

of the country who, through no fault of their own, are born into poor families.

So I believe this is the right kind of welfare reform. It also saves money. It will help us balance the budget, but it does it in the right way.

Q. Mr. President, the Democratic reaction to your budget has been overwhelmingly negative. Do you have a revolt on your hands on Capitol Hill?

The President. Well, I think it's been sort of decidedly mixed, don't you? Senator Breaux was just telling me that he and Senator Lieberman endorsed it today.

Q. But a lot of people feel that you have let them down, you pulled the rug out from under them.

The President. Well, let me just say, a lot of people—I'm sympathetic with the Democratic position. The Democratic position is the Republicans won the Congress by just saying no. They voted against deficit reduction. They proposed health care plans and then walked away from them. They just said no. And somehow, they were rewarded for that, and therefore, we should just say no at least for a much longer time.

But I do not believe that's the appropriate position for the President even if it—the voters have a lot on their hands in their own lives. It's hard not to figure out what's going on in your own life today without trying to figure out what's going on here. And I don't believe it's right for the Democrats to kind of overreact to the last election.

Even though I don't think they were treated fairly—I don't think the last Congress got anything like the credit they deserved for reducing the deficit, bringing the economy back, and doing all the wonderful things that were done—I still believe that the long-term best interests of the country are furthered by bringing the deficit down in a way that increases our investment in education, preserves our commitment to the historic commitments of the Democratic Party to helping those in need, permits us to protect the environment and have a strong defense and do the things the country needs.

So I believe I have done the right thing. I know there will be those who think that it's the wrong time or the wrong thing, and

they are free to express their opinion. But I still feel very good about what I—

Q. Mr. President, much of that criticism appears to be directed at your proposal to cut the growth of Medicare.

The President. Well, I believe—if you look at what we've done—first of all, we've already cut the growth rate of Medicare. The inflation rate has been coming down. And we've done it without cutting services to the elderly.

Their proposal will provide for drastic cuts in services to the elderly. Our proposal will provide for some health care reform which expands health care coverage, including to the elderly, and cuts the rate of increase at a more moderate rate than the Republicans do and in a way that enables us to avoid cutting services to the elderly or charging low-income elderly people a couple of thousand more dollars for health care that they can't afford. We're not going to do that.

So if you look at the details of our proposal compared with theirs, I think ours is going to stand up very, very well. And that's why I have urged all the Members to look at the details, look at the facts before they reach a final judgment.

Q. Do you want to meet with Republicans as well?

Q. Where does it all go from here, Mr. President, a budget summit?

The President. —the details, like welfare reform.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:33 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With European Union Leaders

June 14, 1995

The President. Let me say that it's a great honor to have President Chirac here for the first time since his election, although he's been here before and we've had several good visits since I've been President. And I'm looking forward to the conversation. We have had no conversations yet, and we're going to

have a press availability at the conclusion of our meetings.

French Nuclear Tests

Q. Have the French set back the world in terms of resuming their nuclear testing?

The President. I think I would—what we want to do is get a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty. That's high on our agenda, and we have agreed not to test while we search for that. And I'll—if there are further questions on that, I will answer them at the——

Iraq

Q. Do you have any information about this happening in Iraq? Do you think it is a coup attempt against Saddam?

The President. I'd rather answer all these questions at the press availability.

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]

France-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, can you say something about this visit of the French President, new-elected?

The President. First, let me say it's a great honor to have President Chirac here for his first visit as President. But we have known each other since I became President. And I think you met my wife before I was elected. I've had many good visits with him, and we've talked extensively by telephone since his election. But I look forward to this. And of course, after our meeting we will have a press availability, and we'll be able to answer questions about the subject of our talks at that time.

Q. How is the mood between France and the United States today with the new President here in Washington?

The President. I think it's very good. I know that I personally have a lot of confidence in President Chirac. I think he's entered office with a lot of energy and direction and conviction about the things that are good not only for France but for our alliance and our common search for security and for democracy and the world and for peace. And I'm looking forward to it. I think he's going to make an enormous contribution to our common causes.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The President met with President Jacques Chirac of France in his capacity as President of the European Council and Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

The President's News Conference With European Union Leaders

June 14, 1995

President Clinton. It's a great pleasure to welcome President Chirac and President Santer to the White House, the first visit for both leaders in their present positions to the Oval Office.

I begin with congratulations to President Chirac on his outstanding victory last month. From our many contacts with him throughout his long public service, the United States knows that he is a true and reliable friend, and he will be a strong and effective leader for France and for Europe. In his short time as President he has already demonstrated this leadership. We applaud his determination to create jobs and economic growth for his own country, and with Jacques Chirac as President, we are sure that the French commitment to peace, stability, and progress is in excellent hands.

France, as all of you know, was America's first ally. We know that our relationships will grow even stronger in the coming years.

It was a pleasure as well to meet President Santer, whose leadership in the cause of Europe follows in the great tradition that began with Jean Monet. More than 30 years ago, President Kennedy spoke of a strong and united Europe as an equal partner with whom we face, and I quote, "the great and burdensome tasks of building and defending a community of free nations." This is more true than ever. And our summit today shows the United States partnership with Europe is a powerful, positive force.

The three of us reviewed a lot of economic and security issues: Our efforts to help the countries of Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. We reaffirmed our commitment to strengthening NATO and proceeding with the steady process of enlarging the alliance. We agreed to continue liberalizing