

blame somebody else,” to a culture in which each of us understands that we are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you’re fortunate enough to be a mother or father, you’re responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you’re concerned about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you’re responsible for doing something about it. If you happen to be a CEO in corporate America, you’re responsible for telling the truth to your employees and your shareholders. And in the new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we’d like to be loved ourselves.

We can see that culture of respect, the culture of change and service growing around us here in America today. You know, I started what they call the USA Freedom Corps. It’s an opportunity for Americans to help neighbors in need, and the response has been fantastic. Got people signing up for all kinds of ways to help in their community, and I’m grateful.

Our faith-based charities are strong, and they’re vibrant, which is important to bring hope to those who hurt. Our policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation’s uniform are reminding us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than themselves in life—sacrifice for peace,

sacrifice for freedom, sacrifice for safe streets. And once again, the children of America believe in heroes because they see them every day in America.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. I’ve been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. The tests of the last 2½ years have come to the right nation. We’re a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We’re an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift up whole nations by spreading freedom. And at home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of our country. This is the work that history has set before us, and we welcome it. And we know that for our country and for our cause, the best days lie ahead.

Thank you for coming. May God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:44 p.m. at Wings Over the Rockies Air and Space Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Bill Owens of Colorado and his wife, Frances; Ted Halaby, chairman, and Bruce Benson, former chairman, Colorado Republican Party; and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney ’04, Inc.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Economic Advisers and an Exchange With Reporters in Crawford, Texas *August 13, 2003*

The President. Good morning. As you can see, my economic team came down. We’ve had some great briefings. Let me summarize by saying that this administration is optimistic about job creation. We believe strongly that the tax relief plan that was approved by Congress in ’01 and most recently in ’03 is going to have a very posi-

tive effect on economic growth and vitality. We believe it is more likely in the upcoming year that people are going to be able to find a job, and that’s exactly what—where we focused our policy.

But I also know there’s more that can be done. I think one thing is certain, and we’ve spent a lot of time discussing this:

There needs to be a strong message to Congress not to overspend, set priorities, and hold the line on the priorities. As well, we need an energy policy, and we need good tort reform. And I appreciate the fact that the House has passed a good energy bill and the Senate passed an energy bill. Now is the time to get together and reconcile their differences and get a bill to my desk. I also appreciate the fact that the House passed good class-action reform, and the Senate now needs to follow suit.

And I also look forward to working with the Congress to get associated health care plans passed, which will make it easier for small businesses to be able to write affordable health care for their employees. So there's some things we can do to make sure that the economy continues to grow and so people can find work. If you'll remember, the tax relief plan that was passed was called the jobs plan, the growth-and-jobs creation plan. That's what we're interested in. We're interested in people being able to work in America, and we're upbeat about the chances for our fellow citizens who are looking for work to be able to find a job.

I'll answer some questions, starting with Scott [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press].

Liberia/Former President Charles Taylor

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. President Taylor has met your demand to leave Liberia. You've got a west African peacekeeping force in there. Is the time right to send in those 4,500 marines and sailors? And should Nigeria turn President Taylor over to the war crimes tribunal?

The President. They can work that out with—how they deal with Taylor. One, I'm glad he's gone. But my focus now is on making sure that humanitarian relief gets to the people who are suffering in Liberia. And one of the things I have said all along was that we are there to help ECOMIL do its job by providing the conditions necessary for the arrival of relief. And that's why we've got an assessment team on the

ground that's dealing with the Nigerian who's in charge of ECOMIL, to determine what is necessary to help ECOMIL do its job. They are in the lead, and we are there to support and help.

Obviously, one place we've got to make sure is secure and open is the port. And so we're working with ECOMIL, and I will again take recommendations from the Defense Department as to what is necessary to fulfill the mission.

Q. What's your timetable, if I may?

The President. My timetable of listening—

Q. Making a decision on whether to send those 4,500 in.

The President. Well, I've already made the decision, Scott. And I said this from day one. The decision is for us to help ECOMIL do its job of getting humanitarian relief to the people in Liberia. I've made that decision, and nothing's changed.

Yes.

Hemant Lakhani/Homeland Security

Q. Yesterday there was a sting operation that netted a Brit believed to be trying to sell surface-to-air missiles to someone they believed who was Al Qaida, highlighting the danger to airlines. Also yesterday, there were three lost fisherman who came onshore to JFK Airport, breaching security.

Your Democratic opponents are trying to use homeland security as an issue in the campaign, saying that the administration is not doing enough to protect the American people. What is your assessment in light of what happened yesterday?

The President. My assessment is people are going to say the darnedest thing when they run for office, in terms of just the politics. The American people know the difference between politics and reality, and the reality is we're doing everything we can to protect the homeland.

And the fact that we were able to sting this guy is a pretty good example of what

we're doing in order to protect the American people. And our homeland security is focused on airport security. And today, the airports are much more secure than they were prior to September the 11th. America is a safe place for people to fly, precisely because we're working hard to make sure that our homeland security is strong.

The other way to make sure the homeland stays strong is to hunt terrorists down before they come to America. And that's why we're on the global hunt. That's why we've got troops around in places like Afghanistan and Iraq dealing with potential terrorists, bringing them to justice, finding them before they hurt us.

Yes, Elisabeth [Elisabeth Bumiller, New York Times].

Tax Policy

Q. Are you going to go for a new round of tax cuts this fall?

The President. Elisabeth, we are discussing a lot of things. And we believe that the tax relief plan we have in place is robust enough to encourage job growth.

Q. So is that a "no"?

The President. Well, as of this moment—you see, things change in the economy, as you know—but as of this moment, we feel like the plans we have in place are robust enough to create jobs.

Q. Is there any discussion—

The President. Please. The other thing that's necessary is to make sure we've got spending discipline in Washington, to make sure that Congress doesn't overspend. And that will—because that will affect the psychology of those who are—risk capital in order to create the job base.

You had a followup, I take it.

Q. Yes, I was just going to ask you: The discussions in the administration, maybe not at the White House level, about a—perhaps a business tax credit, that you would get a tax credit if you hired somebody to sort of—

The President. Well, thus far, we—in the discussions today, we feel like the tax relief

plans that we have passed will be robust enough to create the conditions necessary for economic growth, and therefore, people will find a job. If we change our opinion, we will let you know. You may not be the first to know, but you'll be one of the first to know.

Yes, sir.

North Korea

Q. Thank you. Russia has proposed a multilateral security pact to end the stand-off with North Korea. Are you willing to offer incentives before North Korea dismantles its nuclear weapons program?

The President. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to continue the dialog with North Korea, to make it clear to them that not only does the United States feel strongly that the Peninsula ought to be nuclear-free, but other countries which live in the neighborhood feel the same way. And remember, the policy has evolved from one of bilateral—you know, pressure to negotiate bilaterally with the North Koreans. That's what we did in the past, and that policy unfortunately failed because the North Koreans didn't keep their word about whether or not they would enrich uranium.

And so now we've taken another tact, which is to—first of all, to convince the Chinese to be an active participant in a dialog to make sure that the Korean Peninsula is nuclear-free. By the way, the first stage of that happened right here in Crawford when Jiang Zemin came to visit, and he stated clearly after that visit that it was in China's interest that the Korean Peninsula be nuclear-weapons-free. And we're just continuing that policy. It's very helpful that the Russians are involved with the dialog with the North Koreans. It is also very helpful that the South Koreans and the Japanese will be involved. And I think we can deal with this issue in a peaceful way, and we're making good progress.

Carl [Carl Cannon, National Journal].

National Economy

Q. Mr. President, you said that candidates say the darnedest things when they're running for office. One of the things they're saying is that there are fewer jobs now than when you took office.

The President. Yes.

Q. A year from now, you are going to be standing for reelection yourself. Do you think there will be as many jobs as when you took office? And when will we start to see a significant decrease in the unemployment rate?

The President. Right. Let me remind the listeners here about what our country has gone through. We—the stock market started to change in March of 2000. And there was a precipitous decline in March of 2000. And that began to affect savings and money and attitude. And then the country went into a recession. The first three quarters of 2001 was a recession. And we dealt with that by passing tax relief, which made the recession one of the shallowest in history.

Now, people said, "Well, maybe you shouldn't have done that. Maybe you shouldn't have had tax relief. Maybe you should have let the recession run its course." But my attitude about that is, is that a deep recession would have caused more people to lose work. And I'm more worried about families finding a job and putting food on the table than I am about economic theory and economic numbers, and so the recession was shallow.

And as the economy was beginning to recover, the enemy hit us on September the 11th, and that affected our economy in a big way. And then we had corporate scandals which we've dealt with. And then, of course, you remember the march to war. I've reminded people—I think this isn't the first time I've said this—that some would put on their TV screens that we were "marching to war." As a matter of fact, it was a year ago we began the march to war. During the August vacation, as I recall, there was the march to war. It's hard

to have a upbeat view of the world when you're marching to war. I mean, war is not exactly a positive thought, particularly when it comes to people willing to take risk, and consumer confidence.

But nevertheless, we dealt with that issue. And so now the economy is—having overcome those obstacles, is beginning to recover. And yes, I think people are going to go back to work, and I firmly believe that what we have done was the absolute right course of action in order to help people find a job.

Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio], you've got a question?

Q. I do.

The President. I'm being very generous today, as you can see.

Q. Yes, you are. Thank you, sir.

The President. My pleasure.

Federal Deficit

Q. If a Democrat were President and running for—

The President. Wait a minute. Let me stop you there.

Q. Yes.

The President. They say the silliest things during the political season. And sometimes people ask the silliest questions.

Q. [Inaudible]—try not to do that, sir.

The President. Now, be careful. Be careful. [Laughter]

Q. With that in mind, if a Democrat were President—

The President. Are you adjusting? [Laughter]

Q. —and were running a \$455 billion deficit, as are you, all other things being equal, wouldn't you be upset about it?

The President. Let me tell you something, the deficit was caused by a recession which we inherited and did something about. The deficit was caused because we spent more money on fighting a war, and the American people expect a President to do what is necessary to win a war. And so I look forward to taking this debate on. I really do. We did the right thing when

it came to tax relief. We inherited a tough situation.

But most importantly, the American people know that I'm not afraid to lead and to make a tough decision. And I made a tough decision, a series of tough decisions, one, to make America more secure, a tough decision to make the world more peaceful, and I made tough decisions when it comes to making sure our economy grows.

And I believe that we've laid the foundation for good economic growth and vitality. I think people are going to be more likely to find a job in the upcoming year.

Thank you all for coming.

California Gubernatorial Candidate Arnold Schwarzenegger

Q. Are you going to do anything for Arnold? You say he'll be a good Governor. You're spending 2 days in California.

The President. I'm going to campaign for George W., as you know.

Q. Will he get a plug in the speech, a mention?

The President. I think I've answered the question, and yes, he would be a good Governor, as would others running for Governor of California. And like you, I'm most interested in seeing how the process evolves. It's a fascinating bit of political drama evolving in the State—in the country's largest State.

Q. It's also the biggest political story in the country. Is it hard to go in there and say nothing about it?

The President. It is the biggest political story in the country? That's interesting. That says a lot. That speaks volumes.

Q. You don't agree?

The President. It's up to—I don't get to decide the biggest political story. You decide the biggest political story. But I find it interesting that that is the biggest political story in the country, as you just said.

Q. You don't think it should be?

The President. Oh, I think there's maybe other political stories. Isn't there, like, a Presidential race coming up? [Laughter] Maybe that says something. It speaks volumes, if you know what I mean. But yes, it's an interesting story; it really is. And I'm looking forward, like you are, to seeing the outcome of the interesting story.

But no, I'm going to go, I'm going to talk about—now that you've asked, are you going on the trip?

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. Good. Well, you'll see me speak to marines and their families, thanking them for their service to our country, reminding them that what's taking place in Iraq is essential to U.S. security. Then I'm going to go to a national park, talking about the fact that we believe parks ought to be revitalized and talk about the initiatives that I've laid out to do that. And then, of course, I'll be doing a little spadework for the '04 campaign. One of the most important political stories—[laughter].

Have a great day. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:44 a.m. at the Bush Ranch. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. Festus Okonkwo, Nigerian commander of ECOMIL forces in Liberia; Hemant Lakhani, arms dealer charged with selling missiles to U.S. agents posing as terrorists; and former President Jiang Zemin of China.