

Interview With John Crane and Ann Nyberg of WTNH Television, New Haven, Connecticut
November 2, 1994

Ms. Nyberg. Mr. President, thank you for being with us tonight.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Crane. Thank you.

Foreign Policy

Ms. Nyberg. You have just returned from an unprecedented preelection whirlwind Middle Eastern trip in the name of peace. Following the trip, polls shows your popularity up. Skeptics would say the trip was planned to boost not only popularity but know-how in the area of foreign policy. Your comments, sir.

The President. Well, we worked for 2 years, very hard, on peace in the Middle East. I had no control over the timing of the Israel-Jordan peace treaty. Obviously, they made their own decision about when to sign. They asked me to come and witness it, because of the role the United States and our administration played in that. When I was there, I went to visit our troops in the Persian Gulf. I sent them there to counter Saddam Hussein's latest aggression. Clearly, I had no control over that. There was no politics in this trip. The American people know it.

But the benefits that are coming in foreign policy, the nuclear agreement with North Korea, the work in the Middle East, the success in Haiti, they are the result of 2 years of hard work that happened to coalesce at this time. There was no politics in that, and there shouldn't be.

Midterm Elections

Mr. Crane. Mr. President, here in Connecticut and across the country, Republicans are trying to make you the symbol of all that's wrong with Government. The pictures of you appear in many GOP television ads. Do you think this midterm election is really a referendum on you?

The President. No, but I think that it is the culmination of 2 years of irresponsible conduct on their part, where they did their best to derail the Government, to put the brakes on everything, to oppose deficit reduction, to oppose our plans for economic recovery, to oppose our plans for things like family and medical leave

and the crime bill. As a party, they did their best to wreck everything and then to blame us. But the American people are beginning to see through it.

After all, let me put it to you this way. If I were a Republican President and I had followed policies which reduced the deficit, shrunk the Federal Government to its smallest size since President Kennedy was in office, increased the economic prosperity of the country, reduced the nuclear threat, expanded trade, and passed the toughest crime bill in a generation, they would be running me for sainthood. But because I'm a Democrat, they're engaged in a great disinformation campaign. And they've signed this contract to take this country back to the trickle-down economics of the eighties, a decade which, I might add, was pretty rough on the State of Connecticut, along toward the end, with all the exploding deficits and other problems. So, I believe the American people will see through that. I've got a lot of faith in the people of this country to be positive, to be forward looking. And my job is simply to get out and give them the facts, and then they'll make the decision.

Child Support

Ms. Nyberg. President Clinton, we want to go to the viewers now. As you can imagine, we asked them to give us questions for you; we were having a chance to talk to the President.

The first question is from Andrea Wilson of Norwalk. Andrea wants to know, Mr. President, what you're going to do to make deadbeat moms and dads accountable and responsible for supporting their children.

The President. I sent in the springtime a welfare reform bill to Congress which, among other things, has a much tougher mechanism of child support enforcement. I think we have to have more automatic requirements, more wage withholding, more respect for these child support orders across State lines. It has simply got to be easy to get the child support payments out there. We've got billions and billions of dollars of unpaid child support. And if we had it paid by people who can afford to pay it, the welfare

problem would be much smaller, and it would be a lot easier for people who are struggling to raise their children in dignity, to do it.

Job Creation

Mr. Crane. Now for our second viewer question, Mr. President. It comes from a woman named Eva Nay, who wants to know why, if you made jobs one of your administration's top priorities, there are still layoffs and little in the way of job creation in Connecticut?

The President. Well, let me see. I've got some figures right here; I'll check it. The national economy, since I became President, has produced 4.6 million new jobs. Now, the Government didn't do all that; most of these jobs are in the private sector. But we created the environment in which the jobs could be created by bringing the deficit down, by expanding trade, by investing more in new technologies. Not every American who wants a job has one, and of course, there's nothing the National Government can do to stop some companies from laying off. What our job is is to create more jobs than are lost, and we're doing that.

But just a moment, let me check here. In Connecticut——

Mr. Crane. Take your time.

The President. Well, I'm looking here.

The unemployment rate in Connecticut has dropped more than one percentage point. We've had several hundred new jobs added since I became President. In the previous 4 years—listen to this—Connecticut lost 150,000 new jobs. So, we've got job gain now, where we had job loss before. We need to create more jobs. We have to keep working on it. The first thing I had to do was to try to stop the job loss. And I think we have done that. We're moving forward.

Ms. Nyberg. And our viewers will be happy to hear that.

President Clinton, thank you very much for taking time out of your busy schedule in Providence, Rhode Island, to be with us tonight.

The President. Nice to do it. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 5:02 p.m. The President spoke by satellite from the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence, RI.

Interview With Janet Peckinpough of WFSB Television, Hartford, Connecticut

November 2, 1994

Ms. Peckinpough. Mr. President, good evening. Thanks for joining us tonight.

The President. Good evening, Janet.

White House Attack

Ms. Peckinpough. The first thing I want to ask you is, how can you feel so secure about your security right now? Does this have you shaken up at all?

The President. No, not at all. In fact, when the incident occurred, within a matter of seconds a Secret Service agent was upstairs at the White House there with me. They have worked very hard to increase their ability to protect the President every year. And they get better at it every year. I have a high level of confidence in them.

This incident could have happened at any time, I suppose. I regret it, but I don't think the American people should worry about it. We

live in a democracy. People can move around freely. The one thing I do hope people will draw from this incident is that the congressional Members who were brave enough to vote for the crime bill, to stand up to the brutal pressure the NRA put on them and the threats they leveled against them, to try to get these assault weapons off the street were right. That man had a modified assault weapon with a magazine with at least 20 bullets. And I think it's a good thing that we're trying to move against that.

But in a free society where people have free movement and where there are lots of guns, this kind of thing can occur. I can't stop being President. This is a democracy. We have to get out here and—all of us—and be with one another and talk to one another. So I'm just going about my job and doing it with a very high level of confidence in the people whose job it is to protect the President.