The President. Goodbye.

Note: The interview began at 4:42 p.m. The President spoke by telephone from the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence, RI.

Interview With WDIA Radio, Memphis, Tennessee
November 2, 1994

Q. WDIA here in Memphis, Tennessee. We have President Bill Clinton live and on the radio with you.

Good afternoon, Mr. President.

The President. Good afternoon. How are you?

Q. I'm just fine, thank you.

Q. W.C. Brown is joining me here, and we're glad that you're joining us here by phone in Memphis. And we have a few questions we'd like to ask you, but first we'd like to give you an opportunity to make a statement.

Midterm Elections

The President. Well, first, it's good to be talking with you and to have a chance to visit with you so close to this election. The message I want to get out is that with all of our challenges in America, we're in better shape than we were 21 months ago. We're rebuilding the economy. We have more jobs; we have a lower unemployment rate; we've got more high-wage jobs coming into the economy. We're doing things for ordinary American families: the Family and Medical Leave Act, tax breaks for 15 million working families to keep them out of poverty, immunization for our children, more Head Start. We're doing things to support education: expanded college loans and apprenticeship programs for young people who don't go on to college. We've supported African-American educational programs especially strongly, and we'll continue to do that. We've supported the kinds of things that will move this country forward. We've taken steps to help communities deal with the crime problem, not just with more police and the Brady bill, the assault weapons ban but also with prevention programs for our communities so that we can help our young people live a more positive life. So we're moving in the right direction.

The Republicans offer a contract that would take us back to the trickle-down Reaganomics era of the 1980's where we explode the deficit, move our jobs overseas, and have the risk of big cuts in programs that are important to all Americans, like Medicare and Social Security. We need to keep going forward; we don't want to go back. In order to do that, in a place like Tennessee where there are so many important elections—two Senate races, all the Congress races, a big Governor's race—it's important that people go out and vote next Tuesday.

Anticrime Legislation

Q. That's very true, Mr. President. The crime bill is an issue that we talk here on the talk show programs and in the news all the time about. A lot of people are concerned about the amount of money that's earmarked for the Midsouth area, the Memphis Midsouth area, as well as whether or not the crime bill is really going to be something that can be effective here in the Midsouth or whether it's just another Band-Aid. What would you say to that?

The President. I think it depends upon what the people at the local community do with it.

Q. Okay.

The President. It is the best crime bill, in my judgment, that has been passed at least in my lifetime. It gives the local communities the ability to increase their police forces by about 20 percent over the course of the next 5 years. It gives local communities the ability to put more serious offenders behind bars. It gives local communities the ability to have prevention programs, education programs, recreation programs, alternatives to imprisonment for young people to give them a better chance at a better future. But all of this depends on what local people do. The President, the Congress, we can't fight crime on the streets; all we can do is give you the tools to make the most of it. But if your churches, your community groups, your community police forces, if they make the most of this, it will lower crime and reduce violence.

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White House Attacks

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Also, there have been two attacks on the White House itself recently.

Q. You would bring that up.

Q. I would have to bring that up. I haven't heard in the media you respond to those attacks on the White House per se. How would you respond to that? Would you say that that is, as Rush Limbaugh, a friend of yours—[*laughter*]—would say, is that the American people being expressive through those people who have enough nerve to go out and do something about it? Or are these just idle terrorist acts that are being done by people who have lost it, shall we say?

The President. The first incident I think was not even an attack. I think it was a stunt that went awry. I think the man was plainly just trying to land his plane there. The second incident, we'll have to see when all the facts get in. But I believe the Secret Service do a good job protecting me and our family, and I feel great confidence in that. I just get up every morning and do my job. I think that every President knows there's always some chance that somebody will be out there thinking about something like that; but it doesn't bother me much. I don't think about it; I just try to work with the Secret Service. I think they do a good job, and I just go on with my job.

Income Taxes

Q. Mr. President, this is W.C. Brown. Would you talk just a little bit about tax breaks? We hear that tax breaks are contained in a bill that will help to benefit the poor.

The President. Yes, our budget contained tax cuts for 15 million families. And in Tennessee, there were almost 20 times as many people who got an income tax cut as who got an income tax rate increase. Three hundred and eighty-four thousand working families in Tennessee, including a lot of them in your listening area, got a tax cut because they work full time, they have children in the home, but their incomes are still modest. We wanted to make absolutely sure that people that work full-time with kids in the house would not be in poverty. So we expanded a program called the earned-income tax credit, which not only reduces taxes but can get people a refund on their taxes if their incomes are modest enough. It was the most significant thing done in the last 20 years to make the Tax Code fairer to working people. I'm very proud of it and I think it's not very much understood, but it's very, very important to emphasize. Senator Sasser, Congressman Cooper, Congressman Ford, in your area, these people stood up for the interest of working people, and now they are being pilloried in Tennessee in this election and accused of raising taxes on average Americans when in fact they cut taxes on almost 20 times as many Tennesseans as had their tax rates raised. And they ought to be supported for it, not criticized for it.

NCAA Basketball

Q. Mr. President, on a lighter note. We here in the Midsouth area are also big fans of your favorite team, the Arkansas Razorbacks——

The President. Boy, they're good, aren't they?

Q. ——the NCAA championship team. And of course, we know you're good friends with Nolan Richardson. What would you have to say about the team this year, their chances in repeating? And we have a game coming up in Memphis at the Pyramid pretty soon. Would you be thinking about visiting Memphis and probably supporting your team?

The President. Well, I'm looking at all the basketball schedules, seeing if I can make any of these games. Of course, they lost 2 of their 12 men on the team, but all the first 5 are coming back. They had a good recruiting year. He's a great coach; they're great kids. I think they've got a good chance to repeat. But it's very, very difficult to repeat. There's a lot of talent out there, and when you get to the end of the NCAA's, one game and you're out. So it's going to be tough, but they're a great team. They've got a great chance, and obviously I'm pulling for them.

Q. Well, thank you very much. And when you're in Tennessee, certainly we'd like to invite you to WDIA and be a part, because this is Clinton country.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 4:51 p.m. The President spoke by telephone from the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence, RI, to interviewers W.C. Brown, J. Michael Davis, and Leon Gray.