

And I would like to propose a toast for the health, the prosperity of the United States of America and its great President, Mr. Bush, and Mrs. Bush.

Note: President Bush spoke at 8:10 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Collor's wife, Rosane. President Collor referred to the President's dog Millie and "Millie's Book as Dictated to Barbara Bush."

Exchange With Reporters

June 19, 1991

Chief of Staff's Travel

Q. Mr. President, are you angry at the Chief of Staff?

The President. No.

Q. The papers said that you're ready to take some action.

The President. Well, I've looked into this matter and, given the circumstances, I think it was appropriate. We had a lot of very important negotiation on legislation. We have a very important speech that needed fine-tuning. He knew I wasn't happy with that. He made plenty of phone calls. You know, I recognize, and I think the Governor does, there's an appearance problem. But when you look at the facts surrounding this particular trip, this beating that he's taken is unwarranted in my view. And I will say it's special for reasons I've outlined to you. But nobody likes the appearance of impropriety. On the other hand, I think fairness dictates you ought to look at the particular fact about it. And so, that's my view. In fact, I back him up on this——

Q. Have you encouraged him to exercise more caution on the appearance question?

The President. I think when you have an appearance problem, I think all of us would agree you want to try to avoid it as much as possible, and I think all of us have. But you shouldn't be judged by appearance; you ought to be judged by the fact. And so, that's what I'm saying here. And there's plenty of reason that this was done, and it doesn't set a precedent. It doesn't say anybody that has access to a car can go anywhere anyone wants at any time. The Governor would be the first to say that.

So, that's the way I look at it. And I'd say it's special, and I've looked at the facts.

And I feel very comfortable with it——

Q. Have you discussed this with him personally?

The President. Of course, I did. We discussed it——

Q. Do you think he's being victimized?

The President. Well, can I rephrase your question?

Q. Okay.

The President. Do I think there's a piling on——

Q. Do you think he's being targeted?

The President. Do you think there's a piling-on syndrome out there? Yes, I do. And you can interpret that one any way you want to.

Q. You got anyone in mind? [Laughter]

The President. So far, the UPI is clean as what they call a hound's tooth—[laughter]. Don't ask me about——

Q. Those are the most deadly words in history. [Laughter] You're 1,000 percent behind him, aren't you? [Laughter]

Q. Is the Governor's job safe, sir?

The President. Yes. And he's doing a first-class job, and I think the people around this table would attest to that. We've done well. We've got a good domestic agenda. And I think the American people are beginning to understand it.

The problem is, to get that message out, you've got to beat down a bad domestic agenda first because we don't have the proper numbers. And so, we've got a good program. And as soon as you all leave, which I know will be very soon, we will have a chance to discuss—[laughter]—that's one of the things we're going to discuss today, is where we stand on some of this

important legislation.

I don't think I need to tell you all again I want a civil rights bill, and I don't want a quota bill. I think the American people want a civil rights bill, and they don't want a quota bill. And that's one of the things that John Sununu and Boyden and others around here are working closely with the Congress on. The transportation bill—we've got a lot of things to discuss—the crime bill. We've got a good domestic agenda.

And why some people don't understand that, I don't know. I can understand the Democrats not understanding it because, very candidly, they've got a different domestic agenda. It happens to be a bad domestic agenda, but nevertheless it seems to dominate. We're asked to sing from their music, and I'm not going to do that. We haven't in the past, and we're not going to do it now.

So, there's a lot going on, and I say that John Sununu's been right in the heart of a lot of this serious negotiation in attempting to get things done, and I'm very grateful to him for that.

Civil Rights Legislation

Q. Do you like the Danforth compromise, sir, on civil rights?

The President. Well, we've got some reservations, but I like the fact he's trying, and I like the fact other Senators are working with him, because Republicans want a civil rights bill that eliminates, as best a bill can, discrimination in the workplace. I will repeat: They don't want a quota bill. And I, frankly, resent it when some of my political opponents up there—or put it this way, our political opponents up there charge me or charge Members of Congress who agree with me as having some kind of a political agenda here.

I sent this bill up 2 years ago, or maybe year ago. Certainly when the winning political—the '92 political connotations. And so, I wish people would interpret things that way, because that's the way the facts are. But I haven't seen much defense of that, and I haven't seen much advocacy of our bill. I haven't seen anything that says what's wrong with our legislation.

You know what my deal would be to these people? Look, if you really want an anti-

discrimination civil rights bill and you're not happy with the President's, try it. Take four steps forward. You might not get all five you want; take four and see if it doesn't help eliminate discrimination in the workplace. But don't inflict the American people with something that inevitably, in the opinion of the Attorney General, our own counsel, and many of the staff people on the Hill lead to quotas. And that's what the issue is. And I get very hot under the collar when we get accused as a party or as an administration that doesn't care about the civil rights aspects of all of this.

So, I'm going to keep talking about it and keep trying to be rational and keep trying to work with Congress constructively. We've got to do that to get a decent bill passed. But I am not going to sign a bad bill.

Well, that's just one. We've got a lot of other issues that—I don't know how I got off on this diatribe here, because——

Q. You don't think you're being political?

The President. No. I will be when the time comes.

Q. Not at all?

The President. Well, yes. I was out at a fundraiser, and then I loved it. I was very political. But we're moving into that season. But do you think anytime people criticize the President that they're being political? Do you think anytime they accuse me of not having a domestic agenda up there? Do you think anytime they go off down to some salon retreat down here in Virginia and come out with diatribes against me that that's political? Sure it is, Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International]. We're all grown up. But we know how it works. But we've tried to approach legislation, sometimes to the distress of some, in a very nonpartisan way because that's the only way I can get something done for this country. But I'm not going to yield on fundamental principle, and that is not political. That's something I believe.

But sure, we're moving into a political season. I'm hearing all kinds of weird voices out of the past coming out criticizing on the other side. Not our side, of course. We don't do that kind of stuff.

Q. Well, it's a two-way street, isn't it? And

you'll put a label on every time when it isn't political?

The President. Well, yes, label this as a nonpolitical conversation this morning, but you'll know. [Laughter] It's like Potter Stewart on pornography: You'll know it when you see it. [Laughter]

Q. That's the quote.

The President. Now, would you all kindly fold the—hooks? [Laughter] It's been a joy. Now, get the—[laughter].

Q. We've got to go to work. [Laughter]
The President. Does this count as a press conference?

Q. No.

Q. No.

Q. Pretty close. [Laughter]

The President. Marlin? [Laughter]

Q. Pretty close, Marlin.

Q. We were told the President wasn't going to talk at all. [Laughter]

Note: The exchange began at 10:03 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, prior to a meeting with the Republican congressional leadership. The following persons were referred to: John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff to the President; C. Boyden Gray, Counsel to the President; Senator John C. Danforth; Attorney General Dick Thornburgh; Potter Stewart, former Associate Justice of the Supreme Court; and Marlin Fitzwater, Press Secretary to the President. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at the Presentation Ceremony for the Presidential Scholars Awards

June 19, 1991

Welcome. Good to see all of you. Welcome. Well, please be seated. It's a delight to have you all here at the White House. May I salute the Chairman, my old friend John Engler, who also doubles as the Governor from Michigan, an awesome assignment, but has found time like all of our committee to give to this worthwhile program. And I'm very grateful to you, John. And then, of course, on my right here, Secretary Lamar Alexander, our new Secretary of Education, a former Governor who's really bringing a new drive and a new focus on our program, America 2000, which I think has a real shot now at revolutionizing education in this country. And we need it. We need to start from scratch and take a new look. So, I salute both of them.

I particularly want to thank the members of the Commission and the corporate sponsors, and all of you, thank you for coming. Welcome to the White House and to an event that bestows the highest scholastic honor that a President can bestow.

First, I want to say that there's absolutely no rule here that says that the person giving the speech has to be as smart as the stu-

dents receiving the scholarships. [Laughter]
Thank heavens. [Laughter]

Which reminds me of what George Burns once said: "Smartness runs in my family. When I went to school I was so smart my teacher was in my class for 5 years." [Laughter] Well, even at 95—and he was here the other day—George Burns would salute this program, the Presidential scholarship program, now 27 years old. And today, I would like to discuss briefly how education can and must help prepare America's children to serve the Nation and the world.

Let me begin by asking you to look at yourselves and say, what do you see? You see some of our best and brightest young people. You see living educational success stories. You see our hope for an exciting and rich future.

You come from every sort of background, every race and creed. You live in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and in other lands. But as Americans, you revere learning, achievement, and the hope that both create.

California's Marisa DeSalles realizes all of