And I will be appealing in the last 10 days here on the basis of trust. You know, I admit to making mistakes, but I also have kept the trust, and so has Barbara Bush. We've been good custodians of the people's house. I think character is vitally important, and I'm going to appeal on that basis. We've got the program. Here's our agenda. I think we can get that in with new Members of Congress.

But the Presidency is more than that, and I want to finish what we've started. I want to lift up these kids and give them hope. Here's a college graduate; it's not right that she's out there now wondering how she's going to get her first job. Her family has struggled to educate her. And I think this agenda is the way to get it done and still get this fiscal discipline back in the mix. So that will be my appeal as we go right down to the wire in the last 10 days.

Mr. Smith. Will you be glad when it's over?

The President. Oh, golly, I sure will. It's been the craziest year. With all respect, and present company excluded, I've never seen the media in such—the one I get the biggest kick out of—I hold up a bumper sticker that says, "Annoy the Media. Reelect Bush." People know what it means.

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

Mr. Smith. Thank you, Mr. President.

Note: The question-and-answer session began at 7 p.m. at the WWOR-TV studios. WWOR-TV anchorman Rolland Smith served as moderator for the session.