

the beginning, and we have got to move forward.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I'm not ruling it out at all, I mean, I—[*inaudible*—but you heard my answer. I just think it is very important that we know exactly what we're talking about: How would it be done? What are the mechanics? How does it rank in order of priority with these other things we have to do, both in terms of what's most urgent, number one, and number two, what can we most likely get done quickest?

And let me just emphasize, if you look, there was a study in one of the papers just in the last 10 days on the deaths of young people by gunshot in one of our major cities which concluded that the increase in the death rate was attributable over a brief period of time, like over the last 5 years—we're not talking about 20 but over the last 5 years—entirely to the dramatic increase in the use of semiautomatic assault weapons as opposed to single-shot guns. That single thing had raised the death rate in the last 4 or 5 years more than any other thing.

So, there are lots of issues here. We're going to try to deal with them all in an aggressive and forthright way, but we have to figure out exactly what to do and in what order. The possibility of movement here has just opened up, and the American people need to keep the pressure on, and we'll keep moving.

North Korea

Q. Mr. President, the North Koreans seemed pretty inflexible yesterday in their statement about their offer being "take it or leave it." Is there more flexibility in private than they're showing in public?

The President. Well, let me just say we have some hope for the continuing discussions. When negotiations are going on, I'm always reluctant to characterize them one way or the other, whether it's GATT or with North Korea. I just don't want to do that. But if you've asked me, have I given up on the discussions, the answer to that is no. We're aggressively pursuing them.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:37 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Interview on "The Home Show"

December 10, 1993

Gary Collins. The President of the United States, ladies and gentlemen.

The President. Gary.

Sarah Purcell. Hello, Mr. President, how are you?

The President. How are you? Glad to see you.

Ms. Purcell. Pleasure to meet you.

The President. Thank you.

Ms. Purcell. Thank you. Welcome to your own home.

The President. Here we are.

Mr. Collins. By the way, have you done all your shopping yet?

The President. No, I haven't even started.

Mr. Collins. Oh, yes, we know what you're going to get, though.

The President. You do?

Mr. Collins. Well, it's bigger than a breadbox but smaller than a bus.

Hillary Clinton. Now, don't give it away.

Mr. Collins. Oh, I'm sorry.

Ms. Purcell. You know how these men are—

Mr. Collins. That's good—[*inaudible*—what are you getting—

The President. I accept.

Hillary Clinton. He seems very happy.

The President. Hi, Socks.

Ms. Purcell. Can you give us any hints about what your plans are for a gift for—

The President. No, I wouldn't do that.

Ms. Purcell. We saw your last year's gifts.
The President. I have made a decision. Do you like that?

Mr. Collins. Well, somebody told us that you shop Christmas Eve, is that correct? Do you like that?

The President. I do two things actually, though. At least in the past I have. When we lived in Arkansas, I had a little closet that was just mine, and I shopped all year long for everybody that I knew, just a little bit here and there. And I'd travel around, and I'd buy something, and I shoved it all in the closet. And

then about 10 days before Christmas, I'd take it out and organize it. And then I would find out what I hadn't done, and then I'd go out the day before Christmas and shop.

Ms. Purcell. Now, who did your wrapping, or did you do the wrapping?

The President. Well, the people who worked at the Governor's mansion did some of it, and then I did some of it. I did a lot of it myself.

Ms. Purcell. Are you pretty good?

The President. Chelsea and I would do a lot at the end. I'm pretty good actually.

Ms. Purcell. Yes.

The President. I'm not bad.

Mr. Collins. I just hate it. I would walk a mile rather than wrap a package.

The President. Well, you know, at the end of the—the last 2 or 3 days I get in the Christmas spirit in a big way, and I do a lot of that stuff.

Mr. Collins. Is that starting to build for you now? I mean, first Christmas in the White House as President.

The President. But really, I become like a little boy again around Christmastime. I don't want to sleep. I just want to, you know, do things.

Mr. Collins. This has really been a year for you folks, hasn't it? I mean, all the things that have been going on, the health reform, NAFTA, the Brady bill. I mean, the list goes on and on, and it just seems you're just getting started. And the polls seem to reflect kind of a turnaround in the feelings about the White House and what the effort is here. It must give you a tremendous sense of pleasure.

The President. Well, when we took office, you know, there was so much to be done and such a huge wall of cynicism that we had to pierce. And you know, when you start really changing things, there are going to be a lot of broken things around and about. So we knew it would be tough, but it was really gratifying to come to the end of the year and to see these ratings come out saying that I had more success than any President in the last 40 years in the first year and things like that. I think people are beginning to see, well, the economy's getting better and the country's moving. I'm very, very grateful for it.

Mr. Collins. So it's going to be a great message this Christmas.

The President. It's going to be a happy Christmas at our place.

Mr. Collins. What do you like about it most? I mean, what's the highlight of Christmas for you—if you had to pick one thing?

The President. If I had to pick one thing, it would be our family's sort of renewed sense of togetherness. It happens every year. Just the sense of gratitude we feel, it really kind of comes together, we feel. We try to remember what Christmas is really a celebration of, and it brings us closer together.

Ms. Purcell. You come from a single-parent family, and I know that Christmas probably is a lot different for you now. How do you feel about those changes in your life? And how does it mean—

The President. Well, I'm just—I'm very grateful. I'm extremely grateful to my mother, who was widowed three times in her life, a very brave lady. And she did a good job for me and for my brother. We're grateful to her. And I think it's real important, as Hillary and I go across the country and try to get more families to stay together and more intact families and support more responsibility for fathers, to point out that there are an awful lot of single parents out there—mostly women but some men—who have done a superb job, who've been fanatically loyal to their children, who've made great sacrifices for their children. You know, if every parent in this country, whether there was a two-parent family or single-parent family, had the internal fortitude and the external skills to put their children first in their lives, the problems in this Nation would drop dramatically in a decade. Ten years from now you wouldn't recognize this country.

Ms. Purcell. I absolutely agree.

Mr. Collins. If we could just keep the spirit of Christmas going a little bit beyond New Year's, we'd have remarkable results.

We talked about earlier tradition. We talked about the food that you're going to share on Christmas Day and so forth. And we waited for you to arrive because I understand, and we have a good source here, that on Christmas Eve part of the fun is doing carols and acting out roles. We heard that you're awfully good.

Hillary Clinton. He's a good singer, too.

Mr. Collins. Is he?

Ms. Purcell. Is he a good singer?

The President. I love Christmas carols.

Ms. Purcell. And you act out the parts in the carols, from what I understand. Somebody's Rudolph and someone's—

Mr. Collins. What's one of his big hits?

Hillary Clinton. Well, "The Twelve Days of Christmas," you have 12 different things to do. So, that's a special thing.

The President. I'm a very good partridge in a pear tree. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Collins. Can you give us an example?

Hillary Clinton. We've never known quite how to act that out, so it's different every year.

The President. Maids a-milking, you know. Swans swimming. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Collins. We'll be back with the Twelve Days of Christmas.

Hillary Clinton. What is it, nine lords a-leaping?

The President. I can't believe I did—yes—

Ms. Purcell. We'll take a break and be right back as soon as we can remember them all.

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

Ms. Purcell. [*Inaudible*—but they actually have, and then you had something that you wanted to present them with, didn't you?

Carol Duvall. Well, I do feel a bit like it's bringing coals to Newcastle to bring you a Christmas ornament after looking at all these gorgeous, gorgeous trees. But we did know that you have an official White House heart ornament that a lot of the quilters around the country had made. Well, we wanted to get into the act, but I know that a lot of our ladies don't all sew, they don't all quilt. So, I tried to copy the idea with a nonsewing one. And this is our little ornament for you.

Mr. Collins. That's a little ornament. Take a look at it. All right, there it is, and here we go.

Ms. Duvall. Now, you're supposed to turn it around to the other side.

Mr. Collins. Turn it around.

Hillary Clinton. Oh!

The President. That's great.

Mr. Collins. Oh, I remember that.

Hillary Clinton. That's so neat.

Mr. Collins. Mr. President, if you can hold that real close over your shoulder, we'll get a—

Ms. Duvall. They've got a shot of it. I'll have to tell you that was before this meeting, so I had to cut that out of a magazine. But it was a nice picture of you.

Hillary Clinton. Oh, thank you. We'll put that on our personal tree.

The President. We've been collecting these ornaments, you know, for a very long time now.

Ms. Purcell. And I know that the two of you have been giving a lot of thought to this being your first year in the White House, your first Christmas in the White House. And I know you must have some special thoughts of things you might wish for the Nation for the New Year and for the holidays. Would you like to start, Mrs. Clinton?

Hillary Clinton. Well, I just wish that the feeling of Christmas and the meaning of Christmas could find a place in the heart of everyone in the country and that it wouldn't be just seasonal, but it would go on and on and help change the way we treat each other and live together.

The President. My hope is that we will achieve more peace on Earth next year, peace in the Middle East, relief of tensions in other places in the world, but mostly that the American people will find a way to bring peace to our own streets, our own homes, our own communities. Our Nation is too violent. It makes a mockery of all the things we say we believe. It is turning the joy of childhood into a tragedy for too many millions of children. And I'm going to work real hard next year to have more peace on this piece of Earth that we inhabit in the United States.

Mr. Collins. Well, I don't know how you can work any harder than you've worked this year.

Ms. Purcell. Absolutely.

Mr. Collins. With the surge in popularity, the people turning to the Government to say, "please help us; it looks like we can't do this ourselves," are you going to feel much more bolder next year in terms of your campaigns and—

The President. Well, I don't know if we can get any more done than we did this year, but I think we can. I think we can move forward on health care, on crime and violence, and on reform of the welfare system to move more people into permanent jobs, which I think will strengthen families. Those are the three things we're going to be—

Ms. Purcell. Two enormous jobs to tackle, but thank you so much for sharing this with us. We really appreciate here at "The Home Show"—

Mr. Collins. We wish you the very, very best holiday.

Ms. Purcell. And thank you for sharing it with us.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 11:49 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Appointment for the General Services Administration *December 10, 1993*

The President announced today that he has appointed Maine businessman Robert J. Dunfey, Jr. to be the Deputy Regional Administrator of the General Services Administration for Regions I and II, covering the Northeastern part of the country.

“This appointment reaffirms the commitment that I have made, along with Administrator

Roger Johnson, to bringing people with sound management experience into the GSA,” said the President.

NOTE: A biography of the appointee was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Appointment for the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation *December 10, 1993*

The President announced today that he intends to appoint three individuals, Jerry MacArthur Hultin, Raymond J. McClendon, and James B. Nutter, to the Board of Directors of the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac), a stockholder-owned corporation chartered by Congress in 1970 which supports home ownership and rental housing through the creation and development of a secondary market for residential mortgages.

“Jerry Hultin, Raymond McClendon, and James Nutter all bring years of financial management experience to the task of overseeing the important work of Freddie Mac,” said the President. “I appreciate their willingness to serve.”

NOTE: Biographies of the appointees were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Nomination for Army, Navy, and Air Force Assistant Secretaries *December 10, 1993*

The President today announced his intention to nominate Deborah P. Christie to be Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Financial Management; Rodney A. Coleman to be Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, Installations, and Environment; and Helen T. McCoy to be Assistant Secretary of the Army for Financial Management.

“Secretary Aspin is putting together strong management teams in every branch of the service,” said the President. “These three nominees are prime examples of that effort.”

NOTE: Biographies of the nominees were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.