

NOTE: The exchange began at 1:10 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Mayor Giuliani's wife, Donna Hanover, and their children, Andrew and Caroline. The transcript released by the Office

of the Press Secretary did not include the complete opening portion of this exchange. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

## Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Conferees on the Patients' Bill of Rights and an Exchange With Reporters

May 11, 2000

### *Africa and Caribbean Basin Trade Legislation*

*The President.* First of all, I would like to thank this very impressive array of Senate and House Members for coming, in the midst of quite a busy time up on the Hill, as we try to work out the remaining issues to get a strong Patients' Bill of Rights passed.

I'd like to begin just by expressing my gratitude to most recently the Senate but also to the House for the truly historic Africa/Caribbean Basin trade bill that passed by, I think, 77 votes in the Senate today. And this bill passed with big bipartisan majorities in both Houses. And it's an example of the kind of thing we can do if we work together. And I'm very grateful to the Congress for that and very much looking forward to this bill.

### *Patients' Bill of Rights*

Last October the House passed the Norwood-Dingell bill by a big majority, but the conferees have not been able to agree on a bill which could then be taken back to the Senate and the House. So this meeting is to determine what the issues are, what the prospects are for resolving them, to make it clear to these Members that I will offer anybody in the White House, starting with me, day or night, to try to help resolve this and hopefully to get a bill out.

I think it's fair to say that most of us, maybe all of us, really want a bill, not an issue, not a debate. We'd like to pass a bill. And so I'm looking forward to this meeting, and I want to thank you all for coming.

Q. What are the prospects for approving it this year?

*The President.* Well, you should ask us all after the meeting. [Laughter]

### *Security at the State Department*

Q. Mr. President, the FBI testified today there are possible intelligence officers operating as accredited reporters at the State Department. Does that concern you, sir?

*The President.* Does it concern you? I should be asking if it concerns you. [Laughter] No, I don't want to make light of this. Of course, the testimony today was the first that I had heard that assertion, and obviously it has to be looked into.

I would have thought that you might have docile intelligence officers masquerading as hostile reporters. [Laughter]

### *Social Security*

Q. Mr. President, this morning you told Diane Rehm about some predictions about what you thought George W. Bush might do if he's elected President, in terms of tax cuts, Supreme Court appointments. Do you also think that he would destroy Social Security by privatizing it, as the Vice President has charged?

*The President.* I don't want to talk about the campaign here. I'm here trying to get something done. I'll be glad to answer—at some appropriate time, I'll tell you what I think ought to be done on Social Security, although I'm pretty well on the record on that. But I don't think this is an appropriate thing for me to discuss right now.

### *Permanent Normal Trade Relations With China*

Q. Mr. President, do you have any concern about comments by Majority Whip DeLay yesterday that he may not be doing quite as well as he had hoped getting Republican votes for the China bill?

*The President.* No, because I've noticed he's quite effective at getting votes when the time

comes—sometimes when I like it and sometimes when I don't. And I think he wants us to do our part, and I'm doing my best. I think in the end, especially after President Ford and President Carter and all those former administration members came, and after the, I think, very important reports in the press today about the Chinese dissidents favoring this vote, I think we'll get there. We've just got a lot of hard work to do.

*Northern Ireland Peace Process*

Q. Do you have an update on the situation in Northern Ireland, Mr. President? And do you foresee a situation where you would be able to travel over there to celebrate some success?

*The President.* Well, we're not done yet. There's still a matter to be resolved about what exactly the new police force would be called and how it can be constituted so that both Protestants and Catholics will join the police

force and be a part of the unified police force, and what the political problems this issue present to both sides are.

I think what the IRA did in agreeing to put these weapons beyond use and put them in these cachement areas and allow them to be inspected was a terrific step forward and a great credit to Gerry Adams and Michael McGuinness—Martin McGuinness—and everybody else who worked on it.

But we've got one last issue, and I don't think anybody ought to be celebrating until we resolve the one last issue.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:15 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sinn Féin leaders Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Remarks at the Award Ceremony for the National Teacher of the Year May 11, 2000

*The President.* Thank you very much. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Let me begin by welcoming you to the Rose Garden and saying, I'm grateful that it's not too hot and it's not too cold. Sounds like one of those books we used to read when I was 6 years old—it's just right. [Laughter] Actually, we got rained out here yesterday at an event. And we had two events earlier today, and it was quite warm. So this is—you're here at just the right time.

I'd also like to thank the representatives of the Marine Band who played for us today. This is their third event today, and they've done a great job. Thank you very much.

I want to thank Secretary Riley, my friend and coworker for better education for well over 20 years now. Even my adversaries will concede that he is the finest Secretary of Education this country has ever had, and I am very grateful to him.

I welcome the other representatives of the Department of Education and the executive director of the Council of Chief State Schools, Gordon Ambach; Scholastic, Inc., senior vice president Ernie Fleishman and all those from Scholastic who are here. And I want to recog-

nize the president of the National Education Association, Bob Chase, who has done a wonderful job representing all the teachers of our country here in Washington, including those in the AFT. And I think they would say the same thing. And we thank you for all the fights that you've waged for us, and with your friends in the AFT, and people who love education everywhere. We've had a good 7 years here, thanks in no small measure to you, sir. And we thank you very much.

We have here 54 or 55 State Teachers of the Year, 36 former National Teachers of the Year, and our present honoree, Marilyn Whirry of California. And I want to say a little more about her in a moment.

President Truman presented the first of these awards here at the White House almost half a century ago. And every year since, Presidents or members of their family have personally handed out this award to recognize not only the awardee and the awardees but, indeed, all of our teachers. On that very first occasion, President Truman said, "Next to one's mother, a teacher has the greatest influence on what kind of a citizen a child grows up to be."