

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

June 24, 1995

Good morning. Today I'm talking to you from the Convention Center in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. The Arkansas firefighters are meeting here, and I'm the first sitting President ever to visit Pine Bluff. Zachary Taylor planned to come in 1849, but he had to cancel. It's a record I'm proud to set. I'm also proud to be here with Dr. Henry Foster, who was born here and grew up here.

Just under 5 months ago, I nominated this fine man to be our Surgeon General. And this week, a majority of the United States Senate was clearly prepared to confirm him as Surgeon General. But he wasn't confirmed. He wasn't confirmed because the Senate was never even allowed to vote on his confirmation, because they were blocked by a group, a minority group, of willful Senators who abused the procedure to keep his nomination from coming to a vote for their own political ends.

Let me tell you a little bit about Dr. Foster. He's been a doctor for 38 years, including 3 years in the United States Air Force. He has delivered thousands of babies and trained hundreds of young doctors. He's ridden dusty country roads in Alabama to bring health care to people who never would have gotten it otherwise. He has labored to reduce teen pregnancy, to reduce the number of abortions, to tell young people without other role models, in a disciplined, organized way: you shouldn't have sex before you're married; you should stay off drugs; you should stay in school and do a good job with your life. His efforts to give a future to young people without one were recognized first not by me but by my Republican predecessor, President Bush.

Let me tell you something: If more people in America lived their lives like Henry Foster, there would be fewer kids on drugs, fewer teen pregnancies, fewer abortions, fewer broken families. This is a man our country should be proud to call our own.

So why was a group of Senators determined to stop Dr. Foster? A minority of the

Senate blocked a vote on him in a calculated move to showcase their desire to take away a woman's right to choose. Dr. Foster has faithfully performed his duties as a doctor for 38 years. Although he has delivered thousands of babies, when the law permitted it, the patient requested it, and after appropriate counseling, he did perform an average of about one abortion per year.

Now, I know it is easy to condemn abortion. It's easy to put on divisive television ads or pass out inflammatory materials. But it is very hard to actually work with children and look at them face to face, kids that nobody pays any attention to, and look at them and tell them they ought not to have sex, they ought not to get pregnant, they ought not to do drugs. That's hard. That's why most of us don't do it. But Henry Foster did.

Unfortunately, in Washington today, pure political correctness and raw political power count a whole lot more than actually doing something to reduce the tragedies of teen pregnancy and the high number of abortions.

You know, I believe it is clear what the law of the land is, and I believe that abortion should be rare but it should be legal and safe. The extreme right wing in our country wants to impose its views on all the rest of Americans. They killed this nomination with the help of the Republican leadership who did as they were told. And they're just getting started.

This week, the House passed a bill which would prevent women who serve in our military or who are on military bases with their servicemen husbands from getting abortions at base hospitals, even if they pay for it and no matter what the circumstances. Imagine a servicewoman in a foreign country, a remote location without good medical facilities or even a safe blood supply. This House bill would say, "If you can spend thousands of dollars to fly back to the United States for a safe and legal procedure, you're all right; otherwise you may have to risk your life in a hospital far from home." Why? Because she voluntarily enlisted to serve her country. So that a woman who's willing to risk her life for her country should also have to risk her life for a legal medical procedure. This seems to me to be too extreme.

In a few days, the House will actually try to cut off Federal funds for abortions for poor women that arise from rape or incest. Even those with strong antiabortion feelings know this is a tough issue, and most people think it ought to be left to individual citizens. It's one thing to say that the taxpayers should not pay for a legal abortion that arises from a poor woman's own decision. That's one thing. Quite another to say that the same rules apply to rape and incest.

This is a big, diverse country. We are deeply divided over many issues, none more than the painful and difficult issue of abortion. The law now is that the woman, not the Government, makes a decision until the third trimester when a baby can live independently of his mother and therefore the Government can prohibit abortions.

There are some who believe that America now must toe their line and that every woman must live by their rules, even though the Constitution, as interpreted by the Supreme Court, says exactly the reverse. They'll stop at nothing to get their way. And this week it looks like the Republican leaders in Congress have given them the keys to the store. Looks like they'll vote for any bill, oppose any nomination, allow any intrusion into people's lives if they get orders to do so from these groups.

Many, many Americans oppose abortion. And everyone agrees it's a tragedy. I believe we should all work to reduce the number of abortions through vigorous campaigns to promote abstinence among young people; reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancy, especially among teenagers; and promote more adoptions. I believe, in short, that we ought to all do more of the kind of things that Henry Foster has been doing for decades.

If people in Washington spent less time using abortion to divide the country for their own political ends and more time following Dr. Foster's example of fighting these problems, there would be a lot fewer abortions in America and we'd be a lot stronger as a country.

We need more citizens like Henry Foster willing to commit their time, their energy, and love to fighting for our children, our families, and our future.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:06 a.m. from the Pine Bluff Convention Center in Pine Bluff, AR.

Interview With Susan Yoachum of the San Francisco Chronicle in Pine Bluff, Arkansas

June 24, 1995

The President. Hello.

Ms. Yoachum. Hello, Mr. President.

The President. How are you?

Ms. Yoachum. I'm fine. It's very good of you to call, so I'll get right to it.

The President. Where are you?

Ms. Yoachum. I'm in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

The President. It's a great town.

United Nations

Ms. Yoachum. Actually, it is. I'm following around one of your newest—well, not your newest rivals but one of the newest candidates for President on the Republican side, Pete Wilson.

So let me begin by asking you about your speech on Monday concerning the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. How do you plan to outline ways for the U.N. to reconstitute itself for the next 50 years?

The President. Well, I think we have to, first of all, recognize that—I think there are two fundamental realities we have to recognize. Number one is that the end of the cold war gives the U.N. the possibility of living up to the dreams of its founders in ways that were simply impossible when the world was divided into two large blocs. And so I think there should be a lot of hope about the U.N.

The second thing I think we have to recognize is that in order for that hope to be realized, the U.N. has got to be properly run and, in particular, the peacekeeping operations have to be properly run. And the United States has spent a lot of time, because we pay a lot of the costs of the U.N., analyzing how the overall operations can be more efficient and cost-effective and inspire more confidence in the countries that are paying the bills and, in particular, looking at the peacekeeping operations and setting up systems to make sure that we use peacekeeping when it will work, that we restrain it when the situation is not right, and that the com-