

Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One September 22, 1995

Charter Schools

[The President's remarks are joined in progress.]

The President. —education speech, but when I saw the venue today, I couldn't do it. There were kids; they were happy; I just couldn't do it. But this school, I have been—we got the DLC interested in this before I ever thought I'd be running for President in '92, the whole idea of charter schools, because one of the biggest problems with public education is there are too many people telling the teachers and the principals what to do—levels of authority—but not enough genuine accountability and not a sort of organized entrepreneurialism in the schools.

So these charter schools—like this guy calls himself the CEO of the school instead of the principal. And they come up with a theme, and they develop a culture and develop all the kind of community services as well as all the parents. They have an organized influence. It's a tough neighborhood. And those children that were talking to me were very articulate. They showed me their work, very high-quality work. And they really just hammer on these kids that they can all learn, doesn't matter what their background or their income is, they matter, they can learn.

They got rid of the—there's no principal, no vice principal, no counselors, no nothing. Everybody is organized in these small clusters that they call families, Family A or Family B.

Q. Oh, so that's what's the Family B—

The President. Yes. Yes, Family B is—that's the way they organize it. And they've got a certain number of teachers per students. They've got like a 1 to 20 ratio, because they don't have any sort of administrative-service infrastructure. I think it's a little more—it was 7 to 160, I think. And so every student has a teacher who is also a counselor, a friend, a mentor, as well as an educator. And they've reduced the dropout rate, and their performance levels on the basic scores are basically at or above the California and the national averages, even though their social-economic profile would tend to put them way below.

And it's very interesting to watch it. And I'm convinced it's because—these charter schools, in effect, it's a way of having school choice that's

as close as you can get to vouchers without going to vouchers and still keep the money you need in the public schools, because it's not like a magnet school where the people that go there may tend to be super—the more intelligent kids only or higher I.Q. kids, because—and that case, although it's a school of choice, you can opt not to go there or opt to go there. Most of them are neighborhood kids that you saw. They were basic—[inaudible].

But the whole idea of the charter school is that you're part of the school district for funding purposes but you're an independent operating unit. And Bertha Davenport, the woman who is a school superintendent, a very impressive woman, and she succeeded Tom Payzant, who was also very successful, and Dick Riley brought him to the Department of Education to try to promote this. So a lot of superintendents don't like charter schools because they lose control of the schools, but her idea is—she said, "I'm not running these schools; I just created a climate, set expectations, make sure the trains run on time." So she's got nine of them.

And one of the things we did with the Goals 2000 program and with the rewrite of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act last year was to get the Congress to put out a little money just to fund school reforms, because if you switch from a regular school to one of these charter schools you need some extra money that aren't in the school districts' budgets, the money is—like to organize kind of planning sessions and figure out how you're going to redo the whole thing. So that's what I announced today. But it is an example of what we tried to do to invest more in education but to deregulate it, without lowering the standards—in fact, we're trying to deregulate it and raise the level of accountability.

So it's great. So these little independent operating—[inaudible]—and they will basically have contracts with their school districts with performance standards. And they'll either meet or exceed them, or they won't. And if they won't, then their charter can be jerked.

It's very exciting. There's no such thing as a cure-all, but you saw what happened. I mean, one of the things that I always was amazed

by is that when schools had a monopoly on customers and a monopoly on money and districts were sort of independent of one another, there were not incentives to copy what works. And I think one of the most—the thing that I keep hammering home is, almost every problem in our country's education system has been solved pretty well by somebody, somewhere. But there's no—it's not centralized like the Japanese system, for example, where they can say, "This works in Kyoto; here's how it works. Everybody will institute this in 60 days; show up 10 days from now, and we'll have a training session about how to do it." We don't have that, but it's not entrepreneurially decentralized like a competitive environment.

For example, Sam Walton was the best entrepreneur I ever met. And way into his old age, until he got very sick, he was still getting on his one-horse airplane and flying to some town where he was opening a new store. And he'd go check out his store; then he'd go down to K-Mart and start wandering, and he'd say hello, and he'd introduce—he'd say, "Who are you?" He wouldn't tell them he was Sam Walton. You'd say, "I'm John Palmer," and he'd say, "Well, Mr. Palmer, how long have you been shopping at K-Mart? If you don't mind my asking, what are you in to buy? How do these people treat you? If you have a defective product can you get your money back?" He did that, and he did it in the large stores and he did it in small stores. In other words, he thought, no matter how big he got he had to at least equal his competition. And if they were doing something for his customers, it was not only bad business, it was unethical for him not to do for his customers what his competition was doing. And in different, less explicit, less organized ways, that's the way a market works in the best sense.

But I found that when—we had a little old school that was a semi-version of this, a great school in a little rural county in Arkansas. And we got them permission from the Federal Government to take all their Title I funds and some of this special-ed funds in the first grade and get rid of all the separate classes and put them all together. And we went down to 1 to 15 in this poor school district. There were three kids that had been held back. The next year they quadrupled their test scores. There was an 80 percent increase in the scores of the Chapter I kids the next year over the previous

year and a 67 percent increase in overall scores in the first grade. They even had first graders working in teams, learning together, doing collective work, which, by the way, we know how that really works. And I actually was paying people from other school districts, their expenses, to come look at what these people did.

And we found that there were school districts that were reluctant to copy it because it would be like admitting failure. And others who didn't copy it because it was too much trouble, everybody—[inaudible]—or they thought it was some fad that—[inaudible]. But the lesson is that things can get better, schools can perform at world-class standards, more kids in racially integrated—[inaudible]—economically isolated places can do well.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. It's like trying to turn a battleship around or it's basically trying to hold 400 ping-pong balls in your arms, because it's—but the point is when you get something that works, if you can get enough visibility to it, people can be looking at it and involved in it, and you basically—you empower the parents and the students and all these other people who come in here.

There was a very impressive man from the State social services there who talked about how he brought in—if all these kids had any problems, about all the services at the school. And he said, "All these pathologies are in our communities, but all the antibodies are, too," which I thought was a real—great one-liner.

So what I tried to do is to put the Federal Government in the business of adding funding where it's needed, holding up things that work, having high standards but not adding to the problem of over-regulation. Riley has reduced Federal regulations in education by about 40 percent since he's been there. And this is a program that has, at the State level, an enormous amount of support—[inaudible]—as you might imagine.

So parenthetically, it helps make the case for why we should cut the education funding in the balanced budget debate. But it also shows that there is a way to make schools work better, to have high expectations of kids, and to get some results. One of the things I find is that there's so much—people tend to give up now. They tend to think, "Oh, the schools can't be made to work well," or "The crime rate will

never go down.” But those things just aren’t true.

So—and this was an extraordinary school, which is why I really wanted to go there. I thought we could really juice it up.

Mood of the Country

Q. Is it hard to explain to people how these sort of public-private or public-local partners—I mean, the technology initiative yesterday, the Goals 2000—I mean, they are a lot more complicated than most people understand.

The President. Yes.

Q. But in the face of everybody saying less Government, it’s hard to explain this sort of thing.

The President. Well, what I’m trying to—like I said in my speeches this week, psychologically, they’ve got an easier argument. If a majority of people are anxiety-ridden and worried about the country, they can say, “We’re moving into a new era, and the problem is the Government, and the Government is spending too much time on immigration, welfare, and affirmative action—too much of your money. Therefore, just get rid of it; less is better.” It’s a harder argument to say, “We’re moving into a time of change; we’re all going to have to change. We need to be faithful to our values. What works is having the right vision, working together, and working for the future.” But if you can find some summary ways to say that, then the San Francisco announcement on the computers or the San Diego announcement on the charter schools, they become like ornaments on a Christmas tree. But the programs have to be secondary to people’s understanding of what’s happening and the vision and the values behind it, so that the programs become like ornaments on a Christmas tree.

That’s why I keep saying this budget debate fundamentally is not about funding. It’s about the choices we make about money.

Q. Mr. President, what was it that got you thinking about this sort of 100-year change that—I mean, were you just sort of reading since—

The President. Well, for years I felt like most people, I’ve been aware for a long—I began to talk about the wage stagnation and the relationship in the social disintegration and the wage stagnation at least 8 or 9 years ago, before I heard anybody else talking about it. I just studied—because I study data all the time. When

I was a Governor and I was trying to restructure the economy, I just studied a lot of things that were—looked like boring numbers but could be made—but had real-life stories around them.

But when I ran for President, I believed that if I had the right sort of economic policy, which was to grow jobs in the private sector and try to pursue strategies that will increase the number of high-wage jobs, facilitate defense conversion, and raise skill levels in the work force, we could grow jobs, grow entrepreneurs, and raise the incomes. I thought if we had a social policy that emphasized helping people to help themselves, helping people that need help but imposing responsibility and accountability, that we could reform welfare and do all these other things. And I thought if we had a Government that was strong but smaller and more entrepreneurial, that was more oriented toward results and less oriented toward regulation, we could build broad support for it.

And we did all that. We had a huge amount of success in the first 2 years. And the Congress—the Democrats actually moved a long way—however you want to say it—either to the center or into the future. But there was no perception of it on the part of the voters. Part of it the Republicans spent a lot more time and money on communication, as opposed to governance. But they hadn’t been in the governing business for a long time, so they could do it. And part of it was that there was no way for people to feel it. They had these feelings about the way their lives were.

And after the election was over, I basically spent—I spent a lot of time trying to understand what was driving the mind-set of voters in terms of what was happening in their lives and try to tie what’s going on here to what’s going on in the rest of the world. And I finally realized that the depth of the changes—you know, it’s one thing to say it’s a post-cold-war era, the global economy, the information age, and another thing to try to come to grips with the fact that the depth of the changes in the way we live and work and relate to each other and the rest of the world are, in my judgment, greater than at any time in 100 years.

So I started looking for historical parallels. And it started with people saying, you know, this is going to be like Truman, all that kind of stuff—you know, what people say about ’48. And I think the psychological dynamics are a lot like ’48, where we had to come down off

World War II, we had to make all these economic adjustments, there was no common—[inaudible]—to weld us together. If there was, it was—[inaudible]—into exhaustion. The psychological dynamics were—[inaudible]—but the underlying reality was different, because, basically, even in the Great Depression, we knew we had a great industrial country; we just had to figure out how to make it work again, how to get out of this Depression.

But this is something different. The way we live and the way we work is really changing. And so I started going back into history, and I read—and I started trying to read things that would—triggered it. And finally, I realized, thinking about the beginning of the progressive era, basically, from Teddy Roosevelt to Woodrow Wilson, that the same kinds of things were being done. We changed the way we live; we changed the way we work; we changed the idea of what the role of Government was; we defined our relationships to each other in different ways. We never had to worry about child labor on the farm; nobody would have thought of—a farmer couldn't let his kid work 12 hours a day, 6 days a week on the farm, except when he was in school, you know. And we changed our relationship to the rest of the world.

I mean, when we got into World War I—it started with Teddy Roosevelt, even a little before Roosevelt, with the antitrust laws which said we were not going for socialism in the industrial age but we had to have competition to avoid the evils of a monopoly. Then we got into child labor. Then we got into the idea that we could destroy our natural heritage by abusing the environment—Teddy Roosevelt wanted to preserve the environment. And then Woodrow Wilson did a lot of other progressive things. We enacted the progressive income tax, to pay for things that we had to do together in an industrial society, that we couldn't do apart.

And then, lo and behold, after this whole tradition of isolationism—the biggest war we ever fought was the one we fought with each other—we wound up having to come into World War I basically to ensure the victory of the good guys and what we believed in. And if you go back—and it took about 20 years. So if you look at the way things are today, you see the same sort of thing, with a lot of good things and a lot of bad things and all these anomalies. The economy comes back, the wages stay flat. The crime rate goes down, our juvenile crime

goes bad. Peace in our time, with all these isolated acts of madness. And it's the same sort of deal. And so we have to work our way through it.

And as President, one of my big jobs is—and I neglected that the first 2 years, I think. The first 2 years, I knew exactly what I wanted to do, and I went about doing them. And I was obsessed with doing them. A lot of it required the Congress to go along. And I would have been better served, I think, and the country probably would have been better served if maybe we had done—even if we had done just slightly less, if people had understood sort of the big picture more. And the President, in a way, has to impart that big picture.

And there were times when I did it, like in that Memphis speech, for example. But if you go back and look at Lincoln's speeches, for example, he was always explaining the time people were living in and putting the big issues in terms of choices that had to be made, so that he basically never let the people off the hook.

Q. You mean like now we are engaged in the great Civil War, testing whether or not—

The President. Yes, yes, his second Inaugural—one side could make war rather than stay in the Union, and the other side would accept war rather than see the Union rend apart. And the war came. It was all about choices.

And one of the—the traditional rap on the Republican and Democrats' tradition is that the Democrats believe that Government could solve all the problems; the Republicans believe that Government was useless. And they were both too extreme, and the Americans were in the middle. But the real problem now is the Democrats have really moved a lot, and when we move this way the Republicans move this way.

But the real problem is, if we talk only in terms of programs and dollars, right, and they talk only in terms of the evils of Government and how the President is doing too much for them—[inaudible]—both sides are letting the people off the hook. That's what—you go back and read Lincoln. You know, the people were always—he would never let the people off the hook. We were making choices.

And Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, if you go back and read their speeches, there's a lot of that in there. And even when FDR was railing against the trust and all the enemies that he'd created, he still in the fireside chats

was always reminding people that they had things to do.

So what I try to do—even the speeches I gave in my fundraisers, which were not your traditional campaign speeches, is I'm trying to find ways to explain as best as I understand it what is happening to our people and trying to get us to make choices that are consistent with the new realities and the basic values that I believe we all have to hold. And it's a very exciting thing. And I'm also trying to tell the Democrats that they need to just relax and say what they believe and not worry about this debate—a lot of people are, you know—there are Members in the Republican House that say things like Medicare's the worst thing that happened to the sixties, Janet Reno ought to be indicted, and all this stuff. It's driving some of our people crazy. But what I'm trying to tell them is—and I'm trying to tell the Republicans the same thing—this debate had to come because of the transition period. And in a period like this, new things become possible which are good, but then things become thinkable which caused people to shudder for the same reason, because all the conventional wisdom breaks down and then you have to create a new one.

Congress

Q. Why do you say the problem that Truman faced is the one you're facing? There ere Republican Congresses both times, but that was a do-nothing Congress. This is sort of a do-too-much Congress in terms of activism. Do you draw—think the analogy—[inaudible]—do you see that as a different—

The President. But the difference is perception. The truth is the last Congress was not a do-nothing—you mean, Truman had a do-nothing Congress.

Q. Yes. But the current Congress is an activist Congress.

The President. Well, the House is an activist House. The Senate wants to be activist, but they're trying to find a more dynamic center that can be a bipartisan center. And the real interesting thing is whether the chemistry between the House, the Senate, and the President can lead to a creative kind of tension that will move us forward. That's the argument I keep making to the Speaker, or the personal plea I made to Bob Dole on welfare reform, which, frankly, to which he responded and we worked through a lot of that stuff. A lot of those ideas

that are in there, the giving States a bonus for putting people to work, requiring people to sign personal responsibility contracts, all those things are ideas we've been advocating for years. And I'm excited—I don't agree with everything in that Senate bill, but I'm excited about the direction it took, that it really is a new-ideas direction rooted in the idea of both work and family, which I think is—one of the central realities for you and for every other American is we have to create a country which you can succeed at work and at home. And if we get in a position where even the poorest among us have to choose, we're in deep trouble.

Welfare Reform

Q. Has Dole told you he thinks he can get most of that bill?

The President. No, he didn't say. But before he brought the bill up, we had a visit when he came to the White House one time, and I just told him that I would really go a long way to try to meet him in agreement and I thought that welfare reform had become a symbol for the country and I didn't want it to become a symbol of division because I didn't think we ought to kick poor people around and beat them up. But I did think it was bad to have a system of permanent dependency that was created for a different age. As Moynihan never tires of telling us, it was created for the West Virginia miner's widow, who had a fourth-grade education and kids at home and there wasn't anyplace in the work force for her anyway.

We live in a world now where work and family are merged much more clearly and which we cannot afford to have a whole class of our people in a state of permanent dependency. It draws upon their dignity; it's bad for their children. So welfare should be a temporary help to people in need.

So, anyway, that's a hopeful sign anyway. But we can do a lot of good for this country. We can balance the budget. We can strengthen the economy. We can maintain our commitment to education and technology, which means people will be able to make more of their own lives and they'll have a stronger economy. We have to slow the rate of growth in Medicare and Medicaid—I don't disagree with all the specific Medicare reforms that have been advanced. Some of them are common to what I recommended in '94, if you go back to my health care plan. What I think is wrong is to jerk

an arbitrary amount of money out of a health care system without considering what the consequences are.

I was in Orange County after I left the—you all were down there with me, but after I did the public deal, I went in and did a roundtable with business executives in Orange County and some education leaders. And most of them were Republicans. But I started a dialog with them in '92. Some of them supported me and some of them didn't, but I've kept up the dialog because there are a lot of forward-thinking people around there. And one man spoke up in this room; he said, "You know, nobody has talked about the impact of the Medicaid program, all these cuts, on the great teaching hospitals," that basically this is typical of the Democrats—it's a problem they solved a few years ago in an indirect way and they never thought to explain to America that, basically, Medicaid, because so many of the great teaching hospitals are located in and around cities with large numbers of poor people and because those teaching hospitals need patients, Medicaid funds have actually supported medical education in America and indirectly supported institutions of—[inaudible]—resource.

So he was telling me—now, one of the things we estimate is that California will rebound from the defense downsizing by having a huge advance in medical and biological sciences over the next 20 years as we move into the age—[inaudible]. And he said, "If we just arbitrarily take all this money out of the Medicaid system without really thinking about what it's going to do to these great centers of learning and research, it's a bad deal." So that's an issue that nobody has even thought about in the actual debate.

But the point is, we can work this out. We do have to slow the rate of—is this going to become another Washington paralysis, like it was before I showed up? They fought about the crime bill for 6 years and fought about family aid for 7 years and fought about all this other—where each side can walk away and say, well, I tried, but the others were unreasonable. Or will we find a creative tension here which enables us to do—make real progress on all these—[inaudible]—so that we're throwing the country into the future but in a way that keeps us together and really preserves our obligations to our children, our parents, and our obligation to keep opportunity—[inaudible]?

It's going to be a very interesting 2 months.

Administration Accomplishments

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Well, it did that. And also it came about because I realized that either—right before or right at the election there were a few sort of revisionist articles that came out in magazines saying, "People think nothing has been done, but this Congress has given Bill Clinton 80 percent of his programs in 2 years, very ambitious programs; it's only the third time since World War II this has happened, and why don't they link it? Maybe they don't feel it. The Democrats govern better than they talk. Health care was a \$300 billion fight by those who were—so health care overshadowed everything else." There were all these reasons, but when you stripped it all away, I was doing all these things that 70 percent of the American people really agreed with when they heard about it, but it didn't connect in their lives and their minds. And a lot of them couldn't even receive it. A lot couldn't even receive it.

I'm going to tell you an interesting story. Mack McLarty—two stories. Mack McLarty spoke at the Perot convention for us, and basically—and I now think we took slightly the wrong tack there. But anyway—and there were some—a lot of them were Republican political people, but there were some real Perot people there, too. And so Mack talks to this—he's working the crowd after he talks. He basically said, we did 80 percent of what Ross Perot advocated in his book, and here's what he advocated and here's what we did and here's what we still have to do. So he talks his heart out, you know. And this woman comes up to him—he's working the crowd—and this woman says, "You're a nice young man, and you're a very attractive, nice young man. But I don't agree with anything you and your President stand for." So he says, "What is it that you don't agree with? Do you disagree with the fact that we took the deficit from \$290 billion to \$160 billion?" She said, "Did you really do that?" He'd just spoken about that. He said, "Yes, we really did that." He talked about it. She said, "Well, I do agree with that." He said, "Well, what do you do?" She said, "I'm a retired schoolteacher." He said, "Do you have children?" She said, "One; my son works for Dupont"—or some company. I think it was Dupont; I can't remember. And he said, "You don't agree with NAFTA, do

you?" He said, "You know, 30 percent of that company's profits last year came from trade with Mexico." She said, "Is that right?"

It was interesting. But the point is she literally could not hear him when he was standing up there talking to her because her resistance is to her preconceptions about Democrats and me and Government and Washington. She couldn't absorb it.

And a lot of you have heard me talk about my Cabinet member whose sister called her one day and said, "I'm so excited because my tax bill went down \$600"—or whatever it was. This woman was a working mother with two kids and a modest income. She said, "Yes, I know, that was a big part of the President's program." And she said, "No, it wasn't." She said, "What do you mean? I'm in the Cabinet; it was a big part of our program." She said, "All you do is defend him." She said, "He went around the table and made us all give up money to pay for that earned-income tax credit so people like you get a tax break." She said, "I watch the news every night; if anything that important had happened—that's the most important thing that's happened in years—I would know that if he had."

But you see, it was buried amidst all the bigger conflicts of the economic plan, just like the direct student loan program was, which is why they can never—[inaudible]. The point I want to make is what struck me is in a democracy it is not enough to do a lot of particular things that will make the general points you're trying to make. Things are changing so much that a lot of what is unsettling is not so much in reality as it also is in people's heads. And it's very important that—I mean, the most important thing in a democracy is how—is not who happens to be President at one given moment, it is how the people understand their time, their obligations, and their opportunities.

Which is why I don't like the argument going on between the two parties, even though in specifics I normally agree with—I don't think we ought to frame it just in terms of we're for this much money and this program, and they say the Government—[inaudible]. What we really have to do is say, this is the change, this is what's happening in your life, and the money is incidental to the value choices you're making and the vision you have about the future. Don't kid yourself; this is a decision we're all making. These are changes we're all going

through. You can't just blame somebody or drive a wedge through the country and expect us to get results. Neither will all your problems be solved if we win this money battle over this program.

And I just began to see that, and I realized that if you go back and read the really important things that Presidents said in history, very often what they tried to do is to explain to the American people that—[inaudible]—and how the American idea can be preserved and enhanced in that moment by taking a different course rooted in the basic things that have always been at the guts of this—[inaudible].

The Media

Q. [Inaudible]—modern Presidency people do—[inaudible]—because they see this on the TV—

Press Secretary Mike McCurry. Time out. This is good food for thought, but these guys need real food, too.

Q. Lincoln—if he suggested the same kind of scrutiny that you are—[inaudible].

The President. Well, I think in the information age, too much exposure and too much information and too much sort of quasi-information—I mean, you guys have to compete with near-news, too. It's like when we were kids, we'd drink near-beer. You've got all this information and a lot of competition among news sources, and then you're competing with the near-news. And there is a danger that too much stuff cramming in on people's lives is just as bad for them as too little in terms of the ability to understand, to comprehend.

Which is why, again I say, I underestimated in my first 2 years the importance of continually not just—even the town meetings, one of the problems is—like yesterday in the Larry King thing—I don't know if you listened to it—I thought it was good. I loved doing it, but I found myself about three questions in, I said, No, no, no, no, I'm doing too much of the details of the specific issue they're asking without trying to keep putting it in the larger context. Because we need to develop sort of a common understanding.

Now, people intuitively respond to that. When in Colin's book, he talks about the American family or if I talk about common ground or I say what it is that brings us together or Ross Perot says we shouldn't have politics or, you know, or when the leaders in the Congress make

some outreach that they resonate to intuitively, but there's no sort of, "Well, what does that mean at this time?" which is what I'm trying to do.

I had so many people on this trip, even at these fundraisers, come up to me and say that they were really glad they were there because they had been themselves trying to understand what was going on and make sense of it, to kind of incorporate it into their lives.

Colin Powell and the Mood of the Country

Q. [*Inaudible*—you have an autographed copy of General Powell's book tomorrow night when you see him?

The President. I certainly hope so. [*Laughter*]

Q. Are you looking forward to that? It will be the first time you will share the platform with—

Q. Is he going to be at the Congressional Black Caucus?

Q. Yes.

The President. Maybe I'll get my book. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, it's very—I'm also trying to get people to get out of their funk about it.

Q. Get out of their funk?

The President. Yes. Yes, because the truth is that we have proved that we can make this economy perform under these circumstances. But it used to be that a high-performance economy, a lot of entrepreneurs, a lot of new millionaires was inexorably—inevitably meant higher wages for everybody. It doesn't anymore. So we've got to go to the second problem. We've proved we can perform. We've proved we can make progress in social problems. I mean, it's—just last night on the news it said teen pregnancies down in America for the second year in a row. And you heard me—the divorce rate is down, food stamps, welfare, crime, murder. But the wrinkle on it is the teenager is still in trouble.

But we've proved—you know, 5 years ago most Americans basically thought the crime rate was going to go up forever. And you now know—so we can do things if we have the right understanding and we understand that we just have been given the gift or the burden of living through this time and we've just got to do our job.

I think it's really—it's quite exciting. But I believe, to go back to what you said, John, my own belief is that human beings, particularly

the American people, are capable of enduring a lot of difficulty and a lot of tumult and upheaval if they understand it. What makes people insecure is when they feel like they're lost in the funhouse. They're in a room where something can hit them from any direction any time. They always feel living life is like walking across a running river on slippery rocks and you can lose your footing at any time.

If people kind of—if you understand what's happening to you, you can make the necessary—not just changes but necessary psychological adaptations. So you define security in a different way, and you can rear back and go on then. So that—I find it—and I really feel that this is important for me to do.

President Ronald Reagan

Q. [*Inaudible*—in California what do you hear about President Reagan? I understand it was possible you might visit him, but he is in pretty bad shape. Have you heard any word on him lately?

The President. I called Mrs. Reagan some—a couple months ago, I guess. I haven't heard anything since then.

Mood of the Country

Q. On what we were talking about, do you feel after this trip that you found the words that can explain the time to people, or are you still searching for it?

The President. Yes, but I can't do it in 30 seconds.

Q. But when you talk about getting people out of their funk, there was this period where you were so—consistently reported—a long time ago now, but to be in one yourself. Are you long since out of it, and is this part of why?

The President. Oh, yes. Yes. But what bothered—I don't mind adversity. I have difficulty when I—I don't think I can do my job as President if I don't understand what's happening. And I really spent a lot of time trying to understand what was going on, and I really think what I said is true. I think that I and all of us had underestimated the dimensions of the changes and the challenges facing us. And so now I feel quite good about it.

Q. [*Inaudible*—30 seconds in this day and age?

The President. I'll—eventually, I'll get it in 30 seconds. I'll be able to do it in 30 seconds, in a minute, 2 minutes, 5 minutes, and 30 min-

utes. It's what you've got to do. You need to—if you can go 30 minutes down, you know.

President's Schedule

Q. It's a long way to November in 1996—

Press Secretary McCurry. I get the last question. These guys—you've had so much energy this week, they all want to know are you going to try to keep this same pace all the way through to November of 1996.

The President. No. [Laughter]

Q. Can you tell us how to get by on 4 hours sleep a night? Are there things you learned in Oxford or—

The President. I never slept—I slept more than 4 hours every night we were gone. I never slept less than 5 hours. But except that night we were in Denver—I slept 6 hours, but it was 2 and 4.

Q. Not continuous.

The President. Two and four. So it was tough. When I have a difficult day like that, particularly if I can't exercise, I try to drink lots and lots and lots of water. I try to make an extra effort to concentrate on what other people are saying, to listen—

Q. [Inaudible]—don't fall asleep.

Q. Good advice to us.

The President. Well, so you don't fall asleep—not fall asleep, but just don't get blah, you know.

Q. Mr. President, when you run at 7 a.m. it means that we have to run at 5:30 a.m. [Laughter] Seriously. When you run at 7 a.m., I have to get up and run at 5:30 a.m. to catch the pool for you running.

The President. Why couldn't you make a deal with the pool that you could be the designated runner, then you could run at 7 a.m.

Q. Believe me, that would be the most popular innovation you could make.

Q. Hey, I'll take pool duty.

The President. I would love to have the pool run with me, any day.

Q. They should. I'm not sure Lew Merletti would love it, but I mean—

The President. Oh, no, it would be fine.

Q. Because that's what the public thinks. They think jogging with the President is running alongside of him. They don't think it's the 10th and 11th cars in a 12-car motorcade, passing beside him around the corner.

The President. The Secret Service would not care if anybody in the pool wanted to run with me.

Press Secretary McCurry. That's not the—the problem is, have you ever had Helen Thomas [United Press International] sit in your office at 7 a.m. in the morning? [Laughter] That's what I do every morning. Now, it's like a running press conference.

The President. No, I couldn't talk while I was running.

Q. We couldn't either, believe you me.

The President. I laid off for a couple of months. And one of the things I always have to do when I start running again, particularly the older I get and the harder it gets, is concentrate real hard on my breathing patterns. Because most people can run a lot more than they think; it's their breathing that gives out. They get into irregular breathing, and they start gasping instead of pushing out. So I can't—when I get in real good shape again I can talk when I'm running. But right now I can only concentrate on—

Q. Why did you lay off? Had you had a sprain or a strain or just—

The President. Well, this summer, the heat and allergies bothered me. So I just worked out. And then when I went to—by the time I got on vacation I was as tired as I've ever been in my life, I think. And I just didn't want to do it. I just wanted to lay around my family or fool around on the golf course or go climb mountains if you're going to do it. I just didn't want to do it.

Press Secretary McCurry. Let's let these guys have dinner.

Q. Thank you, sir.

Q. I was going to ask, can you come back again and say hello to—

The President. Thanks, guys.

NOTE: The exchange began at approximately 7:30 p.m. aboard Air Force One en route from San Diego, CA, to Washington, DC. In his remarks, the President referred to Bertha Pendleton, superintendent, San Diego Unified School District; the late Samuel M. Walton, founder, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.; and Secret Service agent Lewis Merletti. The press release issued by the Office of the Press Secretary did not include the complete opening portion of the exchange. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.