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Interview With Dan Rather of CBS News

March 24, 1993

The President's Schedule

Mr. Rather. How's your golf game?

The President. Not very good. I've only played twice. The first time it was about 35 degrees with a whipping wind, and the second time, I had a very good second nine holes. But I haven't gotten to play very much.

Mr. Rather. We were talking about your sleep or lack of same over in the Oval Office. You mentioned something about a nap. Are you trying to nap these days?

The President. If I can take a nap, even 15 or 20 minutes in the middle of the day, it is really invigorating to me. On the days when I'm a little short of sleep, I try to work it out so that I can sneak off and just lie down for 15 minutes, a half an hour, and it really makes all the difference in the world.

The White House

Mr. Rather. We're in the Library now, where President Roosevelt made his fireside chats. Is this among your favorite rooms?

The President. I love this room. And this is a highly public room. It is actually a lending library. People who work around here can come in here and check out these books just like any other library. It's also a public room that's open to everyone who comes in the White House on a tour. So people get to see this wonderful library of America, great old portrait of George Washington, and as I was telling you a moment ago, the little-known anonymous design for the White House by Thomas Jefferson. He tried to become the architect of the White House anonymously, and his design was rejected in favor of this one.

Mr. Rather. You were mentioning that certain Presidents dominate this house, as opposed to how they may be viewed in history. What did you mean by that?

The President. What I meant was most of the Presidents who are dominant here were very important Presidents, or all of them. Lincoln is plainly the dominant presence here: a bedroom named for him, the room where he signed the Emancipation Proclamation, his statues and portraits everywhere. But Andrew Jackson is very important here. He put both of the round porches on the White House and changed the front to the back of the White House and the back to the front. Theodore Roosevelt built both the wings, and his portraits are everywhere and his vigor and youth. Franklin Roosevelt lived here longer than everyone else, but he has just a couple of portraits here in the house and a very modest presence, considering the fact that he was plainly the dominant personality in terms of the length of time that he dominated here. So it's just sort of interesting who dominates, because of the contributions they made to the house itself, I think.

Mr. Rather. What are the chances that Bill Clinton can be one of those dominant Presidents in this house?

The President. Well, I don't know. Probably not much. I think this house is in good shape; I don't know that I can do anything to it that would improve it. I imagine that I will enjoy living here and that I will revere the responsibility about as much as anybody who's ever been here.

The Presidency

Mr. Rather. What's been your biggest disappointment so far?

The President. How hard it is to do everything I want to do as quickly as I want to do it, that the pace of change, although they say we're keeping quite a brisk pace—the House of Representatives adopted the budget resolution and my jobs stimulus package last week in record time—but I still get frustrated. I have a hard time keeping up with everything and keeping it going forward. I'm an impatient person by nature, and I want to do things. That's been disappointing.

But I've been pleased that my staff has worked like crazy, my Cabinet's worked hard. We've had a minimum so far of the kind of backbiting and factionalism and all that you hear about.

Economic Plan

Mr. Rather. What would you count as your biggest success so far?

The President. I think moving the economic program as quickly as possible and developing a big consensus for the idea that we need to make a serious attempt to both reduce the deficit and increase investments in jobs and education and technology. We've got to do both at the same time.

I've been very worried that I wouldn't be able to convince the American people or the Congress to do both at the same time because we've never done it before in the history of the country. But the competition we're in in the world and the problems we've had for the last 12 years absolutely require us to invest in our people and their jobs and to reduce the deficit at the same time, I believe.

Mr. Rather. Now, it's my information, I want to check it with yours, that what you call the job stimulus part of your economic plan is in trouble in the Senate. One, you may not have the votes. Senator Byrd said this afternoon that he saw trouble on the horizon. Does that match your information?

The President. We plainly got the votes to pass it as it is or with very minor modifications. What most Americans don't know is that of the 100 Members of the Senate, if you have one more than 40 you can shut everything down. And you know, there's been some discussion that the Republicans may try to filibuster the stimulus program and may try to stop us from trying to create any new jobs. They have 43 Republican Senators, and they may be able to hold 41 of them. And if they do, you know, they can indefinitely postpone a vote. Well, there's some speculation about that. I would hate to see that happen, and I think it would not serve them well. The American people did not elect any of us to perpetuate the kind of partisan gridlock we've had for the last several years, and particularly to have a minority of one House do that. So, I'm hopeful that that won't occur. I do hear that.

You know there's some argument around the edges among the more pro-deficit reduction Democrats that we should make some minor changes in the jobs stimulus program, but they're not great, I don't think.

Mr. Rather. Two things strike me, not just about what you said but the way you said it. Correct me if I'm wrong, it sounds to me like you're really worried about the possibility that it will be slowed if not stopped, the stimulus part.

The President. I think in the end we will pass it because, first of all, I think the public would just be outraged at the thought that we have a chance here to create half a million new jobs and to do things that are good that need to be done and that it would be slowed up. I'm just pointing out that if the minority in the Senate can get 40 votes plus one, they can stop anything from happening.

And that's what happened when they tried to gut the motor voter bill last week. That would have really been a big—it's a major piece of political reform, makes it easier for all kinds of people to register and vote. And they were willing to pass the motor voter bill, which allowed people to register when they license their car but not allow people, low-income people, to register when they pick up their Medicaid or Social Security benefits or something else. I've seen it. It can happen. All I'm saying is it can happen. I hope it won't, and we'll do our best to avert it.

Mr. Rather. Mr. President, let me come to what I and, I think, a lot of Americans perceive to be the gut of this. The economic indicators are looking good. Do we really need this, what you call stimulus package now? Doesn't it or does it present a real threat to inflation and increasing the deficit? Why not either reduce it or call it off since the economy seems to be moving?

The President. Because we're not producing jobs and because it doesn't present a threat to inflation, nor does it present a threat to the deficit. I agreed over the next 5 years to reduce the deficit by 4 times as much as the stimulus package over and above the deficit reduction that I've proposed, $500 billion of deficit reduction. So, we have blown away the amount of the stimulus package over the next 4 years in extra deficit reduction. So, we're not adding to the deficit.

Secondly, the financial markets have already discounted the prospects of this being inflationary.

Third, and most important of all, unemployment in America is too high. Unemploy-

ment in all the rich countries except Japan is too high. We have to prove that we can generate jobs in America again. And there is no indication that we are doing that. Now, last month we had a lot of new jobs, but way, way over half of them were part-time jobs with no health care benefits and no security of lasting. So, we need this to create jobs. This program invests in community, invests in people and their education. I think it's very important.

Mr. Rather. Mr. President, I want to talk to you about Russia. Time for us to take a break. Stay here with us for our special edition of 48 Hours, an interview with President Clinton. We'll continue with conversation about Russia in just a moment.

[*At this point, the television stations took a commercial break.*]

Aid to Russia

Mr. Rather. Mr. President, just right off the top of your head, what percentage of this day have you spent dealing with the problems in Russia?

The President. Probably 30 percent today.

Mr. Rather. That's a lot.

The President. A lot.

Mr. Rather. Why? And let me ask a specific question. If I'm a trying-to-do-right American, lost my job, trying to support my wife and kids, tell me why I should pay for spending foreign aid to help the Russians?

The President. Because it's in your interest. And let me tell you why it's in your interest. For one thing, America needs good customers for its products. And Russia, a free Russia with a free economy, would prefer to do business with America over any other country. And they prefer to buy our farm products and other products, and we have to look ahead. Every year we have to be looking ahead to find more and more markets for our products because as we get drawn into the global economy, we've got to sell more to other people to keep our incomes high.

Secondly, we have a real interest in keeping Russia democratic and keeping them committed to reducing their nuclear arsenals. Why? Because otherwise we have to turn right around and rebuild our defenses at very high levels, spend huge amounts of taxpayers' money on nuclear arsenals, raise our children in a more dangerous world, and divert needed resources which ought to be spent on education and training and investment here at home.

So a safe, a democratic, a free market-oriented Russia is in the immediate economic interest of every working American and very much in the interest of those folks and their children over the long run. If we let Russia revert to a country which will never be able to do business with us, that's bad business. If it reverts to a nationalist, even if not a Communist, a highly nationalist nuclear power that forces us to spend more of our money keeping our guard higher, then that's money that will be diverted from the future of the working families and their children.

Mr. Rather. What about the theory that whatever money we try to give to the Russians, it would be money down a black hole, just disappear because chaos and pandemonium are hour by hour?

The President. First of all, we don't have enough money to, on our own, affect the course of events. Ultimately the Russian people will have to work out their own future. But there are some specific things we can do which will not hurt us; in fact, will help us, and which will send a clear signal to the forces of freedom and democracy and market economics in Russia that we and the rest of the West will help them.

You know, for example, if we provide more food aid, that helps our farmers, and we can do it at relatively low cost to ourselves. If we can find a way to help to privatize more businesses and to make those work, that helps us. If we can find a way to help them run their energy business better so they don't lose as much of their oil or their gas in the pipeline, that helps them without hurting us. It gives us a market for our pipeline products. If we can find a way to help them convert their nuclear power plants that are built on the Chernobyl model to a different energy source, that could put a lot of our folks to work, put a lot of their people to work, and make them safer environmentally and economically. So there is a zillion things we can do.

Now, over the long run, they're going to have to do some things for themselves. They're going to have to get control of their rampant inflation. They're going to have to make sure that they can get out of the bureaucracies that don't work anymore, that clog up all reforms. They're going to have to make a lot of decisions themselves. But there are some targeted, limited commitments we can make that, no matter what happens, won't hurt us very much and carry the potential of helping us a great deal while helping to keep good things alive in Russia.

President Boris Yeltsin of Russia

Mr. Rather. Now you've met with the Russian Foreign Minister this afternoon.

The President. I did.

Mr. Rather. Did you come out of that with increased confidence that Boris Yeltsin will survive?

The President. He's a very resilient fellow, you know. He's like all of us in public life; he's not perfect. I'm not perfect; we all have our problems. But he is a genuinely courageous man, genuinely committed to freedom and democracy, genuinely committed to reform. And I think now he is more open perhaps than in the past at trying to work out some kind of accommodation with others who would negotiate with him to keep reform going, even though they may have some different ideas. Well, that's what I have to do here. I have to work with the Senate and the House, the Democrats and the Republicans. I think he's got to work on all that. But I think he's got a fair chance to survive. And I think not only the United States but I think the major Western countries ought to do what they can to be supportive of his elected Presidency now because he represents the ideals and the interests of our Nation and our way of life.

Vice President Alexander Rutskoi of Russia

Mr. Rather. Mr. President, correct me if I'm wrong, but you've said a couple of times, I think, recently that Boris Yeltsin is the only democratically elected leader in Russia. In fact, his Vice President——

The President. That's right.

Mr. Rather. ——Alexander Rutskoi is also democratically elected. I just want to go over that. If Boris Yeltsin is impeached because he's tried to suspend the constitution and Alexander Rutskoi, who has now broken with Yeltsin and is also committed to democratic reform, comes into power, would you, would the United States Government consider him a democratically elected leader and swing in behind him?

The President. First of all, it is true that he was elected on the ticket with Yeltsin. But when Yeltsin was elected, he won an overwhelming popular victory. If you go back and look at the distribution of votes, there's no question that that's what happened.

I don't want to get into what might happen or what-if questions. The constitution under which these proceedings might take place was one that came in 1978 under the Communist government. The only popularly elected President ever is Yeltsin. Yeltsin and Rutskoi were elected together on a ticket. And we'll just have to see what happens. I think in the end the Russian people will resolve this one way or the other by what they do or don't do in the referendum in April.

Mr. Rather. Mr. President, I would love to spend hours talking foreign policy. We have such a short time here. Let me try to do something reasonably brief, and that is mention some countries and potential problems out on the horizon and just have you respond briefly.

The President. Sure.

Iran

Mr. Rather. Iran: Particularly if it is proven that Iranian-sponsored terrorists had anything to do with the World Trade Center bombing, would you be prepared to retaliate?

The President. First, let's note that even as we speak, we were just given notice that another major arrest was made and someone brought to the United States from Egypt where the apprehension was made. That's very good news. I don't want to speculate about who was behind it until I know. That would be a very dangerous thing to do.

Let me say that I'm more concerned about the Iranian government maintaining its militance, perhaps supporting, in general, terrorists organizations or engaging in unsafe proliferation of weapons of mass destruction for

its own use or for the benefit of others. I wish Iran would come into the family of nations. They could have an enormous positive impact on the future of the Middle East in ways that would benefit the economy and the future of the people of Iran. I am very troubled that instead of trying to contribute to alleviating a lot of the problems of the Islamic people to the region, they are seeming to take advantage of them. I hope that they will moderate their course.

Mr. Rather. I want to move on, but I want to make sure that I understand. I asked the question, should it be proven they had anything to do with the World Trade, would you be prepared to retaliate? So far, you're on the record as not answering.

The President. That's right. I want to be on the record as not answering. I want to maintain all options in dealing with terrorists, but I want to be on the record as not answering because I don't want the inference to be there that I'm accusing them of something that I have no earthly idea whether they did or not.

Iraq and Saddam Hussein

Mr. Rather. I understand.

Iraq and Saddam Hussein: Just before you came into office, you were quoted as saying words to the effect, well, if Saddam Hussein goes a certain way, I, Bill Clinton, could see relations getting better. Do you regret having said that, or is that a fair quotation?

The President. I think the inference was wrong. What I said was, I cannot conceive of the United States ever having any kind of normal relationship with Iraq as long as Saddam Hussein is there. I can't conceive it. What I said was that I did not wish to demonize him; I want to judge him based on his conduct. And in that context, I will be very firm, and the United States will remain very tough on the proposition that he must fully comply with the United Nations requirements, which he has still not done, in order for us to favor any kind of relaxation of the restrictions now on him through the U.N. That's my position.

Bosnia

Mr. Rather. What used to be called the Balkans, what once was Yugoslavia, is now referred to in shorthand as Bosnia. You seem—and I say this respectfully, but I want to say it directly—you seem to have been all over the place in terms of policy toward Bosnia. One, tell us exactly what U.S. policy toward Bosnia is at the moment and what we can expect in the future.

The President. Well, first, let me respond to your general comment. And like most Americans, I am appalled by what has happened there; I am saddened; I am sickened. And I know that our ability to do anything about it is somewhat limited. I'm convinced that anything we do would have to be done through the United Nations or through NATO or through some other collective action of nations. And I am limited also not only by what I think the United States can do or should do but by what our allies are willing to do.

Now, against that background, we have done a number of things. We have been instrumental in tightening the embargo against Serbia. It's much tighter than it was when I took office. We have pushed for enforcement of the no-fly zone against the Serbians. I think we will get that in the United Nations sometime in the next couple of weeks. We have begun the airlift operation, which was initially criticized and is now universally recognized as having done an awful lot to alleviate severe human suffering and to meet profound needs. We have determined that we should support the Vance-Owen peace process to try to bring an end to hostilities there. But we've also been very clear that if the Bosnians will sign off under the Vance-Owen plan and the Croatians sign off on it, and the Serbs don't, that we think that we're going to have to look at some actions to try to give the Bosnians a means to at least defend themselves. I'm very concerned about this.

But my view is that we ought to try to get the Vance-Owen peace process working. If the parties will good-faith agree to a peace process, then I would be willing to have the United States participate with other nations in trying to keep the peace in Bosnia.

[*At this point, the television stations took a commercial break.*]

North Korea

Mr. Rather. Mr. President, before I get away from foreign policy, very quickly—North Korea, nuclear proliferation: one of those things people's eyes glaze over. Important, of course, but is it something that consumes a lot of your time?

The President. Well, it's caused me a lot of concern in the last few days. Just for the benefit of our viewers, the North Koreans have refused to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency's inspectors to look into sites where they might be illegally producing nuclear weapons under the nonproliferation regime. And because they wouldn't allow our inspectors in and because the United Nations continued to insist that they do so, the North Koreans have now given us notice that they are going to withdraw, which means they're going to put themselves outside the family of nations seeking to contain nuclear weapons. That would be a great mistake, and I hope they don't do it.

It's deeply troubling to us and to the South Koreans. You know, Seoul, which is now a teeming city of well over 8 million people, is very close to the 38th parallel, very close to North Korea. And over the last few years, relations between those two nations have been warming, and people began to dream of reunification in the same way that it happened in Germany. So this is a very sad and troubling development. I don't want to overreact to it. The North Koreans still have a couple of months to change their mind, and I hope and pray that they will change their mind and return to the family of nations committed to restraining nuclear proliferations.

Health Care

Mr. Rather. There's no easy transition to make to health care, but we need to move on. So, if I may. As I understand it—correct me if I'm wrong—you are telling the American people that their health care coverage will be increased, that the deficit at the same time will be cut. The translation of that is that there's going to be yet another significant increase in taxes, isn't it? How can it be avoided?

The President. Not necessarily. And we're looking at the options to do it. If I might, let me try to describe the problem. And I know we don't have a lot of time, but let me be as brief as I can.

There are the following problems in health care: The average person who has health insurance is pretty satisfied with the quality of health care, but terrified of losing the health care coverage. They're just afraid that either through higher deductibles, higher copay, or just outright loss of the insurance, or they had to change jobs but they've had somebody in their family that's sick, they won't be able to keep their health insurance. That's one big problem. The average business is terrified about the cost of health care. We're spending 30 percent more than any other country and getting less for it. So more and more people lose their health insurance every year. And then there are a lot of people who don't even have access to health care. They never see doctors or dentists or go to a medical clinic.

So we've got the most expensive health care system in the world. For the people that can afford it and stay with it, you get to choose your doctor, choose your providers of all kinds, and it's good stuff. But millions of people live with insecurity, and the cost of it is really breaking the economy.

Now, here is the dilemma. In order to fix this cost problem and the security problem, you know, to tell people you can still choose your doctor but you're never going to have to worry about losing your health insurance, you have to find a way to pay, to cover everybody who doesn't now have health insurance, and to stop the loss of coverage for people that have it. That costs money.

But if you do it, that permits you to cut out literally tens of billions of dollars of excess paperwork and administrative cost, stop a lot of other things that are driving up costs in the system. And you literally save, between now and the end of this decade, hundreds of billions of dollars, of both private dollars and taxpayer dollars. So the issue is, how do we make people secure so you can still pick your doctor; you're never going to lose your health insurance, you're always going to have it, no matter whether you change jobs or lose your job; you're always going to have access to health care. It's going to be good. How do we do that? Bring the cost down, and do it within a time that is acceptable.

Mr. Rather. How are you going to pay for that?

The President. We are looking for a lot of different options, but the last thing I think we ought to do, the last place we ought to look, is to ask the employers and the employees of America who are paying too much for their health care right now to pay more to solve this short-term problem.

But the dilemma is this, quite simply—100 percent of the people who studied this problem say this—you may have to pay some more in the short run or find some more money in the short run, but over the long run it's going to save a massive amount of money. I can do more to save money on the Government deficit and to free up money in the private sector by bringing health costs in line with inflation and solving this problem than any other single thing I can do.

What we're trying to find a way to do is to cover all the people who don't have coverage and to guarantee the security to the working people who are afraid of losing it without raising their taxes. And we're looking for ways to do it. And there may be some options. We've got 400 people, including doctors, nurses, health economists, experts from all over America working on this, and they've done good work. I think we've got a chance. And I've got another month to do it.

[*At this point, the television stations took a commercial break.*]

Gays in the Military

Mr. Rather. Mr. President, at your news conference yesterday, correct me if I'm wrong, but I thought you got a little testy when you were asked about gays in the military, respect for you in the military. Am I wrong about that?

The President. No, I didn't feel testy. I thought it was an unusually worded question, but that's all part of it. No, I don't mind talking about it. Let me say, I talk on a regular basis with General Powell. I have met with the Joint Chiefs. I have a whole schedule of things that I'm working through now to continue to work with the military. This is a very difficult time for them.

Mr. Rather. Well, is it correct that you have reversed your position? You say we now——

The President. Absolutely wrong.

Mr. Rather. Did you misspeak yourself?

The President. No, I didn't misspeak myself. Nothing I said yesterday is in any way inconsistent with anything I've ever said before about this.

First, let's review this issue. Half the battle is over. Half the battle is over. The Joint Chiefs agree that they should stop asking enlistees whether or not they're gay. So they have already said, we won't ask you to lie, and we won't use your forms against you. And if you get in and you perform well, that's fine.

I agree and everybody else agrees that any kind of improper sexual conduct should be grounds for dismissal or other appropriate discipline. There's no difference in opinion on that. There is a very limited argument here, which is if you do not do anything wrong but you do acknowledge that you are gay, should you be able to stay in the military and, if so, should you be able to do anything anyone else can do?

The question I was asked yesterday was as follows: Would you consider any restrictions on duty assignments? And the answer is, I am waiting for the report of the Secretary of Defense made in conjunction with the Joint Chiefs. I think they're divided among themselves on this issue. Other nations which admit gays into the military, some of them have no differences in duty assignments, and some do. What I said was, if they made a recommendation to me, would I review it and consider it? Of course I would. I mean, I asked them to study this. I can't refuse then to get the results of the study and act like my mind's made up. This is not an area where I have expertise. I have to listen to what people say. I will consider the arguments. I have a presumption against any discrimination based on status alone, but I will listen to any report filed.

Potential Supreme Court Nominee

Mr. Rather. Mr. President, time is running out on us here. I want to give you an opportunity on this program before this tremendous audience to indicate who your

choice on the Supreme Court is going to be. This is a great opportunity for you to do it. I want to give you an opportunity.

The President. I thought you'd never ask. [*Laughter*] I must tell you I have not reached a final decision. The problems in Russia and just the stuff I've been doing on the economy have kept me from spending quite as much time on it as I would have. But Justice White, to his everlasting credit, gave me his letter now for his resignation in June, and his successor can't take office until October, so he gave us some time.

I love the Constitution of the United States, and I believe in the Supreme Court as an institution. I used to teach constitutional law. There will be few things that I will do in this job that I will take more seriously, few responsibilities I will cherish more. And I will try to appoint someone that I think has the potential of being a magnificent Justice, someone who will be a defender of the Constitution, but someone who has good values and common sense and who understands the real life experiences of Americans as well as the law.

Mr. Rather. Let's talk about this for a moment. I think you were just starting college when the last Democratic President had a chance——

The President. That's right.

Mr. Rather. ——to choose someone for the Supreme Court. If you think about it, it's been a long time.

The President. A long time. President Johnson put Thurgood Marshall on the Court, and I just went to his funeral. It was a long time ago.

Mr. Rather. If you're not going to reveal who it's going to be—I'll give you another opportunity to do that—tell us in what directions you hope to take the Court? I mean, you make an appointee hoping that he will at least bump the Court in some other direction. Let's talk philosophically about the Court.

The President. Well, there was a lot of talk, as you know, during the last 12 years when the Republicans held the White House, about trying to move the Court in a sort of a rightward direction. Indeed, the political platforms of the Republicans were repeatedly filled with litmus tests and specific requirements and everything, and pushing the Court to the right. In fact, as has always been the experience with Presidents, some of the appointees did, in fact, move to the right. Others turned out to be much more complicated people. You know, they had different views. I would like to put someone on the Court who would make sure that there was a certain balance in the debate, that there was a real feeling for the rights of ordinary Americans under the Constitution, but that also someone who was hard-headed, who understood that the criminal law had to be enforced, that you didn't want to over-legalize the country. There's a nice balance to be formed.

I'd also like to put someone on there who was a very cogent and powerful arguer and who could show respect for the other Justices, who could be a good colleague, and who could engage people in honest dialog. I mean, I think the Supreme Court is no different, really, in that sense from a lot of other units. I can't help but believe that when they're all talking together and working together and honestly trying to pick each other's brains, that they're not only free to act on their own convictions but they'll learn from one another and maybe make better decisions.

Mr. Rather. During the campaign, you campaigned as one who would be a President tough on crime. There became this opening on the Supreme Court. You talked about wanting to appoint a Justice with a "big heart." What do you mean "big heart"? Does that mean trouble for prosecutors and law enforcement officers?

The President. No, not at all. As a matter of fact, I think—there may be differences about capital punishment, for example. I've supported capital punishment, and I still do. And I wouldn't necessarily make that a litmus test, because there's a big majority on the Supreme Court that support capital punishment. So whatever my appointee turns out to do on that, it won't change the majority. The majority agree with me on that issue.

But I think that being big-hearted is not the same thing as being soft-headed. I mean, we need an administration that takes an aggressive approach to the crime issue. But we need to be smarter about it. I mean, we can't

talk tough on crime and make sentences tougher and refuse to pass the Brady bill and make people wait 7 days before criminals can buy handguns. We ought to take automatic weapons out of the hands of kids in the streets of our cities. If we're really going to be tough on crime, we ought to be not only tough in the traditional ways but also to change the environment some.

Academy Awards

Mr. Rather. Mr. President, it's my unfortunate duty now to ask the tough questions you don't want to hear. Number one, do you have a favorite in the Oscar race for the Academy Awards? Have you seen these movies? Which one do you favor?

The President. I haven't seen them all, so I can't say. The ones I have seen I enjoyed. I thought Clint Eastwood's western was very good, "The Unforgiven," and a remarkable departure from a lot of his past movies. I thought Jack Nicholson was brilliant in "A Few Good Men." I try to see all the Oscar movies every year. I still haven't seen "Scent of a Woman." I'm working on that. I'm trying to have that brought into the White House. And when I see them all, then I'll have my favorite, but I don't think it's fair until I give them all a shot.

NCAA Basketball Championships

Mr. Rather. I know you don't follow basketball, but I'm willing to make you an offhand wager that North Carolina slaughters Arkansas.

The President. I bet they don't. I don't think they can slaughter them. We haven't lost too many games by a lot of points. Arkansas doesn't have any tall players. As you saw in the St. John's game where they played an incredibly talented, well-disciplined team, they often win by never quitting, a philosophy that I try to follow myself.

Mr. Rather. Mr. President, you're very generous. We appreciate your hospitality. Thank you very much.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 5:25 p.m. in the Library at the White House, and it was broadcast nationwide at 10 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to Gen. Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Announcement of Nomination for Nine Sub-Cabinet Posts

March 24, 1993

President Clinton intends to nominate his longtime adviser Rodney Slater as Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, San Francisco port executive Michael Huerta as Associate Deputy Secretary of Transportation for Intermodalism, and investment banker Aida Alvarez as Director of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight, the White House announced today.

In addition, the President announced his approval of the appointments by Transportation Secretary Peña of Jane Garvey to be Deputy Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration; by Energy Secretary O'Leary of John Keliher to be Director of the Office of Intelligence and National Security; and by Health and Human Services Secretary Shalala of four officials: Wendell Primus, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation; Kimberly Parker, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Legislation (Congressional Liaison); Karen Pollitz, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Legislation (Health); and James O'Hara, Associate Commissioner for Public Affairs.

"Rodney Slater has been one of my most trusted advisers for many years and played a major role in getting me to this position," said the President. "Rodney, Michael Huerta, and Aida Alvarez are the kind of innovative leaders that we need in public service. I am very pleased that they and the people chosen by Secretaries Peña, O'Leary, and Shalala are joining me here in Washington."

NOTE: Biographies of the nominees were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.