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You are authorized and directed to notify the Congress of this determination and to publish it in the *Federal Register*.

William J. Clinton

NOTE: This item was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 17.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway

May 17, 1994

Interest Rates

Q. Mr. President, the Federal Reserve seems likely to increase interest rates today. How is that going to affect economic growth and your calculations for deficit reduction if you have to spend more to service a \$4 trillion debt?

The President. Well, first of all, if it happens, it will be because we have growth. I mean, now let's get the fundamental facts out here. We have more jobs, lower inflation, and a lower deficit and expectations for high growth this year, good growth.

And so—I make it a practice generally not to comment on what the Fed does. There is clearly some room for short-term interest rates over the rate of inflation that won't slow down our economic growth. And I have every confidence that we're still going to have another good year this year and that we will be able to offset any modest increase in interest rates with increased growth. And so far—I talked to Mr. Panetta yesterday—we're well within our projections on deficit reduction.

Norway

Q. Mr. President, have you ruled out the possibility of sanctions against Norway because of whaling?

The President. We are working on this whaling issue. You know, the United States has taken a position opposed to commercial whaling, and we're working through this with Norway. The Vice President and I had a conversation about it this morning. We are working through the issue, and we feel comfortable about what we're doing. We think we're doing the right thing.

Q. [*Inaudible*—environmental groups say you—

The President. Some environmental groups do. The most mainstream environmental groups have not joined these rather extreme claims that have been made against our country. Give us a chance to work through this. I think we'll come out in the right place.

Q. Madam Prime Minister, do you agree with the Commerce Department's opinion that your country's resumption of whaling goes against efforts to save the whale, so to speak?

Prime Minister Brundtland. No, I certainly don't. We would never have a policy which is not in accordance with international law. We would never have a policy which is not long-term sustainable development, not on this issue, not on any other.

[*At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.*]

Q. [*Inaudible*—whaling, Mr. President?

The President. We are working—we'll work through that. I have confidence that we will be able to work through it.

Q. Mr. President, in that letter to Congress last October, you said that you're going to work with Norway to create an inspection regime for commercial whaling within scientific limits. Is that still the U.S. position?

The President. What were you going to say, Mr. Vice President?

The Vice President. I was going to say, we're opposed to commercial whaling. We have always been committed to good, sound science. And as the President said, we're working with Norway to work through this issue. We're opposed to commercial whaling. We hope that we'll also, incidentally, be able to establish a sanctuary in Antarctica. We hope Norway will support that. But we're just going to work through the issue.

Q. Are you going to visit Norway, Mr. President?

The President. I hope I'll be able to go back. I went to Norway once when I was a young man. I loved it. I'd love to be able to go back someday; one of the best trips I ever made in my life.

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:07 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Question-and-Answer Session on *Brown v. Board of Education* in Beltsville, Maryland

May 17, 1994

The President. Good morning. Do you know why we're here? Why are we here, somebody?

Q. To talk about the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and how it affects us today.

The President. That's right, we are. What was the ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*? What did the Supreme Court say?

Q. That "separate but equal" was unjust and unconstitutional.

The President. And what were the facts in the case? What gave rise to the case? What was the case about?

Q. Unsegregating schools in the South.

The President. In the South and in Topeka, Kansas. It was about a little schoolgirl named Linda Brown whose parents thought she should not be sent to a segregated school. The United States Supreme Court made that decision in 1954, 40 years ago today. Before that, the Supreme Court had ruled that "separate but equal" was constitutional, right? And when the Supreme Court makes a ruling like that, it's the law of the land until they change their minds.

During the Civil War, President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves, in 1863 in the White House, on the same floor that I sleep every night, in what is now the Lincoln Bedroom—the room where your father spent the night last night, right? Secretary Riley's 93-year-old father spent the night last night in the room

where President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves.

Secretary Riley. He said he heard Lincoln all night long. [Laughter]

The President. Then, after the Civil War was over, the 14th amendment to our Constitution was adopted, which declared that everybody had to be equal under the law. But there was still a lot of racial prejudice in the country and a lot of discrimination. And a few years after that, the Supreme Court decided a case called *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Have you studied that? And the problem with *Plessy v. Ferguson* was that blacks and whites had to sit in a different place on the train, and the 14th amendment said that nobody could be discriminated against under the law. And by law, they were required to sit in a different place on the train. So what did the Supreme Court say in *Plessy v. Ferguson*?

Yes?

Q. That trains or whatever were equal, and they could be separate.

The President. That's right. If the facilities were equal, they could be separate without violating the 14th amendment, right? So the *Brown* decision overruled that. Now, why did they overrule that? What was the argument? Why was "separate but equal"—what's the matter with that?

Go ahead.

Q. Well, people were still being—

The President. So they—

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. One argument was that even though they were supposed to be separate but equal, they weren't really. Right? Okay, what else? What else is wrong with "separate but equal"?

Q. That if they are separated, they wouldn't be equal.

The President. That's the heart of it. Because they were separated, right, they wouldn't be equal. That's very important. The argument was that if they were separated, the act of separating people by race under the law itself was a message of inequality.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that? Nearly everybody believes that now, right?

You look around this room today. This is America: people from all different racial and