

said they were very sorry that they could not have simultaneous translation of my remarks in Spanish and Arabic.

So what I think the race commission wanted to do was to say, "Hey, the overwhelming majority of white Americans regret the whole episode of slavery, have been trying in various ways with fits and starts to overcome it for 100 years, have to continue to try to overcome it, but we should focus now on where we are and where we're going."

### **1998 Elections**

**Mr. Smiley.** Last question. I asked you earlier how important you thought this election day was for you. I've tried in the few moments that I've had to ask you how important you think it is for black America, specifically. Let me close by asking you how important you think this election is for the entire country tomorrow.

**The President.** Well, that's the most important issue. And I think it's really a question of what the country wants us to do here. Do they want more of the last 8 months of partisanship, or would they like more progress? Do they want us to have more Washington politics as usual, or would they like the people of America to be the center of our focus?

When I say—we've got a mission here. We want to continue to prepare America for the new century. We want to finish the agenda that was unfinished in this last year. We want the Patients' Bill of Rights. We want modernized schools. We want an increase in the minimum wage. We want to save Social Security. We want to do more for child care for working people. We want to do more to spread economic opportunity where it hasn't been spread and to keep this economy going. We have a mission, an agenda. It's not about politics; it's about people.

And I can just tell you that this election will be determined by two groups of people: those who vote and those who don't. And if I were sitting out there in America, I'd say, I believe I'll be among those who vote.

**Mr. Smiley.** Mr. President, as always, a pleasure to sit down and talk to you, and I thank you for taking the time doing it and address us today.

**The President.** Thank you.

**Mr. Smiley.** Thank you, sir.

**The President.** Good to see you.

NOTE: The interview began at 11:13 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 2 but was embargoed for release until 11:30 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to Dr. John Hope Franklin, Chairman, President's Advisory Board on Race. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

### **Remarks on the Patients' Bill of Rights**

*November 2, 1998*

Thank you so very much, Mrs. Jennings, for coming here with your son amidst your evident pain to share your experience with us. Thank you, Dr. Weinmann, for sharing your experiences with us. If you would do that every day until we pass a bill, you can drink my water every day. [*Laughter*] I loved it. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, Dr. Beverly Malone. Thank you, Secretary Herman, for the work you and Secretary Shalala did. Thank you, Deputy Secretary Gober; Director of OPM Janice Lachance. I'd also like to thank Linda Chavez-Thompson, the executive vice president of the AFL-CIO; Gerry McEntee, the president of AFSME; Bill Lucy, the secretary-treasurer of AFSME; John Sepulveda, the Deputy Director of OPM; and Rudy de Leon, the Under Secretary of Defense, for being here. And a special word of appreciation on this day before the election to Congressman Eliot Engel, one of the great supporters of the Patients' Bill of Rights from New York City. Thank you, sir, for being here.

### **Iraq**

Let me before I begin a few words about the situation in Iraq, which has been dominating the news, and I haven't had a chance to talk to the American people through the press in the last couple of days.

Saddam Hussein's latest refusal to cooperate with the international weapons inspectors is completely unacceptable. Once again, though, it will backfire. Far from dividing the