

## Exchange With Reporters at the George Bush Presidential Library in College Station, Texas November 6, 1997

### *Iraq*

Q. President George Bush, have you given any advice—what advice do you have for President Clinton in dealing with Saddam Hussein in this latest standoff? And do you have any regrets?

*President George Bush.* I agree with the President's stance of being firm with this man, and he's doing exactly the right thing. It is important that we have people with us in this, and it is important that the United Nations not waver one single bit. So I have no advice.

Q. Do you regret that your administration didn't more aggressively try to depose Saddam Hussein?

*President Bush.* In what way would I have deposed him? I'm not sure I understand the question. How depose him?

Q. During the war, do you regret not being more aggressive in trying to take him out?

*President Bush.* No, I have no regrets. The mission was to end the aggression, and we ended the aggression. We tried to do it peacefully without firing a shot. That failed the end of the aggression. His legions are defeated, and they cannot project the offensive force they once had.

Now, if you're asking me if I'm happy he's still there, no. But for those that now say, *ex post facto*, we should go in and have killed him, then I would then ask the question, whose son, whose daughter would I ask to give their lives in a perhaps fruitless hunt in Baghdad, where we would have become an occupying power? I have no regrets. The military said, "We've accomplished our mission." We ended the war, and we did the right thing. And history will say we did the right thing.

Q. What do you make of his staying power, President Bush?

Q. Mr. President, what do you think of the report from Mr. Butler that says Iraq is tampering with the U.N. surveillance cameras and moving weapons-related equipment?

*President Clinton.* Of course, that may be why he wants to interrupt the inspections, and why it's so important that they resume immediately. You know, the idea of getting the Americans

out may just be a ruse; it may be that there is something that they're covering up, which is exactly why the international community has to resume the inspections.

Q. President Bush, what do you make of his staying power, Saddam's staying power, after all these years?

*President Bush.* Lots of staying power. A lot of staying power. If you're brutal, you don't care about the lives of your people and the welfare of them, you can stay in power a long time. I thought he'd be gone because of that brutality.

Any others?

### *George Bush Presidential Library*

Q. What do you think of this library, Mr. Clinton?

*President Clinton.* I like it. It's very impressive. And the displays are particularly interesting to me.

### *Fast-Track Trade Legislation*

*President Bush.* May I inject an answer to a question that has not been asked? I have great respect and I expect—I'm not trying to speak for President Carter or President Ford—for what President Clinton is trying to do in getting fast track through this Congress, through this Republican Congress. And he is doing the right thing. The Congress must support him in the House of Representatives, as they did in the Senate. And I am passionately committed to his position, President Clinton's position, on free and fair trade.

And I don't know if anyone wants to add to that. But this is an important moment, given what's happening out there.

*President Gerald Ford.* Well, I strongly reiterate my previous comment to the effect that fast-track legislation is critically important for substantive reasons and for U.S. leadership around the world. We've had that kind of legislation since the day I was President, and we hope to have it because it's important, critically, to the future of the United States as a leader—for the Nation.

So we hope and pray you'll get the votes tomorrow, Mr. President.

*President Jimmy Carter.* Well, all of us former Presidents have endorsed not only NAFTA earlier but also fast track now. In January, my wife and I and others were down in Latin America and saw the tremendous progress being made there. As a matter of fact, the MERCOSUR countries, which President Clinton visited recently, have already signed separate trade agreements with Mexico, with Canada, and with Europe. And I think, first of all, we're going to get left out if we don't sign fast track and get the negotiations done. And secondly, it's going to be a slap in the face to our natural friends and allies in Latin America.

The last 3 or 4 days I've been calling as many Democratic Congress Members as I could, trying to get the Democrats to come and support fast track. I think we have a much better chance among Republicans than we do Democrats. So I think we've got a lot of work to do, but it couldn't be a more important issue at this moment than to get fast track approved.

*Q.* How does it look, President Clinton?

*President Clinton.* It looks like we'd be better off if they were in Congress—[laughter]—and if I was. We're working hard. And let me say, the strong position that President Bush, President Carter, and President Ford has taken is immeasurably helpful. You know we have a lot of opposition, and I think you all know where it's coming from. I wish we could have a secret vote in the Congress; we'd pass it three or four to one.

But we're going to do the very best we can, and we're very hopeful. And we've been gaining ground in the last day—we had a great announcement yesterday by a group of Texas

Members of the House, supporting it, and we're working on another group today. We're just going to keep working until tomorrow morning and see where we are. But I think we've got a good chance to win.

*President Ford.* Let us know if we can help make any calls.

#### *Presidential Libraries*

*Q.* What kind of ideas does this give you for your library?

*President Clinton.* Well, I'd like to have one that's as graphically representational as this one is and both personal—it's beautifully personal. I was over there—I was a little late getting in the line here because I was reading all of your biographical background and looking at your kids when they were young—no, it's wonderful. But I think it has a wonderful balance between the personal and the public service of President Bush.

*President Carter.* Each library has gotten larger and larger, so I can't wait to see President Clinton's that he's going to build in—[laughter].

*President Clinton.* I don't have as much land. I'll have to build a high-rise. [Laughter]

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:40 a.m. in the George Bush Presidential Library at Texas A&M University. In his remarks, President Clinton referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A reporter referred to Richard Butler, Executive Chairman, United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) charged with dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

## Remarks at the Dedication of the George Bush Presidential Library in College Station

*November 6, 1997*

Thank you very much, President and Mrs. Bush, President and Mrs. Ford, President and Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Reagan, Mrs. Johnson, David and Julie Eisenhower, Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg, Reverend Graham, Governor and Mrs. Bush, Vice President and Mrs. Quayle, and to all the foreign dignitaries and American officials who are here.

The sun is shining on Texas A&M today. And the sun is shining on America today. You know, we have an interesting country, with a lot of religious, racial, and political diversity. Once in a while, we all get together. This morning, I think it's fair to say that all Americans are united in tribute to President George Bush for his lifetime of service to America.