

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway

June 5, 1992

U.N. Conference on Environment

Q. Mr. President, are you trying to undercut Mr. Reilly at Rio? There's a problem there.

The President. Mr. Reilly, the top environmentalist, has my full support. He conducts himself the way he should, with great dignity and great decency. That a document that he prepared properly was leaked, I find terribly offensive. I saw him today on the television this morning, and I thought he was outstanding. In fact, I'm trying to call him to tell him that.

Q. Who leaked it?

The President. I have no idea, and I wish you'd help us on that one.

Q. Someone from the Vice President's office, perhaps?

The President. No, listen, I don't have any idea. But if we get a little more cooperation out of the press that thrives on leaks, why, maybe we could stop it. It's an insidious—

Q. Have you got any memos I can have?

The President. —an insidious practice. And Bill Reilly is one of the top environmentalists in the world. He had some suggestions to make. He did it in the proper way. And that he was put in an embarrassing position by the leaking of a document and the printing of a confidential document, I find very offensive. I don't like it, and he has my full support.

Q. Well, beyond the leaks—

The President. And as soon as I get him, I'll tell him. So we have a good—after all of those questions last night, we have a good, sound environmental record. We have spent \$800 billion in the last 10 years, cleaning up the environment. We're going to spend \$1.2 trillion in the next 10 years, and we're sharing the world's best technology with the rest of the world.

So we're going to keep on this path, and the fact that some in the environmental movement have some difference with us has to be anticipated. That's to be expected. But we've got an outstanding record, and I

must, as President, and will as a human being keep in mind the needs of American families to have jobs. I am the one that is burdened with finding the balance between sound environmental practice on the one hand and jobs for American families on the other.

We're walking a tight line there. We've found the proper formulation for America, and that is my responsibility. I'll go down to Rio and proclaim the solid points of a sound environmental record. We want to share this technology and this experience with the rest of the world.

Q. Sir, speaking—

The President. —anything to be apologetic for, and now I want to get the views from a sound environmental Prime Minister who has been to Rio, with whom we have a lot in agreement and maybe some differences. And that's the way we learn, and that's the way things get better. So if you'll excuse us, we had a press conference last night. I don't think you were able to attend, but it was a good one. We answered most of the questions.

Thank you very much. This is the end of this. Thank you.

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

Prime Minister's Visit

The President. May I say to the Norwegian journalists how very pleased I am to once again see your outstanding Prime Minister, our friend, a person that I admire and respect and with whom we have many, many things in common. When we have differences, we can always discuss them very frankly, but they've been few and far between since I've been President. But I'm anxious to hear from her now on Norway's priorities, what she found at Rio, where I'm sure she had a role of real leadership.

I just wanted to take this opportunity to welcome her back to the White House and let the people at home know the high regard the Americans have for her and for

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her government and certainly for her country.

Environmental Policy

Q. Mr. President, what's your comment on the criticism of the American position in Rio?

The President. Hey, I get criticized at home. I don't have to go to Rio to get criticized. [Laughter] So we're used to it. We have a very sound and, I think, forward-looking environmental record. But as I just explained to the preceding wave, I feel a real obligation and part of my duty as President to do two things: One, formulate sound environmental policy, take the world's best environmental technology, and that's the United States', and share it with the world; and then, on the other hand, worry about American families, people that need jobs. You have to find the balance between economic growth and sound environmental practice. I'm convinced the two can go hand in hand.

So that's what we try to do, and I think some from the environmental movement don't understand this. Some from other countries have different priorities in terms of the unemployment numbers and all of this. So some in the Third World have differences in terms of how much resource can be given to them in terms of money.

So we've got all kinds of nuances of difference here, but I'm very proud of our record and of our environmental chief, Mr. Bill Reilly, who is down there. And I realize that in some areas people look at things differently than we do.

But I've got these two priorities: jobs and economic growth, the biggest economic engine in the world, and—it grows, it throws off much more funds to do it, to help other people with. Has to do that, and I'd have to be concerned about the families that are hurting when it's not growing properly.

Secondly, we spent \$800 billion improving the environment in this country, \$800 billion in the last 10 years. And it's going to be \$1.2 trillion in the next decade. That's industry, government, everything. Out of all that, we learn a great deal technologically, and we're prepared to share that, our science and our technology, with the rest of the world. So we've got a good record. That's my answer, and we're so glad you all are here.

Now, we're going on to do a little business.

Note: The exchange began at 10:40 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the President's Meeting With Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway

June 5, 1992

The President met for approximately 40 minutes this morning with Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway. They discussed the Rio environmental conference, from which Prime Minister Brundtland had just come, and the roles of technology, alternate sources of fuel, and policies that are both environmentally and economically sound. The President stressed the strong leadership role the United States

has played and his continuing commitment to improving the environment.

The two leaders also reviewed various issues of European security and agreed on the importance of U.S. global leadership and a continuing strong U.S. military presence in Europe as essential to peace and stability.