

NOTE: The interview began at 7:21 a.m. The President spoke by telephone from the Oval Office at the White House.

Interview With Joe Templeton of ABC Radio

November 8, 1994

Midterm Elections

Mr. Templeton. Good morning, Mr. President. After 8 days on the campaign trail, how do you see this midterm election shaping up?

The President. Well, Joe, I don't know. You know, I must say, there are a lot of these races that are very, very tight. And the thing I want to say to the American people today is that it's important for us not to go to the polls in a negative frame of mind. There's been a little too much negativism, some places a lot too much, in this election.

This is a very great country. I just got back from the Middle East peace signing. I am, again, captured by the idea that others know what a great country we have, that we have the capacity to seize our opportunities and to face our problems. We're trying to do that here; we just need to keep going forward. And we need to get out there, all of us, and vote today but to do it with a belief in our country, a belief in our future, a belief in our possibilities to make life better.

Mr. Templeton. Now, if Republicans win the House and Senate, and many pollsters are saying that's a very good possibility, what does this do to your prestige in the rest of the term?

The President. Well, I don't know. That'll be up to the American people to decide. But for most of the last 40 years, we've had divided Government. We've had the Congress in one hand and the Presidency in the other. The American people have kind of gotten used to that. So I don't know that it will make a great deal of difference in that sense.

I hope that the Democrats who have taken courageous decisions to bring the deficit down and to get the economy going again and to try to improve education and make the streets safer, who have taken the tough decisions, will be rewarded for their courage and not punished for it. Because you know, we always say we want people to be brave,

to ignore the polls of the moment, and to take the tough decisions that will get us into the future. I think it's important when those folks come up for election that we reward them for that and not punish them for it because of the barrage of negativism that seems to characterize so many of our campaigns.

So again, I would just urge all the people who are listening to us to vote but also to do it in a positive frame of mind. Our country is moving forward economically, we are addressing the crime problem, we're addressing some of these terrible social problems that we've ignored for too long, and we're taking up issues that have to be taken up. They don't have simple and easy answers, and I think it's important that we don't give in to simplistic and essentially negative messages about them. We are a great country; we can do what we have to do, and we ought to try to do it together across party lines.

Mr. Templeton. Now, you have been out there stumping for the Democrats for 8 days or so. Do you feel you've really made any headway?

The President. Well, you know, you never know. When I was a Governor, I was never sure that the President did any help or damage to anybody in my home State. And I never thought, really, people would listen to me in terms of telling them for whom to vote.

What I tried to do was to clarify the issues. I tried to put the record of our administration that the candidates I campaigned for supported; I tried to clarify the stakes and say from my point of view what our position toward the future was, what their position was. I did the best I could to do that.

I think people are capable of making up their minds on their own about candidates. Every race is different; every State is different. But I hope I was able, at least, to focus the attention of the public in a more positive way on the choices before us.

Mr. Templeton. Well, now they're talking about 70 million voters or so turning out today. I wonder if you voted?

The President. Oh, yes, I did. I voted early. I voted absentee back home in Arkansas.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, for being with us this morning.

NOTE: The interview began at 7:29 a.m. The President spoke by telephone from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks at a Reception Honoring White House Volunteers

November 8, 1994

Thank you so very much. Thank you. It is great to be with all of you. It's especially great to be with you on election day. I hope all of you have had a chance to go to the polls, and if you haven't, I hope you'll go before they close tonight. This is a fitting time for the event honoring the White House volunteers because as people all around our country go out and exercise their right to vote, they're exercising their full right and their full responsibility as an American, just as all of you do through your service in the White House.

At these midterm elections, it is critical that people understand that there are clear choices between going forward and going back, between a Government that works for ordinary families and one that works for organized interests, between a Government that does something about our great national problems like crime and one that just tries to talk them to death.

It is very important in this election season that the American people not vote in anger or cynicism. You know, these last 8 days I've had the opportunity to go out and make our case to the American people have been bracketed by two events that ought to deny that: first, the opportunity I had to represent you in the Middle East, seeing our young men and women in uniform in the Gulf, going to the signing of the peace treaty. I looked into the eyes of millions of people. I saw how they viewed our country. They know this is a great country. They know we have a strong defense, a strong economy, and we are now also number one in making peace around the world. They think this is a good country, and so should we.

And now, at the end of this season, I look at you and I think of the hours you have worked, how you have made even more sacrifices this year than last. I do not know how the American people could say anybody, just because we've got some difficult problems

and some unresolved challenges, which we have always had and we always will have, that there is something inherently wrong with America's Government. If they could see you, they would know that we are a good people with a good Government, working hard to help the American people realize their dreams and to respond to their hopes and their needs.

I just want to say, for the benefit of all of you and, of course, our friends who are covering this event, I wish I could thank all of you by name, but I don't want to keep you here all day and into the night. [*Laughter*] I do want to say that I think I should represent—name a few representative people we are fortunate to call White House volunteers.

Jeffrey Cohelan, a former Member of the House of Representatives, and his wife, Evelyn, are loyal volunteers in Hillary's correspondence office. We thank you for continuing to serve the United States.

Jenny Lou Dodson lives in Charlotte, North Carolina. She works for an airline, and she flies to Washington every Wednesday to work in the White House Personnel Office. Let's give her a hand.

Al Carpenter worked at the White House from 1947 to 1950. Now he's volunteering his time to take calls on the comment line. He used to work on the Presidential yacht; for the voters who haven't voted, we don't have one anymore. [*Laughter*] He traveled to Key West and the Caribbean with President Truman. Now he travels to the White House to talk to people over the phone all over the United States.

Eddymarie McCoy worked on Capitol Hill and has been part of several campaigns, like the one that's culminating today. Now she's sharing her experience with the Office of Legislative Affairs.

Some of you have been through several administrations. Evelyn and Ward Russell first volunteered at the White House in 1953. We also have dedicated volunteers from many universities and local colleges like Georgetown, American, George Washington, Howard, and George Mason. We thank you all. We have members of the Shiloh Baptist Church here. We have students from Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart. And last