

the component parts of the crime bill? You and I both know that many of those components would fly through the Congress with no opposition—more police, more prisons. You might even win the assault weapons ban issue. Why doggedly say it's all or nothing?

The President. Well, for one thing, I'm not sure that it would all pass. There is an answer to that. The first answer is, the House adopted them separately and together. The Senate, 95 to 4, before this issue got politicized, voted for

a crime bill that is very much like the crime bill now before it that is so far not being permitted to come to a vote—95 to 4. They voted for a bill that had prevention, punishment, prisons, police—

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:18 p.m. from Room 459 of the Old Executive Office Building. The broadcast of this interview was terminated by the station's scheduled 4:30 newscast.

Statement on the Observance of International Literacy Day

August 24, 1994

On International Literacy Day, I am delighted to salute the many men and women who work so diligently to empower all people with the invaluable ability to read.

If our world is to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, we must harness the energy and creativity of all our citizens. Nearly half of American adults lack many of the basic literacy skills so essential to success in today's complex and ever-changing world. Literacy is not a luxury; it is a right and a responsibility. And in an international community increasingly dedicated to the principles of equality and opportunity, illiteracy is unacceptable.

It takes great courage and hard work to overcome illiteracy. But with the help of dedicated teachers, tutors, and volunteers, everyone can

learn the joys of reading and writing. These caring partnerships are the essence of community service, bringing hope and inspiration to all of us.

As people around the world celebrate International Literacy Day, I stand with you in working toward the goal of universal literacy. I am proud to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the countless individuals whose tireless efforts are helping to put this dream within our grasp.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: International Literacy Day was observed on September 8, 1994. An original was not available for verification of the content of this statement.

Remarks on Anticrime Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters

August 25, 1994

The President. Good afternoon. For 6 long years, the American people have watched and waited as Washington talked about stemming the tide of crime and violence in this country but did not act. Today Senators of both parties took a brave and promising step to bring the long, hard wait for a crime bill closer to an end.

I want to salute the Senators of both Republican and Democratic ranks who put law and

order, safety and security above politics and party.

Ordinary Americans all across our country ought to take heart today. In the last 2 weeks, Members of Congress in both Houses and from both parties have thrown off the bonds of politics-as-usual to do the people's business. That's what the people sent us all here to do. I hope this crime bill will now rapidly pass the Senate and that we can move on doing the people's business across party lines, unencumbered by

the labels of the past and the false choices of the past, moving to a better future for all Americans.

Thank you.

Cuba

Q. Mr. President, Fidel Castro says there's a simple way to stop the exodus of Cuban refugees, and that is to open up a high-level dialog between Washington and Havana. What's so bad about that?

The President. Well, I think, first of all, we have asked that we resume our talks, as you know, or we have offered a resumption of talks on the whole issue of immigration. And I have been doing a careful study over the last few days of the nature of our immigration laws and their implementation, especially since the 1984 agreement signed in the Reagan administration. But that is what this issue is about.

The other issues—I think President Castro or Premier Castro needs to be in consultation with his own folks. The people of Cuba want democracy and free markets. And that's always been our policy, and that will continue to be our policy. But I would urge the American people to be firm and be calm about what is going on here now. We must not let any nation, even a nation as close to us as Cuba, even with so many American citizens of Cuban descent, control the immigration policy of the United States and violate the borders of the United States. We have to be firm in this. And we will work this through to a successful conclusion, I believe.

Q. Mr. President, what's wrong with talking to Cuba and Fidel Castro when we talk with other so-called outlaw nations like North Korea?

The President. Well, we have a different policy of 30 years standing. And I think Mr. Castro knows the conditions for changing that policy. The discussions that have been held on a regular basis for several years now between our two countries have been limited to matters of immigration. They can be held, and we would support that.

Health Care Reform

Q. Mr. President, is health care dead this year?

The President. I wouldn't say that, no. I don't think you can say that because—and I don't think the recess will kill it—was that what you were going to—and the reason I say that is because, like most of you, I have watched with great interest what has happened and what has not happened in the Senate and the House. I told you all when we started this issue a long time ago, now over a year ago, that it was a very complicated issue, that it's no accident that Presidents of both parties for 60 years have tried to find a way to solve the health care crisis and have never been able to do it, particularly in the face of intense, organized, and expensive efforts to stop it.

But I think the less I say the better right now, as long as Senator Mitchell and Senator Chafee and Senator Breaux and others are doing their best to continue this dialog. I spoke to another Democratic Senator today who said that she felt there's still a good chance that a bill could come out that people would want to vote for and think was the right thing to do. So I think we just have to let this thing develop a little bit and see what happens in these dialogs. And again, I think the less I say about it, the better.

Thank you very much.

President's Vacation

Q. When do you go on vacation?

The President. It's still up to the Congress, isn't it?

Q. Will you wait until the Senate goes into recess?

The President. Oh, absolutely. I want to wait until the crime bill is over for sure.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:36 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.