

Interview With Ken Minyard and Roger Barkley of KABC Radio, Los Angeles, California
November 4, 1994

Q. And now, ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States of America, President Bill Clinton. We wanted to make—you're probably very happy today, Mr. President, given the unemployment figures, and we thought bringing you on in this style would be appropriate.

The President. Well, thank you very much.

Q. You recognize that music, of course?

The President. I do. That's what I played on "Arsenio."

Q. That's right. That's right.

The President. Now, I'm supposed to say, "Great show," aren't I?

Q. Oh, yes. Let's start from the beginning. Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States.

The President. Great show, Ken and Barkley.

Q. Oh, thank you very much.

The President. I've got my lines down.

Q. You did it fine.

The President. You play my music, and I do your lines. It's great.

Q. Yes, thank you very much. Mr. President, it's a pleasure certainly for us to be able to visit with you here. We were actually broadcasting this program from your Inauguration on the morning of January 20, 1991. We were in the big scaffolding thing that was set up alongside the Capitol building where all the photographers and other broadcasters were. And you waved at us, I think. That was a very nice thing.

The President. 1993. Yes, that was great.

The Presidency

Q. '93. Yes, '93. Excuse me, '91. 1993. Now, would you say as you look back on it, nearly 2 years after that day, that you maybe went into the office somewhat naive about the reality of being President of the United States?

The President. What do you mean by that?

Q. Well, that the magnificence of that moment and the anticipation of the 4 years to follow and, perhaps, 8, how tough it was going to be. And then suddenly the reality sets in that you're dealing with Haiti and the Middle East and all the things that have—

The President. I think to some—I think I underestimated a couple of things. First of all,

the difficulty of having to manage both a domestic and a foreign policy at the same time when both needed so much change, because we need to be strong at home and strong abroad and fighting for good jobs and strong families and safe streets at home and fighting for greater security and freedom and democracy abroad, that's something I underestimated.

The other thing I underestimated was the extreme partisanship of the Republican congressional leadership which we now know from studies is the worst it's been since World War II. No President ever had to deal with that.

Now, notwithstanding that, after the Congress went home, we learned that this was only the third time since World War II when the Congress supported the President more than 80 percent of the time. And so we were able to have a historic reduction in the deficit and to provide a dramatic increase in college loans for middle class people and pass the family leave law and the Brady bill and a dramatic crime bill and immunize the kids in the country who are under 2 by 1996. We did a lot of profoundly important things, but it was an extremely partisan and negative environment.

I also underestimated the extent to which the communications in the country would continue to be so combative and negative. And I think that somehow unduly sours the American people when the truth is that, for all of our difficulties, this country's in better shape than it was 21 months ago. We're growing jobs at 5 times the rate of the previous 4 years. We've got over 5 million new jobs in 21 months. I mean, we're moving in the right direction.

President's Popularity

Q. With those accomplishments and a slew of good economic indicators, it's got to—you've got to wonder, I would think, to say, "This is—we should be in great shape here; my popularity should be at an all-time high, and it's not."

Although, by the way, I should point out to you that Orange County Register this morning opens this way in a story: "Who's the most popular politician these days in California? President Clinton." You emerged on top of all the politi-

cians. Pete Wilson, Governor Wilson, came in second.

Q. In a poll in Orange County?

Q. In Orange County Register and other media outlets.

The President. Well, you know, for one thing, I think if you look at the time in which we live, the combative time in which we live and the frustrations people are going through, it's hard for any incumbent politician to be popular.

Secondly, I have taken on a lot of tough issues in a very short period of time. And when you go through fights and you take on a lot of strong interest groups—and we had to take on tough interest groups to pass the economic plan, to pass the college loan plan, to pass the Brady bill, to pass the assault weapons ban, to try to deal with the health care issue—when you do these things, there is—it's also, while you're doing it, it can be very unsettling to people because all the news they get is about the combat, the conflict, the things that are going on.

So I knew when I started this course that I had to keep my eye on what America would look like in the 21st century. And I had to be willing to have some ups and downs in popularity to try to solve the long-term problems of the country.

I just want the American people to know that I have—every day I get up and go to work and do the best I can trying to increase their strength for the future, to give them good jobs and safe streets and strong families and to make us stronger in the world. And I think we are getting stronger. We're moving in the right direction. And that's my job.

And I tell everybody at the White House, it's not our job to worry about our popularity, to worry about what the American people think of us every day. But we have to think of the American people every day. And in the end,

I think the approval ratings will come out okay. But I've just got to get up here and try to solve these problems. They're not easy; they're not simple.

And the only thing that I regret is that I have not been more successful in trying to dissipate some of this kind of cynical and negative atmosphere in which we operate today because the truth is, this is a very great country with enormous capacity to deal with our problems. We are making progress; we are moving forward. And we need to fight the temptation to be full of self doubt. You know, it just doesn't belong in this country.

Q. What we'd, of course, like to talk to the President of the United States about—I know you're on a short schedule, and you're going to be coming out to California. The big issue we wanted to discuss is—

The President. Yes, I'll be there today. I'm going to have a rally late this afternoon at City Hall.

Q. That's right. Tonight, for Dianne Feinstein, right?

The President. Yes.

Q. But we also wanted to sometime tackle the issue of Don Imus versus Ken and Barkley, but we'll do that another time.

The President. Well, you guys are doing pretty well, I think.

Q. Yes, we are. We would hope, indeed, that we'd have an opportunity to talk to you again. Thank you, President Bill Clinton on the Ken and Barkley Company.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 10:44 a.m. The President spoke by telephone from the Holiday Inn in Duluth, MN. An interviewer referred to radio personality Don Imus.

Interview With John Watson of WILM Radio, Wilmington, Delaware November 4, 1994

Mr. Watson. Good morning, Mr. President, how are you?

The President. I'm fine. How are you?

Mr. Watson. Thanks for being with us. You've been very busy these days; not much time for

the saxophone, I guess, which happens to be my favorite instrument, by the way.

The President. Oh, thank you. I love it myself. I'm not playing too much. I did get a chance to play a couple of weeks ago with a group