

tion to cover contingencies in the Defense Department so we could fund a pay increase at the maximum legal level allowable and continue to make improvements in readiness and the quality of life. We are going to continue to do that. If you're committed to serving America, the people who make the decisions about investments in your future should be committed to making sure that you can serve and succeed, that you can have good families and a good life in the United States military. And we are very grateful to you for that.

Let me say, what I most wanted to do was to have a chance to say thank-you personally and to go down the row and shake hands with the children. And while I am very good at stopping the rain, I am not good at keeping it away forever. So I'm going to terminate my remarks with a heartfelt thank-you to all of you for your service to the United States.

God bless you all, and thank you. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:50 p.m. on the flight line. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Joseph W. Ashy, commander in chief, North American Aerospace Defense Command, commander in chief, U.S. Space Command, and commander, Air Force Space Command.

Interview With Jim Gransbery of the Billings Gazette in Billings, Montana May 31, 1995

Farm Bill

Mr. Gransbery. —envison sharp reductions in both mandatory and discretionary spending for farm programs and research. To what extent are you willing to go—a veto or whatever—to get a farm bill that adequately meets your funding requirements to protect farmers' income and future research?

The President. I'm willing to go quite a long way. You know, I went to Ames, Iowa, a couple of weeks ago to hold a rural conference to give agricultural interests from around the Middle West a chance to come in and testify on a strictly nonpartisan basis just to say what they thought ought to be done in the farm bill. And I pointed out that we had already put in our budget certain reductions in agricultural supports that were

consistent with the GATT agreement we made with Europe and the others, other countries, to try to get everybody to reduce their agricultural supports.

Now, the—and I think the numbers that are in the marks, in the Republican marks are excessive. You know, we might be able to cut some more, but there's a limit to how much we can cut and still be competitive. Up here, you know, you've got special problems. I worked for a very long time to get this agreement last year with the Canadians on wheat to limit imports and then to set up this commission to try to resolve that problem.

But I think that it's a great mistake to look at these farm subsidies just as sort of special Government spending programs instead of looking at them in the context of how we do in international markets. If everybody did away with their protectionism, we wouldn't have to spend a plug nickel on agriculture in America. Our people would do just fine.

And so, I think the proper way to do this is through negotiations with our competitors and to keep driving the subsidies down in a way that opens up markets to our farmers and tries to keep—therefore, have some reasonable relationship of the competitiveness of American agriculture to the incomes people can earn.

If we cut excessively, one or two things, or both, will happen: You will either have substantial losses of American markets—markets for American farmers, or you'll have a lot of individual farmers go under and corporate farms take them over, or both.

So I think it's very important—and Secretary Glickman, the new Agriculture Secretary, as I'm sure you know, was a Congressman from Kansas for 18 years, knows a lot about agriculture. He's out and around the country now talking to farmers, trying to continue to get more ideas about what we can do to put some more flexibility in the farm program that the farmers have asked us for, what we can do to help make more farm income from within the United States by diversifying products and building on the base farm production to develop new products and a lot of that.

But we are still going to have to be very careful, not only about how much farm

prices—farm programs are cut but how they're cut. It's not just important to the dollar, but it's also important what form they take if your goal is to preserve productive, competitive family farms. And that's my goal. That's what I think our interest should be. We can't be in the business of propping up somebody that can't do it, but everybody knows that's generally not the problem with American agriculture.

So, that's where we are. And I intend to make a hard fight out of it. And we have some allies in the Congress among the Republicans and the Democrats. I know that the urban Democrats and the suburban Republicans are the majority, but there are some that are sensitive to these issues. And of course, we have some—in the agriculture committees themselves, we've got some folks in both parties that understand these issues. And so I think we'll be able to make some progress there.

Militia Groups

Mr. Gransbery. Sir, are you here in Montana to take on the ideology of the so-called militia and similar anti-Government groups? How serious a threat do you think they really are?

The President. Well, the first answer to your question is no, I'm not here in Montana to do that, although if—that presumably will be a part of my town hall meeting because you've got a strong militia presence here. I'm here because I think it's important that the President explicitly acknowledge and listen to all the concerns that the Mountain West has about—have about the Federal Government. All these concerns have to be listened to.

Now, on the militia movement, I think that the answer is—how much of a threat? It just depends on who you're talking about—what the group is and what they've said and what they're prepared to do. I had a lot of experience with the militia movement 10, 11 years ago in a different incarnation when I was Governor—groups that were—they were then calling themselves survivalists. And we had a tax protester from North Dakota or South Dakota, Gordon Kahl, killed in Arkansas.

Mr. Gransbery. I remember that, yes.

The President. We had another guy, Snell, just executed in Arkansas who killed a pawn shop owner he thought was Jewish, and then killed a black State policeman who was a good friend of mine—shot him down in cold blood.

And we had a group called The Covenant of the Sword and the Arm of the Lord that had 200 people in an armed encampment in north Arkansas that we were able to seal off and persuade them to voluntarily evacuate and give up a major, major arsenal. And then those that were wanted—there were two who were wanted on murder warrants there—they were arrested. And everybody else that wasn't one was let go, and they didn't come back. So I went through that, through the difficult times of the early eighties.

I do not—my view is that all these groups and individuals have to be viewed based on the facts, you know. What are they doing and what are they saying? But I don't believe that anybody has a right to violate the law or take the law into their own hands against Federal officials who are just doing their job. I don't believe that.

Bosnia

Mr. Gransbery. If U.S. combat ground troops are sent to Bosnia, what are the rules of engagement? Will they be there to secure the safety of the U.N. peacekeepers, or will they be asked to neutralize the Bosnian Serbs as well?

The President. Well, the answer is that, first of all, they have not been asked for, and no decision has been made to send them. But going back to a time before I became President, there was a general commitment made by the United States that if our NATO allies who were part of the U.N. force in Bosnia got in trouble and needed our help to evacuate them, that we would do that, because we have air and naval presence in the area and we can move manpower off of our naval presence into the area.

As you know, our role in Bosnia has been to try to confine the conflict to Bosnia. Our troops are in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. We have also supported certain efforts in Croatia to try to confine the conflict. And then we had played a major role

in the airlift which is now the longest humanitarian airlift in history.

Now, the question has arisen—if these people—if the U.N. forces want to stay in Bosnia but have to relocate so they can concentrate themselves in more secure areas, if they needed help from us, would we be willing to give it? My instinct is, as long as the mission was strictly limited for a very narrow purpose and it was something that we could do for them that they couldn't do for themselves, upon proper consultation with Congress, I would be inclined to do that. But they would not be going there to get involved in war or to be part of the U.N. mission.

The United States—first of all, Europe wanted to take the lead here. It was the right thing to do. And we had no business involved in ground war in Bosnia.

Natural Resources Policy

Mr. Gransbery. Natural resource issues, grazing, mining, lumbering, woods, are all flash points in the West. Your administration appears to have antagonized just about every one on all sides of these issues. In view of the fact that you captured electoral votes in the West in 1992, what policies can you establish now to regain your political support, especially in the Rocky Mountain West?

The President. Well, let's just take them one at a time. On the grazing issues, which I think gave the Republicans their little opening to claim we were waging war on the West, the administration—the Interior Department made a mistake. They just made a mistake. They proposed as a negotiating strategy raising the grazing fees too high in 1993. It was wrong. But after strenuous objection by a number of people, led by Senator Baucus, we immediately dropped it—immediately. That should have been evidence that we weren't trying to wage war on anybody out here.

Since then, what we've been trying to do is to develop a responsible way of managing the federally owned lands that permit people to continue to graze them in a responsible manner. And I've been trying to follow the model that was developed down in Colorado to use more local input.

On the mining, I just simply believe that the mining law of 1872 needs to be modern-

ized. I don't think that it's served the public interest very well, but I don't think we should do it to the extent that we put people out of business.

On the timber, the truth is that the timber people ought to be for me. The previous—

Mr. Gransbery. I beg your pardon?

The President. The timber people ought to support what I've done. If you look at where we were before, look at the fact that the old growth forests were tied up in court for years and years and there were no contracts let—that's mostly, you know, Washington, Oregon, Northern California. That's where the big controversy was on the timber.

The previous administration, President Bush's White House, they complained about it, but they didn't get their Government in line. They had six Government agencies that had five different legal positions in the cases in court. So I got all of our people together. I said, we've got to come out with a position that will get this case out of court so we can do what we can to preserve the forest but so we can get people logging again.

And that is what we did. We did something the previous administration couldn't do. And I have been—we are letting contracts there now. We are giving landowners, especially small landowners, more flexibility over their land. We have just released a contract, the U.S. Forest Service has, for a half a billion board feet of salvaged timber in Idaho, primarily in Idaho.

The only difference now is whether we should have a law which basically says that no one can file a suit on any timber contract for 30 months. You know, I think that goes too far. But I am trying to get it where these folks can log again. I have worked hard on that, and I think that, frankly, that's just a bum rap. That's what I believe.

You know, I come from a State that has a lot of national forest land and that has a lot of logging. And I have really worked hard to make that one go. So one of the things that I hope to do when I get out of here is get a better sense of how people perceive what our administration is doing and how—you know, if there are problems between my office and the White House and what's actually happening out here on the ground, I

want to get a sense of what they are and move through them.

But you know, if I had been trying to wage war on the West, I don't think the West would have done as well as it has in the last 10½ years. The economy out here is booming because I followed good economic policies. And I really have tried to be sensitive to all the incredibly conflicting interests. And you pointed it out—I may ask people on both sides—you know, most of the environmental groups don't think I've been—[*inaudible*]—

Mr. Gransbery. That's true.

The President. —enough. I mean, I think it's a mistake to take an extremist position on one side or the other. If you look at Montana, for example, you have got a huge stake in preserving the environment and permitting people to grow wheat and raise cattle and do whatever else they're trying to do. And what we've got to do is to try to work it out.

What I generally try to do is try to push as many of these decisions as I can down to representative local groups so that people don't feel that alienated bureaucrats in Washington are shoving them around. I don't want them to feel that way.

NOTE: The interview began at approximately 6:45 p.m. in the President's limousine en route to Montana State University. The press release issued by the Office of the Press Secretary did not include the complete opening portion of the interview. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks to the Community in Billings

May 31, 1995

Thank you very much. Thank you for that wonderful, wonderful welcome. It is great to be back in Montana and great to have that kind of reception. I know it's hot, and I was thinking you might just feel the need to stand up and down to keep cool. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank the Billings High School Band. Didn't they do a good job on "Hail to the Chief"? Thank you, Chancellor Sexton, for making me feel at home. Thank you, Governor Racicot, for coming out here and

meeting me at the airport and coming over to be with us here. I have—I was a Governor for 12 years, and I served with 150 other Governors. Most of my friends in Arkansas thought that I just couldn't get another job. [*Laughter*] But in a lot of ways, it was the best job I ever had. At least you could know people, and they knew you. And because I come from a State that's a little bigger than Montana but not much, more populous but smaller, and I always loved being Governor. Three people I served with are also here today, and I'd like to introduce them: the Governor of Colorado, Roy Romer; the former Governor of Wyoming, Mike Sullivan; and your former Governor, Ted Schwinden. They're all over here with me. I hate to tell Governor Racicot this, but when we started, Governor Romer and Governor Schwinden and I didn't have any gray hair, and Governor Sullivan had lots of hair. [*Laughter*]

Congressman Williams, thank you for your wonderful introduction and for your incredible enthusiasm and for occasionally playing golf with me. [*Laughter*] I'd also like to say a special word of appreciation to Senator Baucus who is not here, but who has given me a lot of good advice over time, and I've been better off when I've taken it than when I've ignored it. [*Laughter*]

I also want to tell you, I'm glad to be here at this campus. You know, the last time I was here, I appeared at the other college, so this is sort of equal time. And I thank you for giving me a chance to give you equal time.

I feel very much at home here. I was saying, before I became President, for 12 years I was Governor of Arkansas. And I knew everybody and everybody knew me, and they called me by my first name. And even my enemies smiled when they saw me. And if people were mad at me, they told me to my face, but they didn't have to hear it indirectly from somebody else; we all really knew what was going on.

And one of the most frustrating things about being President is, with 260 million people in this country and so many intermediaries between you and the White House and the people out where they live, it's hard to know sometimes—I mean, look, half the time when I see the evening news,