

you know that he could have had another job with longer tenure. *[Laughter]* Every one of you know that he stayed here because he loves you, he loves that neighborhood he grew up in in Queens. He cannot imagine walking away from this fight until we have had a chance to do every last thing we can to give every kid in

this State a chance at a better future. You take care of it and make sure he's reelected.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:09 p.m. in the Imperial Ballroom at Sheraton Centre.

Interview With Marjorie Clapprood of WRKO Radio, Boston, Massachusetts

October 19, 1994

The President. Good morning, Marjorie.

Ms. Clapprood. How are you?

The President. Great. It's a beautiful day down here.

Ms. Clapprood. I've got to tell you something, sir. I have been waiting a long time on getting you on this program.

The President. Well, it's high time.

Ms. Clapprood. It is high time. I even went down for the big old Clinton watch when you were over on the Vineyard this summer, and I'm sorry I missed you. But we sort of feel like you've made Massachusetts your second home, so we're delighted you're coming on back.

The President. I'm glad to be back; looking forward to coming up there tomorrow.

Education

Ms. Clapprood. So let's talk about a couple of things. First of all, you need to know that all the kids over at Framingham High are looking forward to your coming down with Senator Kennedy. And let's talk about this education bill. Even Jack Anderson is calling you the education President.

The President. Well, we've worked very hard on education, and Senator Kennedy has had a lot to do with it. A lot of our education initiatives have not attracted a great deal of public notice, maybe because we've been successful in getting bipartisan support for them, for most of them, all but the college loan program. The program to provide middle class college loans at lower interest rates had no Republican support because we took on some organized interest groups. But all the others did. And it's a real tribute to Ted Kennedy because he got the ex-

pansion of Head Start in, he got the national service program in.

And this education act we're signing in Boston tomorrow, or in Framingham, has an incredible amount of good things in it. It's a dramatic reform in terms of putting more responsibility back on local school districts, giving them freedom from Federal rules and regulations but giving them very high standards to shoot for. It's a really—it's a very modern, exciting, and I think, effective piece of education legislation. I'm proud to be signing it.

Massachusetts Senatorial Campaign

Ms. Clapprood. Well, you know, Mr. President, Senator Kennedy is not only delighted to have you here signing that particular bill, but as you know, this is the toughest race the Senator has ever faced in 32 years. And for many of us in Massachusetts, we're surprised to know that nationally he is one of several seats that we're looking at that could be in very serious jeopardy. Your coming out here to help him will be bringing a message to Massachusetts voters that says what? How important is Senator Kennedy and his reelection to the completion of your agenda as you go back to Washington?

The President. He's terribly important to doing it. And he's important for some reasons that people, I think, may not be aware of in Massachusetts. I mean, the rap that his critics are saying is that, "Well, he's been there long enough. He's yesterday's politician." But I can tell you, I've been talking around here the last week, just asking people, and there is a general feeling here that of all the people in the Congress, Ted Kennedy is one of the four or five

who are most receptive to new ideas, to trying new things, to breaking out in new directions.

And if you just look at what we've done in education, we have changed the whole national approach to education. It's much more grassroots, local control: Have national standards, have the National Government helping, but give people the freedom at the grassroots level to try new things and to do things that will work. And he's also been instrumental in developing a national apprenticeship program for young people who don't go to college and, as I said, this college loan program. We've had the most impressive set of achievements in the last year and a half in education we've seen in the last 35 years, a lot of cutting-edge, new ideas, and Ted Kennedy has done it.

The other thing he's very good at that I think people don't appreciate is he's the best Democratic legislator at getting Republicans to support what he's doing. He's the best at getting bipartisan support.

Ms. Clapprood. So I've heard, yes.

The President. And I think that if the people of Massachusetts know that, they would be more inclined to reelect him, because he's really a very forward-looking Member of the Congress, and we need him back.

Midterm Elections

Ms. Clapprood. Well, one of the things that the First Lady said when she was in a couple of weeks back—I was happy to be at the dinner that she hosted for the Senator—she went so far as to say that Senator Kennedy's opponent, Mitt Romney, is really just another clone for Phil Gramm and another Senator “no” for you. Are you as worried about that? Do you want to make any predictions on all of these GOP threats that they are going to be taking over the Senate and taking over the Congress this time around?

The President. Well, I don't think they will if we can get the facts out there. I mean, we have made the Government work for ordinary Americans. We've passed things like family leave and the Brady bill and immunizations for all the kids in this country under 2, against ferocious Republican opposition. We've got the economy coming back. We've got more high-wage jobs coming into the economy in 1994 than the previous 5 years combined. Unemployment is down. Employment is up. The deficit

is down. If we can get the record out, we should be winning seats, not them.

But the problem is that they are great talkers, and they promise the Moon, and they will go like robots off of a cliff together. And that's what I'm worried about. It's no offense to Mr. Romney, but they all—in the last few days of the legislative session up here, we had an important piece of environmental legislation, the Superfund bill to clean up toxic waste dumps.

Ms. Clapprood. Right.

The President. Everybody in America was for it. We had the chemical companies, the unions, the Sierra Club; they were all for it—first time they had ever agreed on anything. There was no one in America against it except over 40 Republican Senators who filibustered it to death to keep people like Ted Kennedy from coming back to Massachusetts and saying we helped to clean up toxic waste dumps. They were willing to leave the poison in the ground. That's how bitter and partisan and obstructionist they are. They killed lobby reform and campaign finance reform. And all the lobbyists were cheering Senator Helms when he walked off the floor of the Senate and saying how great it was.

Now, I don't think the American people want to turn the Congress over to them. And especially, I don't think they want to go back to trickle-down Reaganomics. That's what they've promised to do, you know. They've promised to give us the economic policies that they did in the eighties that put New England in the ditch. And I don't think that the people will support it once they know that.

Ms. Clapprood. Well, you know, one of the things that I loved about your campaign, Mr. President, was the slogan “It's the economy, stupid.” And it seems as though, with all the indicators macroeconomically looking so terrific—what is the deal with cynical voters? I mean, how do we get this message out? It seems to me that you can't win for losing, even when everything looks good.

The President. Well, I think there are two problems. One is a substantive one. And that is that we've had 20 years when most wages have been stagnant for hourly wage earners and when people have been changing jobs more frequently, so that makes them more insecure. The average 18-year-old, for example, will change jobs six, seven times in a lifetime now. And those feelings don't change overnight. So even though people may say the unemployment rate

is dropping and new jobs are coming into America, into Massachusetts, there is still an unsettled feeling. A lot of people themselves haven't gotten a raise. A million Americans lost their health insurance last year; that's why we have to address that.

Then there's a political problem, which is that when Congress is in session, particularly with the bitter partisan obstruction we've seen, what tends to get covered is the fights, the bad news, the failures, the process. So a lot of people just don't know the facts about the economy. So what I'm going out to do now, in the last 3 weeks, is to say, "Look, we're making Government work for ordinary people. We're bringing the economy back. The world is a more peaceful, more secure place for Americans, with opportunities for prosperity. We should be very upbeat about the future, and we ought to reward the people that are building the future, not reward the people that are tearing it down."

Talk Radio

Ms. Clapprood. Do you have any further comments, other than those that you made on KMOX, about talk radio? Do you think that the right-wing conservative bashing of talk radio has done a disservice? It seems to me that's the national pastime of a lot of my colleagues on the air; that's just the "get good ratings if you kick Bill around."

The President. Well, what I think is important, let me say—one thing I like about radio is—

Ms. Clapprood. Me.

The President. Oh, I like you.

Ms. Clapprood. Good.

The President. But generally, I like radio because it's an immediate, it's almost an intimate thing. People feel like they're right there.

Ms. Clapprood. Right.

The President. And people feel that they have a chance to have their say. But a lot of these folks who are on the far right, they never have anybody on that disagrees with them, they never have an honest discussion, and they're not as careful as they ought to be with their facts. I think it's good to have your critics on there and to have honest debates. We shouldn't all agree on everything, and no one in America, including the President, is right about everything. There are always things we can learn. But what I think the American people ought to insist on from talk radio is a conversation, not a screaming match, and strict adherence to

the facts. There's plenty to argue about when we get the facts straight.

That's the only thing that bothers me. I think generally this talk radio phenomenon can be a great instrument in promoting democracy. People feel so isolated from Washington, so isolated from the bureaucracies. A lot of folks even feel isolated from their State capital. So if talk radio makes people feel like they've got a voice, they can be heard, then that's good. But it ought to be a conversation, not a screaming match, and we ought to get our facts straight.

Ms. Clapprood. Yes. And I've got this big problem—my mother always said to me, a position that is not articulated ceases to exist. And sometimes, if that other side isn't heard, people actually believe it's their reality.

The President. I agree with that.

Foreign Policy Accomplishments

Ms. Clapprood. Yes.

I wanted to ask you a little bit about international affairs, if we can. Coming on the heels now of what looks like a fairly peaceful transition and return of Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power in Haiti, you've got an awful lot on your international plate, with the Middle East, with what's happening in Kuwait, and I understand you're on your way next week to the signing of the peace accord between Israel and Jordan. Do you feel as though you've turned a major corner in your administration in terms of not only the maturity of the Clinton administration but in public perception finally cutting you a break and saying, "You know what, he's doing all right"?

The President. Well, I hope so. I think, first of all, a lot of these problems are very difficult, and they don't yield overnight. And a lot of them are things we have been working on here for 2 years. But I'm very proud of what our people, particularly our young men and women in uniform, have done in Haiti and in the Persian Gulf. I'm proud of the role the United States is playing toward peace in the Middle East and in Northern Ireland. And I'm very proud of the work that Ambassador Gallucci did in hammering out this agreement with the North Koreans, which will enable us to avoid a confrontation with them, and enable them to move toward a more normal relationship with South Korea and with the rest of the world, and take a major nuclear threat away.

But I'm feeling good about it. You know, last year we devoted ourselves intensely to two

things: getting our relationship straight with the Russians and reducing the nuclear threat in that part of the world, and toward getting an international economic order set up. We worked on NAFTA, the Asian Pacific countries, the GATT world trade agreement. And then this year, we had some good success, as you have pointed out, in Haiti and the Middle East and elsewhere. So I'm very hopeful. And I'm very excited, as I know a lot of people in Massachusetts are, about the moves toward peace in Northern Ireland. And we're working hard on that as well.

President's Leisure Activities

Ms. Clapprood. You don't even have time to go bowling anymore.

The President. No. I miss bowling. I like to bowl, actually.

Ms. Clapprood. By the way, I know I heard on your birthday one of your wishes was to break 80. Did you ever do that?

The President. I never have.

Ms. Clapprood. You never have.

The President. But the last 10 games of golf I've played I had 80 once, 81 twice, 82 three times, so I'm playing—

Ms. Clapprood. Oh, man.

The President. I'm playing pretty well, for me. That's about as good as I can play. And if I lowered my handicap when I was President, the American people would never believe that I'm working as hard as I am. [Laughter] So I probably should not want to break 80. But still, I do.

The Presidency

Ms. Clapprood. I know. It makes you very charming and endearing, because the rest of us can all relate to that.

Let me ask you just a couple wacky questions. The thing that I remember most about you from the first time that I heard about the Governor from Arkansas that wanted to be President was a picture I saw of you with then-President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, a personal hero of mine but also someone here from Massachusetts. And I grew up in his hometown of Brookline. And I saw that picture recently on sort of a retrospective of your tenure over this last year and half as President. And I wondered, from that idealistic young man that you were, to now sitting in the Oval Office and dealing with questions like sending the 82d Airborne down to Haiti while Sam Nunn and Jimmy Carter and

Colin Powell sat there, making decisions on war and peace, is it everything that you thought it was going to be? And what are your biggest surprises now that you're actually sitting where you worked so hard to get?

The President. Oh, yes, it is that much and more. I mean, if anything, I am more hopeful, more optimistic about the future of this country than I was before I got here.

Ms. Clapprood. You never want to say, "Quit your bitching. Quit your whining. Why is everybody being so unreasonable?"

The President. Yes. Well, I do want to say that some. I mean, sometimes I think that Americans in this time are a little too prone to see the glass as half empty instead of half full. Our optimism, our unfailing faith in our ability to make the future better has been one of the great secrets to our successes over the last 200 years. And so I do feel that. I regret that at this moment in our history there is a lot of accumulated cynicism and frustration and that it is, in some ways, more difficult for the President to communicate directly to the American people than it has been in the past, because of all the indirect filters between me and the American people. The Presidency is more isolated than I wish it were, partly because of the security concerns that exist in this day and age.

But having said all that, it is a joy and an honor to go to work here every day. And I feel good about the fact that the economy is coming back. I feel good about the fact that we're facing up to problems that have been ignored for years and years here. I feel good about the fact that we're able to do things like this family leave law and to give tax breaks to working families with children to keep them out of poverty, because I don't think anybody that works full-time with a kid in the house should be there. These are things I take pride in, not for me but for our country. And to see how much America is still looked up to in other parts of the world and how people want us involved in Northern Ireland, in South Africa, in the Middle East peace process, and in Haiti, that is a source of great pride.

So with all the down sides of this job and with all its frustrations, it's still an opportunity to make America a better place. And this system of ours does work. It's worked for over 200 years. And the only thing I hope I can do is a better job of communicating with the Amer-

ican people about what we're trying to do and getting them to believe more in themselves and their future. We ought to be quite optimistic based on what is going on here in this country now.

Ms. Clapprood. Well, I'll tell you what, we'd like to be part of making this a regular morningside chat with you. And if it means anything, my sainted mother, who lives in fine Whiskey Point, in Massachusetts, always had a picture of John Fitzgerald Kennedy next to the praying hands and the palms from Palm Sunday. Now she's got a picture of you and Hillary there, as well.

The President. Oh, wow.

Ms. Clapprood. You've got a place of honor, sir. And I thank you very much for joining us. Can I ask one favor?

The President. Sure.

Ms. Clapprood. As you go out jogging around the Charles River Thursday morning, would you put on your little "walkwoman" and listen to Clapprood and Whitley right here on WRKO?

The President. If I can find one of those, I'll do that. Thanks.

Ms. Clapprood. Yes. You've pushed my buttons. I thank you, sir, for joining us. God bless.

The President. Goodbye. Bless you.

NOTE: The telephone interview was recorded at 11:05 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast and release at 7 a.m. on October 20.

Remarks on Signing the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 in Framingham, Massachusetts October 20, 1994

Thank you. You know, we wanted to come here because this school has a reputation for academic excellence and because it is so diverse, because it's a school that really looks like America. But if I had known we were going to get such an enthusiastic reception, I would have come yesterday instead of today and just waited. [Applause] Thank you.

I also want to say a special word of appreciation to your student council president. I thought he did a fine job up here. I can tell you this, if he continues to speak so well, so much to the point, and so briefly, he'll win a lot more elections. [Laughter] Very impressive.

I'd like to thank your principal, Mr. Flaherty, your superintendent, Dr. Thayer, your school board chairman, Mr. Petrini, and all the people here who made this wonderful visit possible.

I'd like to thank all the Members of Congress who have joined us. I especially want to thank those who have come from other States, Senator Pell and Congressman Reed have come from Rhode Island, and Senator and Mrs. Jeffords are here. We're glad to see them. I thank Congressman Markey for hosting us. And I thank Congressman Kennedy for coming and bringing

his wife and his mother. I'm glad they're all here. Thank you for coming.

I want to say just a brief word about those who have spoken. Governor Kunin, who was the Governor of Vermont, is now the Deputy Secretary of Education, spoke on behalf of the Department and Secretary Riley, who was the Governor of South Carolina. All three of us served as Governors together, working on these education problems. And I think we've made a real difference, bringing a whole different approach to education to Washington. We look at it from the grassroots up, from the point of view of the principals and the teachers and the school board members. And we like to think from time to time we even look at it from the point of view of the students, from the grassroots up, from education at the school level where it should be.

I want to say a special word of thanks to Senator Jeffords for what he said and to Congressman Ford and Senator Kennedy. Let me say that you read a lot and hear a lot about all the fights that go on in Washington and about how things don't get done. But when the history of this time is written, the progress we have made in education will be known chiefly