

at this little deli with this guy who had been a butcher's assistant when he was 13 years old and had finally saved enough money to open his own deli 3 years ago. And he built it with his hands, and he made this Clinton burger, and I thought, well, I'm going to eat it. He did it. And then I went to this restaurant in downtown Columbus and talked to those folks about health care. And I asked them what they thought I ought to have, and they said I ought to try the corned beef on pumpernickel. So that's what I did. They said that's what was good, so I tried it. Every now and then I lose my discipline. But I lost 15 pounds last year, and I'm going to try to lose 10 or 15 more this year. I like it better. I don't like to diet, but I like the way I feel when I'm a little bit lighter.

Mr. Imus. Mr. President, you were terrific. It's always great to have you on. Thank you very much.

The President. Well, thank you. Don't lose your sense of humor now just because I'm President.

Mr. Imus. No, I won't.

The President. Just give my adversaries equal time, that's all I ask. [Laughter]

Mr. Imus. Thanks.

The President. Have a good day.

Mr. Imus. All right, the President, Bill Clinton, here on the "Imus in the Morning" program.

The President. See you in Lead Hill.

NOTE: The telephone interview began at 8:03 a.m. The President spoke from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks at a Brunch With Senior Citizens and an Exchange With Reporters February 17, 1994

The President. I want to welcome all of you here today. You represent 60 million Americans, and we need your help to pass health care reform.

One of my key tests for health care reform is: Is it fair, and does it protect older Americans? Our proposal does. It preserves and strengthens Medicare. It gives new prescription drug coverage and long-term care coverage to senior citizens. And it protects the choice of a doctor.

Other approaches to health care reform in Congress threaten Medicare by taking money away from Medicare to pay for the health care of others. Congress comes back next week and will take up the balanced budget amendment. It also will take money from Medicare without doing anything to strengthen the health care security of senior citizens.

Make no mistake about it, right now in Congress there are people who represent interests who want to use Medicare as a sort of a bank to pay for other people's health care, to bring down the deficit, to do other things that have nothing to do with the purpose for which Medicare was paid in the first place.

We have demonstrated with our budgets that you can reduce the deficit and still be fair to older Americans. We have demonstrated with our health care plan that you can take savings from Medicare and strengthen Medicare by providing prescription drug benefits, by providing long-term care benefits, by doing something to help early retirees and guarantee the security of their health care plans.

I'm here today to say that I don't want Medicare to be used as a bank for other people's designs. I do want to strengthen Medicare and provide the prescription drug and long-term care benefits, but it can only be done if we fight together for a health care plan that has these provisions. Otherwise, if we don't fight, then these provisions will be taken out of our plan and, in fact, Medicare will be put at risk, either by the balanced budget amendment because of the way it works or by other people's health care plans.

So I need your help. We can do this. We can provide guaranteed health insurance for all Americans and include prescription drugs, which will save money over the long run, and include new options for long-term care, which will save

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money over the long run, but only if you will fight. And I hope you will. I thank you for being here.

Yes.

Whitewater Development Corp.

Q. Mr. President, for the last couple of days, you've been talking about how hard the health care fight is going to be. At the same time, yesterday the Special Counsel in the Whitewater case said that his investigation he thinks is going to take a year and half. Is that going to be distracting for you, and why do you think it's going to take so long?

The President. Because most of it has nothing to do with me. I mean, this decision which many called for is going to cost the taxpayers millions of dollars, because what they did was to shut down the investigation that was ongoing of the S&L issues down there, which I have nothing to do with, and submerged it all in there. So it may take a good while because they have to go over all that ground. But I have really nothing to do with it, and they'll have to do whatever they're going to do in whatever time they're going to do it. The reason I thought it was a good idea to do the Special Counsel was so I wouldn't have to fool with it anymore, and I'm not spending any time on it.

Q. We see your lawyer coming in and out of here quite frequently. Are you meeting with him about this?

The President. I talked to him yesterday. But he basically just gives us a regular update, oh, every few weeks.

Welfare Reform

Q. Mr. President, are you contemplating taxing food stamps and the poor people to support your welfare plan?

The President. No.

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, have you prepared the American people psychologically for the possibility of military conflict Monday?

The President. Well, I have done my best to talk about this, and we'll continue to talk about it as we get closer. I think the most important thing now is that the Serbs and others in Bosnia understand that the NATO allies are dead serious about carrying this out but that if the Serbs will move their weapons or put them under United Nations control, there will be no air strikes, and that we want to do what we can to get a permanent long-term peace agreement. That's what we're really working for.

The American people, I think, understand what is at stake here and understand our interest in not permitting Sarajevo to be shelled and hundreds of thousands of people's lives to be destroyed and in working for a peaceful agreement.

I have not committed ground troops to this conflict. I have said that we would participate in NATO air strikes, and I think it is the right thing to do. But I hope the air strikes will not be necessary, and they will not occur if the Serbs will comply.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. in the Old Family Dining Room at the White House.

Announcement on the White House Conference on Aging

February 17, 1994

The President announced today that he is formally calling for a White House Conference on Aging to be convened in May of 1995.

"I am pleased to resume the proud traditions of White House Conference on Aging begun by President John F. Kennedy in 1961," said the President, noting that there has not been a White House Conference on Aging since 1981. "The fact that this will be the last White House

Conference on Aging of the 20th century makes this one even more significant."

Under the terms of the Older Americans Act, which authorizes that such a Conference be held, a 25-member policy committee chosen jointly by the President and the Congress will be selected to work out the specifics of the Conference, including its agenda and the number of participants. Earlier in the fall, President