

to keep the guarantee of medical care and nutrition—basic nutrition—to children who are poor from being taken away from them. And I could not have won in that battle if I didn't have enough allies in the Congress to sustain my veto. In 1993, because of the composition of the Congress, we passed a budget bill that reduced the deficit by 85 percent before the balanced budget bill had passed. I could not have done that if there hadn't been those people in the Congress to do that.

So, I am committed to this campaign finance reform. But there are other issues, and we have to have allies. People give money in these elections based on what they honestly believe should be done. I don't question the sincerity of those who financed Mr. Gingrich and the Republican revolution. But I disagreed with it. And we had an argument. And we have to have enough capacity to stake out our position, and if we don't have—we have to fight for the things we believe are important, just as they fight for the things they believe are important.

It's a simple thing. The cost of communications have overwhelmed the capacity of the system as it was intended to operate. The FEC created this soft money loophole. It has become the way of getting access to virtually unlimited communications. We have to close the loophole. And we have to close it for all on a fair basis. For me, I could give it up easily, but I don't think it would be right for me to put the people that agree with me about what's best for America at an even greater disadvantage than they're going to be. And it doesn't affect me personally, but that's been my position.

**Q.** Thank you Mr. President.

**The President.** Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ann McBride, president, Common Cause; and Harold Ickes, former Deputy Chief of Staff to the President.

## **Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Ezer Weizman of Israel and an Exchange With Reporters**

*October 7, 1997*

### **Middle East Peace Process**

**President Clinton.** Good morning, everyone. I'm delighted to have President Weizman here, and we had a nice dinner last evening, and we're going to have further talks today about what we can do in the United States to further the peace process. And certainly we are grateful for all that he has done as President and throughout his entire career. It's a great honor to have you here.

**President Weizman.** Thank you very much.

**President Clinton.** Thank you.

### **Jonathan Pollard Espionage Case**

**Q.** Mr. President, thank you. In light of the recent swap between Israel and Jordan, there has also been talk raised again about Jonathan Pollard. I was wondering if you believe justice was served when he received his life sentence, and do you believe he will spend his life sentence in prison?

And to President Weizman, will you be raising this issue today with the President?

**President Weizman.** You were talking too fast. What did you say?

**Q.** The question of Jonathan Pollard—will you be raising it with President Clinton today?

**President Weizman.** It's always in our minds.

**Q.** Mr. President?

**President Clinton.** Well, I receive—when Mr. Pollard applies for clemency, I receive recommendations from both my Justice and National Security Advisers, and I take into account what they recommend, and then I take action. And that's what I'll do if it comes up again.

### **Assassination Attempt on Khaled Meshal**

**Q.** Good morning. Thank you, Mr. President. What is your reaction to the attempted assassination attempt in Jordan and Mr.

Netanyahu's apparent contention that it was a legitimate tool of government?

**President Clinton.** The United States law is different on that, and our policy is different on this. I believe that, certainly for us, we have the right law. We don't—it's illegal for the United States Government to engage in assassination attempts. But I think that it's very important for countries to fight terrorism. I think that Israel's struggle against terrorism is important, but it's also important to consider the consequences on people who are your allies of whatever actions you take.

I think the important thing now for me is to try to get this peace process back on track. That's really the only way to ultimately get rid of terrorist problems in the Middle East. We've got to keep doing that. And then we can all—have all governments working together against terrorists.

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

**Q.** President Clinton, can I ask you a question?

**President Clinton.** Let me first say that we are profoundly honored to have President Weizman here. We are grateful for his visit and for his work for peace as President and for, indeed, his entire career. I've looked forward to this for a long time. We had a grand dinner last night, and I'm looking forward to our visit.

Please ask your question.

**Q.** What do you think about this Israeli failed assassination attempt in Jordan?

**President Clinton.** I believe that it's important to fight terrorism, but I think it's important to consider in the fight the consequences on all your allies in that fight and what the ultimate conclusions will be. The people that are involved have dealt with it as best they could, and so I think the important thing for me now is to get the peace process back on track and to go forward.

American law is very different, you know. We don't—it's against the law in America for the Government to promote any kind of assassination, and I agree with that for us. But I think the most important thing for me is to get this peace process back on track.

### **Middle East Peace Process**

**Q.** Mr. President, I understand that you were considering last night the possibility of inviting both Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat to a 2-month summit at the North Pole? [Laughter] Is it on the agenda?

**President Clinton.** You got a good leak. Let me say what I said last night. I said that I would go anywhere or do anything that I thought would be most effective in promoting the peace process, and if I thought it would help I would get parkas for all of us and we could all go to the North Pole and stay there until we had a peace agreement. And I will reiterate that in public.

But what we are going to discuss today, and what I am continually assessing, is what is the best way for the United States to promote the peace process, without pretending that we're a party that can make the peace, and what is the most effective thing for us to do.

But what I said was that I would do anything, including go to the North Pole, if I thought it would help make peace, and I will reiterate that in public. I would do that. At least it would cool things down. [Laughter]

**Q.** Are you optimistic about the peace process? Because people in the Middle East are not.

**President Clinton.** In a funny way, sometimes when things get really bad, they have a way of getting everyone's attention about the bigger issues. And it may be that some of the difficulties of the last 6 months will create an environment where everyone is more aware of the ultimate consequences. And perhaps we can therefore actually have a chance to get it back on track that is greater than the chance we've had for the last several months. I just hope so.

Thank you. We need to visit.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:48 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

**Statement on Senate Action on Campaign Finance Reform Legislation**

*October 7, 1997*

Today was not the end of this fight for campaign finance reform but the beginning. The Republican leadership and a minority of the Senate used procedural maneuvers to block the obvious will of a majority of United States Senators to support bipartisan campaign finance reform legislation. I will fight for this measure as hard as necessary, for as long as necessary. And I call on all Senators to realize that the bipartisan McCain-Feingold measure is our best chance to move forward with reform.

**Remarks on Departure for Newark, New Jersey, and an Exchange With Reporters**

*October 8, 1997*

**Welfare Reform**

**The President.** Good morning. I ran for President with a challenge to our country to replace the broken welfare system with one that expands opportunity, demands responsibility, and reflects our values of faith, work, and families.

Since I took office, we've worked hard to make this vision a reality. First, by working with 43 States to launch innovative experiments in welfare reform, and then by enacting a welfare reform law that challenged all our States and all people involved in the system to do far more to move from welfare to work.

Today we received yet another piece of evidence that welfare reform is working far better than anyone had predicted it would. We learned that welfare rolls have continued their unprecedented decline, dropping by another 250,000 people in the most recent month alone, one of the largest monthly drops ever. Altogether, we have seen our welfare rolls shrink by more than 1.7 million people since I signed the welfare reform law and by more than 3.6 million people, or 26 percent, since I took office.

This is a truly historic achievement for America. It shows that we can accomplish

great things when our policies promote work and reflect our values. We're building an America where all families have the chance to center their lives around work, family, and responsibility.

But we have more to do to ensure that all those who can work are able to work. The private sector here must do more to take the lead. The balanced budget law I signed last August not only repealed unfair cuts that targeted legal immigrants but also created a \$3 billion welfare-to-work program and increased incentives for businesses to hire former welfare recipients.

For our part, we've set a goal of hiring 10,000 people off the welfare rolls to fill existing jobs in the Federal Government. Later today the Vice President, who has led this initiative, will report on our progress in doing our part.

We are working hard here to change lives to empower all Americans to seize the new opportunity of a new century. I am very encouraged by these welfare numbers. We now have the smallest percentage of our people on welfare in about three decades after the biggest drop in the welfare rolls in history. This proves that this system can work. But to get to the rest of the people, we have to have more help in creating these jobs, the businesses have to take advantage of the tax credits, and the municipal governments and others have to take advantage of the \$3 billion fund. But this is great news for America today, and I must say I am very, very pleased.

Wolf [Wolf Blitzer, Cable News Network].

**1996 Campaign Finance Inquiry**

**Q.** Mr. President, Senator Thompson says that it's time for you to take personal responsibility for the campaign finance irregularities and relieve Janet Reno of her responsibility and simply ask for an independent counsel on your own. How do you respond to Senator Thompson on that?

**The President.** Well, I think that, first of all, I have assumed responsibility. We set up a system that has given Senator Thompson 100,000 pages of documents. And I was surprised that these films had been subpoenaed and not turned over. I think there is a logical reason for it. I'm frustrated whenever there has not been absolutely full compliance, but