

you want to hurt the private sector. Therefore, I think we have to have some sort of health reform. That's what I believe. You have to decide if you believe that, but I think it's important.

Let me just close with this. This is the lead editorial in this morning's Washington Post. It says—on the entitlements mess—and it says as follows: “Nor have all the entitlements been badly behaved in recent years in terms of costs. The health care programs are the budget busters. By contrast Social Security costs have risen in stately fashion with population and inflation. And the costs of all the other entitlements taken together, including those that support the poor, has declined in real terms.” Remember what “real” means in Washington, less than the rate of inflation. “The real Federal budget problem”—that's the normal word “real”; here they mean real like you do—“the real Federal budget problem isn't entitlements, it's health care.”

So I say to you we can talk about these other entitlements, and we should. As we talk about them, let us not make our middle class squeeze problem worse than it is already. That's one of the profound problems that is driving this country. One of the reasons that Senator Wofford is in the Senate today is because of

the anxieties of middle class workers in Pennsylvania.

Let us continue to work on this deficit. Let us realize the deficit is too big and the debt is much too large as a percentage of our gross national product. Let us realize that there are two problems with it. One is the deficit, and the other is we aren't investing enough. But on the entitlements issue, I would argue the real culprit is health care costs, and we can only address it if we have comprehensive health care reform.

And let me close by saying one more time, if Marge Mezvinsky hadn't voted for that budget, we wouldn't be here celebrating economic progress or talking about entitlements. We'd still be back in Washington throwing mudballs at each other. And I respect her for that, and I'm glad to be here today.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. at Bryn Mawr College. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Patterson McPherson, president of the college; Alice M. Rivlin, Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget; and Peter G. Peterson, former Secretary of Commerce and president of the Concord Coalition.

Remarks on the Russian Elections and an Exchange With Reporters in Bryn Mawr

December 13, 1993

The President. I'd like to, first of all, congratulate the Russian people on having their first parliamentary election—it was a clear democratic exercise throughout the country—and to say how very pleased I am that the new constitution was adopted because this now lays a foundation for a long-term—a legitimacy for democracy and for the expression of popular will that will not be just solely dependent upon the occasional election for President. So I think that is also very, very good.

In terms of the results of the parliamentary elections themselves, I am informed by our people there that we don't yet really know what the results are going to be because a lot of the votes and a lot of the major areas have not been counted yet and it's not clear what the final distribution will be.

I will say this, I'm not particularly surprised by the showing of the ultranationalist party, because the Russian people have suffered a lot in the last few years. And you saw the same sort of thing happening in Poland, where there had been a lot of economic adversity. It's hard for people to go through these changes and not have a certain percentage of them vote for candidates which articulate protests most forcefully. So I wasn't particularly surprised.

I do think that it will be possible for a majority of people who favor democracy and don't favor a dramatic change of course in foreign policy for Russia to put together a coalition in the Parliament who can work with the President and go forward. So I'm quite hopeful.

But I think in any country where ordinary people are having a hard time you're going to have some significant protest vote, including the United States.

Russia

Q. Mr. President, do you anticipate any change in your policy, American policy toward Russia in terms of aid, in terms of galvanizing the allies to somehow address this protest movement and try to diffuse it?

The President. Well, let me answer you this way. First of all, we need to wait in terms of—I anticipate no change in my policy in general terms towards Russia. I think we ought to wait and see how the votes come in, what the distribution of seats in the Parliament will be and how it all shakes out. It will be quite some time before you have a real feel for what's going to happen.

But I do think that the vote in Poland and this vote send a signal about how difficult it is to convert from that old Communist system to a market economy at a time of global recession, when the ability of any other nation or group of nations to give a big infusion of capital to provide temporary security is not there. If you look even in East Germany in the recent votes, where they've gotten a massive amount of money from West Germany, still just the transition process is extremely painful. And keep in mind all these changes, these economic and political changes, are playing out in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe, the former Warsaw Pact countries, at a time of global recession when there is deep frustration and alienation among middle class voters in the wealthiest countries.

So this should not be too surprising. I think what it means is that we have to think through our approach to these nations and remember that there has to be a lot of sensitivity to the ability of ordinary working people to navigate their way through all these tough changes and at least be able to imagine how they're going to come out on top at the end. And I think that there will be a little more sensitivity to that, hopefully not just in the United States and Europe and Japan but also in the international organizations themselves.

Multilateral Trade Negotiations

Q. One of the things that people have been looking for is a way of breaking through the global recession or the GATT talks. What is your sense of where that stands now? Have they cleared away enough barriers to get an agreement by Wednesday, or are they still hung up on the audiovisual—

The President. Well, I've not received a final report today. As you know, I did quite a bit of work on it yesterday. I had a talk with Prime Minister Balladur and Prime Minister Major and Chancellor Kohl, and our folks, they're all working very hard. And the United States, I think, has certainly bent over backwards on all the issues outstanding that required us to show some flexibility. We have shown some, including in the audiovisual area and certainly in the agricultural area and some other areas.

I think it would give a big boost of confidence if we could get it done, but it's important that it be a good agreement. And I'm hopeful, but I don't know much more than I did yesterday afternoon real late. I'm hopeful, but I can't say for sure.

Russia

Q. Will the election affect, at all, your scheduled trip to Russia next month? For example, will you meet with Mr. Zhirinovsky during your visit to Moscow?

The President. I've made no decisions. I haven't even had a chance to talk about that. I had always assumed that when I went there after the parliamentary election that there would be some opportunity for me to relate to the parliamentarians as well as to the President. That's something we had always assumed. But in terms of who and how and what the specifics are, there have been absolutely no discussions of that. They haven't had time yet. They've just had the election.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:21 p.m. at Bryn Mawr College. During the exchange, a reporter referred to Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party in Russia.