

Exchange With Reporters in the Village of Xiahe, China

June 26, 1998

Q. Good morning, sir.

Human Rights

Q. Mr. President, the Chinese arrested a couple of dissidents, one apparently for intending to do an interview with an American journalist. I wonder, does such action make it more difficult for you to make the case to the American people that your policy of engagement is improving the lot of the Chinese people, is improving the human rights situation?

The President. No. I found the reports disturbing, and I've asked Ambassador Sasser to raise it with the Chinese authorities. And if true, they represent not China at its best and not China looking forward but looking backward.

One of the reasons that I came here was to discuss both privately and publicly issues of personal freedom. So I think it's very important for me to do that. But I think it makes the case—it makes it all the more important that we continue to work with the Chinese and to engage them.

Taiwan

Q. There have been some suggestions that you're going to sort of accept the Chinese insistence that during the press conference, that you're going to sort of declare the United States decision not supporting Taiwan independence, not supporting Taiwan's bid for the United Nations, and not supporting one China/one Taiwan but two Chinas. Is it going to happen?

The President. Well, first of all, you should come to the press conference to see what happens. But our position with regard to Taiwan

is embodied in the three communiqués and in the Taiwan Relations Act and in the facts of our relationship over the years. So I think it's obvious that there will be no change in our position one way or the other on this trip.

Susan McDougal's Release From Prison

Q. Mr. President, on a domestic matter, Mr. President, are you happy with the Susan McDougal—Mr. President, are you happy for Susan McDougal? Do you feel—

The President. Well, I'm concerned about her health, and I hope that she gets better now. I think it's a—I hope that the judge's decision puts her in a position where she can get over her pain and her difficulty.

Supreme Court Decision on the Line Item Veto

Q. Sir, the line item veto, sir, was struck down. What do you think about that?

The President. I'm disappointed. I think that having it has made it much easier to control spending, and I think that—and control special interest tax breaks. And so I hope very much that the Congress will not use this decision to move away from the path of fiscal discipline that we have followed the last 5 years that has gotten us to our present state of economic prosperity. I think it would be a mistake.

Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:35 a.m. in the village. In his remarks, the President referred to Susan McDougal, Whitewater investigation figure, and U.S. District Judge George Howard, Jr.

Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion With Xiahe Area Residents

June 26, 1998

The President. Let me begin by thanking all of you for spending a little time with my wife and me today, and by thanking everyone in Xiahe for making us feel so welcome.

I'm sorry that I had to take a little time to answer some questions from our news media, but as you know, there's 12 hours time dif-

ference, and so, they're running out of time to file their stories, and thank you for your patience.

In America, there is a lot of respect for and interest in Chinese history and culture but also in the remarkable transformation which has occurred here over the last 25 years. For example,