

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Labour Party Leader
Tony Blair of the United Kingdom
April 12, 1996

Q. Good morning, Mr. President—[inaudible].

The President. No, not yet. I may have something to say later today, but I think it's not appropriate for me to comment yet. We're trying to find out all of the facts.

Okinawa

Q. Mr. President, on Okinawa, could you tell us some of the reasoning that went into that decision—

The President. Excuse me? I'm sorry.

Q. On the base in Okinawa—

The President. Yes. Well, Secretary Perry has been working very hard on that issue to try to deal with what we think are some very legitimate concerns the people of Okinawa have about the noise levels, access to land. And Japan has been a wonderful security partner for us for a long time, and they still are. They pay the highest percentage of support for American forces of any of our foreign host countries. And we thought we ought to try to work through these issues. And the Secretary has worked very hard at it, and so has the Japanese Government. And so I hope we've got a good resolution here that will permit us to defend our own security interests and pursue our interests in the Northern Pacific and fulfill our commitments to our Japanese allies.

Thank you.

President's Taxes

Q. [Inaudible]—your taxes. Do you have any advice for the American people?

The President. I always try to pay them. [Laughter] I've got an accountant, and I tell him to resolve all doubt in favor of the Government and go on. [Laughter] That's what I've been saying for 20 years now.

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]

Discussions With Mr. Blair

Q. Mr. President, do you think you'll—[inaudible]—the next British Prime Minister?

Mr. Blair. Well, that is not a diplomatic question. [Laughter]

The President. If I were in his position that's the question I'd ask. Look, it's all I can do to keep up with American politics. I only hope he's talking to the next American President. [Laughter]

Q. Will you be sharing ideas, Mr. President?

The President. Yes, I'm looking forward to discussing a number of things including, obviously, the Irish peace process and the process in Northern Ireland, which is very important to the United States. And I want to compliment Mr. Blair and his party. I think that the way they have proceeded in this has been very statesmanlike and very much in the interest of his nation and the cause of peace.

Q. And similarities between your two parties as well?

The President. I'll leave that to you.

Northern Ireland Peace Process

Mr. Blair. I was saying to the President how immensely helpful people have found his visit to Northern Ireland a few months ago and what a boost it gave to the peace process. And I think that is still there, and it's still helping. I hope we can get it back on track very much.

Q. Mr. Blair, you'll be talking to the President about your own development of—

Mr. Blair. I think we will be talking about many things, Jeremy.

The President. If you give us a chance. [Laughter]

Mr. Blair. Quite so. And on that point—

The President. This is a great omen for the peace process. You've got the Americans' greatest Irish reporter here. [Laughter] How are you?

Mr. Blair. You're in very good company, Mary.

Q. Is there anything that Mr. Blair can practically do to bring about a revival of the peace talks in Ireland, a truce?

The President. He might have better ideas about that than I do. But the first thing, of course, is that there has to be an election law ratified in the Parliament. But I want to talk to him about it. We'll see what his ideas are.

Q. Do you want all of the parties to participate in the elections and to attend—

The President. Of course. We've always been for all-party talks and all-party participation, that is, all of the parties that are committed to a peaceful democratic future in Northern Ireland.

Q. And do you think Sinn Fein—[inaudible]—peaceful democratic future in Northern Ireland?

The President. We have to get back to the conversation here. I've already answered more questions than I meant to. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10:45 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks on the Progress Report on Auto Trade With Japan and on the Administration's Economic Team

April 12, 1996

Thank you very much. Mr. Vice President, Ambassador Kantor, Senator Levin, and Congressman Levin; all the distinguished leaders from the auto industry and Mr. J.C. Phillips from the UAW and to Jim Hill; all the people here from the agencies that are part of our Nation's economic team that really worked so hard to achieve these results. I welcome all of you here.

I want to thank you for what you said, Jim. I am a car guy. I was 6 years old the first time I crawled underneath a 1952 Buick in my father's tiny dealership in Hope, Arkansas, population 6,000, and I never quite got over it. And one of the things that I promised myself I would do if I ever got a chance to have an impact on it was to give the American automobile industry the chance to be rewarded for its willingness to compete. And that is what we have worked hard to do in this administration.

I just saw something—Mickey Kantor and I walked outside, along with the Vice President, Mr. Panetta, and I saw something I never thought I would live to see—and just 4 years ago, if you had told me that I would see it, I'm not sure I would have believed it—right-hand drive American models made by American workers in American plants bound for Japan, a Ford Taurus, a GM-built Cavalier, a Chrysler Neon, built for the Japanese market where consumers are now freely buying tens of thousands more American cars than ever before. These new exports, as others have said, are the results of efforts by our car makers and our economic team. We have worked to expand our trade on fair terms not only with Japan but with others throughout the world. These exports show what

we can do when we truly work together and when others work with us in a spirit of cooperation and mutual benefit.

The boost in sales is tremendous news for American workers, for our auto and auto parts manufacturers, for our strong relationship with Japan. I also want to say it is good news for the people of Japan. When I first went to Japan in 1993, I said to the Japanese people what I will have the opportunity to reiterate in just a couple of days: We have no more important bilateral relationship. We are bound together in our support for democracy and freedom and for the security of freedom-loving peoples in Asia and now elsewhere, as Japan has shouldered bigger and bigger burdens to help us all pursue the goals that we share. We also know that if we have a free and open trading relationship with them, it will help their economy, it will give their consumers more choices, and it will help both nations to be more competitive as we hurtle our way forward into the 21st century.

Just 3 years ago our ties were strained by a trading relationship not beneficial to our Nation. The trade wasn't working, but the ties weren't working either. Today our relationship is working better for both of us. There's a lot to be done. In a big and complex relationship like ours there will always be a lot to be done. But we are strengthening and deepening our relationship. It is now a powerful force for creating opportunity, for advancing democracy, and for improving the quality of life in both our countries.

I also want to say that, as Ambassador Kantor said earlier, I believe that the right kind of trade