Remarks at the Blue Ribbon Schools Ceremony
October 7, 1994

Thank you very much for that wonderful welcome, increasingly rare around here these days. I just wanted to hear the Vice President say those lines from "A Man For All Seasons." [*Laughter*] They're wonderful, aren't they?

Let me say, as you know, we're about to wind up this session of Congress today, tomorrow—sometime in our lifetime, it will end—and that's why I couldn't be here earlier today. But I did want to come by and say a heartfelt congratulations to all of you.

The Vice President and the Secretary of Education have already talked about what we're trying to do here, but I would like to put in a couple of sentences what I think is very important. It's hardly ever discussed in the common discussion, at least, of what goes on in Washington. But we have been quietly, but effectively, trying to create a dramatic change in the relationship of the National Government to the schools of this country and to the teachers and to what is going on in education. It is a change rooted in the experiences that Secretary Riley and Deputy Secretary Kunin and I had as Governors and the hours and hours and hours that we all spent in public schools, listening to teachers, watching people work in the schools, listening to parents.

We have made the Federal Government both more active in education and, yet, less meddlesome in trying to support what you are trying to do. We have tried to put the National Government on record in favor of globally competitive national standards of excellence in education but also in favor of getting out of the way and letting you achieve those standards of excellence in education. And this is a substantial departure. The elementary and secondary education act that just passed the Congress, overcoming the perennial filibuster problem, does just that. It provides targeted funding, more directed toward the areas of real need, but also provides for an enormous amount of flexibility for the schools so that every school can be a blue ribbon school. That, in the end, ought to be our objective in America.

So we will keep trying to do our job here. It will make a real difference that no child should ever walk away from going to college because of the cost, because under this new student loan program, you can have lower interest rates and longer repayment terms, and it can be geared to your salary so that if you want to be a schoolteacher or a police officer, something where you're not going to be rich, you can still afford to pay back that student loan. That will make a difference. It will make a difference in hundreds of thousands of more kids in Head Start; that by 1996, every child in this country under the age of 2 will be immunized; that'll make it easier for the kindergarten and the first grade teachers to do their job. Those things will make a difference.

But in the end, we know what will make the difference is you, the teachers, the parents, the principals, the people at the grassroots level. All the magic of education is still in the human interplay that is a long way from Washington, DC. So we'll keep trying to do our job, but a big part of our job is making sure that you have, to use the new Washington buzzword, the empowerment necessary to do your job. That is our commitment to you; we will keep it. And I am glad to see your smiling faces here today.

Bless you all, and thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

The President's News Conference
October 7, 1994

The President. Good afternoon. Ladies and gentlemen, 20 months ago I came here to make a start and to make America work for ordinary citizens again, to take on some tough issues too long ignored and to get our economic house in order. There have been some tough fights

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along the way, but I believe they were the right fights for our future.

We came here with an economic strategy that was comprehensive and direct: reduce the deficit, expand trade, increase investment in people and technology, and reinvent the Government to do more with less. We pursued this strategy with discipline. Now we have fresh evidence that the national economic program we put into place last year is beginning to work for America.

The Department of Labor reported today that the unemployment rate fell to 5.9 percent, a 4-year low. And the economy has created about 4.6 million jobs since I took office. More jobs in high-wage industries were created this year alone than in the previous 5 years combined. It's not enough, of course. As the census report makes clear, there are still too many Americans working for low wages, living in poverty. There are places in rural and urban America where the recovery has not yet reached.

But if you look at the changes since just a few short years ago, when we were exporting jobs and exploding the deficit, there's a great difference. We're getting our economic house in order. Jobs are being created at home. We're moving in the right direction.

This Congress, as it concludes a difficult session, showed that it could make a difference for ordinary people when it put people and progress ahead of narrow interests and partisan obstruction. It didn't always happen, so let's begin with a look at the record, what's been done, what hasn't been done, where do we go from here. Let's begin with what was accomplished.

The economic plan passed, putting our house in order. It was historic deficit reduction led by cutting over $255 billion in spending; cuts in 300 separate Government programs; raising taxes—or tax rates—on only the top 1.2 percent; cutting taxes for 15 million working families with 50 million Americans in them, people who work full-time but still hover just at the poverty line, so that people will always be encouraged to choose work over welfare and won't have to raise their children in poverty if they do.

We've broken down trade barriers, eliminated barriers to exports, passed NAFTA. Exports to Mexico are up 19 percent, exports of cars and truck up 600 percent in the last year.

They talked for more than a decade around here about making Government smaller, but it never seemed to happen. Well, now it is. Under our legislation we are shrinking Federal positions and cutting the Federal work force by 272,000, to its smallest size since the Kennedy administration. And now, again I say, private sector jobs are going up; the deficit is going down.

For the first time in a generation, we have taken a serious assault on crime, passing the Brady bill and the crime bill with its 100,000 prison cells, its 20 percent increase in police on the beat, its ban on assault weapons, its "three strikes and you're out," and other penalty laws.

The Government is beginning to work for ordinary citizens in important ways. That's what the family leave law was about. That's what the law which will provide immunizations for all children under 2 by 1996 is about. That's what Head Start for 200,000 more kids is about. That's what the national standards of educational excellence with more local control; apprenticeships for kids who don't go to college; national service, so people can earn money for college and serve their communities; and making college loans more affordable for 20 million people who can now have lower interest rates, lower fees, longer repayment schedule; it's what the empowerment zones and the community development banks to bring free enterprise to poor communities are about.

All of this was real progress. It's only a beginning, and more could have been done. But too many times, an idea for creating jobs, reforming Government, educating students, or expanding income, fighting crime, or cleaning up the environment, or reforming the political system was met by someone trying to stop it, slow it, kill it, or just talk it to death.

A lot of the same people just recently signed that so-called Contract With America, a commitment to taking us back to the Reagan-Bush years when we exploded the deficit, cut Medicare, cut taxes for the wealthiest in America, divided our citizens, and sent our jobs overseas. My contract with the American people is for the future: grow the economy, fight crime, take on the tough problems, make Government work for ordinary people.

Congress is leaving town without passing GATT, the world's largest trade agreement. It will cut global tariffs and, over the next decade, means a $744 billion tax cut. It will generate hundreds of thousands of new jobs for American workers. It will keep our recovery going and

sustain growth all around the world. We must not retreat on GATT. That's why I've asked Congress to return and pass it after the election, and I believe they will do that.

But Congress had a chance to do a lot of other things which it should have done but didn't do. It should have passed significant environmental legislation, much of which has the support of both American people and industry and environmental groups. It should have passed health care reform instead of watching another million Americans lose their coverage, as the new data points out happened just last year, while costs increased faster than inflation and more citizens lose the right to chose their doctor. And it certainly should have passed political reform. I think the American people were appalled by the spectacle of lobbyists hiding who they work for, what they get paid, and by Members of Congress accepting their gifts and then walking away from lobbying reform. There's something wrong when a Senator can filibuster this bill and walk off the floor of the Senate and be cheered by lobbyists. Well, the Congress is the people's Congress. The lobbyists may have been cheering in the filibuster last night, but the American people were not.

So Congress has done well on the economy, on crime, on tax fairness, on education and training, on trade, on loans for the middle class, on family leave, on reinventing Government. Congress has not done well on political reform, on environmental legislation, on health care, and on an unprecedented record of using the filibuster and other delaying tactics to try to keep anything from being done.

We have to now resolve to give the American people a choice as Congress leaves town and we move into the next few weeks before this election. Do they really want this contract which is a trillion dollars of unfunded promises, a contract which certainly will lead to higher deficits, cuts in Medicare, and throwing us back to the years of the eighties when we lost jobs and weakened our country? Or do we want to face up to the challenges which were not met in this Congress and use the next Congress to keep the economic growth going, to pass health care reform, to pass welfare reform, to pass political reform, to deal with these environmental issues?

You know, countries all over the world want America to succeed and want to follow our lead. We saw it just in the last few days when the elected democratic Presidents of South Africa and Russia were here working with us on their common futures and their aspirations. We see it in the help we've been asked to give to the peace process in Northern Ireland. We see it in the help we've been asked to give to the peace process in the Middle East. We see it in the enthusiastic reception our young men and women in uniform have been given by the people of Haiti who want their democracy back.

I am proud of the work America has done around the world in the cause of democracy. I am proud of what our troops have done in the last 3 weeks in Haiti. As I said, and I caution you again, their job is still difficult and dangerous, and we still have a lot of work to do. But the violence is down, the Parliament is back, the refugees are returning, the electricity is burning again, and democracy is coming back. This is the direction we ought to be taking at home as well as abroad, fighting for the future, not going back to the past.

Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International.]

Administration Accomplishments

Q. Mr. President, while acknowledging your accomplishments, the Republicans are savoring a big-time victory in November. You also have had some major setbacks in legislation. And some of the pundits are counting you out in '96. How do you account for this very dark picture, political picture, and what are you going to do about it?

The President. Well, what I'm going to do is go out and make sure the American people understand what the choice is. If the American people had been told 20 months ago that we would have had a historic first year with the Congress, that we'd have 4.6 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 4 years, an unusual number of high-wage jobs coming back into the economy, a serious assault on crime, that I would have presented major reform legislation in all the areas I've mentioned, plus the welfare reform bill I sent to Congress that I expect to pass next year to end welfare as we know it, I think they would have been well pleased. And I think when they see what has been done and that we are going in the right direction and then they see the alternative, the clear alternative, partisan gridlock by the Republican congressional leadership—I know you may say, "Well, some Democrats didn't vote with you, Mr. President, on campaign finance reform

and lobby reform," and you would be right. But look at the record. Most Democrats, on these filibuster votes, voted for campaign finance reform; most Republicans voted against it. Most Democrats voted for political reform; most Republicans voted against lobby reform.

So the American people have to make a choice first about what direction they want. Do they really want this Republican contract on America? Do they really want somebody to just tell them what they want to hear one more time, instead of someone who'll take over the tough problems? Do they really want someone to make a trillion dollars in promises that means higher deficits, cuts in Medicare, the crime bill won't be funded, the economy will be back in the dumps? I don't believe they do want that. They haven't had much of a chance to see the big picture here; they just follow the daily march of events. In the end, this is a decision for the people to make in '94 and in '96.

When I showed up here, I knew that there was always a great deal of enthusiasm for change in the beginning. But the process of change is difficult, exacting; it requires discipline and confidence, and you have to stay at it. And there are always dark times. There has never been a time when the organized forces of the status quo haven't been able to drive down the popularity of a President who really fought for change. I'm not worried about that. I am not at issue here. The real issue is what is the future the American people wish for themselves. And I am looking forward to having a chance to go out and say what I think the direction should be and then let the people make their decision.

Iraq

Q. What can you tell us about the mobilization of Iraqi troops on the border with Kuwait? Do you think this is just bluster or do you think it's a real menace? And what's the United States prepared to do?

The President. Well, first let me say we are watching it very closely, and we are watching the troop movements as well as the threats that the Iraqis have made to the U.N. mission there. I spoke with General Shalikashvili just before I came over here today. We are taking the necessary steps as a precaution to deal with this issue. I don't believe I should discuss them in any greater detail, but let me say, I think they are appropriate and necessary, and we are fully in agreement on the course we are taking.

Iraq should not be able to intimidate the United Nations Security Council and the U.N. mission there. They should not be misled into thinking that they can repeat the mistakes of the past. If Iraq really is trying to say in some insistent way that what they want is relief from the U.N. sanctions, there is a clear way for them to achieve that relief, simply comply with the United Nations resolutions. If they comply with the United Nations resolutions, they can get relief from the sanctions. There are clear rules, clear standards. This is not a mystery.

So we have taken this matter seriously. We have responded with necessary precautionary steps. I cannot say more than that now, and I don't want to read more into it than has actually happened. But I am confident we are doing the right thing.

Yes, Andrea [Andrea Mitchell, NBC News].

Foreign Policy

Q. Over the past 20 months, Mr. President, some people would say that you have made very strong threats against the Bosnian aggressors; that you have warned North Korea not to build even one nuclear bomb, yet now there's acknowledgement that they at least have one, if not more; there have been threats against aggressors in Haiti and compromise, leaving the option for the leaders to stay there. To what extent would you say that it is fair criticism that Saddam Hussein might be testing you because this country has not been strong enough in responding to aggression and to aggressive threats?

The President. Well, first of all, I think that if he were testing me based on the facts that you outlined, he would have a very gross misapprehension of the facts. When I ran for President and when I became President, I never said that the United States would take any unilateral action in Bosnia. And I defy you to find the time when I did say that. I said that we would work with our allies. The actions of force which have occurred in Bosnia have been largely as a result of the initiatives of the United States; the creation of the safe havens, the use of NATO air power out of its area for the first time in history have largely been the results of the constant and insistent pushing of the United States.

Secondly, with regard to Korea, I think that our actions in Korea and our policies to date have been appropriate. They have been firm;

they have been deliberate. The implication of your remark was that they had a bomb-making operation going on during this administration. The evidence that has been cited in some press reports is quite different. It is that before I became President, they may have accumulated enough nuclear material to make a nuclear device or two. That has been the press reports. I fail to see how that shows a lack of resolve on our part since we have been here. I think we have pursued this course quite firmly. We were pushing the sanctions option if there was not a return to serious negotiations. There has been, and I hope those negotiations will succeed.

In the case of Haiti, I think it is absolutely apparent to everybody that it was the literal imminence of the military invasion which is leading to a peaceful transfer of authority there. We have, after all, 19,000-plus troops in Haiti. We are proceeding with the transfer of authority. It plainly was the result largely of the credible threat of force that a diplomatic solution permitting that threat of force to be instituted into the country in a peaceful rather than a warlike manner that resulted.

So if those are the examples, I would think that Saddam Hussein would draw exactly the reverse conclusion than the one you have outlined. Secondly, I would remind you that when we had clear evidence that the Iraqis were involved in an attempt to kill former President Bush, the United States took decisive and appropriate action.

Health Care Reform

Q. Mr. President, we haven't really had a chance to hear from you since last week Senator Mitchell declared that there just could be no resolution of the health care issue. I wonder if you could give us a sense of how you're regrouping on health care, if you are, and whether or not you now think that you made a mistake by proposing such broad changes and whether you're now willing to accept something more incremental in the next Congress.

The President. Well, I haven't had a lot of chance to think about exactly where we should go with this except to say that no sooner had Senator Mitchell issued his statement than the press reports were then full of, "Oh, my goodness, we have all these problems; 1.2 million Americans lost their health insurance last year, 1993; the cost is still going up at twice the rate of inflation; people are still losing their choice of doctors." So this problem will not go away.

I am very proud of the fact that we did get as much broad-based support as we did for comprehensive reform and that the basic elements of this reform were supported for the first time in history, I might add, by a heavy majority of medical providers, that—doctors and nurses and others—that for the first time in history we got a bill to the floor of both Houses of Congress. So what we will do after Congress goes out of session is to assess where we are and how we ought to go about this next year. But I fully intend to keep after it.

Let me just say one other thing. Let me try to put this into perspective. We worked hard on health care for a year and a half. It's the most complex issue facing the Congress but one that has to be addressed because of its human and its budgetary and economic implications not only for the Government, where it's the primary fueler of the deficit, but for the private sector as well. We worked on it for a year and a half. Since I have been here, we have broken gridlock and passed family leave after 7 years, motor voter after 5 years, the Brady bill after 7 years, the crime bill after 6 years, the banking reform bill after 7 years. Those are just five examples of how long fundamental reform took in areas that were more limited and less comprehensive. I think we can do health care—we must do health care in less time than that. But if it takes one more year, I'm not discouraged by that.

Q. Can you accept incremental reforms?

The President. I think in the end we will have to do—we will have to address this comprehensively. I think the principles I outlined have to be addressed by the country or we'll never solve the deficit or deal with the problems in the private sector. And I have not had any chance to think about how to approach the Congress with that. I will, but I—no one came forward with a convincing case that we could control costs, for example, which is imperative, without having a mechanism to cover everybody.

But there may be some other way to do it. I have always been open to any kind of new idea. I was disappointed that there weren't more bills introduced into the Congress in this last session that actually offered the promise of doing that. But I still think we can get it next year. I hope there will be a less partisan atmos-

phere. I hope the needs of the American people will be put first. And I intend to come back full force trying to do that.

Yes, Peter [Peter Maer, NBC Mutual Radio].

President's Approval Ratings

Q. Mr. President, going back to the upcoming campaign, as you yourself joked, I guess, at a reception earlier today, warm welcomes are increasingly rare. How do you analyze your own low approval ratings? And what's your advice and reaction to members of your own party who are running away from the administration's very record?

The President. Well, the record is a good one. And there is ample evidence that if people know the record, they respond to it. I think what—a lot of them are frustrated by the fact that the American people don't know it. All I can tell you is, you analyze it. You figure it out. Generally, there is a period of drag that sets in on Presidents at midterm. It happened to President Reagan in '82; it's happened in other cases. But also I think when people know what the choices are, they're in a better position to make those choices. I don't think they know that today.

My only concern is that the American people not go out and vote against what they're for and vote for what they're against. I think the American people wanted us to bring this deficit down. I think the American people wanted us to invest more in the education and training of the work force. I think the American people wanted us to make college more affordable for middle class people. I think the American people wanted us to pass the crime bill. I think the American people wanted us to pass campaign finance reform and lobby reform. That's what I think they wanted.

So what the American people should do is to say, "Who voted which way? What do I want for the future? Do I want to keep fighting in these directions?" and say, "Okay, Congress did some good things, and they failed to do some things they certainly should have done." Or do they want to go for this contract that the Republicans have put out on America, a trillion dollars in promises, just like we had in the eighties, which explodes the deficits, cuts Medicare, shifts jobs overseas, and puts us back in the ditch? I don't think that that's the choice they'll make if they understand the choice before them.

Iraq

Q. Mr. President, getting back to the situation in Iraq, could you tell us: How many Iraqi troops are moving? How many troops are involved? Which are those troops? Are they members of the Republican Guard? How far north of Kuwait are they right now? And the second part of that question: Tariq Aziz, the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, said today that Iraq is complying with all of these U.N. sanctions. What specifically has Iraq not done that you wanted to do that would result in its being allowed to export oil?

The President. Well, I think the Iraqis are well aware of what the United States believes in terms of their sanctions compliance and to the extent to which they are working with the United Nations mission there. And I would remind you that there are other United Nations resolutions over and above the weapons inspections ones that are usually discussed. So I think that the Iraqis are quite well aware of what the United Nations expects them to do to lift the sanctions. And if they will do it, then no one will stand in their way of lifting the sanctions.

In terms of the military situation, I think I have said all it is appropriate for me to say at this moment. We know what they're doing. We have responded with necessary steps. We will watch it very closely. We will report more as events unfold.

Yes, Sarah [Sarah McClendon, McClendon News Service].

Arkansas Airbase

Q. Sir, the Republicans are trying to blame you for the existence of a small airbase at Mena, Arkansas. This base was set up by George Bush and Oliver North and the CIA to help the Iran-*contras*, and they brought in planeload after planeload of cocaine there for sale in the United States. And then they took the money and bought weapons and took them back to the *contras*, all of which was illegal, as you know, under the Boland act. But tell me, did they tell you that this had to be in existence because of national security?

The President. Well, let me answer the question. No, they didn't tell me anything about it. They didn't say anything to me about it. The airport in question and all the events in question were the subject of State and Federal

inquiries. It was primarily a matter for Federal jurisdiction; the State really had next to nothing to do with it. A local prosecutor did conduct an investigation based on what was within the jurisdiction of State law. The rest of it was under the jurisdiction of the United States Attorneys who were appointed successively by previous administrations. We had nothing, zero, to do with it. And everybody who's ever looked into it knows that.

Iraq

Q. Saddam Hussein has misread the intentions of American Presidents before. Without going any further than you care to into what may be the nature of these particular troop movements, what can you say to him today to make sure that he does not, because of your situation in Haiti, believe that you are perhaps vulnerable in the way that he thought your predecessor was vulnerable and do something that you don't want him to do?

The President. First of all, let me—I rarely do this to any of you, but I thank you for asking the question in that way because I do think President Bush's intentions were misunderstood, not because of anything President Bush did. And perhaps our position here might be misunderstood, not so much for the reasons that in your question were implied but because we do have troops in Haiti and we are otherwise occupied.

Saddam Hussein should be under no illusions. The United States is not otherwise occupied. We remain committed to the United Nations resolutions. We remain committed to the policy we followed before. The mistakes of the past should not be repeated. On the other hand, I would encourage you not to inflame this situation beyond the facts. Let us deal with this on the facts. We are monitoring what has actually happened. We are taking what we believe is factually appropriate steps, the necessary steps that any prudent administration would take under the same circumstances.

So let us watch this concern, but let us not blow it out of proportion. Let's just deal with the facts as they unfold. But it would be a grave mistake for Saddam Hussein to believe that for any reason the United States would have weakened its resolve on the same issues that involved us in that conflict just a few years ago.

The Economy

Q. Mr. President, to go back to domestic matters for a moment. You mentioned looking at the record. I want to ask you about one part of the record that does not look so good. The Census Bureau reported that through the first year of your term, through the end of 1993, median income has gone down. The rich have continued to get richer, the poor have continued to get poorer, income inequality has grown, precisely the trends that you singled out as the reasons you were opposed to what happened in the eighties. Do you believe that you can reverse these trends in the next 2 years of your term? And if you cannot, how do you think you'll be able to convince the American people that your Presidency has been a success?

The President. Well, first of all, let me—let's put this in context. And that was a fair question, I think, properly asked. These trends have been developing for nearly 20 years, as you pointed out. I don't think anyone thought I could turn them around in a year or that I alone could turn them around.

And let me try to be clear about where I think responsibility lies here, because I don't think it's fair to just say that the previous administration is completely responsible for these trends. I think their policies aggravated them to some extent but, more importantly, did not address them, which I think is the most important thing.

What is happening in America that would lead incomes to go down or be stagnant among people who actually work full time? And how could it continue even in a period of economic expansion? Indeed, how could it have continued through expansions for 20 years? That is the question. The answer, it seems to me, is to be found in the following facts.

Number one, for about 30 years we have had a problem developing primarily in our urban areas and our very rural areas where there was disinvestment of economic opportunity coupled with the breakdown of traditional family structures and community structures, so you had a lot of people growing up and living in places where the only jobs available were low-wage jobs or where there were relatively—there were too few good jobs. That's been going on for about 30 years.

Number two, compounding that, for about 20 years, American jobs overall, certainly hourly

wage jobs, have been set more and more and more in the context of a global economy, so that to whatever extent a person has a job in America that can also be done by somebody somewhere else living on a much, much lower wage, that person will be under great pressure either to lose the job or to have the wage lowered or at least never to get a wage increase.

What is the answer to the problem and how might it be fixed? I think there are three answers, and we're pursuing all of them as best we can. First, increase the level of education and training of the work force and make it more permanent for a lifetime. That's why we had the apprenticeship program; that's why we have the college loan program; that's why I'm trying to pass the reemployment system legislation that I introduced this year, but I think it will pass next year. In other words, develop a system to raise the skill level of the work force and the wages will rise.

Secondly, follow policies that will change the job mix in America, that will tend to get more high-wage jobs here. That's why I believe so strongly in expanding trade. In the United States when we expand trade, it drives the wages up, up.

The third thing we have to do is to bring free enterprise to the inner cities and the isolated rural areas. That's what the empowerment zones are about; that's what those community development banks to make loans to low income people are about. Will that all change the income distribution in 2 years or 3 years? I don't know. I know we've been going in this direction for 20 years, and we can certainly change it back the other way in less than 20 years. But again I will say, we have to stay on this course. If we change course in this midterm election and decide that instead of investing in education, expanding trade, and empowering the inner cities and poor people, we're going to explode the deficit, give another tax cut we can't pay for, and cut Medicare—and, by the way, cut all other programs, including education and training and the crime bill—we'll be going in the wrong direction.

So the voters are going to decide whether this is the right direction, and I hope that they will decide that it is.

HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros

Q. Did you know when you nominated Secretary Cisneros that he was making payments to a former mistress? If you did, did you ask any questions about them? And finally, do you think the recent controversy about them undermines his effectiveness in your Cabinet?

The President. We knew what the facts were at the time and the legal counsel or the people—excuse me—who were handling it for me reviewed it, decided that there was nothing illegal or inappropriate about what was done by Secretary Cisneros, something that was fully known by his family. And no, I don't think it undermines his effectiveness. I mean, what he did in his past he's dealt with, and he's been pretty forthright. He's been, in fact, I think painfully forthright. And I think he has been an extraordinarily gifted HUD Secretary. He has proposed initiatives heretofore unseen to house the homeless, to empower people who are stuck in these public housing projects, to sweep the projects of weapons and drugs. He is doing the job that I hired him to do for the American people. And as long as he is doing that job at a high level, I think he ought to be permitted to continue to do it.

Cuba

Q. Mr. President, the Haitians in Guantanamo at least knew that you were working hard to get them out of there. What is the hope for the Cubans in Guantanamo?

The President. I'm sorry, what was the first part of your question?

Q. The Haitians in Guantanamo, they knew that you were working hard to get them out of there. What is the hope for the Cubans in Guantanamo?

The President. Well, we're working on that, and we're talking to them about that. As you know, some of them are going to Panama; some of them will have to decide what it is they wish to do. Of course, any of them who go back to Cuba would be eligible to apply to come to the United States legally now under a much higher ceiling. And we think a substantial number of them would be in the category of people who could get in because of their family connections in the United States and the broadened definition of family connections under the new agreement, which raises the ceiling to 20,000 people we're taking in. Also, some of them are children or otherwise vulnerable, and we're looking at them to see whether there should be any special considerations for them.

Yes, Mike [Mike McKee, CONUS].

Middle Class Tax Cut

Q. Mr. President, you promised the middle class a tax cut 2 years ago during the campaign. Will you be able to keep that promise in the next 2 years?

The President. I can't give you an answer today because it depends upon how well the economy goes and what other considerations there are with the budget. And let me just give you an example of that.

In this budget, because we began with a deficit that was bigger than we expected, the middle class tax cut essentially was capped at 15 million families, comprising about 50 million Americans or only about 20 percent of our population. Would I like to do better than that? Yes, I would, but not at the expense of the economic recovery for the same middle class. So what we are looking at now in the context of the welfare reform legislation, the child support enforcement legislation, the other things we're trying to do to strengthen families is whether and to what extent we can address that issue. What are the revenue projections for the next 2 years? What are the other demands on State spending—Government spending, I mean? How much can we control the other costs? What do we absolutely have to do for defense? Because that's very important, as we've all seen in the questions you've asked me in this press conference.

So I cannot give you an answer. Do I think it should be done? I still do. I don't think—the Federal tax system is much fairer than it was when I became President because of the tax cut for the working families just above the poverty line and also because something we often forget: We made 90 percent of the small businesses in this country eligible for a tax cut last year in the economic plan. Any small business with a taxable income below $100,000 was also eligible for a tax cut.

So I think we're doing better. But the Tax Code is not where it ought to be. And middle class families, especially those with children, I think should look forward to a little more fairness, but I can't say how and how much yet.

Midterm Elections

Q. Despite the economic expansion and the record you've been citing here today, the political mood in the country remains extremely sour. Your poll ratings are very low, but you're far more popular than the people up on Capitol Hill. How can you go out to the public, as you're going to do in the next couple of weeks, and argue that given the rate of failure, the record of failure you cited today, the people up there should be reelected and that staying the course that is underway right now is good for the country?

The President. Well, it's easy to argue that staying the course we're underway right now is good for the country because these 2 years compare so favorably with the previous several in terms of economic direction, investment in people, and making Government work for ordinary folks. That's easy to argue.

What I think is important is to take the message to the American people in terms of what's good for them and what changes they want. In other words, the election should be about them and their future and what changes they want, not necessarily about whether the parties are ideal or perfect or whatever.

We're going through a period of change. The American people are not satisfied either with the rate of change or with the certainty that it will occur. And they, like everybody else—I mean, after all, you can't—the people are of more than one mind on more than one issue. That is, all these interest groups that everybody reviles when they want campaign finance reform or lobby reform are the same people that have the money and the organized communications ability to change the attitudes of the people out there on issue after issue after issue.

So the important thing, the message I have to say is, what is the direction you want? Do you want continued progress in the economy? Do you want a Government that takes on tough problems like crime and welfare reform and health care? Do you want a Government that does things for ordinary people, like the family leave law or making college loans more available to middle class people? Or do you want this contract, which says clearly, "Give us power, and we'll take you back to the eighties. We'll give you a trillion dollars' worth of promises. We'll promise everybody a tax cut. We'll explode the deficit. We'll cut Medicare. We'll never fund the crime bill. But we will have told you what you wanted to hear." I think the American people will vote for the future and not the past, and that's my hope and belief.

Health Care Reform

Q. Mr. President, a question about bipartisanship. Looking back on the health care reform effort, is there anything you think you could have done differently to forge a consensus? For instance, do you think it would have helped if you'd brought Republicans earlier on in the process up to the White House to negotiate the way you did at the end of the crime bill fight? And looking ahead to next year when you're going to be pushing health care reform and other issues through a more Republican Congress, is there anything that you plan to do differently to forge a coalition for governing?

The President. Well, let me say, I'm sure that there are some things I could have done differently. You know, I never dealt with Congress before last year, and I'm still learning all the time. I would point out that the Congressional Quarterly said that last year that the Congress and the President worked together more successfully than at any time since World War II, except in President Eisenhower's first year and President Johnson's second year. So I felt that we accomplished quite a great deal.

When we were putting this health care bill together, there was a lot of consultation with Republicans. When we wanted to present a proposed bill and say, "Now, how would you like to change this?" we were told that they had their own group working on health care, and they wanted to present a bill, and then we would get together. So I said, that's fine; I understand that. Then Senator Chafee, to his everlasting credit, came up with a bill that had two dozen Republican Senators on it that would have covered all Americans and controlled costs. By the time we got down to serious negotiations, instead of two dozen Senators for universal health care and controlled costs, there were zero. They all left. I mean, Senator Chafee was still there, but everybody had abandoned his bill. We had one Republican Congressman saying they'd all been instructed not to work with us. We had one Republican Senator quoted in one of your papers saying that they had killed it, now they had to keep their fingerprints off of it.

So I am more than happy to work with them in any way I can. I do not believe we have a monopoly on wisdom. Let me say, let me give you some evidence of my good faith on being flexible about changing. I have given State after State after State waiver from Federal regulations to pursue universal coverage and health care costs control on their own. Tennessee has done some very exciting things and, by the way, gotten some very impressive results, I understand. We just approved Florida to do this. We're in the process of approving more States to move forward. I am very flexible on how we get this done. And if the American people are worried that the Federal Government has too much emphasis and they want more for the States, fine, let's talk about that. But if there's going to be a bipartisan effort, it has to be good faith on both sides.

I like working with Republicans. I proved that in the NAFTA fight, proved it in the crime bill fight. I will prove it in the health care fight. But it can't be a kind of situation where every time I move to them, they move further the other way. That's the only thing I would say.

Yes, sir, last question.

Secretary of Agriculture

Q. Mr. President, for Secretary of Agriculture, will you be looking for someone with farm experience, or will you be looking for somebody like Secretary Espy, who has heavy congressional experience?

The President. Well, the most important thing, I think, is someone who really understands how to deal with the agriculture community, understands the interests, and is committed to agriculture and to farmers and to rural development. And let me say that, if I might, in closing, that I also want somebody who will faithfully implement the reforms that Secretary Espy has started.

We passed a dramatic restructuring of the Department of Agriculture. We're going to take down the number of employees by at least 7,500. We have seen an Agriculture Department that has been extremely active in helping farmers deal with disasters, that has tried to help the farmers in the Middle West with their production problems, that has given an enormous amount of emphasis to rural development. So this Agriculture Department, under this Secretary of Agriculture, has established a lot of credibility with the American people who are in agriculture, including selling rice to Japan for the first time, selling apples from Washington to Japan for the first time, doing things that haven't been done for a long time for hard-

working, grassroots farmers, whether they're Republicans or Democrats or independents.

And when I came here, out of a rural background, out of a farming background, that's what I desperately wanted to do for the agricultural community. And so when I pick another Agriculture Secretary, that is a standard that Mike Espy set that must be met for the next Agriculture Secretary.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 73d news conference began at 2 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

The President's Radio Address With President Nelson Mandela of South Africa

October 8, 1994

President Clinton. Good morning. This week I'm honored to be joined by President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, a man who has been a hero for people in every corner of the world. For a long time, the name "Nelson Mandela" has stood for the quest for freedom. His spirit never bent before the injustice of his 27 years of imprisonment. Apartheid could not silence him. And when he was freed, Americans all across this country who had fought for justice in South Africa rejoiced.

After his long struggle, Nelson Mandela found in himself the strength to reach out to others, to build up instead of tear down. He led his country forward, always choosing reconciliation over division. This is the miracle of the new South Africa. Time and again, President Mandela showed real wisdom and rose above bitterness. President Mandela and the South African people, both black and white, have inspired others around the world.

In our own hemisphere today, the people of Haiti are emerging out of fear into freedom. Now Haitians have the chance to do what South Africans have done, to bring together a country where there have been deep and bloody divisions. It can be done, and the United States stands ready to help.

We must do all we can to help civil societies free themselves from the shackles of repression, to sustain their fragile democracies, and to defeat the forces of destruction that threaten all of us. That's why America stands with Nelson Mandela and the South African people through economic assistance, through trade and investment to help them to build the thriving democracy they so richly deserve, and why we're working to help the Haitian people stand up and reclaim their freedom and their future, too.

Now I'd like to ask President Mandela to speak with you.

[*At this point, President Mandela discussed his visit to the United States and thanked the American people for their friendship.*]

President Clinton. Thank you, Mr. President. This week I pledged to President Mandela that the United States will continue to support his nation just as we have since before his election. And I want to encourage all of our citizens and especially our businesses to accept the President's invitation to invest, to build in his country, to visit his country. A flourishing South Africa involved in the rest of the world is in our interest.

President Mandela was right the other day when he called the transformation of his country an achievement of all humanity. The kind of peaceful development we're seeing in South Africa will inspire progress all around the world. Now South Africa is a model for building the open, tolerant societies that share our values. And when we look around the world at the stirring changes in Russia, the moving developments in Northern Ireland, the stunning achievements of the peace initiatives in the Middle East, we see the prospects for democracy and peace growing. Our mission is to build a new world for our children, more democratic, more prosperous, more free of ancient hatreds and modern means of destruction. This is no easy task. But more nations than ever are choosing democracy, and more are embracing the values of tolerance that allow each of us to make the most of our God-given potential. Freedom