

have to be a doctor or a lawyer. I just want to know that when I close my eyes, you'll be able to stand on your own two feet." They're together today celebrating Christmas.

D.C. Central Kitchen had the help of 5,000 volunteers this year; each one of them deserves a little credit for the success of Steve and so many others like him. That's America at its best, when neighbor helps to lift up neighbor and together we shine a light in the darkness. That is also the true spirit of Christmas.

So let us all resolve to take this spirit with us into the new millennium. We'll be better people and a stronger nation for doing so.

Happy holidays, and thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:43 p.m. on December 23 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 25. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 23 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Interview With Charlie Rose of CBS' "60 Minutes II"

December 22, 1999

Terrorism During Millennium Celebrations

Mr. Rose. Mr. President, because of the recent arrest and heightened security concerns at airports, do you expect, worry that there will be an incident of terrorism before the first of the year?

The President. Well, we are on a heightened state of alert, and we're doing a lot of work on this. But I would say to the American people, they should go on about their business and celebrate the holidays as they would, but they should be aware. You know, this whole millennial idea draws out a lot of people who are maybe, by our standards, deranged, and other people maybe want to use it for their own political ends. So if people see anything suspicious, they should report it to the authorities as quickly as possible. But otherwise, I should say, they should go on about their business. We're working very, very hard on this.

Mr. Rose. It worries you?

The President. No, I'm concerned, but I think we have, I think, the best law enforcement folks we could have, and they are working very hard. And we're doing quite well so far. So I have every hope that we'll get through it. But I think that what I would ask the American people to do is not to stay at home and hide but just to keep their eyes open. If they see something that looks fishy, tell the authorities and we'll get on it. But they should know that we're working this very hard.

Last Year of President's Term

Mr. Rose. All right, let me—I look around this office, and I see a desk over there that President Kennedy sat at. And I remember the story he said about the Presidency, and one of the great things about the Presidency was he could walk to work. As you think about leaving this building, what will you miss the most?

The President. I think what I'll miss the most is the work, the job, the contact with all kinds of people and all kinds of issues, the ability to make a difference, to solve problems, to open up opportunities for other people. There's almost no—not almost, I suppose there is no job like it in the world. It's been an unbelievable thrill and a profound honor, and I will miss it very much.

I'll miss a lot of the other things. I love living in the White House. Hillary, I suppose, has done more work on the White House than anybody since the Truman administration, redoing rooms and building a sculpture garden and doing things like that. And we love living here. I love going to Camp David; I love Air Force One; I love all of the perks of the job. But the thing I love most is being President, doing the job every day. It just—to me, it's an almost indescribable honor. I would never grow tired of it, and I feel graced every day.

Term Limits

Mr. Rose. If you could change the 22d amendment, would you?

The President. I don't know. It's probably not fair to ask. On balance, I think the two-term tradition has served us well. I'm glad President Roosevelt served the third term, because of the war. But on balance, I think it's served us well.

Now, you know, I'm young, and I'm strong, and I'm, as far I know, in good health. I love the job. And so if I could serve again, I probably would. But I think that's the reason we have this limit, so that people like me don't get to make that decision. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Rose. Are you going to leave a note in that desk over there for your successor, and what will you say?

The President. I will, and I don't know what I'll say. But probably most of what I'll say will be predictable. I'll be wishing my successor well and talking a little bit about the job and offering to be available if I can ever be of any help.

National Economy

Mr. Rose. Prosperity. Economic prosperity and growth has been a hallmark of this Presidency. How long can it last, and will it be a part of our future, our near future?

The President. Well, it certainly will be part of our future. Now, how long it will last? The truth is no one knows. I believed when I got here that there was a chance that we could have a very long period of economic growth. Now I couldn't have known, when we started and we started slashing the deficit and investing more in technology, that we would have the longest economic expansion in history that would even outstrip wartime when we had been fully mobilized. And in February we will.

But I think that there are some fundamentally different things now. If the Government can follow good policies and the Federal Reserve will follow smart policies, there is this enormous power of productivity we're getting out of the revolution in technology and information technology. It's just now working its way into every sector of the economy, and it's also continually advancing itself. So I think if we can keep that going and if we can keep our markets open, that's very important, not just the exports we sell but the imports we buy, the open market keeps the American economy highly competitive and tends to keep inflation down. And I think that's one of the things that's been under appreciated about this. I never will forget, back in '94 I got really alarmed when lumber prices went way up in a hurry, and I thought home-

building prices were going to explode. And then all of a sudden, we had this big infusion of less costly imports.

Now, we have to work on fair trade rules; we've got to have—we can't be taken advantage of, as some tried to during the Asian financial crisis, but on balance, these open markets are very good for us. They give us growth and competition, keeps inflation down. And I think that's very good.

Globalization and the Technology Gap

Mr. Rose. What we want to do here in this conversation is really focus on the future. You've done a number of conversations about this century and your term in office. Thinking about the future and the economic health of the country, there is also this process. In 10 years—10 years ago the wall came down; 5 years ago the web went up. Globalization is part of our life.

The President. It is.

Mr. Rose. Some worry—and Seattle might be an indication that we're looking at the possibility of a great gap between a two-tier system, between the haves and the have-nots of the world, those who get it with technology and those that don't.

The President. Well, first of all, the worry is well-founded, but it's a constant. That is, we have had a great gap in opportunity, even though it's sometimes closed and sometimes open, but there has been a huge gap between the haves and have-nots since the dawn of the industrial revolution and the creation of middle class societies with mass wealth. Some have had it, and others have not ever created it.

There is a chance that what will happen now is that it will become more pronounced across countries and within countries because of the advantages that technology-literate people and entrepreneurs with access to money will have in a rapidly changing world. That is, it's liable to accelerate.

But I would remind you that in the United States we had an increasing gap between the rich and the poor for about 20 years, as we moved into this new economic phase. The same thing happened when we changed from being an agricultural economy to an industrial economy. In the last 2 or 3 years, we started to see the gap close again. And the answer is not to run away from globalization. The answer is to make change our friend. The answer is to

have broad access to information and information technology, to have broad-based systems of education and health care and family supports in every country, and to continue to try to shape the global economy.

You mentioned Seattle. I think that you had a lot of people out there protesting globalization, but they can't reverse it, and it's done a lot more good than bad. It's created—over the last 50 years, as the world has become more interconnected, we've moved away from the specter of war as holocaust, even though there have been a lot of smaller wars, and we've seen millions, hundreds of millions of people lifted into the middle class. So the answer is how to make this globalization more human, more humane, and how to shape it so that everybody has a chance to be a part of it.

Response to American Hegemony

Mr. Rose. Do you hear around the world now, as I'm sure you've heard from heads of state and others, this kind of unilateralist—America in the future is too strong, too dominant, and the fear of a backlash against us.

The President. I agree with that. And I think—I've tried to be very sensitive to that—I think we have—and to make sure that we fulfilled our responsibilities. I think that, on the one hand, people are glad that we won the cold war, if you will; they're glad that the forces of freedom won. All over the world people are embracing democracy and market economics. But if you enjoy the level of military and economic strength we have and the level of political influence, people are going to resent you.

And I must say—and again, I don't mean to be partisan here, but I think the resentment is deeper when the Congress takes as long as they did to pay our U.N. dues and puts the conditions on it they did, when we don't ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, when we basically preach to other people around the world, you ought to do this, that, or the other thing. But instead of helping them, we continue to have a very large military budget, but we spend the smallest percentage of our income on assistance to other countries to help them succeed economically and politically of any advanced country in the world. So we do some things that breed this resentment.

Now, a lot of them resented me at Seattle because they think that when the United States says we ought to have core labor standards and

we ought to have good environmental standards in a world trading system, that I'm trying to keep poor countries down, that I just want them to open their markets to us, but they won't get rich because I'm going to try to force them to give up their comparative wage advantage or their ability to grow. That's not true. So some of the resentments against America are not fair. But it's all perfectly understandable. I mean, look how fortunate we are compared to most other countries. and when people get in a tight spot, they want us to come help; Bosnia, Kosovo, the Middle East, you name it.

Prospects for the 21st Century

Mr. Rose. Do you think this century coming up will be America's century, as the 20th century has been described?

The President. Well, I think it can be. But I think we have to think very carefully about how we want to define that. I mean, look what we know will happen. We know that, barring some completely unforeseen event, China and, sometime thereafter, India will have economies that look bigger than ours, because they've got so many more people than we do, 4 times as many people; in the case of China, even more. We know that Europe will grow more integrated, I think, in the 21st century. And the European Union will be more and more a union. And they have 50 percent more people than we do, and they could have a lot more than that if they continue to bring in other countries.

So I do not believe that we will have the relative economic dominance we have today. We've got about 4 percent of the world's people and almost 22 percent of the world's income. But I think we can be still very prosperous. I think we can still be the strongest individual country in the world in many ways. But I think we will have to build partnerships with some of those who resent us now. We will have to have an increasingly interdependent world. Because, whether we like it or not—it's like globalization; interdependence is another word for globalization—we will become more interdependent, and we'll have to learn to be adroit at that. We won't be able to just say, "Well, if we like it, we're here, and if we don't, we'll walk away." We'll have to really work on our partnership skills.

Future Allies

Mr. Rose. You touched on something that I've thought about. This century was marked by our friends becoming our enemies—France and Germany—our enemies becoming our friends. Is that going to be part of the 21st century, people we now look on as rivals become friends, friends become—

The President. I think it is highly likely that some of the people that have been our most recent rivals will be our friends.

Mr. Rose. Like?

The President. Well, I know a lot of people are very skeptical about Russia now, because of the problems they've had. But they just had a genuinely democratic election with a lot of debate, vigorous opposition, brutal campaign ads, you know, the whole 9 yards.

Mr. Rose. Did the results surprise you?

The President. No. It's about what I thought they'd be. You know, still only 25 percent of them are voting for the old Communist Party; the rest of them are for something else, in spite of the economic hardship that they have faced in the last few years. So I still think there's a chance that if the leaders of Russia define their national greatness in 21st century terms, that is in terms of their ability to unleash the creative capacity of their people rather than their ability to dominate their neighbors, which was their 19th and 20th century definition of greatness, that they will be—we'll have a real partnership there. It's also possible that we'll have one with China.

Mr. Rose. A partnership?

The President. Absolutely. It just depends on how they view us and their own self-interest.

Future Rivals

Mr. Rose. Do you see, on the other hand, people who we might consider friends, like Western Europe, becoming more rivals because—

The President. I think the only way that would happen is if it were provoked by greater protectionism, economic protectionism outside the borders of Europe. That is Europe could get so big, and they could integrate the economy of Europe, and they'll have a lot of poor countries coming in just like we have poor States and poor regions. If they close their economy, rather than open it, that could be a difficult thing. But I think it's far more likely that our former enemies will become at least friendlier,

if we're not friends, and that all of us together will face the enemies of the nation-state in the 21st century.

Mr. Rose. The enemies of the nation-state?

The President. Yes. The organized enemies of the nation-state that have vast money and vast access to weapons and technology and travel: the organized crime syndicates; the narcotraffickers; the terrorists. And I think the likelihood that all these people will be integrated—there may be some rogue states that will support them, but I think you're more likely to see the nation-states trying to uphold stability in their national lives, increasingly open and democratic. Even China, I think, will become more open and more democratic. They're already electing mayors in a million little towns, literally.

Mr. Rose. In democratic elections?

The President. Yes. And so I think—by their standards. They don't have a Republican or a Democratic Party like we do, but they are having these elections. I think in the future the likelihood is that nation-states will be allied against the enemies of the organized society and the open society.

Chemical and Biological Threats

Mr. Rose. Do you expect in the next 10, 20 years to be a terrorist attack in the United States, thinking about the recent events, thinking about the potential for germ warfare, the potential for biological attacks, and the potential—

The President. Oh, absolutely. I think that's a threat.

Mr. Rose. A likelihood?

The President. Well, I think it's highly likely that someone will try. And keep in mind, the World Trade Center was blown up just a few years ago. We were fortunate to catch the people who did it. Oklahoma City had the terrible explosion.

What I think will happen—let me back up a minute. I have done everything I could as President to try to organize the permanent Government, the people who will be here when I am gone, and the Congress to deal with the long-term threat of biological, chemical, and small-scale nuclear war, as well as the increasing sophistication of traditional weapons. And we are doing a massive amount of work now in preparation to try to minimize the chances that it will occur and—God forbid if it should occur—to try to minimize the impact of it. I

think, parenthetically, one of the benefits of our research into the human genome is that we'll be able to analyze these viruses much more quickly and come up with antidotes much more quickly than we used to be able to. Even now, when new strains of diseases—whether it's AIDS or anything else—come up, we can identify them so much more quickly than we used to be able to.

So what I think will happen—let me just make this point—the organized forces of destruction will take maximum advantage of new technologies and new scientific developments just like democratic societies do. So I think, just like the computers are all being miniaturized and people carry these little pads around that have—and now you've got these gadgets where you can use as a telephone or a typewriter, do E-mail, and all that. Well, the same miniaturization will apply to biological and chemical weapons. And if people should get nuclear materials that can be made into a bomb, to nuclear materials, which is why we've worked so hard with Russia to control access to that stuff.

So we've just got to be ready. There will always be bad guys out there in the world who will try to take advantage of people's vulnerabilities.

Mr. Rose. But aren't the odds against us, when you describe that kind of technological advantage—I mean, and just recently two people trying—in separate cases—trying to get inside America's borders with explosives—it gets more and more easier to conceal, and more and more the likelihood that an American city—

The President. Well, if you go back through all of human history and you look at conflicts in weapons systems—and that's what we're talking about, biological, chemical weapons—offense always precedes defense; that is you've got to know what you're defending against.

So my goal in this whole thing, trying to mobilize the country on biological, chemical weapons, and make sure the Government is doing everything possible, is to close the gap between offense and defense. And the answer to your question is we won't be severely—there might be incidences. I mean, the World Trade Center was blown up; Oklahoma City was blown up. We've got a guy in the laboratory in the Middle West, almost 5 years ago, who was trying to develop biological agents, political extremist.

Mr. Rose. And there are scary ideas coming out of science, where viruses can attack certain ethnic groups?

The President. Yes, there are people that—

Mr. Rose. The potential of science to do harm is alarming.

The President. But you know, it's always been that way. I mean, it's always been that way. And I think that I'm actually more optimistic than—keep in mind, no one believes that someone's going to come in and kill everybody in America. That's what we worried about during the cold war. And we still have to deal with these traditional threats. That's why India and Pakistan is perhaps—the Kashmiri issue is perhaps the most dangerous one in the world today because you've got two nuclear powers there who are somewhat uncertain about one another and why we have to work hard to avoid that.

But yes, there will be problems. Yes, there could be terrible incidences. But I would say to the American people, they should, on balance, be hopeful. But what they should do is to support the leadership of this country in putting maximum resources into research and development so that we're prepared. And I think we will grow increasingly sophisticated in picking these people up, increasingly sophisticated in detecting these weapons, and what we can't afford is to have a long period of time where these offensive capabilities of the new age are better than the defensive capabilities. If we can close the gap between offense and defense, we'll be fine.

Mr. Rose. What's interesting about a conversation about the future with you is that because of this office and your curiosity, you see and know more than almost anyone. I mean, you are aware because you talk to the scientists; you talk to people responsible.

The President. I think about it a lot.

Mr. Rose. You do?

The President. Sure. I have to. See, I think one of the jobs of the President, because of the unique opportunity of the office you just described it, is to always be thinking about what will happen 10, 20, 30 years from now, and to allocate some time and effort to make decisions for which there will be almost no notice.

You know, right now, I mean, hardly anybody reports on or thinks about the work we're doing in biological warfare or chemical warfare—the speech I gave at the National Science Foundation—but it's fine. It's what my former national

security aide, Tony Lake, used to call “the dog that doesn’t bark.” And there is a sense in which there’s a bunch of dogs in this old world you don’t want to bark.

Mr. Rose. It’s the old notion about if the tree falls in the forest and nobody hears it, did the tree fall? Can you—are there things that we don’t know about that alarm you, this sense of science and where it’s at and what’s coming down the pike, that gives you great pause?

The President. Well, there are a lot of things that concern me. You know, we’ve done a lot of work—the other thing that, besides the chemical and biological weapons—trying to protect computer systems.

Year 2000 Problems

Mr. Rose. Speak to Y2K. Where are your concerns, and do you think that most of those—

The President. My concerns, well, they’re much more traditional in Y2K. I think we’ve done a good job here. We’ve spent a lot of money—I say we, the American people, not just the Government, the private sector—we’ve spent a lot of money, tried to be ready. I feel a high level of confidence. It wouldn’t bother me a bit to get on a commercial airline, for example, on New Year’s Eve or New Year’s Day and fly around. I think our systems are in order here.

My concerns really are for some of our friends around the world that have more rudimentary computer networks and capacities and whether they will have a shutdown that they won’t be able to immediately fix or get around.

Mr. Rose. And make them vulnerable to what?

The President. Well, if there were problems in the financial system, what if records disappeared and people lost money? That would be destabilizing in some countries. If power systems—

Mr. Rose. And make them vulnerable to outside forces, to kinds of elements you mentioned earlier?

The President. Well, maybe, but I think more internal destabilization. What if a power system shuts down in a big country with a hard winter? How long will it take to get back up before anyone would freeze to death? I mean, these are the kinds of practical problems that I’m concerned about.

But I think that—I’m talking about something far more insidious, though. What we have to—

this is, again, offense and defense. What we have to do—this technology of computers is changing so fast, and we’ve got a lot of whizbangs out there, and they can make a ton of money working for bad guys. So what we’ve got to do is to continuously work on protecting the cyber security, the infrastructure of the information economy, just like we’re trying to deal with chemical and biological warfare and the miniaturization of weapons and all this.

But most people are good people. We’ve got plenty of talented people. We just need to be imagining the future, thinking about all the problems as well as all the opportunities, and then prepare. Society always has problems; there are always misfortunes. But basically, I believe the future is quite promising and far more exciting than any period in history. I wish I were going to live to be 150; I’d love to see what happens.

Possibilities of the Future

Mr. Rose. Would you like to be cloned?

The President. No. I wouldn’t wish that on anybody. [Laughter]

Mr. Rose. There is this thing, too. I mean, think about Chelsea’s children, your grandchildren, say the year 2050, whatever the appropriate time might be. What’s this world going to look like? Is it going to be more interesting, more challenging? How will we travel; what kind of food will we eat; will we go to other planets?

The President. I think we’ll be eating food that’s like what we eat now. I think it will be safer. I think we’ll know a lot more about it, even safer than it is now. I think that in big, urban areas, I think we’ll still have our love affairs with cars. I think they will be much more safe. They’ll be made of composite materials that are much more resistant to wrecks. And I think where there is a lot of heavy traffic, I think that we’ll all travel by a computerized plan.

I also think there will be a lot more rapid rail transit. I think it will be safer. It’ll be better, and I think we’ll be able to do things while we travel and spend more time. I think we will go into outer space, and at sometime in the next century, I think there will be large, permanent platforms sustaining life in outer space that will basically be jumping-off places to distant planets and maybe even beyond. That’s what I think will happen.

Q. Hold on one second. I know you've got to change tape. Okay.

Mr. Rose. You said computerized plan—

The President. No, I meant cars. You want me to say it again?

Mr. Rose. How much time do we have?

The President. I just misspoke myself.

Mr. Rose. How much time do we have here?

The President. I don't know, 10 minutes, 5 minutes?

You want to do that again?

Mr. Rose. The last question? All right. Okay.

Think about the future of your grandchildren, Chelsea's children, the year 2050. What will life be like then? What kind of food; what kind of transportation; will we be living on other planets? Will we still be concerned about things that concern us now, like overweight, stuff like that?

The President. I don't think all of the problems will go away. I think the food will be pretty much like it is now, but even safer. I think that on Earth, we'll travel in automobiles, still, but in traffic jams, we'll have automated systems. I think there will be a lot more high speed rail. I think we'll travel in ways that give us more free time to do things while we travel.

I think that there will be large platforms in outer space that will be jumping-off places to distant planets, and I think that the biomedical advances will be stunning. I think a lot of cancers will be cured. I think there will be a vaccine for AIDS. I think that the research in the human gene and the revolution, the continuing revolution in microchips will enable people to probably cure spinal cord injuries by having a programmed chip that goes into the spine and replicates all the nerves that were damaged.

I think that it'll be a fascinating time. And I think there will be lots and lots of continuous daily communication with people across national and cultural lines.

Mr. Rose. Would you go to space if you had the opportunity?

The President. I might. I'm real interested in it. I like it a lot. I think it's important.

Post-Presidential Plans

Mr. Rose. What one thing do you most want to accomplish—I've got to go—when you leave this office? What's the single most important thing for you to accomplish when you leave?

The President. You mean, after I'm not President anymore?

Mr. Rose. After you're not President.

The President. I think the most important thing is for me to be a useful citizen of this country and of this world, because I've had opportunities here only my other living predecessors have had. And I think that for me to be able to continue the work I've done in racial and religious and ethnic reconciliation and trying to convince people that we can grow the global economy and still preserve the environment and trying to empower the poor and the dispossessed, in trying to spread the universal impact of education and use technology to benefit ordinary people, these kinds of things—I think I should continue to do this work and trying—I want to get young people into public service. I want them to believe this is noble and important work.

So I think, in a word, I have to be a good citizen now. That's the most important thing I can do when I leave office is to use the maximum—to the maximum extent I can, the knowledge that I have, the experience that I've gained to be a really good citizen.

Mr. Rose. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was videotaped at 5:10 p.m. in the Oval Office for later broadcast, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 28. The text of this interview follows the transcript as released by the Office of the Press Secretary. A portion of this interview could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.