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ministrative cuts, and I hope they'll agree to the other budget cuts, too. I don't like asking for these contributions, but I have to deliver to you a leaner Government and a more vibrant economy in return.

I do propose to raise income tax rates, but only for the top 1.2 percent of taxpayers, those taxpayers whose taxes went down in the 1980's while their incomes went way up. And our overall tax proposal will cost a family of four with an income of $40,000 less than $17 a month.

Finally, I will cut almost $250 billion from more than 150 domestic programs, many of them with some merit, and from the defense budget.

Now a lot of interests will argue that these cuts are too steep. Still others will say they're not enough or demand that we protect their pet projects while cutting someone else. To all, I say the same thing: Give me real cuts, don't waste the people's time anymore. I'm committed to cutting every bit of spending we can from programs we don't need or can't afford. And I won't raise taxes without cutting spending. But tell us exactly where you want to cut, and I'll gladly listen.

It's time to put politics aside and put America first. It's been years since our Government fought for working families and gave them a system where they could thrive and pass the American dream on to their children. It's time to include all Americans again, to build a new prosperity, not because we want new wealth for the Government but because we want to renew the dreams of our children, all of them.

I'm determined to take us in a new direction, and I ask you to join me in this fight for the future. Support your elected Representatives who are demonstrating the courage to change. If you do, we can write the next great chapter in the history of the greatest country the world has ever known. Thank you, and good morning.

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

Remarks at the Children's Town Meeting

February 20, 1993

Peter Jennings. Mr. President, one of my first impressions here is that this is an awful lot bigger than what you were used to living in Arkansas.

The President. It's bigger than almost anybody in America lives in, but it's a beautiful house. You know it was started in 1792. President Washington authorized it to be built, and then before it was finished, actually, President Adams and his wife moved in here. So it's been here a long time.

Mr. Jennings. Right behind us here, of course, we can't go in this morning, but it's really one of the most beautiful rooms, the Blue Room, looking out onto the Jefferson Memorial.

The President. It's very beautiful. And upstairs, just above it, there's another big oval room which President Franklin Roosevelt used as his office during World War II. And now we use it for formal receiving of foreign dignitaries. And it also looks directly out on the Jefferson Memorial. And there's a porch there that President Harry Truman put on, so I can go out at night now and look at the lights shining down on Thomas Jefferson's head. It's a wonderful sight.

Mr. Jennings. You know the White House staff is very discreet. When I asked them if you sneaked around, sticking your heads in various rooms at night, they said, ''Ask him.'' Do you wander around at night?

The President. I do a little, not so much down here but up on the second and third floor. And I spent a lot of time working, in this last month, over around the Oval Office, so I'm in the Cabinet Room a lot and in the Roosevelt Room, which is the President's big staff room. And I'm just trying to learn what all the pictures are and where all the things are and learn the history of the place. I'm very interested in it.

Mr. Jennings. I just have one question before we go and actually meet the children. There's the President's seal up there, the President of the United States, just above the door of the Blue Room. And it reminds me of Teddy White, the political writer, who said there is a moment when the man stops being the man and becomes the President. Was there such a moment for you, do you remember?

The President. I think there was a moment when I realized I was going to be President, and it was different after that. And it was not at the election. It was a couple of weeks after the election when I was planning the Inaugural and they asked me what I wanted to do. And we decided that I would start at Thomas Jefferson's home at Monticello and then go to the Lincoln Memorial, and then the next morning I would go to the graves of President Kennedy and his brother, Senator Robert Kennedy. And I realized, in describing that that's what I would do, that I was becoming a part of our history.

Mr. Jennings. Well, you indeed—and these young boys and girls, between about 8 and 15, from Washington and other parts around the country, are very interested in you and history.

Good morning, everybody. You welcome the President? Nice to have him, isn't it? Well, I think they have a lot of questions. Who wants to ask the first question?

School Integration in Little Rock

Q. I would like to ask you a question that goes back to about 30, 40 years ago, back in Little Rock, Arkansas. If you were in the same position that you are now, and during the time of the occurrence of the Little Rock Nine, how would you take forth the matters about them going into the school? Would you go with the community, or would you go with your heart?

The President. I would have gone with my heart and with the law of the United States, which was that the children had a right to go to the school without regard to their race. I would have done what President Eisenhower did. I would have sent troops there and done whatever it took to give the children the right to go to school.

One of the people who was part of the Little Rock Nine, Earnest Green, is now a business executive here in Washington and a good friend of mine. And I'm glad he had a chance to do that.

Mr. Jennings. Mr. President, excuse me, I don't think everybody knows who the Little Rock Nine were.

The President. Oh, what he's asking about—about 40 years ago, a lot of the schools, public schools, in our country were still segregated by race. Virtually all the schools in the southern part of the United States were segregated by race. Young black and white children went to different schools. Forty years ago, the courts ruled that we could no longer segregate schools by race. In my hometown of Little Rock, in the capital city, the Governor and the local school board tried to keep them separate. President Eisenhower then ordered troops there to open the schools so that the schools could be integrated. He was asking me if I would do the same thing, and I said I would.

Good for you. Great question.

Mr. Jennings. There's a stool behind you, Mr. President, if you feel like sitting on it. Who else had got a—we kind of broke it down into fun questions and serious questions. Who had a fun question they wanted to start with?

Chelsea Clinton

Q. Do you help Chelsea with her homework?

The President. I do. I do math with her quite often. I took a lot of algebra and advanced mathematics in high school, and then I didn't take any more after I went to college. So when Chelsea got into algebra, she started asking me to help. And so I've used it sort of to learn algebra again. It's been a lot of fun for me. I enjoy it a lot. We do it quite often at night or early in the morning.

Mr. Jennings. Now, Mr. President, people all over the country who I know want to ask you questions, we have an 800 number which we'll put on the screen. It's been up for a while, and people have been trying to call in. So take a look, 1–800–648–8094. And I know we have a call from Kim in Minnesota. Go ahead, Kim.

Women in Political Office

Q. My question is, why can't women be President? Why is it just men?

The President. Women can be President, Kim. No woman has been elected President yet, but we now have a significant number of women in the United States Senate. We've had a good number of women Governors. We have a large number of women in the House of Representatives. And I think that there will be a woman elected President in the not-too-distant future.

I think that the American people used to be prejudiced against women in public life, and women didn't even have the right to vote guaranteed until, well, less than a hundred years ago. But it's been done now in every other political office in the country. And I think you'll see a woman President before long. Maybe it will be you, if you work hard and do what you can to get involved in public affairs.

Mr. Jennings. I wonder if we can test the confidence level on that statement in here. How many of you girls, or young women, think a woman will be President in your lifetime? Oh, confidence level is very high.

Who's got the next question? How about you, Shannon?

Los Angeles Civil Disturbances

Q. Since the L.A. riots, we have a lot of empty buildings, and a lot of people in our neighborhood want to open businesses. I want to know how can we have low-interest loans to help minorities build shops and buildings?

Mr. Jennings. Mr. President, before you answer that question of Shannon's—I forgot for a second—would you like to see a little bit of where she comes from?

The President. Sure, I would.

Mr. Jennings. Shannon has come here to us from Los Angeles today. How many kids have come from different parts of the country? Just give the President some indications. We have a large contingent from other parts of the country. And Shannon comes from Los Angeles, and here's a little bit about the way she lives. You can look at the monitors.

[*At this point, a short film was shown in which Shannon explained what it was like to live in Los Angeles after the civil disturbances.*]

Mr. Jennings. Sir, her question about low-interest loans for minorities makes a lot of sense.

The President. Good for you; it does. Let me tell you the two or three things we're working on here. First of all, I'm trying to set up, in all the big cities throughout the country, a financial institution that will make low-interest loans to people who live in those communities. There is such a bank in Chicago that's done a very good job of rebuilding some of the poor communities through setting up businesses.

The second thing that I want to do is to get the Congress to pass a bill which will give people special incentives to invest funds in communities like south central Los Angeles, that you put money in places where there's a lot of unemployment, a lot of empty buildings, you get a special tax break for doing it.

And the third thing I have asked Congress to do is to pass a bill to benefit small-business people so that as long as they keep investing money to create jobs, they'll have their taxes lowered for doing that. And I think these things are very important, and I'm glad you asked.

Let me just mention one other thing. One of the provisions of the economic plan I sent to Congress would also permit us to create about 700,000 summer jobs this summer for young people, which would get them active. And then they could be used to clean up the area and to help people make the parks more attractive and to do things to make those areas better and make people want to invest in them more. We've got a lot of work to do, and I'm glad you asked the question.

Health Care Reform

Mr. Jennings. We have a question down here in the front row.

Q. I would like to ask, if we start health care programs, when we start them, who is going to pay for them? Who is going to fund them?

The President. First of all, we're already paying a lot of money on health care. Your country, believe it or not, has the most expensive health care system in the world. We

spend much more for health care than any other country, but a lot of Americans don't have health insurance. You know that, don't you? A lot of Americans don't have health care.

So what I think will happen is that we will have a health care system which will be paid for partly by the Government and partly by people who are employers and partly by the people who work for them. And we'll pay for it in three ways. But what we've got to do is to find a way to provide basic health care to all Americans, including people who have serious health problems—I know there are some people in this audience today who have members of your family with serious health problems—and to keep the cost down, more like what it costs in other countries. Because otherwise, we're going to be hurt very bad economically.

One of the reasons we're having trouble generating a lot of new jobs in this country is that our businesses are spending so much more money for health care than any other businesses anywhere in the world, that they have less money to invest to put people to work. So my job is to do two things that are hard to do: get health care for everybody, and then to bring the costs down.

The Presidency

Mr. Jennings. We have a phone call from Connecticut. Go ahead, Connecticut.

Q. I was wondering what made you have the burden to become the President?

The President. You mean, why did I want to become President?

Q. Yes.

The President. That's a good question, Andrea. I decided to run for President in 1991 because I was concerned that there were too many people in America who were out of work; there were too many people who were losing their jobs; there were too many people who had problems with health care; there was too much of an indication that we weren't building a future so that young people like you would be able to grow up and have a better life than your parents did. And I was afraid that the American dream was in danger. I thought I had some good ideas about how to turn it around and how to make life better for the American people, and that's why I ran. I asked the American people to listen to my ideas, and they were good enough to vote for me and give me a chance to serve.

The White House

Mr. Jennings. Now, I know a lot of you have questions about exactly how the President spends his day. Who's got a question about what the President does in the White House?

Q. I just wanted to know—I mean, you were just coming down the hall in the Oval Office showing us how nice, you know, everything around here is, just look around the room and—I don't know, personally if I lived here I would feel constrained to actually live, you know? I mean, it's just so nice, everything is so perfect, I would not—I mean, I don't know. So how do you feel about——

The President. I feel a little that way, too, sometimes. But let me say that upstairs, on the second floor, there are some nice formal guestrooms but there also is—Chelsea has a bedroom and a little room where she can study and do her work. And Hillary and I have a bedroom and a little family room, and they're not quite so formal. So the rooms that we have are much more like regular rooms in a house, and you don't have to worry so much about breaking an expensive piece of china or something like that.

Mr. Jennings. But it wasn't always so formal here, was it, Mr. President? The East Room, they used to hang laundry in the East Room.

The President. Oh, absolutely. It wasn't always so formal at all. It's probably as formal now as it's ever been, but there are some more informal rooms. And then there's a third floor, a floor two floors up from here, which has some other rooms and a little hallway where we have our rocking chairs and our family books and all kind of stuff like that, which is really much more homey. So we spend a lot of our time in places where we don't have to go on tiptoes all around.

Mr. Jennings. We said we were going to test you on some of the questions here. Do you know the children of which President roller-skated in here, in the East Room? Who remembers that?

Q. Roosevelt.

Mr. Jennings. Which Roosevelt?

Q. Teddy.

Mr. Jennings. Exactly. President Theodore Roosevelt's children used to roller-skate here in the East Room. And of course, maybe you'd like to point out to the kids the famous painting.

The President. Yes. That's a picture of who? Who is that?

The Children. George Washington.

The President. That's right. That's President Washington, painted by Gilbert Stuart. And it is an absolutely invaluable piece of art. Gilbert Stuart was a very famous artist. I think it was offered to the United States first for about $500. He painted it in 1797. That was a lot of money back then. It's worth millions of dollars today. It's a priceless picture.

Mr. Jennings. And who saved it?

The President. Excuse me?

Mr. Jennings. Who saved it?

The President. Who saved it?

Mr. Jennings. Dolley Madison, right?

The President. Yes, Dolley Madison saved it.

Mr. Jennings. When there was——

The President. ——from the fire.

Mr. Jennings. She wouldn't leave the White House until the——

The President. Yes, during the War of 1812 the British marched on Washington and tried to burn the city, and the White House caught fire. There's still some char marks actually out on the front of the White House. And Dolley Madison would not leave the White House until the precious treasures were preserved, including that.

There's also a picture back there of President Theodore Roosevelt, painted when he was a year younger than I am now. Theodore Roosevelt was the youngest person ever to become President. He was elected President at the age—well, he became President when President McKinley died; he was 42. And President Kennedy was elected when he was 43, and I was elected when I had just turned 46. So I'm the third youngest person to be President.

Mr. Jennings. But not—[*inaudible*]. You probably need a bit of rest for the moment, though, sir, as you're the third youngest, so we'll go away for a commercial and be right back.

The President. I feel like the oldest some days. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, the television stations took a commercial break.*]

The President's Pastimes

Mr. Jennings. Welcome back to the East Room of the White House. Let's go straight to you, Jared, you have a question.

Q. What do you do for fun around here? [*Laughter*]

The President. I like to play golf. I've only gotten to do it one time since I've been President, but I like to do that. And I like to play cards and games with Hillary and Chelsea. We play pinochle; we play a game that Chelsea taught me called Hungarian rummy. I like to play Trivial Pursuit. That's pretty much what I do.

Q. Are you a good Trivial Pursuit player?

The President. Sometimes. I'm better on some subjects than others, but I like it a lot.

Somalia

Mr. Jennings. Way over there in the corner.

Q. About Somalia and the United States, are we going to help the United States or Somalia first? Because Somalia has been in trouble for years, but we haven't done anything. We've done something, but not that much. So are you going to start helping Somalia first or getting the United States their jobs back first?

The President. Well, my most important job is to try to help people in the United States get their jobs back, because I was elected first and most importantly to help the people here with jobs and education and health care.

But I think the United States has a responsibility in Somalia. And I supported it when we sent our troops over there to try to stop the fighting and to try to bring some safety and food and medicine and education back to the children there. And I think that what we will be doing in Somalia is trying to work with other countries to always keep enough soldiers there to try to keep the peace, but there won't be so many Americans there. And then we can support others and try to

make sure that we restore peace on a long-term basis and try to make sure that the people always had enough food and medicine and shelter to do well. I think we do have a responsibility there, but as President my first responsibility is to all of you.

The Presidency

Mr. Jennings. Behind you here, Mr. President. Jeannie has a question. Jeannie Lee.

Q. Hi. How do you feel, like, now that you're the President of the United States?

The President. It's an incredible honor. And every day I still get up and I feel a lot of gratitude just for having the chance to serve. I also feel a big sense of responsibility. I don't want to let you down, all of you and all the people all over the country, the people who voted for me and those who didn't. I hope I can do a good job to help solve our problems and move us forward.

Mr. Jennings. Jeannie, what do you think is probably the best thing about being President? If you were him, what would you guess?

Q. I think I would have a lot of responsibility, too, because I've got to take care of the whole United States and I've got to help others. And you've got to help the people of the United States fight their enemies and crime and riots and gangs.

The President's Education

Mr. Jennings. Right behind you, Willie.

Q. When you were in, like, our grade, what was your hardest subject in school?

The President. When I was in your—when I was your age? How old are you?

Q. Nine.

The President. Nine. You're in the fourth grade? I made my lowest grades in conduct—[*laughter*]—because I talked too much in school and the teachers were always telling me to stop talking. I did best in math. I did well in reading. I had some trouble spelling, interestingly enough, when I was young, because I'd get excited and I would go too fast. And sometimes I wouldn't spell so well.

Q. What are you going to do about the environment?

Violence in Schools

Mr. Jennings. Well, let me hold the President on the environment for just a second, if that's okay with you, because I think touching on education is really interesting.

Mr. President, I'd like you to meet Michael Cruz here. We met Michael out in the country, and we did a little film about him which I'd like you to see, because I know he has a question. And it's something I know that he cares a lot about and he'd like to ask you about. So let's, first of all, look at where Michael goes to school.

[*At this point, a short film was shown in which Michael explained how the violence in his school is affecting his education.*]

Mr. Jennings. Well, Michael goes to the Roberto Clemente High School in Chicago, Illinois. Have you got a question for the President, Michael?

Q. How are you going to make my school safer to get a better education?

The President. I have an answer to that, but let me ask you first so I won't prejudice your answer: If you were in my position, what would you do to make the school safer?

Q. I would try to get as much teachers and, mainly, security guards in there to keep the violence, because now there's not so many security guards and there's too many students. I would just try to control the school first. And then once they control the school, then I'll throw the education on their lap.

The President. Let me tell you what we're going to try to do. First of all, as part of the economic program I sent to Congress there is a safe schools initiative which, if it passes, would enable us to help schools with more security guards and with more, like metal detectors and things like that, to try to make sure kids don't come to school with weapons.

Secondly, I have offered a program that would permit us to put another 100,000 police officers on the street in America in the next couple of years, including people who could be stationed in around schools. The third thing I think we ought to do is to pass a bill which says that nobody can buy a handgun unless there's a waiting period, during which time you can check their criminal history and see if they've been in any trouble

before, because you don't have to sell them guns if they have been in trouble before. But if you don't check, you don't know. I think that's a good place to start.

But let me also say, you're from Chicago, right? I was in a junior high school in Chicago not very long ago called the Beasley Academic Center. It's a public school in Chicago. Do you know where it is? It's in a neighborhood with a very high crime rate. And they have police outside the school. Now, I know it's not a high school, it's a junior high school. There are police outside the school, but not in the school, because the teacher has to deal with—she's got 75 fathers a week coming to the school, 150 mothers a week coming to the school, and the kids have a whole strict code of conduct. They ask to go there, but there's no academic requirement. You know, if everybody asks to go and if there are too many who ask, then they do it by lottery. But the kids that go there really help to keep the peace in their own school, supporting the principal. And with the parents involved, I think that's real important, too.

I can provide extra help for law enforcement, but we've got to get more grassroots community people involved. I loved seeing you in that class. And I just hope that a year or two from now, all those other desks will be full, too. And don't you give up on your education, because—don't let anybody else, no matter what their problems are, take your future away from you. Only you can do that.

Mr. Jennings. You know, there's something else about Michael, which I'm not sure I'm right about. Michael, did I hear that some of the kids in your school teased you badly about coming to see the President?

Q. Yes.

The President. Why? Why did they do that?

Q. Because people don't believe that. People don't want to believe it.

The President. They don't believe that I care anything about them?

Q. Yes, in a way, you can say like that.

Mr. Jennings. Do you think the President's answer to you is—did it give you some satisfaction?

Q. Yes, it gave me a lot.

The President. Look, you know, when I was your age it was a lot easier to be young than it is now. We worried about liquor and cigarettes. Nobody worried about drugs and guns. And I know it's hard to be young now. But I also know that if you get a good education, nobody can take that away from you. You can still have a good life. And there are people there who care about your education. And I'm going to do what I can to support them.

Home Schooling

Q. I'm home schooled; I don't go to school. And I was wondering what you thought about home schooling and what you were going to do about it, or if there was anything you were going to do?

Mr. Jennings. Can you explain what home schooling is?

Q. Yes, my parents teach me at home, so I don't go to school. They don't really believe some of the stuff that's being taught and done in the schools.

The President. I can tell you what I have done about it. Let me tell all of you this, just by way of background. The public schools of our country are largely run at the local level by school boards and school administrators. And the money for them and the rules by which they are run are largely set at the State level, by the State governments throughout the country. So you're from Virginia, right?

Q. Yes.

The President. So the State government in Richmond largely makes the rules for the public schools. I was a Governor before I became President. And while I was Governor, I supported and passed a law through our legislature which made home schooling legal and which supported home schooling and parents and children making the decision to be educated at home, as long as the children were willing to take examinations every year and prove that they were learning what they should be learning for people their age. And that's the way I feel. I think that your parents and you, as a family, should have the right to do this as long as you're learning. And if you can demonstrate that you're learning, I think you should have the right to do it.

Mr. Jennings. Can I interrupt, sir, because I don't think people really understand

why many parents want to teach or insist on teaching their children at home. A lot of it has to do with sex education, doesn't it?

The President. It's different for different people. I think there—and Katie, you can interrupt me or say what you think—but I have talked to a lot of parents and children who have been in the home schooling movement, and normally they fall into two groups. There is one group, perhaps the smaller one, who believe that they just give their kids a better education, that their kids learn more and more quickly. Then there's a second set of concerns which revolve around values. A lot of parents are really upset by what Michael just said, that kids go to school, they have to worry about being exposed to violence, to premature sex, to drugs, to things that they may not agree with. So there are what you might call the values objections, to things that children are exposed to, and then the academic objections.

Is that a fair statement?

Q. Yes.

Mr. Jennings. Who has got—somebody's got some questions about the White House. I want to make sure that I don't lose who has got questions about the White House.

White House Meals

Q. Does Hillary ever cook for you?

The President. Does Hillary ever cook for me? Sometimes.

Mr. Jennings. Do you ever cook?

The President. Believe it or not, sometimes we cook for each other. But we've been so busy lately we haven't had a chance to do it since we've been here. But Hillary's actually a pretty good cook. And I like to cook, but what I like to do is to make things like omelets. I love to make omelets. And sometimes on Sunday nights, Hillary and Chelsea and I will go into the kitchen, and I'll make everybody omelets and we'll sit around and talk.

So both of us like to cook, but we've been—you know, I asked Hillary to take charge of the health care problem and try to come up with a solution to it. And I've been working real hard on the economic problems, so neither of us has had much time to cook. And they have wonderful cooks here. As a matter of fact, Chelsea can tell you there is a whole little kitchen where they don't do anything but make pastry and sweet things and desserts.

Mr. Jennings. They'd all hate that here, sir.

The President. Oh. [*Laughter*] So I've been mostly relying on those folks. But, yes, she does cook for me sometimes.

Mr. Jennings. What about Ellie, way at the back.

Q. My question is sort of serious.

Mr. Jennings. Well, if it's serious, let's hold it for one second, and we'll go to a commercial and come right back.

The President. Okay.

Mr. Jennings. Okay? My apologies.

[*At this point, the television stations took a commercial break.*]

Mr. Jennings. But you have to work on Omar here, because he told me he's a Republican. [*Laughter*]

When we were away for a commercial, some of these kids said you look a lot better in person than you do on television.

The President. Well, that's good news.

Mr. Jennings. You want to deal with that?

The President. Well, sometimes I have these big bags under my eyes when I don't get any sleep the night before if I work late, or when my allergies are bad. So I'm glad you think I look better. I feel better today.

Mr. Jennings. Carlos, what did you want to know? You want to know where Socks was?

Q. Yes.

The President. Socks is just around the corner and downstairs. He's here all the time.

DC School Closings

Q. Well, I also want to know something else. What are you going to do about what the school board is doing about closing 10 schools in every ward?

The President. Here?

Q. In DC.

The President. That's a different question because the Washington, DC, government does get some money directly from the Congress and the President. I can't answer that question today because I don't know whether they're closing down the schools because they don't have enough money to run them or because they have too many schools for

the kids that are there now. That is, a lot of school districts in America are losing school populations.

But I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll look into it. And I've got your address, and I'll write you a letter about it. Okay?

Q. There's a little more I need to tell you. Can you at least talk to them to not close the good ones? Because they might close my school, and my school is the only elementary school that's bilingual in all DC.

The President. You don't want them to do that, do you? Because we have a lot of bilingual kids in DC, don't we, now? Thank you. I'll look into that, and I'll get back in touch with you.

Proposed Handgun Legislation

Mr. Jennings. Okay. We have a phone call, Mr. President, and I think from Texas. Go ahead, Allison.

Q. What is the Brady bill?

Mr. Jennings. What is the Brady bill?

The President. Oh, what is the Brady bill? The Brady bill is the bill I was just actually talking about. It's a bill that would require people who want to buy handguns to wait for a few days while the people who sell the handguns check to see if they have committed a crime or if they have a mental health history or some other problem which would make it dangerous for them to get the handgun. And the Brady bill would require people to wait just a few days until that check is done.

I strongly support the Brady bill. Some people are against it. But I think it's a good idea just to wait a couple of days. I don't think it's much of an inconvenience for people who want to buy guns to ask them to wait so we can check their criminal history.

Gays in the Military

Mr. Jennings. I almost forgot you, Ellie. I'm sorry.

Q. The opposition to your recent attempt to lift the ban on the homosexuals in the military shows that as a society we're still very biased towards homosexuals. What are you going to do to help America as a nation accept them?

The President. Well, I think what's important about that issue to me is not that Americans agree with the lifestyle but that they accept the fact that there are citizens in the United States who are homosexual, who work hard, who don't break laws, who pay their taxes, don't bother other people, who ought to have a chance to serve. And I just say that at every chance I get. And I have also been involved in giving some people the chance to serve who are homosexual, and I think that's important. I think that there are a lot of people whose religious beliefs dictate that the homosexual lifestyle is wrong. I don't ask them to give up their religious beliefs but simply to accept other people as people and give them a chance to be citizens as long as they're not doing anything wrong. That's my position on it.

Special Education

Mr. Jennings. Anastasia, you've had your hand up a lot. Maybe, Mr. President, you'd like to come and sit down for a second.

The President. Hi, Anastasia.

Mr. Jennings. Excuse me for one second for reaching over you. Come and sit here. Sara, you come and sit here if you would and let the President sit down.

The President. Okay.

Q. I have a twin sister and we go to the same school. But she can't speak. So because she can't speak, they've put her in a special class. But she uses computers to speak. And I would like her to be in a regular class just like me.

The President. Wow. And you think your sister could do just as well as you in a regular class?

Q. Yes.

The President. As long as she can use her computer. And her computer is on a little top just like this, isn't it?

Q. Yes. Well, you can put it on here and you can put it on regular tables also if—because you can carry it around. It's a little computer.

The President. And she talks to you by using it?

Q. Yes.

The President. Why do you think they put her in the special education class?

Q. I think it's because she couldn't talk. And they thought—the principal thinks that she can't do it because she can't use her hands and she can't speak.

The President. But you think that she could learn just as quickly if she were in a regular class?

Q. Yes.

The President. Have your parents asked the principal to put her in a regular class?

Q. Yes.

The President. And they said no?

Q. The principal said no.

The President. Well, you know, as President I can't do anything about that except to speak about it. But I'll tell you this, I have a friend named Hamp Rasco whose mother works for me here. And he's now 18 years old. He has cerebral palsy. And he doesn't speak quite as well as you, but he can probably speak a little more than your sister. And I watched him go all the way through high school and graduate from high school and get his graduation degree. And he lives out on his own now. And I'm going to do what I can to help people let all Americans go as far as they can. And I think young people who are working hard to prove they can do this kind of work ought to be given a chance to do it. And I think your sister should be given a chance to show whether she can work in the class or not.

That's what you think then? You just want her to have a chance to prove whether she can do it or not, right?

Q. Yes.

The President. And if she tried and she couldn't do it, then would you support her being in another class?

Q. Yes.

The President. So you just want your sister to have a chance.

Q. Yes.

The President. Good for you. Maybe she'll get it because we were here talking about this.

Mr. Jennings. I have a feeling. Thanks very much.

Q. You're welcome.

The President. Give her a hand. Wasn't that great? Thanks for sticking up for your sister. That's wonderful.

The Environment

Mr. Jennings. We have a phone call from Ian. Go ahead.

Q. President Clinton, how will you stop pollution in the United States?

Mr. Jennings. Just like that. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, it's not quite that simple because you know we make pollution every day, Ian. When we drive our cars, we make pollution; when we run our factories, we make pollution. But there are two or three things we can do. Let me just mention them.

Number one, we have a Clean Air Act in the United States, designed to reduce the amount of pollution that goes into the air in the first place. I want to enforce that. Number two, I want to support clean water. We put a lot of stuff in our water. I want to reduce that. Number three, I want to try to do things that will help preserve the quality of the environment in the first place, like planting more trees and reforesting the land and building up the soil of the United States. I think we want to clean up the things that are being polluted, but we want to stop things from being polluted as much as possible. And then, finally, I'm trying to promote more energy conservation and cleaner energy. Like natural gas, for example, is the cleanest form of energy that we can burn. So I'm trying to promote the use of natural gas. Those are the things that I think we should do in the beginning.

Mr. Jennings. I don't think anybody in the East Room, Mr. President, feels as strongly about that as Pernell does. And I know he has a question to ask you, but before you ask your question, let's show the President a little bit about where you live.

[*At this point, a short film was shown in which Pernell explained how environmental pollution has affected the health of his family.*]

Mr. Jennings. Pernell comes from Garyville, Louisiana, and it's about a hundred miles' trip between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, right, Pernell?

Q. Yes.

Mr. Jennings. Where there are about a hundred petrochemical plants.

Q. Yes, Garyville, the small town that I live in, is right between the chemical corridor, which is the area between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. And Mr. President,

I'd like to ask if restrictions can be put on the amount of carelessly handled hazardous waste and air pollution, such as smoke, and if the health care system can get into this somewhat and help the cancer victims, which this cancer may have resulted from this environmental contamination.

The President. Why don't you tell these folks how many relatives in your family have had cancer.

Q. Well, I'm not exactly sure, but I know my 10-year-old brother died of something that even the experts—experts across the country came over to Children's Hospital in New Orleans to look at this. They could not—they were just stumped. My brother, Charlie, was either the 10th or the 11th person in recorded history ever to catch this. Through all the other patients that caught this, the experts could never figure it out. And they checked into just about every condition that could have caused it, with the exception of the environment.

The President. Let me say that this young man lives in Louisiana, which is just to the south of my home State of Arkansas, so I know quite a bit about where you live and I've been in that alley between Baton Rouge and New Orleans many, many times. The cancer rate there is way above the national average.

I think there are two things we should be doing. One is, we should be doing a lot more medical research to try to find out what causes these cancers. And the second thing we ought to be doing is to invest more money there to do environmental cleanup.

In the election campaign that I went through to be elected President, I said many times that I thought we ought to take some of the money that we're reducing the defense budget by and putting it into cleaning up the environment here at home. Because I think there are now all kinds of health hazards that we never knew about before that we're now learning about in some of the things we've done. And we need to do a lot of environmental cleanup in that part of Louisiana where you live and throughout the country. And I'm going to do my best to do it.

Mr. Jennings. It's interesting, sir, that a lot of people were playing the budget game earlier, helping how to spend your money for you. And an awful lot of kids, both last night and tonight, all of them putting their money into cleaning up the environment.

The President. How many of you think we should spend more money on the environment, cleaning it up?

Q. We've only got one planet. If we don't preserve it, you know, there's no other place we can go to. And everyone from my area and the surrounding areas, most of them voted for you, you know. We all believe very strongly that you, as an individual, do have the know-how and the courage to go about and tackle this problem and many others, and we do have faith in you.

The President. We'll do it for your brother, okay?

Q. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Jennings. We'll be back in just a moment.

[*At this point, the television stations took a commercial break.*]

Economic Legislation

Mr. Jennings. Well, I haven't had a chance to ask you kids this question yet, but how—you've all heard President Clinton—put down your hands for just a second—you all have heard President Clinton say many things he'd like to do. Now, he's a very powerful individual, as I think we all agree, but he can't do it all by himself. You have to get bill through Congress.

The President. That's right.

Mr. Jennings. Your budget bill's up there now. You're going to have a real tough time——

The President. A real tough time.

Mr. Jennings. Right. How many of you would like to know how to get a bill through Congress? Do you think that would be useful in order to find out how you get it done?

The President. I'd like to know that. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Jennings. Well, we've enlisted the help of Steven Urkel, who's a great, great pal, I guess, of all yours, to tell us how you actually get a bill through the Congress. Let's watch.

[*At this point, a short film was shown on the legislative process.*]

Mr. Jennings. Isn't that great?

The President. That was great.

Mr. Jennings. I have a present for you, Mr. President, the Urkel clean air act of 1993, like all Government bills today, on recycled paper.

The President. That's good. That's right. We use a lot of recycled paper.

Mr. Jennings. So you have a chance now to sign that bill or you can veto that bill, right?

The President. That's right. I have to act within 10 days of getting it, and I can sign it or veto it. I think I'd better sign, don't you?

Mr. Jennings. I think you'd better. Do you think he should sign it? Okay.

Let's go back to questions. Venus, you have a question.

Homelessness

Q. As a new President, how are you going to end homelessness, or what are you going to do to end homelessness in the world?

The President. Do you want to say anything about Venus before I answer the question?

Mr. Jennings. Yes, I do. I do. It's a tough question for Venus, and we told the President before that Venus had come to us from the west coast, and I think it would help if the rest of you kids here and the audience at home saw a little bit about the circumstances in which she lives.

[*At this point, a short film was shown in which Venus explained the difficulties of living in a homeless shelter.*]

The President. Good for you.

Mr. Jennings. What's your question then, Venus? Again, would you repeat it.

Q. As the new President, what are you going to try to do or how are you going to do—what are you going to do to end homelessness in our world?

The President. May I ask you a question? How did you become homeless?

Q. I came from New York around 5 months ago, and we didn't have an exact place to go to. So we went to social services and from there on, it was homeless until we can get an apartment.

The President. I think there are two or three things we should do. And I asked her this question because over one-third of the homeless people in America now are families with children. And a lot of them are people who moved from one town to another, and they have no savings; they have no money in the bank.

I met a homeless couple in my hometown about a year ago. It was kind of like you. They had come down from Chicago. And they actually had jobs, but they hadn't drawn a paycheck yet and they had no place to live.

So here are the things that we're going to try to do. First of all, we're going to try to build more housing for low-income working people. We haven't had much of a housing program for a long time. Secondly, I'm going to have an inventory done—an inventory means a list done—of all the housing in America which exists today that belongs to the Government which is boarded up or closed down, and see whether or not we can't give a lot of that housing back to churches or community groups or other groups and let people work on repairing it. And if they do work on repairing it, they should be able to live in it. I met a woman and her children in Philadelphia who were doing a lot of their own work on a home, an old home that had been boarded up. And they were going to get to move in it and live there because of the work they had done to do it.

The third thing we have to do is to create more jobs because a lot of the homeless people wouldn't be homeless if they had jobs.

Mr. Jennings. One of the things about all your answers, Mr. President—and I don't want to take time away from them—is that they all seem to be long-term. And Venus has a short-term problem, and Pernell has a short-term problem, and Shannon has a short-term problem.

The President. Well, I think to be fair, though, if you look at Venus' problem, it wouldn't necessarily be a long-term problem if we increase the capacities of cities throughout this country to move people directly into more stable environments. I know in San Francisco there was a real detailed homeless program that I saw there that the administration wanted to put in that they just didn't have the money to put in because there was no partnership with the National Government. And my feeling on the homeless issue is that a lot of Americans who have money

and homes really want us to do something about it and would really support our doing more about it. I don't think Americans like the fact that children like you, your mother are in homeless shelters just because you happen to move from one town to the other.

Now, on your problem——

Mr. Jennings. Pernell.

The Environment

The President. On Pernell's problem, it's a little different because you have to do a lot of medical research to find out exactly what's causing this. But I think you will see this year, greater efforts in environmental cleanup all over the country if our program passes this year. It's not too late.

But as Pernell probably knows, since you studied your brother's problem, a lot of times these cancers develop over 2 or 5 or 10 and sometimes even over 20 years. So they are long-term problems. And we did a lot of things to our environment in the past because we didn't know what it was doing. And I think now we just have to turn it around; we just have to start cleaning up more. And I think most Americans want to do that.

Mr. Jennings. We have an awful lot of questions, obviously. We're going to go away for just a minute.

[*At this point, the television stations took a commercial break.*]

Chelsea Clinton and Socks the Cat

Mr. Jennings. Well, Mr. President, I must tell you, as impressed as we all are to have you here, and as good as they think you've been so far, there's somebody else they'd like to meet more, and you know that. So we do have a bit of a surprise for you. Chelsea, would you come and join us for a second?

These are the two people that you've all been asking about. Do you want to sit on the stool?

Chelsea Clinton. Sure.

Mr. Jennings. Two people that the boys and girls have all been asking about this morning, Chelsea and Socks. You all had questions about Socks. Who wants to go?

Q. Why did you call your cat "Socks"?

The President. Who knows—guess? Why did we call him "Socks"? Hold him up, Chelsea. Why did we call him "Socks"? Because he has white paws. He's a black cat with white paws, that's right. Good for you.

Mr. Jennings. And he's very restless, right?

Chelsea Clinton. Yes, I had to wake him up.

Mr. Jennings. Does he really have the run of the White House?

Chelsea Clinton. Yes, basically, he can go wherever he wants.

Mr. Jennings. Who else has a question? Jamie in St. Louis has a question for Chelsea. Go ahead, Jamie.

Q. I wanted to know, does Chelsea have to take Secret Service guards to school with her?

Chelsea Clinton. Yes, I do.

Mr. Jennings. What's that like?

Chelsea Clinton. It's okay. They stay out of the way. They do. They have an office up on the third floor of my school, and they sit there most of the day. Or when I'm in gym, they come outside and just sit on the bleachers or just watch my soccer practice.

Q. What kind of cat food do you feed Socks?

Chelsea Clinton. What kind of cat food? Dry cat food. I don't know the brand.

Mr. Jennings. Nor should you, probably. [*Laughter*]

Q. How old is Socks?

Chelsea Clinton. Socks is almost 3 years old. He'll be 3 years old in July.

Q. Does Socks—who trains him? Is he trained?

Chelsea Clinton. Yes.

Q. Like, do you guys play? Also, do you ever have to talk to her about playing with her when she's supposed to do her homework?

The President. Never. She's very good about that. She does her homework pretty well.

Mr. Jennings. Christine in Fulton, Mississippi, has a question for you.

Q. Mr. President, how do you and Mrs. Clinton punish Chelsea when she doesn't listen?

Chelsea Clinton. I didn't hear that.

Mr. Jennings. How do they punish you?

The President. How do I punish you when you don't listen?

Chelsea Clinton. I always listen.

The President. Chelsea's a pretty good girl. We don't have much of that. Sometimes we have to—the number one thing we have to do is to make her go to bed earlier. She has a fault that her father has, which is that she would stay up too late at night if I let her do that. So the number one thing we have to do is to make her go to bed earlier.

Mr. Jennings. And one more question for Chelsea.

Q. Is Chelsea single? [*Laughter*]

The President. She better be. [*Laughter*]

Chelsea Clinton. Do you want to keep Socks?

The President. No, you take him.

Mr. Jennings. You're really nice to come by, Chelsea. Thanks very much.

Chelsea Clinton. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jennings. Isn't that nice to have her come by?

All right, now let's get back to you, sir. You got off the hook there for a few minutes.

The President. I loved it.

Health Care Reform

Q. I have a question about health insurance.

Mr. Jennings. Would you speak a little closer to your microphone, Kevin?

Q. I have a big brother named Jason, and he's 17 now and will be graduating high school soon. Will you have a health insurance program in place so that people like my brother and my twin sister can buy health insurance? If so, how will it work? Will we be able to afford it?

The President. Good for you. Is there anything you want to say about Kevin, Peter, before——

Mr. Jennings. Not just yet.

The President. Okay. The answer to your question is we're going to present a program to the Congress. And if they adopt it, then every Americaa will be able to get health insurance, either from the Government or from their place of employment. And they will be able to afford it because, for people with lower incomes, the premiums will be less. But everybody, pretty much, will have to pay something for it. And I think that's important. But we want to make it possible for people all over the country to have some health insurance. There are over 35 million people in America today that don't have any health insurance and many others who can't change their jobs because if they change jobs they would lose it.

Mr. Jennings. On Monday night, when you were speaking—or Wednesday night when you were speaking to the Congress, you ad-libbed; you took off talking about health care as if you think there's no more complicated problem in the country.

The President. It's the most complicated problem I've ever dealt with, but also the most important. I mean, American families, millions of them, are so insecure about their health care. And yet I say again, we're spending 30 percent more than any other country on Earth, and we have less to show for it. We can do better. We have to.

Homelessness

Mr. Jennings. Bernice. You had your hand up there, like, for a week. [*Laughter*]

The President. She wore her arm out, she's been up there so long.

Q. This is a question that refers to what Venus said. You said that instead of—the best way to end homelessness is to—you said to build houses. Well, you don't really need to build any houses, referring to DC and over the U.S., because there are more than 3,000 houses and apartments that are boarded up with no use. Do you plan to fix any of them up?

The President. Yes. I'm sorry, that's the second point I made: that in the places where we have a lot of boarded-up and vacant buildings, I think what we should do is to try to provide some funds to local communities to fix those up first because that's cheaper and quicker.

But we just don't invest as much money as we did 12 years ago. Twelve years ago we were investing more money on building homes for the homeless than we are now. And as I said, I think most Americans are really concerned that so many people—there are people who sleep on the sidewalk within two blocks of the White House every night. And I'd like to see us do something about it, and I think most Americans would. And I agree with you, we should start with the structures that are already there.

Antidrug Program

Q. Governor Clinton, I was just wondering—I come from a drug rehab over in Fort Pierce, Florida, and I was wondering how—why is it that we always spend all this money on the supply of drugs coming in, like trying to cut it down, you know? Like down in Miami, there's a $50 million operation down there that doesn't even work, trying to—like planes that fly in where the cocaine——

The President. Trying to stop the planes from flying in.

Q. Right. What are you going to do about the, like, the demand? How are you going to cut that down? You know, you can never cut down the supply, but you can always cut down the demand. How are you going to do that?

The President. You know that from your own personal experience, don't you?

Mr. Jennings. She does, yes.

The President. I appreciate—you're a brave girl, and I'm glad you're here. And the reason I said that is because my brother is also a recovering drug user. And I believe that's right. And I have a brother-in-law who is a defense lawyer in the drug court in Miami that keeps people out of jail if they'll go into rehab. And I think—I can tell you what we're going to try to do. We're going to try to shift some of the money that used to be spent on excessive expenditures in some kinds of enforcement and do more to do rehab and education and treatment for people because I believe that rehabilitation works.

I think that if we have drug treatment on demand, that is without delay for people who want it, we could cut down on the costs of the courts, we could cut down on a lot of our criminal problems, and we could rescue a lot of young people's lives. We don't invest enough money in that now. So we're trying to change the priorities a little bit to put some more money into rehab.

Health Insurance and Job Retraining

Mr. Jennings. In just a moment, Mr. President, I'd like you to meet Shana because we've done a little bit of filming out where she lives. But before that, I'd like to tell our stations all over the country that President Clinton has agreed to stay on for half an hour more and answer more questions, so we're going to go a half an hour longer. We thank you for that, sir.

Now, let's take a look at how Shana lives. Because I think you probably have as representative a problem in your family as almost anybody here today. Let's look.

[*At this point, a short film was shown in which Shana explained that her parents both have cancer, her mother has been laid off, and her father is worried that he will be, too.*]

Mr. Jennings. So Shana, what's your question?

Q. As you know, my mom was laid off, and my dad presently works for the same aerospace company. And they've both been treated for cancer, but now they're in remission, thank God. And I was just wondering, because due to her history with the cancer, she's having a hard time with finding a job. And I was wondering what your administration can do in regard to paying health coverage with their preexisting illnesses.

Mr. Jennings. One of the things you're doing—excuse me, sir, before you answer—is, you're cutting back on, you want to cut back on jobs in the defense industry, right—or, you'll have to cut back. Which is it?

The President. Can I ask you a question first? Does your mother—is she covered by your father's insurance policy at Rockwell?

Q. No, her own, I think. I'm pretty sure. I'm not sure.

The President. They paid individually, they were covered individually? Let me talk about the health insurance, and then I'd like to talk about your parents' jobs.

One of the changes we want to make in the health insurance system of America is to say that all Americans will be insured in huge, big pools of people, so that there are a large number of people insured. And if one or two of them get cancer, like your mother, that their cost of care will then be spread over a very large number of other people who don't have that problem. That will lower the risk of any insurance policy causing the company to go broke. And it will mean that we can pass a law which says that you can't refuse to hire somebody just because they've been sick before. In other words, I want to pass a law saying that you can't refuse to hire

somebody because they've been sick before, but first I have to make sure that the companies themselves won't go broke if they do it. So we're going to do that.

Now, let me make a comment about your parents' jobs. Your father still works for Rockwell, and your mother used to. We had to reduce the defense budget at the end of the cold war when the Soviet Union broke up because we were spending so much more money on the military than any other country. We had to invest it in other things here at home.

But we need people working in aerospace. There are about—I don't know what kind of lives you all want to have now, but there are about seven or eight major areas of technology which will produce a lot of the high-wage jobs of the future, and aerospace is one of them. The United States has not done a very good job of trying to build up aerospace jobs in nondefense areas. And next week we're going to start on a major effort, working with the Congress, to do that. I'm going out to California and to Washington State where Boeing is headquartered, and they just announced 23,000 layoffs, to talk about this. So we're going to start trying to figure out what we can do to save the jobs in the aerospace industry and maybe to start building them up again.

Spotted Owl Habitat Protection

Mr. Jennings. Oh, my goodness. Go ahead, Elizabeth.

Q. I live in northern California in a town called Hayfork. And we live in the forests. And my Dad, he had a logging business. And he had to shut it down because they're setting aside the forest for the spotted owl. And this is my school yearbook, and I've highlighted the names of the people—of the kids like me whose parents will lose their job because of the spotted owl. And I just wanted to know what you're going to do to try to help people get their jobs back.

The President. Can you all see this?

Mr. Jennings. It was not a set-up, I wish to assure you, Mr. President.

The President. No. Did you all see this, all the yellow names here highlighted? Does anybody else here know what she's talking about, the spotted owl controversy? David, do you understand it?

Q. Yes.

The President. What is it? What's the issue?

Q. Well, the spotted owl's natural habitat in the wildlife is being threatened by loggers who cut down the trees. It's like in the northwest of the United States. It's like—that's a lot of people's living. And they take the trees and produce timber that all of us use every day. And now since the owl's habitat was being threatened, environmental groups got the forest to be set aside as a preserve for the owl. But then when that happened, it hurt a lot of loggers who make their living off of that. So it's kind of a tough situation.

The President. Do you think that's a good description, Elizabeth, of what happened?

Yes? Let me say that in northern California and in Washington and in Oregon in the Pacific Northwest of the United States where Elizabeth lives and where her father works, a lot of people make their living in the forests. Part of the forests are called old-growth forests. They're very, very old trees. And most of the old-growth forest has all been cut down, but a little of it is left. And there's some logging in that. And then, as Elizabeth can tell you, there are forests sort of rimming the old-growth forest where the trees are newer where some of the land is being ordered to be set aside for the spotted owl.

We have a law in the United States called the Endangered Species Law which says that if an animal is placed on that list, then it has to be protected, even if it costs some jobs to protect it. So there's been a big fight going on for the last few years about how much land should be set aside to preserve the spotted owl and how much land should be left alone to log in the forest.

I want to make two points to you. First of all—and let me say, I live in—my State, Arkansas, has—over half the land is covered with timber, so I have a lot of personal friends who make their living the same way your father did. First of all, the problem has been made worse because the United States Government has not come up with a solution. So that as you may know, the courts have stopped logging all over northern California and Washington and Oregon, including some

places where people should be allowed to log. So I have committed myself to organize, along with Vice President Gore, a forest summit. And the Secretary of the Interior, Bruce Babbitt, in particular, is doing a lot of work on that now. We're trying to set up a forest summit out there to bring all the people together to try to come up with the best compromise that will permit us to save not just the spotted owl but this other point I wanted to make is the old-growth forest that remains, and still let people log.

Let me say it to you in another way: We could remove all the restrictions on logging tomorrow and even put more people to work; not only secure your father's business, but we could put more people to work. But then in a few years we'd have no trees at all to log. So the issue is, how can we have a stable logging environment and keep a significant number of people working and still preserve the old-growth forest, and by the way, the spotted owl.

I think we can do a much better job if we can just get this out of the courts and start—there is a lot of land available, that should be available for logging that's been tied up in the courts that our Government does not want to tie up anymore. So what I'm going to try to do is put a group of people together to come out to Washington, Oregon, and northern California and sit down and go through all this and see if we can't resolve it so we can keep the largest number of people working and still preserve the forests.

Q. But the land that they set aside, like there's lots of lightning up where we live, and there's lots of dead trees. And if we don't go in there and cut the dead trees down, it will start a fire and burn it all down.

The President. That's right, there are a lot of problems. I agree with you, there are a lot of practical problems with what has been done. And that's why I want to try to bring, now that there's been a change in the administration, I want to try to bring our people out there and sit down with all the parties involved and try to hammer this out and resolve it. Unfortunately, it's been all tied up in the courts. And a lot of things have been done which should not have been done.

I believe—all I can tell you, is I'm going to do the best I can to preserve the diversity of the forests, the old forests up there, because most of it's already gone, and we can't afford to let it all go and still provide a stable logging environment. As I said, we could build it up, but if we built it up too much, we'd cut all the trees down; and if we shut it down too much, we'll throw everybody out of work. So the question is, we have to find some way to find the right balance, and we're going to try to do it.

Mr. Jennings. We'll stay on the President's case and make sure that you know particularly when the forest summit comes——

The President. Yes, I'd like for you—will you come and bring your parents when we do it?

AIDS

Mr. Jennings. Mr. President, I know you feel the weight of problems in the country in this room, and there's one other person here I'd like to introduce you to and tell you a little bit about his life, because I know he's been wanting very much to ask you a question. His name is Joey. Meet Joey.

[*At this point, a short film was shown in which Joey explained how he contracted AIDS and how his illness has affected his family.*]

Mr. Jennings. So what's your question, Joey?

Q. That President Bush, he took $350 million away from AIDS research. I want to know if you're going to put that back.

Mr. President. Oh yes, and then some. Right now we're working on a bill for the National Institutes of Health that will increase funding for cancer research, for AIDS research, for health research generally. And I think you'll be pleased with that. In addition to that, in this budget that I have presented to Congress, I've asked them to fully fund the Ryan White Health Care Act so that we can deal with the health care costs of people with AIDS and the burdens that it puts on families.

Meanwhile, you hang in there. We'll keep working until we find a cure.

Mr. Jennings. Is that a good answer, Joey?

Q. Yes.

Mr. Jennings. Something else, Mr. President. Joey, do you ever feel discriminated against because you have AIDS?

Q. Not a lot anymore.

Mr. President. You think people are kind of over their fears, irrational fears of it now?

Q. They don't care about it anymore. No, I mean, they care about it, but it's like they're not afraid of people. I hope not.

Mr. Jennings. Okay, thanks, Joey. Thanks for coming.

Foreign Assistance

Q. A lot of people across the world are fighting and killing each other. I want to know if there's anything America can do to stop it?

Mr. President. The answer is, there are some things we can do and some things we can't. Let's just take some specific examples, and then maybe you can ask me some specific examples.

Somalia: a lot of people were fighting and killing each other. Our country led a group of forces, but most of them were Americans, into Somalia. And because the armies weren't big and the weapons weren't great and because a lot of the people wanted us to come there, we were able to stop a lot of the fighting and provide for safety for people.

Bosnia: you saw the young girl in Bosnia. A much tougher problem, because there were more weapons involved, the land is more difficult, the people have been fighting each other there for centuries, except when they have been stopped by government authority there. And we're trying to find ways to increase humanitarian aid to Bosnia and to push for a peace settlement which, if the parties down there will agree, the people who are doing all the killing, we could then come in and help to enforce.

Haiti: a country in our own hemisphere where the elected president was kicked out after he had threatened some of the people in the army and the government in Haiti. We're doing our best to try to stop any repression there and then to restore the elected government there. That might not be as hard for us because it's a smaller population, a smaller army, and because it's right here next to us, and we can do things with and for them.

So it's different in different places. But I think the United States has a responsibility to try to stop that. There are some places a long—I don't know if you saw the religious fighting in India recently—that's a long way from us, and it's very hard for us to have any influence there. So we're doing the best we can. Let me just say, it works better when the United Nations will do it, when other nations will go along with us. And it works better if there is some support for a solution short of war. So I'm going to do what I can to stop the fighting and killing.

Mr. Jennings. I read in the paper this morning, I think, Mr. President, that you are considering making air drops of food to people in Bosnia who can't get it. Do you think you'll go ahead with that?

The President. Actually, after I leave you today I'm going to go discuss it with our aides and consider that as one option. There are a lot of children in Bosnia who now can't get food and medicine because, I don't know if you've been seeing it on the news, but the trucks which have been delivering those supplies have been stopped. So we have an agreement tentatively to try to start the trucks up again, but we may have to go in and drop some aid into them.

Fast Food and Advertisements

Mr. Jennings. We have a question from Georgia.

Q. Hello. Mr. President, when you go to McDonald's, do you have to pay? Do they accept, or do they say you're the President so you don't have to pay?

The President. Usually I pay. I have—in my neighborhood McDonald's at home when I would go running every morning, they would often give me a cup of coffee. But if I go into McDonald's and buy food, I try to pay. I try not to have anybody give me food when I go in a place.

Mr. Jennings. We had a—is Basil here? Where's Basil? Basil, you wanted to say something to the President about junk food, you told me earlier.

Q. I'm Basil Jeheen. I'm vice president of Kids Against Junk Food. President Clinton, I know that you have received some bad press from an occasional trip to a fast food restaurant. My question is, how are you going to protect kids from being bombarded with

junk food advertisements during their TV shows?

Mr. Jennings. Whoo! [*Laughter*]

The President. I'm going to ask Mr. Jennings——

Mr. Jennings. I'm leaving.

The President. I'm going to ask Mr. Jennings not to take any more advertisement from junk food manufacturers.

Let me say, if you look at what the fast food chains—this is not McDonald's—if you look at Burger King, if you look at Wendy's, if you look at Taco Bell—look at a lot of these fast food places, in the last few years, a lot of them have made a real effort to reduce the junk food content of the food they sell. They're offering more lean chicken; they're offering more fish; they're offering more salads and vegetables. I think a lot of the fast food places are trying to increase the nutritional content of what they sell.

Let me just say this: About 40 percent of American food dollars are now spent in fast food places, because so many mothers and fathers work—parents work. And it's very important that you keep the pressure up, through Kids Against Junk Food, to keep the pressure up to say, ''Okay, a lot of people work. They're busy. They have to buy food at fast food places. But increase the nutritional content of the food.'' I think that's what you ought to do, and I think that's the position I ought to take.

Mr. Jennings. Go ahead.

Q. What I mean is, all right, say you're watching a cartoon and something—they interrupt and then they have an advertisement for junk food. I mean, they interrupt what you want to do, like——

The President. Let me tell you what the Government does and can do. The Government can require the people who sell this food to publish on a fairly large sign like the cereals do now what the real nutritional content of the food is and how much stuff that's not so good for you is in it. But right now we don't have the authority to stop it from being advertised at all. Do you think there should be a law saying you can't even advertise junk food?

Q. No. What I mean is there should be a limit. Like so many advertisements per hour, because they just throw in advertisements. And you pay for it, and throw in advertisements.

The President. What you need to do is to write the networks, ABC and CBS and NBC, and maybe all the other smaller networks that advertise, and tell them to reduce advertisements of junk food—limit to a certain number of hours on Saturday morning, especially.

Mr. Jennings. Basil, one of the things—I'll tell you two things. First of all, when you write to a network like that, if enough of you write they listen to you. And the other thing I'll tell you about the President which I think you'll find encouraging, though I hope it wasn't just a political statement, sir—the President very kindly had a number of reporters in the other day to have lunch with him, and he served us broccoli. [*Laughter*]

At any rate, we're going to go to a commercial now, which makes me just little nervous. [*Laughter*] We'll be right back.

[*At this point, the television stations took a commercial break.*]

Support for the President's Program

Mr. Jennings. We have a question from California on the telephone. Go ahead.

Q. I'd like to know, as children, how we can help you achieve your goals you have set?

The President. Oh, thank you, Byron.

Mr. Jennings. Paid political announcement.

The President. Thank you very much. Isn't that nice?

Mr. Jennings. Yes.

The President. Well, I'll tell you what you can do. You can, as a student you can write to your Congressman and to your two Senators and ask them to support the program that I've talked about today. You can try to get your fellow classmates and your schools, your teachers, and others to get in touch with the people in Congress and ask them to vote for this program. And then at home, in your communities, if we pass the program you can try to make sure that we do it right; that we actually spend some of this money, for example, to recover houses for homeless people, or that we put more young people to work in the summertime—that we do these things. But the first thing we've got to do is pass the program. So I would ask you, starting

Monday, try to get your classmates to write your Member of Congress and your Senators and ask them to vote for the program.

Mr. Jennings. On the other hand, they could also write you in the White House and tell you that they think you're wrong so far.

The President. Sure, they could. If you think I'm wrong, write me and tell me that.

Mr. Jennings. Now, a couple of kids who aren't here today but asked me before, which I think is on these kids' mind, are you going to keep your promises?

The President. I'm sure doing my best. The most important thing I can do, I think, is to try to give these young people a future by creating these jobs and dealing with their educational issues, and try to do all the things that I talked about in the campaign. Sometimes circumstances change and you can't do everything you want. I'm not investing as much money as I wanted to in jobs and I'm raising a little more than I wanted to in taxes because the deficit of our country is bigger than I thought it was. But, in general, I'm right on track to try to do what I wanted to do when I ran for President.

Endangered Species

Q. Well, I would like to know what are you going to do to help endangered species?

The President. Well, we were talking about that before, you know, with the spotted owl. There is a law which requires us to protect endangered species and I support the law. I don't want to see it repealed, but I want to see it administered in a way that doesn't throw a large number of Americans out of work. And I think most people feel that way. They feel we ought to have an Endangered Species Act, but there ought to be a procedure to try to have a balance between preserving those species and not hurting families too much. But I support the Endangered Species Act.

Hillary Clinton's Role

Mr. Jennings. Another telephone call. Go ahead.

Q. Do you feel uneasy about Mrs. Clinton taking such an active role in the Government because if something goes wrong both of you would be blamed?

The President. No, I don't feel uneasy about it at all. I think it's a good thing. She is a very able person. This is the first time since we've been married that she hasn't had a full-time job in addition to everything else, that she's got a lot of time. And she wants to be part of my administration. She's the most talented person that I've ever worked with on a lot of the issues that I care about. And I think she'll be great on this health care thing, and if it doesn't work, I'm going to be blamed anyway.

Native Americans

Q. Mr. President, I'm here today as a Lumbee Indian of North Carolina. Yet under the law, I'm not an Indian. What are you going to do to resolve this problem?

The President. Why is that? I don't understand it. You mean you're not a recognized Native American under the law?

Q. Exactly.

The President. Why?

Q. Because the rules and regulations say that if a tribe is not recognized, you're not an Indian.

The President. And why is your tribe not recognized?

Q. They're still trying to prove that we are Indian with the Department of Interior and the BIA process.

Mr. Jennings. Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The President. Yes.

Q. Yes.

The President. You've asked me a question I don't know the answer to. But I'll tell you what I'll do. If you make sure—I guess Peter's got your address—I will put somebody to work on it the first of the week and I'll try to figure out if there is anything we can do. I wish I could answer your question, but I didn't know that there were Native American tribes that hadn't been formally recognized.

Q. Yes, there are lots.

Mr. Jennings. Nor did I. We'll find out for you. Right next to you, Isaac.

The President. Thank you very much.

Teacher Furloughs

Q. President Clinton, what are you going to do about furloughs?

The President. About what?

Q. Furloughs.

The President. You mean from prisons?

Q. No, I mean from teachers getting out of work.

The President. Oh. You mean, teachers being laid off?

Q. Yes.

The President. Well, where do you live?

Q. I live in Washington.

The President. In Washington. This is a problem around the country because a lot of State and local governments haven't had enough money to fund their school budgets. I think you asked me about that, too, earlier.

There is nothing I can do about it directly, because the United States Government, the President and the Congress don't hire teachers; they're all hired at local school district level. But there are two things that I can do to help indirectly. One is to try to get the economy going again, because if people are working, they'll be paying taxes, and the school districts will have more money. That's the most important thing I could do.

The second thing is to try to have the National Government help our schools a little more than they have for the last 12 years, and the budget that I gave to the Congress does ask us to put more money into education. And that should help some of the school districts around the country.

The most important thing I can do is give them a healthy economy, because most of the money to run the school district comes from the local level. It doesn't come here to Washington.

Child Support Enforcement and Tax Reform

Q. Yes. I was just wondering: How can you help the families where there's a mom and she's taking care of a kid or kids, and the father isn't willing or isn't able to pay child support.

Mr. Jennings. And you have about 30 seconds, Mr. President.

The President. If he's not willing, we can have much tougher child support enforcement. I feel very strongly about it, and I've got a good program to strengthen it. If he's not able and the mother is working and taking care of the kids, I think the tax system should actually give the mother money back, if necessary. I think any parent that's working 40 hours a week with children in the home should not live in poverty. I think we should change the tax system so that people who work with children should be lifted out of poverty.

Mr. Jennings. That's a good question, Jordan. In fact, you know where you can watch for something on that? In the confirmation hearings for your new Attorney General.

The President. That's right.

Mr. Jennings. ——because she has quite a reputation in Florida on that particular subject.

We could go on. You've been very gracious to stay the extra half-hour.

Did you enjoy yourselves this morning? Was he good? Yes? He was okay?

The President. I loved it.

Mr. Jennings. Satisfied with all the answers?

The President. No. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

Mr. Jennings. Well, Mr. President, you know as well as I do it's a rare treat for any of us to be able to come in here and to see you. Thank you very much for having us. Thank you all.

The President. You're terrific; our country's in good hands, all of you. I feel good about our future just listening to you.

Mr. Jennings. Have a good weekend, everybody. Thank you very much, and goodbye from the East Room at the White House.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The town meeting began at 11:30 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. Peter Jennings, ABC News, was the moderator for the program. During the meeting, Mr. Jennings referred to Stephen Urkel, the character on ABC's television program "Family Matters" played by actor Jalleel White. Prior to the town meeting, the President conducted a brief tour of the White House.

Nomination of Mary Jo Bane To Be Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services for Children and Families

February 20, 1993

President Clinton announced today that he will nominate Mary Jo Bane, New York