

Remarks to Medical Educators

June 27, 1994

Thank you very much, Dr. Peck, Dr. Rabkin, Secretary Shalala. I want to thank also Dr. Michael Johns, Dr. Herbert Pardes, and Dr. Charles Epps for the work they did to bring together this very distinguished group of representatives from our academic health centers around America. And I'm sure that the press knows it, but it's not just the people who are up here but all the people who are here in the room have come from all over America, from every region of our country, in very large numbers, with very strong feelings about the central issue in this health care debate, which is whether we are finally going to join the ranks of other advanced countries in the world by providing health care to all Americans and still preserving what is best and what is excellent about our health care system.

The interesting thing is that the point which is being made here today, which I think has not been made with sufficient clarity before, is that over the long run and now increasingly in the short run, the only way to preserve what is best about our health care system is to fix what is wrong with it, to provide basic, decent coverage to all Americans. Otherwise you will see continued incredible financial pressures on the academic health care centers, continued difficulty in providing for the health care of the people who are now in your charge, and eventual difficulty in training and educating the world's finest physicians and other health care professionals. I do not believe that connection has yet been made.

I also want to thank you, particularly Dr. Rabkin, for making the point about rationing. The suggestion that somehow a very important benefit package that includes primary and preventive health care as well as guaranteeing access to the people who need it to America's finest high-tech medicine, is rationing as compared with what we have today: with 39 million Americans or more without any health insurance, with 58 million who don't have any health insurance at some time during the year, and with 81 million who live in families with preexisting conditions and often worry about accessing the health

care system. The suggestion that somehow we don't have rationing today and we will have it if this passes is, to put it mildly, a stretch of reality.

As front-line providers, you know the truth. You know the health care truth, and you know the financial truth. The significance, again, of this meeting today is this to me. I spent a lot of time in academic health care centers. I know that the people who run them are both Democrats and Republicans and independents. Maybe even some of them voted for the third-party candidate last time. I know that the board members of academic health care centers are both Republicans and Democrats. I know that where they serve, there is almost fanatic support for them among people from all walks of life. In other words, the American people, when they deal with you in your communities and in your States, put politics behind and put health care first and ask what are the facts? What are the health care facts? What is the state of medical knowledge? What is the financial truth?

If we could just get those three questions asked and answered in the Congress of the United States, we would get a health care bill that covers all Americans. In other words, if we could have people of both parties bring to the deliberations of the law in Congress less politics and more concern for health care, the way you do and the way you force people to deal with you just because of what you do, we would pass a bill in this session of Congress, with bipartisan support, guarantees health care to all Americans. This surely is not a political issue.

What I want to ask you to do today is—we're all here today "preaching to the saved," as we say at home, and hoping that through the magic of the media it will reach others. But I want to ask you to personally, personally, commit that you will speak to the Members of the Congress from your State of both parties and ask them to make these decisions based on what is good for the health of Americans, what is good for the economy of America, and how it will affect your institution in terms of health care and finances. If we can get beyond the politics to the reality, we can prevail here. And I want you to do that. You can do that. You can do that.

As much as any group in America—I don't know—when I started talking to Members of Congress, that's the one thing I found that without regard to their party, their philosophy, or their predisposition on health care reform, they all knew that they had a medical center in their home State they were terribly proud of.

And so I ask you, as we close this ceremony today, to commit to make a personal contact and a personal appeal to every Member of the Congress from your State to put politics aside and put the health care of the American people first.

If we can do that, and if people understand that you represent what is best in American health care, and we can't preserve what is best unless we fix what is wrong and cover everybody, that central understanding will carry the American people to a victorious result.

We need you. You have done your country a great service today. Please follow it up in talking firstly with the Members of Congress.

Thank you so very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:22 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Dr. William Peck, dean, Washington University Medical Center; Dr. Mitch Rabkin, president, Beth Israel Hospital; Dr. Michael Johns, dean, Johns Hopkins Medical School; Dr. Herbert Pardes, dean, Columbia University Medical School; and Dr. Charles Epps, dean, Howard University Medical School.

Remarks Announcing Changes in the White House Staff and an Exchange With Reporters

June 27, 1994

The President. Good afternoon. Today I want to announce some changes in personnel in the White House that will add strength and vitality to this White House and to our administration.

In the coming months, this White House faces a series of major challenges that are critical to the American people. In Congress, we're seeking to pass the first major health care reform in history, a sweeping crime bill, a significant trade bill, a reemployment act, lobbying and campaign finance reform, and welfare reform. We're seeking to pursue our

continued efforts in economic reform and deficit reduction, producing now 7,000 jobs a week. Overseas we face serious issues well-known to all of you. We've embraced an agenda that is not only daunting but profoundly important to the American people. To meet those challenges, here at the White House we must use our people as wisely as possible, matching their talents to their responsibilities.

More than a month ago, my Chief of Staff, Mack McLarty, started some discussions with me on ideas that he had for a better deployment of our people. These provided the basic framework for the decisions I announce today. I came home from D-Day determined to proceed with these changes. He and I worked with the Vice President and others on these recommendations, which I am pleased to announce today.

Today I'm naming Mack McLarty as Counselor to the President. He has been and will continue to be my closest and most trusted personal adviser. His new role will permit him to spend much more time as my personal representative to the people who are so important to the success of this administration's efforts, Democrats and Republicans in Congress, constituent groups of all kinds, friends who helped to bring me to the White House. In addition, I am asking him to assume greater responsibility in shepherding our legislative program through Congress, including GATT, health care, and welfare reform, and to help lay the groundwork for summits this year with the Latin and Asian leaders.

Mack McLarty has served this country ably and well as Chief of Staff for 18 months. He was reluctant to take the job, and I will always be grateful that he did. He selflessly agreed to serve the country, and I would say he has a record he can be proud of. We had the most productive first year of working with Congress of any administration over three decades; the sparking of an economic recovery; 3 years of deficit reduction for the first time since the Truman Presidency; breaking gridlock on the Brady bill, family leave, assault weapons, and other issues; progress in pushing historic plans for health and welfare reform. He's run an open White House, treating others and their ideas with unflinching courtesy. He has, in short, delivered with the