

I never thought I'd get 100 percent of what I wanted. I think they're making a big mistake not beginning the prescription drug benefit on Medicare and not adding any days to the life of the Medicare or the Social Security Trust Fund. But because I vetoed the tax cut, we can come back to all that early next year. But we shouldn't walk away from here having dismantled our commitment to 100,000 teachers, not dealing with the 50,000 police, not dealing with the environmental issues. And I'm prepared to work with them.

I don't want a partisan fight on this. This is crazy for us to be having a big partisan blow-out because they both made a commitment not to spend the Social Security surplus, and then it turned out to be harder than necessary, and all of it is being mixed into a sort of a combustible political mix. We need to sit down like grownups, go out and tell the American people the truth, and work through this. We can find the offsets. We don't have to spend the Social Security surplus. We can do this. And I hope they will work with me to do it.

Demographics in Nigeria

Q. According to a recent United Nations world population prospect report, 45 percent of Nigeria's 1.29 million population is under age 15, and an additional 18 is in the 15 to 24 years category. What this means is that we have about 63 percent of Nigeria's population which is under the age of 24. President Obasanjo, what does this mean to today's Nigeria and the country's future?

President Obasanjo. Well, to today's Nigeria it means that—simple—37 percent—if you take all the remainder as working, which is not the case—that 37 percent of Nigerians are working to keep 100 percent of Nigerians alive, because you know it, from age one to about age 24, you are preparing yourself for life. It's either you are in school, or you are learning a trade, or you are in the university or something of that nature. Now, that puts strain on Nigerians that are working if they are working. But are they really working? That's another question.

Then, for future, if we are able to train them, ah, the future is bright. There you will have that large population, if everything else is all right, that will be vibrant, educated, talented, and going places for Nigeria, well-governed, the economy buoyant. You can't ask for anything better. So if we train, we look after them and we prepare them adequately, good for future. But for now, it's a strain, and we have to bear out this strain.

President Clinton. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's 183d news conference began at 4:25 p.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, the President referred to Stella Obasanjo, wife of President Obasanjo; 1986 Nobel Prize for Literature recipient Wole Soyinka; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; and murdered Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan of Armenia. President Obasanjo referred to OAU, the Organisation of African Unity, and IGAD, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

Statement on the Navy Blue Angels Jet Crash *October 28, 1999*

I am deeply saddened that today America lost two of its bravest and most distinguished Naval aviators in a tragic crash of a Navy jet belonging to the Blue Angels.

As a nation we all owe our military service-members a tremendous debt of gratitude.

At this time of great loss—a loss that we all share—my heartfelt prayers go to their families, their shipmates, and to the entire Navy.