

Bipartisan Cooperation

Q. Are you worried that Republicans won't go along with a 7-year balanced budget because they're worried about making you look good before the election?

The President. Well, I don't know. You see, I believe there's enough credit to go around when you do the right thing. Yesterday, when I asked the Members of Congress to stand out there, most of them Republicans who came, although we had a fair number of our Democrats who were there as well.

Q. Senator Dole was way in the back, though.

The President. Well, that was his choice. I think—I saw him—I saw him, in a generous gesture, make sure that the committee chairs, Senator Hatch, and Mr. Hyde got to go up front. He was just being generous to them.

But I believe that when we do things together, the American people are not fooled. They know that I cannot claim full credit for a bill that goes through a Congress that is majority Republican, and they are more than happy to give credit to people who actually work together to build things.

So I believe that—my argument is this: If we have an agreement that is within our grasp, that we know is good for the country, then the credit will take care of itself, and the credit will probably flow in appropriate proportions to everybody involved in it. Then there are still all these things that there is disagreement on, that you can have a legitimate, exciting, interesting campaign about, thrown into the future.

My view is that, you know, we got into this budget mess because of profligate decisions that no one who was here in Washington during the time in either party is probably completely blameless from, between 1981 and 1993. And I see passing this balanced budget amendment as a way of taking care of a past problem that we need to get rid of. Then we can debate this march into the future, which path are we going to take for the future.

Everybody knows in the next 4 years we are walking right into the 21st century. The answer is, which road are we going to take. That debate will still be out there. The American people can have that debate, make their

judgments without being frustrated at the political system in Washington for not producing results today.

So I think we can get these things done, and I hope we will.

Whitewater

Q. The Justice Department is asking Judge Howard to keep your videotaped testimony off TV and out of political ads. Two questions: One, are you afraid of being embarrassed by the tape? And secondly, do you agree with a growing number of people who think that Kenneth Starr should step down?

The President. Well, I'll just answer the question about my testimony, and I'll—I don't think I should answer the other question at this time. The facts are what they are, and they are plain for all to see now on the second question you asked me.

On the first question, what I want to do is to—I was asked to testify. If I have any information that is helpful, I want to be able to give it. I think that the American people and the press should have access to my testimony but that it shouldn't be abused in any way.

And so that is the position that I have taken. And I take it that is the position the Justice Department has taken, and they will have more to say about that as we go along.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. District Judge George Howard, Jr.

Remarks on the Agreement on Lebanon and an Exchange With Reporters

April 26, 1996

The President. Good afternoon. As you all know, just a short time ago Secretary Christopher concluded an agreement with the leaders of Israel, Lebanon, and Syria, to end the current crisis in southern Lebanon and northern Israel and to prevent it from starting again. I spoke with the Secretary this morning, shortly after 7 o'clock, and I have just spoken with the Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who joins me in welcoming this achievement.

The agreement will stop Katyusha rocket attacks on northern Israel and protect both Lebanese and Israeli citizens. It sets up a mechanism to which Israel and Lebanon can refer complaints, composed of those two countries, the United States, France, and Syria. Because it is in writing, this agreement will be less likely to break down than the informal understandings that had been in place since 1993.

I want to congratulate Secretary Christopher and his team for their tireless efforts over the past week. Now the civilians on both sides of the border can return to their homes and resume their normal lives with greater confidence and greater security than in the past. I also want to commend Prime Minister Peres, President Asad, Prime Minister Harawi, and the representatives of other interested governments, including France, for providing leadership which was very much needed to end this crisis.

Now this agreement will only last if all those who worked with us to bring it about now work to make sure it succeeds. We must not and we will not tolerate new attempts to disrupt the calm which has been reestablished at such a terrible cost.

I know I speak for all Americans in saying that our thoughts and prayers are with the innocent civilians and their families in Lebanon and in Israel who have suffered so much during the last 2 weeks. Now we must turn again to the hard work of building a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Thank you very much.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, doesn't this really accept the status quo, and will—the real crux of the problem is Israeli occupation of Lebanon, and the President of Lebanon told you that he could restore order on the border if the Israeli troops got out. Why don't you work on that?

The President. Well, first of all, that will be worked on in the context of resolving—making peace in the Middle East. That is a part of a comprehensive resolution to the Middle East peace process. That has always been our position. But first we had to restore

the peace and stop the suffering of the innocent civilians.

1996 Olympics

Q. Mr. President, there are reports that there have been arrests in Georgia in connection, perhaps, with a militia group making some threats against the Olympics. I know you're planning on attending the Olympic games. Can you, first of all, tell us what exactly is going on?

The President. Let me say—as you know, I have to leave—but the Justice Department will make whatever statements are appropriate there. I think it's inappropriate for me at this moment to say more.

Thank you.

Q. Are you concerned, though, about your security going to Atlanta?

The President. No.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria and Prime Minister Ilyas Harawi of Lebanon.

Statement on Signing the Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996

April 26, 1996

Today I have signed into law H.R. 3019, the "Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996."

This bill helps us move toward a balanced budget in a way that honors our Nation's values by protecting our commitments to education and training, the environment, law enforcement, science and technology, and national service. It restores \$5.1 billion of the \$8.1 billion I had sought for these priorities over levels in the appropriations bills that I had rejected. In addition, H.R. 3019 provides emergency disaster funding as well as funding for our troops in Bosnia and for the furtherance of the Middle East peace process.

We should have reached this conclusion 7 months ago, at the beginning of the fiscal year instead of more than halfway through it. Unfortunately, the Congress passed versions of the appropriations bills that were far