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Medicare Reform Legislation

Q. Okay, thank you. Mr. President, what do you think the chances are of getting the Medicare bill passed?

The President. The what, Medicare? You know, that's a good question. I think it's good. I think—I'm pleased we've come this far. And I think there's going to be immense pressure on Members of both the House and the Senate to support this bill. It is a good piece of legislation. It is a complex piece of legislation. After all, we're changing a Medicare system that has been stuck in the past for a long period of time.

I'm beginning to get a sense of the supporters for this piece of legislation. And there's some mighty active groups of people who are interested in good health care for our seniors that are getting mobilized, and so I think we've got a good chance of passing it. I know I will be actively pushing the bill, because it conforms to the principles I laid out of prescription drugs for our seniors, choice for seniors, accountability for the Medicare plan. There's a lot of good features in this bill. I look forward to working to see its passage.

Listen, you all have a wonderful Sunday. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:51 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom.

Interview With Sir David Frost of BBC Television

November 12, 2003

President's Upcoming Visit to the United Kingdom

Q. Mr. President, a lot of people say this might be your first trip to London, but it's not.

The President. No, it's not. I've been there a couple of times. I remember, Laura and I went to see "Cats" in London. Gosh, I remember going to some nice pubs when I was a drinking man in London. It's a great city, and I'm looking forward to going.

Q. We're looking forward to seeing you there, too. In fact, of course, you're famous for the fact that normally social—dressing up socially is not your favorite thing, and you once said that marvelous quote, "Read my lips: No new tuxes."

The President. That's right. [*Laughter*]

Q. Are you going to take a new tux this time?

The President. I'm going to take a tux, and I'm going to take tails. And don't tell anybody, but I had to rent them. [*Laughter*] I'm sure you won't tell anybody.

Q. This is entirely between us.

The President. I'm looking forward to—it's a huge honor to be invited by Her Majesty to stay in Buckingham Palace. It's hard to imagine me even considering staying in Buckingham Palace when I was living in Midland, Texas. It's just one of those things. And Buckingham Palace has got a tremendous mystique to it, and so Laura and I are really looking forward to coming.

President's Agenda in the United Kingdom

Q. And you pinch yourself about those things too. What would you like to see come out of this trip in terms of—in addition to the fun part?

The President. Well, I've got some business to do with Tony Blair. We've got a lot of things to discuss. We're going to talk about how to continue to spread freedom and peace. We'll talk about how to work the compassion agenda on the AIDS Initiative, for example. We're going to spend some time talking about that.

I value his advice, and I—every time I visit with him, whether it be on the phone or on video or in person, I come away with a—some interesting ideas about how to advance a positive agenda.

Secondly, I look forward to speaking to the people of your great country. I'm going to have a chance to give a speech to talk about the importance of our relationship, the unique relationship between America and Great Britain. And I'll have a chance to answer some questions, I'm sure, from what we call the Fourth Estate here, the mighty media. I look forward to it.

Protests/War on Terror

Q. And Tony Blair on Monday night—and he would probably have told you—is expecting there to be quite a lot of protesters about the war. What would be your message to those protesters?

The President. Well, freedom is a beautiful thing, I would first say, and aren't you lucky to be in a country that encourages people to speak their mind. And I value going to a country where people are free to say anything they want to say. Secondly, I would say that I understand you don't like war, and neither do I. But I would hope you understand that I have learned the lessons of September the 11th, 2001, and that terrorists declared war on the United States of America and war on people that love freedom, and I intend to lead our Nation, along with others like our close friends in Great Britain, to win this war on terror, that war is my last choice, not my first choice, but I have an obligation as the President to keep our country secure.

Blair-Bush Relationship

Q. And at the same time, you'll be working with Tony Blair, and what is the key to your working together so well? I mean, it's like you have a special relationship. Is partially the bond, the bond that you're both men of strong faith?

The President. I think so. Tony is a man of strong faith. You know, the key to my relationship with Tony is he tells the truth, and he tells you what he thinks, and when he says he's going to do something, he's going to do it. I trust him, therefore. I've seen him, under some tough—tough circumstances, stand strong, and I appreciate that in a person.

The other thing I admire about Tony Blair is that he's got a vision beyond the current. In other words, he can see a world that is peaceful, and he agrees with me that the spread of democracy and freedom in parts of the world where there's violence and hatred will help change the world, that there are reformers in the Middle East that long for democracy, that long to live in a free world. And Tony Blair, like me, agrees—kind of rejects the elitist point of view that only a certain type of person can adapt the habits of freedom and democracy. And he knows that freedom in the Middle East will help change that world in dramatic fashion. So it's an historic moment which he has been willing to seize, and I'm honored to be working with him to seize the moment.

Public Opinion/Lessons of September 11

Q. And in terms of as you look at the world, Mr. President, at the moment and you see the protesters in Australia or wherever they are and you see that poll that came out, an EU poll the other day that shows that the United States was second among the most dangerous countries in terms of war in the world—level, for God's sake, with North Korea and Iran—when you see things like that, do you think the world is out of step with America, or America is out of step with the world?

The President. Well, first of all, you've got to know, I don't pay attention to the polls. I just don't. I've got a job to do for the American people. It's a job that was changed on September the 11th, 2001, and I refuse to—I refuse to forget—I'll never forget the lessons, is a better way to put it, of what happened to this country. And there are terrorists who are willing to kill innocent life in order to create fear and chaos. There are terrorists who want the free world to retreat from duties so that they can impose Taliban-type governments and enslave people. There are people like Saddam Hussein, who tortured and maimed and killed and, at the same time, threatened and created the conditions of instability. And I know some people don't understand the need to deal with that, but I feel firmly we must deal with those issues.

Q. But do you need to woo people more in the rest of the world?

The President. We wooed—we did a pretty good job of wooing them at the United Nations. After all, remember, 1441 was a unanimous vote that said, after a decade of sending messages to Mr. Saddam Hussein for him to disarm, 1441 said, "Disarm or there will be serious consequences." And that was a unanimous vote. In other words, the world, at least the Security Council, came together and sent a clear signal. Obviously, there was

a disagreement about the definition of ''serious consequence.'' But I can assure you, ''serious consequence'' isn't more resolutions or more debate. ''Serious consequence'' was with dealing with Mr. Saddam Hussein today, before it became too late.

And I understand people don't agree with that position. But nevertheless, I'm convinced that the decisions we made—and there's a lot of countries that made that decision with us—that decision will make the world more peaceful and more free. That decision is in the long-term interests of people who love freedom.

France and Germany

Q. And will you ever be able to forgive Jacques Chirac and Chancellor Schroeder for their actions of that time in undermining the second resolution?

The President. Of course. It's like, I can understand why people express their disagreement with the policy. I understand not everybody is going to agree with every decision that I make or others make. But I've had meetings with Gerhardt Schroeder and Jacques Chirac since then. They've been very cordial meetings. Gerhardt Schroeder has now committed German troops to Afghanistan, which is a very important mission, to help stabilize that good country as it not only enacts a constitution but heads toward elections. And I appreciate the contribution of the German Government toward Afghanistan. I'm proud to say that it is a vital contribution, and I appreciate their willingness to work with us.

Again, we're not going to agree on every issue, but a Europe which works closely with America and an America which works closely with Europe means the world will be better off.

EU-U.S. Relations

Q. The difference really is, between Tony Blair and them, is that Tony Blair sees Europe as a partner of the United States, and they perhaps see Europe as a rival of the United States.

The President. I don't think Germany sees that, for starters. In my conversations with Gerhardt Schroeder, they never yielded that impression. I think Germany understands it's important for the bilateral relationship between America and Germany to be strong. It's in our economic interests that it's strong. It's in the interest of peace that it be strong.

I understand there was kind of this notion of multipolarity, which means that somehow the values of America need to be offset. But we're for peace; we're for freedom. This country is leading the world when it comes to fighting AIDS. And I can assure you, having studied this issue a lot, and I understand the pandemic of AIDS on the continent of Africa, we'll be better off—the people of Africa will be better off if Europe and the United States work together to fight the pandemic of AIDS. My only point is, there's a lot we can do working together.

European Defense Force

Q. And what about the—I gather that you have some misgivings about the proposed European army, the danger that it might be a threat to NATO.

The President. Yes, here's the thing, first of all, I believe that the European defense force ought to take on more responsibility on those missions which NATO turns down. I think it's good for the United States' interests. I think it's good for NATO's interests, so long as the defense force doesn't undermine the vitality of NATO. And Tony Blair tells me that the discussions he's having with other European countries will in no way undermine NATO, and I take his word for it. He's been a man who's been true to his word on a lot of issues, and I believe he'll be true to his word on this issue.

Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction

Q. Tell me about—in terms of Iraq, tell me about weapons of mass destruction. The fact that we didn't find them, and so on, has been much discussed. But do you think that you were the victim of a failure of intelligence in a way?

The President. Not at all.

Q. No?

The President. No, not at all. I think our intelligence was sound. I know the British intelligence was sound. It's the same intelligence that caused the United Nations to

pass resolution after resolution after resolution. It's the same intelligence that was used by my predecessor to bomb Iraq. I'm very confident we got good intelligence. And not only that, Mr. David Kay, who went over to kind of lead the effort to find the weapons or the intent of weapons, came back with a report that clearly stated that Mr. Saddam Hussein would—had been in material breach of Resolution 1441. In other words, had the inspectors found what Kay found, they would have reported back to the United Nations that he was in breach, that he was in violation of exactly what the United Nations expected him not to do.

We'll find the truth. But this guy for many years had been hiding weapons, deceiving weapons. He had dual-use programs that could have been sped up. Nobody could say that Saddam Hussein wasn't a danger. Not only was he a danger to the free world—and that's what the world said; the world said it consistently—he was a danger to his own people as well. Remember, we discovered mass graves with hundreds of thousands of men and women and children clutching their little toys, as a result of this person's brutality.

Go ahead. Sorry.

Q. But in terms of—did you feel, in terms of if there wasn't a failure of intelligence, that there was a sort of exaggeration in what was predicted? I mean, did you ever believe that stuff, for instance? Did you ever believe that stuff about him having weapons of mass destruction that could be unleashed in 45 minutes, or did you never really believe that?

The President. I believe he was a dangerous man.

Q. But you didn't believe that.

The President. Well, I believed a lot of things. But I know he was a dangerous man. And I know that for the sake of security, he needed to be dealt with. After all—again I repeat this because it's a very important point that people in your country must remember, and that is, the world had spoken, universally spoken, about this man's danger for 12 long years. And in order for—at the very minimum, in order for a multinational organization to be valid and effective, something has to happen other than resolutions. And when an organization says, ''If you don't disarm''—in other words, in order to say, ''They don't disarm,'' intelligence convinced a lot of nations, including France, that he had weapons. In other words, he had to disarm something. ''Dismantle your programs. If you don't do that, there will be a serious consequence.''

And the fundamental question is, what is a ''serious consequence''? It's not another resolution. It's not more empty debate. A ''serious consequence,'' in this case, was removing Saddam Hussein so that his weapons programs would not be activated. And David Kay found evidence of weapons programs. He found some biological weapons—evidence of biological weapons. And it doesn't take much time——

Q. But we really need the big discovery, don't we?

The President. Well, that's pretty big, what I just told you. Now remember, for a long period of time, it was assumed that he didn't have a nuclear weapons program. And yet, after 1991, the world had to—changed its attitude about this man's nuclear weapons program and admitted that it was very advanced. A nuclear weapon in the hands of somebody like Saddam Hussein, particularly given the lessons of September the 11th, 2001, would be a horrendous development. And we had to deal with him. And we did—in a way, by the way, that was a compassionate way. We spared innocent life. We targeted the guilty, and we moved hard and fast. And very little of Iraq was touched in toppling Saddam Hussein.

Planning for Iraq After Combat Operations

Q. Did we, in fact—people have said, Mr. President, as you know, that the same meticulous planning that went into winning the war didn't go into winning the peace, and we were a bit unprepared for some of the surprises, the unpleasant surprises, you know, the terrorists and all of that that came along. Is that a fair comment?

The President. No—[*laughter*]—it's not a fair comment. We look at all contingencies and are dealing with the contingencies. Look, let me—if I could step back and maybe think out loud here about some of the stories or some of the speculation that was going on before we went into Iraq: One, the oil revenues would be blown up; the oil fields would

be destroyed. They weren't. As a matter of fact, oil production is up to 2.1 million or 2.2 million barrels a day, to the benefit of the Iraqi people. That's a very important point.

Remember, there was speculation about sectarian violence, that the long-suppressed Kurds or Shia may take out their anxieties and their frustrations on the Sunnis. That didn't happen. There was talk about mass starvation; it didn't happen. Refugee flows that would be unmanageable—that never happened. And so a lot of the contingency that we had planned for didn't happen. What has happened is that in a relatively small part of the country, there are Ba'athist——

Q. You call it now the Ba'athist Triangle.

The President. ——Sunni Triangle, they are attacking. And they're attacking not only coalition forces; they're attacking innocent Iraqis, because what they're trying to do is stop the spread of progress.

Q. It's almost a guerrilla war there, really.

The President. Well, I would call it a desperate attempt by people who were totally in control of government, through tyrannical means, to regain power. This is nothing more than a power grab.

Now, there are some foreign fighters, mujahideen types or Al Qaida or Al Qaida affiliates involved as well. They've got a different mission. They want to install a Taliban-type Government in Iraq, or they want to seek revenge for getting whipped in Afghanistan. But nevertheless, they all have now found common ground for a brief period of time. And what we will do is, we will use Iraqi intelligence; we will use Iraqi security forces—we're up to about 118,000 Iraqi folks in one type of uniform or another securing the country—to be a integral part of chasing these killers down and to bring them to justice before they kill innocent life.

Q. But it must have taken us a bit by surprise, or otherwise we'd have prepared for it, the level of this—the combination of the, what, 700, perhaps, foreign terrorists who came into Iraq, and so on. That was——

The President. I don't think so. I think a lot the people who came in initially wish they hadn't come in initially, or they're not wishing at all right now. But no, we understood it was going to be tough. We've been there for 7 months, David, which seems like a long time, particularly giving the news cycles the way they are. I'm certainly not complaining about the news cycles, but nevertheless, there's a certain sense of impatience that has now crept into the world. And my job is to enable our operators and military to make adjustments necessary to succeed. We've got the same strategy, which is a peaceful Iraq. The tactics shift, depending upon the decisions of the enemy. We're making progress.

That's not to say it's not tough. Of course, it's tough. What they want to do is, they want to shake the will of the free world. And the good news about having a partner like Tony Blair is, he won't be shaken. And neither will I, and neither will Jose Maria Aznar. I heard Berlusconi stand up with a strong statement after the Italian police had been murdered. And we, of course, send our sympathies and prayers to the Italian people. But Berlusconi said, ''They're not going to run us out.''

And that's what these terrorists need to hear. And more importantly, or as importantly, the Iraqi citizens need to hear that. They need to know that we won't leave the country prematurely. They need to know two things: We're not going to cut and run; and two, we believe they have the capacity to run their own country.

Timetable for Iraq

Q. The cut-and-run thing, obviously, is absolutely vital. And you've said you're not going to cut and run. You'll be there as long as it takes. Tony Blair, in his speech on Monday night, said, ''We're not going to retreat one inch.'' I mean, we're there for how long it takes to produce a successful Iraqi democracy, are we?

The President. Yes, absolutely.

Q. Whether that's years and years or what?

The President. Well, we don't think it will be years and years, because, first of all, we think the Iraqi people are plenty capable of running their own country, and we think they want to run their own country. And just today I had discussions with Jerry Bremer, our Ambassador in Baghdad, who flew back to discuss ways——

Q. Oh, yes——

The President. Well, just to discuss ways to do—to assure the Iraqi people that we have confidence in their capability. See, some in the world, some in the world don't believe that Iraq can run itself. They believe that, ''Might as well let them have a military dictatorship or a tyrant. That's the only way they can be governed.''

I disagree, and Tony Blair disagrees with that. We believe that democracy will take hold in Iraq, and we believe a free and democratic Iraq will help change the Middle East. There are hundreds of reformers that are desperate for freedom. Freedom—freedom is not America's gift to the world or Great Britain's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty's gift to everybody who lives in the world.

Role of Saddam Hussein

Q. Is there any likelihood that Saddam himself could be behind this violence?

The President. Saddam Hussein is a violent man. Listen, he tortured and maimed and killed. He had rape rooms, and people disappeared because they spoke out against him. We've discovered mass graves. He's a brutal, brutal tyrant—brutal tyrant. We did the Iraqi people a great favor by removing him. So I wouldn't be surprised that any kind of violence is promoted by him, but I don't know. I don't know. All I know is, we're after him.

Role of World Opinion in Regime Change

Q. That's one of the interesting things. I mean, nobody has time for a moment for Saddam Hussein. Some people are worried in England and around the world by the idea of regime change, because they say, ''Once we've done regime change, Britain and America with Saddam Hussein, what can we say if India wants to do regime change with Pakistan, or Pakistan wants to do regime change with India?''

The President. Well, see, I can understand their concerns, except they forgot the history. This issue has been discussed in the United Nations for over a decade. And the United Nations, as a multilateral international body, passed resolution after resolution after resolution calling for Saddam Hussein to disarm. In other words, the diplomatic process went forward. There was plenty of diplomacy. And to the critics, I would say that there will be diplomacy when it comes to India and Pakistan. The world will speak out clearly.

The problem is, is that when the world speaks out clearly and then nothing happens, all we've got is empty words. It's tyrants that take advantage of that. Tyrants—if tyrants don't fear—feel like they can torture and kill with impunity, feel like they can blackmail the world, and all the world does is put out empty words, it makes multilateralism extremely ineffective.

If I could take a second to remind your viewers that, obviously, not every situation needs to be solved militarily. Military option is the last option, as far as I'm concerned. And I would refer people to North Korea, where we've got a multilateral attempt to convince Kim Chong-il to get rid of his nuclear ambitions. We understand, just like Saddam Hussein, that he has been torturous to his people—people in North Korea are starving to death—and that weapons of mass destruction in his hands given his history, just like weapons of mass destruction in Saddam's hands given his history, is a very dangerous element. It's a dangerous—it inhibits the capacity for peace and freedom to spread.

But what I've done is, I've convinced China and South Korea and Japan and Russia to speak with one voice to the North Koreans, and say, ''Get rid of your nuclear ambitions.'' We're also, at the same time, working on a counterproliferation regime that will stop his ability to ship weapons of mass destruction or a nuclear warhead to a terrorist group. In other words, we're working together in a multilateral, multinational fashion to bring peace and stability to the world.

War on Terror

Q. Someone who knows how passionate you are about this war on terror and Iraq and so on said, ''I know George Bush, and I think, in terms of his legacy, he'd rather—I'll tell you how strongly he feels. He said he'd rather be defeated by the voters than by the terrorists.'' Is that true?

The President. I'd rather not be defeated by either. [*Laughter*] And we will not be defeated by the terrorists. I say that confidently,

because the allies in the war on terror are strong and steadfast, and there's no stronger and steadfast ally in the war on terror than Tony Blair. He understands the stakes. He knows that freedom is being challenged. He understands as well that the spread of freedom and democracy, in the long run, will defeat terror. And that's why the battle—the stakes are so high in Iraq right now. By the way, Iraq is a front in the war on terror. And it's important for people to understand that, because the war takes place elsewhere.

Reform of the Palestinian Authority

Q. And in—one of the reasons that people say, in the Arab world—obviously there was your landmark speech last week—but in the Arab world, that you won't really be able to address the balance against America until the United States is seen not to tilt towards Israel in the Middle East. What do you think about that?

The President. I think about that: I think it's an excuse, because America—I am the first President ever to go to the United Nations——

Q. And say, two——

The President. Two states side by side in peace.

Q. ——two states.

The President. No President has ever said that. And I said it, and I said it with conviction, because I believe it is in Israel's interest that there be a peaceful Palestinian state, and I know it's in the Palestinians' interest. However, to achieve a peaceful Palestinian state, the emergence of a peaceful Palestinian state, a state where people are willing to risk capital, a place where people are willing to develop an economy, there must be a focused effort to defeat terror. And there hasn't been with the current Palestinian leadership.

I went in and embraced, in Aqaba, Jordan, Abu Mazen. And the reason I did so, David, is because he came to the Oval Office and he said, "I will join you in the fight against terror. We're not going to allow the few to destroy the hopes of the many." As well, I could sense in his talk, in his feeling, that he has—he's got great trust in the Palestinian people. In other words, given the chance, the Palestinian people will develop the habits of democracy, and out of that will come a great state, a peaceful state. And I trusted him, and we were working with him. We were making good progress. And I was working with Ariel Sharon. I gave a speech on June 24th, 2002, which says, "All of us have responsibilities, and you, Israel, have a responsibility."

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel

Q. Do you think Ariel Sharon could ever emerge as a man of peace?

The President. Yes, I do. I believe he wants peace for his people. I truly do. I mean, he's a man who has presided over suiciders, where he has to go to the funerals of women and children because some cold-blooded killer is trying to destroy the hopes of all the people in the region. And it's—yes, I believe so. And I believe he believes in a Palestinian state. I've asked him in the Oval Office, I said, "Listen, am I out there by myself on a Palestinian state, or will you support it?" He said he will. But both of us understand, as do a lot of other people, that for a state to emerge, there must be a focused effort to get after the Hamas killers, for example, who want to destroy the hopes of the people that believe in a Palestinian state. And there hasn't been that effort.

Anyway, let me finish my Abu Mazen story, if you don't mind. I embraced the guy, and I believe that he is a—I believe he's a partner with whom we can work, and he's shoved out. Progress is being made, and he is shoved aside by the old guard. And that's unacceptable behavior. It's just unacceptable.

British Detainees at Guantanamo Bay

Q. Guantanamo. You're going to get asked about, obviously, in England, what's going to happen to our British detainees. Tony Blair was talking about it in the House of Commons this week and saying, hopefully they'd be tried before a proper court or repatriated to be tried in the U.K. Will you have any good news for us on that? For him on that?

The President. You mean right here, sitting right here, me and you, talking—the good news is, one, they'll be treated fairly, like they are. And two, I'm working closely with Tony to come up with a solution that he's comfortable with. And I emphasize, a

solution that he's comfortable with. These prisoners are being treated—these were illegal non-combatants picked up off of a battlefield. And they're being well-treated, and they will go through a military tribunal at some point in time, which is—a military tribunal, which is in international accord—or in line with international accords.

Q. As we approach the end of this interview, Mr. President—I could carry on for hours, actually, but I know you've got a lot to do, more than the rest of us. As we approach the end of this interview, what would you say is the most important lesson you've learned in life in the Presidency?

The President. The most important lesson in life in the Presidency is to have a clear vision of where you want to lead, and lead. I've got a clear vision: It's a world that is more free and therefore more peaceful; a world based upon human rights, human dignity, and justice; a world that does not discriminate between one group of people or—a vision that does not discriminate between one group of people or another, because I believe all people have the desire to be free. And I'm willing to lead there.

And the people of this country will make their—you asked about politics—they'll make the decision as to whether or not they—I've have been honest with them and open with them and whether or not they like my leadership style. A lot of it will have to do with the economy, of course, whether I get another 4 years. But I think it's important to know where you want to lead, and lead.

Bush Team for a Second Term

Q. Would you hope to present to the country the same team, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld and Colin Powell and Condi Rice, for the second term?

The President. It's been a fabulous team, and Cheney for certain. And I haven't—obviously, I'm not going to talk to my Cabinet ministers until after the election. But I'm proud of this team. I put together one of the finest teams, one of the finest administrations any President has ever assembled. These are good, honest, decent, hard-working, experienced people who give me good, unvarnished advice and, when I make a decision, say, "Yes, sir, Mr. President, we'll go execute it."

Q. Well, thank you for your decision to do this interview.

The President. Thank you, sir. I enjoyed seeing you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 3:08 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast on BBC One's "Breakfast With Frost." The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 17. In his remarks, the President referred to Queen Elizabeth II and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany; President Jacques Chirac of France; former President William J. Clinton; David Kay, CIA Special Advisor for Strategy Regarding Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs; President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain; Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; L. Paul Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq; President Kim Chong-il of North Korea; and former Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. Portions of this interview could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Interview With Trevor Kavanagh of The Sun

November 17, 2003

The Oval Office

The President. Have you ever been in the Oval Office before?

Mr. Kavanagh. Once, just once.

The President. Okay. The rug was designed by my wife. Every President gets to design his own rug. You probably didn't know that.

Mr. Kavanagh. Fabulous.

The President. I wanted mine—mine was designed by my wife, Laura. And I wanted people to have a sense of optimism when they came in here, that this is a guy who kind of sees a better world, not a worse world. Sometimes the Oval can be foreboding, and I wanted it to be cheery. So I hope you felt that.

This is called "A Charge To Keep." It's based upon a Methodist hymn. One of America's great imports from England was John Wesley. And it talks about serving something greater than yourself, which speaks to my