

Interview With John Bachman and Laurie Groves of WHO Television,
Des Moines, Iowa
November 2, 1994

Mr. Bachman. Mr. President, thank you very much for joining us.

The President. Thank you.

Agricultural Policy

Mr. Bachman. When you were last here, you were at the midst of the floods of '93. You saw Iowa's flooded farm fields. And this year, by contrast, farmers have record crops. But that in turn, as you know, has depressed prices, and the farm recovery is in jeopardy. What can be done, Mr. President?

The President. Well, when I get to Iowa tomorrow, I want to discuss that in greater detail. I have tried to be a good President for the farmers of this country. And our Agriculture Department, our Agriculture Secretary has done a very good job not only in the flood but afterward. I'm sure you know that there was an announcement today that the Agriculture Department will give export enhancements to seven states of the former Soviet Union to try to increase the export of livestock, particularly the pork exports to those countries. And we supported ethanol production; we still do. And we're doing a number of other things that I believe will really help the farm economy in Iowa. And I'll have some more to say about it tomorrow when I get there.

Ms. Groves. Well, I hate to push my luck with that in mind, Mr. President, but I would like to ask you about the export enhancement program, the EEP. Now, I know Iowa Secretary Dale Cochran has expressed his interest in getting some changes there, at least, that will combat some of the glut in the pork market. Would you like to give us a hint on perhaps what you think you could do to help Iowa pork producers in overseas trade?

The President. Well, we're looking at that, as well. And again, I will have more to say about all that when I get there tomorrow.

Secretary of Agriculture

Mr. Bachman. Let me give you one more opportunity, Mr. President: Have you named, or have you decided in your own mind, at least, a new Ag Secretary? And is Ruth Harkin still on your short list?

The President. No, I haven't made a decision. She has been unbelievably good where she is. And she would be good in any position, I think, in the Government, including that one. She's a very able person. She's really done more with the Overseas Private Investment Corporation than anybody has in a long time. And I think any American businessperson that's worked with us in trade and expansion would tell you that the Export-Import Bank, Ruth Harkin's agency, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and the Commerce Department under Secretary Brown, along with the Agriculture Department, have done more for American business than any administration has in a long time.

Mr. Bachman. Is Ruth Harkin still interested in the post? Has she given you any indication that she'd like it?

The President. No, I've gone out of my way not to talk to anybody about this right now because I'm not ready to deal with it. Secretary Espy will be there until the end of the year. He has done a superb job for the farmers of this country, and I think virtually every agricultural commissioner in every State in the country agrees with that.

Midterm Elections

Ms. Groves. President Clinton, unemployment is the lowest now it's been nationwide in years, you know this, and the economy is strong. And yet your approval rating is under 50 percent here in Iowa. Now, with that in mind, how do you think that your visit tomorrow will influence Iowa's undecided voters?

The President. Well, what we have to do is get the record out there. All the opinion surveys show that there's literally almost no awareness among the voters of what this administration has accomplished but that it's changed rather dramatically in the last 10 days to 2 weeks as Congress has gone home and people have been able to focus on the fact that there are more jobs, a lower deficit, a smaller Federal Government, less regulation, more help for ordinary working families: the family and medical leave law; the Brady bill; the crime bill; immunizations for all the kids in the country under 2; middle

class college loans; apprenticeships for people who aren't going to college; an expansion of Head Start.

It's been a very long time since there has been such a productive relationship. But the people don't know it because this has been a contentious 2 years. The Republicans have been more partisan than any party has against a President of the opposing party since World War II. There's no precedent for it. And I've taken on a lot of tough issues, a lot of special interest groups. I've tried to change the direction of this country. And when you do that, you have to be willing to make enemies and you have to be willing to see your approval ratings go down in the short run as people are, at least, confused by all the conflict which is engendered. Plus, everybody knows that the nature of the way Americans get their information today is more contentious, more divisive, more adversarial than ever before.

So I've been given an opportunity now in the last week or 10 days of this campaign to get out and talk to the American people and make my case. The people of Iowa are fair-minded people. And I was there when you needed me and so was everybody in my administration, in a hurry, in the flood. And we stayed, and we've seen this through. I have been a

good President for the farmers of this country and good for the Iowa economy and good for the ordinary working people of this country. And when the record comes out, the people will make the right decision.

Plus, the Republicans are offering us an unbelievable journey into the past that got us in so much trouble. I mean, they want to go back to trickle-down economics. They're making a trillion dollars' worth of promises: big tax cuts for the wealthy, more defense expenditures, a balanced budget. The only way to do it is to have a 20 percent across-the-board cut in Social Security, Medicare, and everything else. And if they don't intend to do it, they're going to explode the deficit and put our economy in deep trouble once again.

Mr. Bachman. Mr. President, I know you'll be saying more of that tomorrow right here in Des Moines. Thank you very much for joining us.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Bachman. And have a safe trip.

The President. Thanks.

NOTE: The interview began at 5:50 p.m. The President spoke by satellite from the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence, RI.

Interview With Van Harden, Bonnie Lucas, and Bob Quinn of WHO Radio, Des Moines, Iowa

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1993 Midwest Flood

Mr. Harden. Well, we're very fortunate to have a very special guest on the phone with us here today, here on "Van and Bonnie in the Morning," President Bill Clinton. Mr. President, welcome to WHO Radio.

The President. Thanks, it's nice to be back with you. I was there once before, remember?

Mr. Harden. Yes, I was just going to say, the last time we talked we—well, you were here filling up sand bags, helping us with water jugs, and all that.

The President. Yes, we had a lot of water the last time I was there. I'll never forget that.

Mr. Harden. Times are a lot better now, we're happy to report. And we want to thank you, too, for especially the moral support you lended us during that time because, as you found out, it was not very good back then.

The President. It was difficult but, you know, I was honored to be able to do it, and I'm proud of the response that we had from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Secretary Espy and all the others. We worked very hard with the people of Iowa on that flood, and I was honored to do it.

Mr. Harden. Well, you got a chance to see from the airplane a lot of the agricultural—our crops and things that were going on. And we