Japan-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Buchanan has said that you will be more scared of him as President than of President Clinton. What do you think of that? And, Mr. President, your own assessment?

Prime Minister Hashimoto. Concerning the election, that's a decision the American people have to make. We learn from the United States how important the free trading system is, and also we are promoting further the free trade principles. And also, we're making concrete actions for the elimination of regulation—or deregulation that are necessary for the goal of free trade. So I'm confident that the American people will make good decisions.

I'm not taking any side, I must say.

The President. Let me say, I would hope that the Japanese Prime Minister would never be afraid of any American President. We have a partnership.

You know, let's just remember, when I became President the newspapers in America were full of the threat of North Korea becoming a nuclear power and posing dangers to Japan, to the United States, everyone. Because we worked with Japan and with South Korea and with other countries, that threat is ebbing away. The Japanese play host today to over 40,000 American soldiers that have helped to keep the peace in the Asian Pacific region, and they pay a higher percentage of the cost of maintaining those military installations than any other nation in the world where we have soldiers deployed.

Our relationship should be one of respect and friendship, even when we have different opinions and different interests. It is not based on fear. It is based on respect and friendship. Now, we've had trade disputes. All I ask you to do is to look at the record that we have established: 20 agreements, an 80-percent increase in American exports under those agreements from auto parts to medical equipment to telecommunications equipment to California rice.

There have been problems. We have taken these issues seriously, far more seriously than previous American administrations. But we have not attempted to approach them in an atmosphere that was based on fear or anger or rancor. We can be firm with each other, strong with each other; we can even disagree with each other. But the American people should know that our friendship and partnership with the Japanese in security matters is an important part of maintaining freedom and peace in the world and helps America. And Japan has lowered its trade deficit with America—or, our trade deficit with them—dramatically in the last 3 years. We are moving in the right direction. Other countries should do as well.

Japanese Whaling

Q. Any hope for progress on whaling? Is there any hope for progress on the issue of whaling that's separating the two?

Prime Minister Hashimoto. Shall we finish the meeting right out here? [*Laughter*]

The President. We just started—[*laughter*]—we haven't started.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The exchange began at 7 p.m. in the garden at the Sheraton Miramar Hotel. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

The President's Radio Address

February 24, 1996

Good morning. This morning I want to talk with you about what we can do to break the hold of gangs and violence in our schools and what we can do to create an atmosphere in our schools that promotes discipline and order and learning.

Today I'm visiting Long Beach, California, a community that has helped to restore order to its schools by requiring elementary and middle school students to wear uniforms. I believe that if parents and school officials decide to take this step, the rest of us should support them.

Let me tell you why. As I said in my State of the Union Address, our Nation is in a moment of great possibility, a time when more of our people will be able to live out their dreams than ever before, a time of fabulous opportunity. But we all know it's also a time of uncertainty, a time when we face economic challenges, educational challenges,

challenges to our family, to our environment, to the safety of our streets.

We will master this moment only if we meet those challenges together. When we are divided we defeat ourselves, but when Americans are together we are never defeated. That's how we have to meet all the major challenges facing our Nation: strengthening our families; building economic security for every working family; fighting crime and drugs and gangs; protecting our environment; maintaining our leadership for peace and freedom in the world; continuing to reform and reinvent our Government so that it is smaller and less bureaucratic, but still strong enough to serve the American people better.

And none of these goals can be achieved unless we meet our seventh challenge: to give our children—all our children—a good, world-class education. And we know that our children cannot learn in schools where weapons, gang violence, and drugs threaten their safety or where plain unruliness and disorder and lack of discipline make learning impossible. Most of our schools are safe, but no parent who walks a child to the bus stop and waves goodbye in the morning should ever have to wonder if that child will return home safely when the last bell rings.

Our administration has worked hard to make our schools safer: getting parents more involved in schools, keeping guns out, teaching that drugs are wrong, supporting random drug testing of student-athletes, letting communities know that schools need not be religion-free zones. I have challenged our schools to teach values and citizenship through character education. And if a juvenile kills or maims as an adult, he should be prosecuted as an adult.

But we must do more, and local communities must lead the way. I believe we should give strong support to school districts that decide to require young students to wear school uniforms. We've all seen the tragic headlines screaming of the death of a teenager who was killed for a pair of sneakers or jewelry or a designer jacket. In Detroit, a 15-year-old boy was shot for his $86 basketball shoes. In Fort Lauderdale, a 15-year-old student was robbed of his jewelry. Just this past December in Oxon Hill, Maryland, a 17-year-old honor student was killed at a bus stop, caught in the crossfire during the robbery of another student's designer jacket.

School uniforms are one step that may be able to help break this cycle of violence, truancy, and disorder by helping young students to understand that what really counts is what kind of people they are, what's on the inside, to remember that what they're doing at school is working, not showing off their own clothes or envying another student's clothes.

Two years ago Long Beach, California, was the first school district in our Nation to require elementary and middle school students to wear uniforms to class. So far, the results have been encouraging. In the first year of school uniforms, both fights between students and students bringing guns to school were cut in half. Overall crime in the schools was cut by more than a third. Just as encouraging was the way Long Beach pulled together: the board of education voting, starting a uniform program; parents actively supporting it; businesses and churches and civic organizations helping to buy uniforms for the students who can't afford them; and students using their new freedom from fear and freedom from insecurity and freedom from envy to learn.

Aziza Walker, a fourth-grader from Long Beach, wrote me this letter. "It is easier to pick out what I want to wear. It's more convenient for my mom, so she won't have to wash so many colors. It also helps me when I walk home with my cousin or by myself. So I won't get shot, beaten, or robbed by a gang or just by some maniac on the street."

We have a basic, old-fashioned bottom line. We must get violence out of our schools, and we must put discipline and learning back in our schools. If it means teenagers will stop killing each other over designer jackets, then our public schools should be able to require their students to wear school uniforms. If it means that the schoolrooms will be more orderly, more disciplined, and that our young people will learn to evaluate themselves by what they are on the inside instead of what they're wearing on the outside, then our public schools should be able to require their students to wear school uniforms.

Let me be clear: Washington will not tell our schools what to do. We know the best

teacher for a child is a loving parent, and the decision whether to require uniforms should be made by parents, by teachers, by local schools. But if they want to do it, we want to help them understand how it can be done. That's why today I signed a directive instructing the Secretary of Education to distribute a new manual on school uniforms to every school district in the Nation. Rather than telling schools what to do, we are providing a roadmap for setting up the school uniform policy for schools who choose to start one.

Every one of us has an obligation to work together, to give our children freedom from fear and the freedom to learn. If we act together, we can give them the chance to make the most of their young lives and to build better futures.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:15 p.m. on February 23 at the Sheraton Miramar Hotel for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 24.

Remarks Prior to a Roundtable Discussion on School Uniforms in Long Beach, California

February 24, 1996

Thank you very much, Mr. Cohn. I am here mostly to listen to all of you. And I thank you for taking a little time to meet with me.

I have spent an enormous amount of my time in the last 18 years now since I became a Governor of my State in 1986—'78—in public schools. And I devoted a lot of time as President to how we can improve education through higher standards and higher expectations, get higher performance. It is obvious that unless the school is a safe, disciplined, drug-free learning environment it's impossible for learning to occur.

And what we have tried to do at the national level is to encourage all kinds of grassroots reforms and to make it possible for people to do what they think is appropriate in their schools; not to tell schools how they should go about improving learning and improving the environment, but to support them when they wanted to do it. And because there were some legal questions raised I did send the Attorney General out here.

As you know, I mentioned your school district in the State of the Union Address, and today, just before I came here, I signed an Executive order instructing the Secretary of Education to send to all the school districts in the country this manual that we have just done up on school uniforms—that we're going to send to all the school districts in the country, not to tell them they should do what you have done, but to encourage them if they want to do it and to show them how to do it.

I also wanted to say something else. As I said, I mostly want to listen to you, but I think it's important to point out that if there is a school uniform or a dress code in a school, you not only have the chance of reducing the violence, I also think it sends a different message to the students. When young people are young we should try to teach them to judge themselves and others based on what's inside them, not what's outside them. And in that sense, I think the school uniform policy is as valuable for students from well-to-do families as it is for students from poor families because of the message it sends.

And I'm very—I'm pleased to be here, and I wanted to come here mostly to honor you for your efforts, and hopefully, to publicize your efforts throughout the country. I'm also anxious to hear from the students. I have to tell you I got a lot of hot letters from students—[*laughter*]—after I bragged on your policy. The mail and the e-mail were burning up—[*laughter*]—for the next several days.

So why don't we start and just hear from everyone who is here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:02 a.m. in the library at the Jackie Robinson Academy. In his remarks, he referred to Carl Cohn, superintendent, Long Beach School District.

Memorandum on the School Uniforms Manual

February 24, 1996

Memorandum for the Secretary of Education

Subject: Manual on School Uniforms

Quality education is critical to America's future and the future of our children and