

Feb. 18 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1995

I will fight for every idea, every proposal, every piece of legislation that strengthens the American dream. And I'll keep doing everything in my power to fight against anything that weakens it.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

## Remarks Congratulating the 1994 National Basketball Association Champion Houston Rockets and an Exchange With Reporters February 18, 1995

*The President.* Good morning, everyone. I am delighted to be here with the Houston Rockets; along with NBA Commissioner David Stern; Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee; the owner of the Rockets, Leslie Alexander; and of course, Rudy Tomjanovich, the head coach.

I want to congratulate the Rockets formally on their championship last year. We've been trying to find a time for them to come to the White House and make their official visit for some time, and as you know, they played the Bullets here last night, and I'm glad to have them here.

I enjoyed last season immensely. I enjoyed watching the Rockets win. It was the first-ever major championship in sports for a Houston team. It opened the season with 15 straight wins, tying an NBA record. And the victories, the number of victories they had was the best in the team's history. So it was a great season for them. And you all know, I kind of liked basketball last year anyway. And I'm beginning to like it better this year as it goes along.

It occurs to me that basketball is a lot like my work around here: You get behind; you get ahead; you never know whether you're going to win until the end of the game. But the most important thing is that you keep playing and doing the best you can and working on the teamwork.

Coach Tomjanovich did a great job in leading the Rockets to victory last year. He's been with the Rockets for 24 years. And I might say that's sort of a rarity in professional athletics today. But it's the kind of loyalty to an organization that I think we need more of all across America, in every walk of life.

I was just told that, before I came in here, that Hakeem Olajuwon's name in Arabic translates into "always on top." [Laughter] I would

say that even for the NBA's most valuable player and defensive player of the year, it helps to be on top if you're 7 feet tall. And he's really done very, very well.

Let me say in closing, I think all Americans enjoy athletics, and I think it's a very healthy thing. But as I said in my radio address today, the thing I like best about basketball is that it is, every play, in every way, a team sport. And it requires a team mentality, even with a lot of stars, to win. You can't win without great players, but you can't win without good teamwork either. And that's what our country needs more of. And I'm delighted to have the Houston Rockets here.

I'd like now to ask the NBA Commissioner, David Stern, to come forward and say a few words.

[At this point, Mr. Stern made brief remarks and presented the President with a jacket.]

*The President.* What do you think this will do for my image, guys? [Laughter] I love this. I love this.

*Mr. Stern.* It's an extra large, Mr. President. [Laughter]

*The President.* I need an extra large. That's great. [Laughter]

*Mr. Stern.* With that, I'd like to introduce the owner of the Houston Rockets, Les Alexander. Les.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Mr. Alexander.* Thank you, Mr. President, for having us here today. I'd like to present you with a championship ring with your name on it, and it says, "To the number one fan in America, from the Houston Rockets."

*The President.* Thank you so much. That's beautiful. Thank you.

*Mr. Alexander.* Now I'd like to introduce one of the great coaches in the world, Rudy Tomjanovich, and of course the greatest player in the world, Hakeem Olajuwon.

*Mr. Tomjanovich.* Thank you, Mr. President, for taking time and making this a very special day for us. It's a day we'll always remember. And I would like to present to you a Rocket jersey with your name on the back and the number one.

*The President.* That's great.

*Mr. Tomjanovich.* You're the number one man on the number one team in the world.

*The President.* You know, I've got a basketball court down here in the backyard. Do you think I should wear this? [*Laughter*] Good length, too, don't you think? [*Laughter*]

*Mr. Olajuwon.* Well, I would just like to thank Mr. President for this, an honor for us as a team and also to have this opportunity to visit the White House. And we're so glad you're the President. And thank you so much for inviting us. And we would like to come back next year as the champion. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* Will you come back next year? Thank you very much.

It's all aired up. I may go down and—

*Q.* All you need is trunks. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* Yes. A shot might help—if I had a shot. [*Laughter*] I still need a shot.

Thank you very much. It's good to see you. It's great.

#### *Meeting With President Boris Yeltsin of Russia*

*Q.* Mr. President, have you put off a summit with Yeltsin in May?

*The President.* No. I don't know what the—let me just say this. I don't know what the source of that story is, but I want to make

it very clear: We have made no decision about the May schedule. And there are lots of issues involved, because there are lots of 50th anniversary events on celebrating the end of World War II. And we literally have not had a meeting on that. So it would be wrong to draw any inference one way or the other. There has literally been—I've gotten no recommendations from my staff on it. We've had no meeting. Tony Lake and I had our first passing conversation about it last night about 6 p.m. So we'll make a decision quite soon and announce it, but there has been no decision made.

*Q.* Well, you wouldn't go, would you, if there's a war on in Chechnya?

*The President.* I have said, there is no decision made. I have made no decision. I've had no meeting. And when I do, I'll let you know.

#### *Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown*

*Q.* Mr. President, does Ron Brown still have your support?

*The President.* He's the best Commerce Secretary we've ever had. And he's gotten more results. That ought to be the test. He's a good Commerce Secretary. The questions that have been raised about what happened before he became Commerce Secretary are being looked into in an appropriate fashion. And meanwhile, he's on the job, and I'm supporting him in that.

No Commerce Secretary has ever done more than he has to create jobs for Americans and to support the interest of American business. And that is the test. And he should go forward and do his job. That's what I want him to do.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:47 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

## Interview With Brian Lamb of C-Span February 19, 1995

### *Former U.S. Presidents*

*Mr. Lamb.* Mr. President, we're talking in and around President's Day, so I want to see if you could tell us the purpose of having this little thing on your desk that involves another President, "Dewey Defeats Truman."

*The President.* Well, of course, that's the famous headline from the Chicago Tribune. I got it when I was in Independence, Missouri, at the Truman Library. And I'm a big admirer of President Truman. He was my neighbor—you know, Arkansas and Missouri border each other—and I always—I like having that on my